**DSEC – II**

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| **YEAR** | **SEMESTER** | **Title** | **L** | **T** | **P** | **C** |
| **I** | **II** | **WOMEN’S WRITING** | **4** | **1** | **0** | **4** |

**Objectives:**

1. To understand the writings in Women’s Literature
2. To compare literature of various women writers for better understanding.
3. To study the works of authors from different countries and draw a common theme in their writings.

**UNIT I: POETRY**

Sylvia Plath : Lady Lazarus

E.B. Browning : A Man's Requirements

Maya Angelou : Phenomenal Woman

Imtiaz Dharker : Another Woman

**UNIT II: PROSE**

Padmini SenGupta : The Position of Women in Ancient India

Vandana Shiva : Ecofeminism: Masculinization of the Motherland

**UNIT III: DRAMA**

Caryl Churchill : Top Girls

Morsha Norman : night’ Mother

**UNIT IV: SHORT STORY**

Joyce Carol Oates : The White Cat

Flannery O’Connor : A Good Man is Hard to Find

Katherine Mansfield : The Doll House

C. S. Lakshmi : A Deer in the forest

**UNIT V: FICTION**

Arundhati Roy : The God of Small things

Margaret Atwood : Surfacing

Manju Kapur : Difficult Daughters

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* Eagleton, Mary Ed. Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader. 2nd edition. Blackwell Publishers: UK, 1994.
* Jaidka, Manju. From Slant to Straight: Recent Trends in Women’s Poetry. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2000.

 **UNIT – I**

 **Sylvia Plath : Lady Lazarus**

"Lady Lazarus," is both the title of the poem, and its speaker—much like the biblical Lazarus, the man Jesus resurrected from the dead in the Gospel of John, the speaker is also resurrected by external forces, and more than once. This resurrection, however, is unwanted—the speaker reveals she *wants*to die in order to escape the profound suffering caused by living in an oppressive, male-dominated society. Instead, the speaker is forced to come back to life, each revival a carnival-like performance for a "peanut-crunching crowd." However, the speaker warns her enemies—the men who bring her back to life—eventually she will return and "eat men like air," demonstrating a complicated dynamic of empowerment and hopelessness. Using metaphors of death and resurrection, Plath provides a dark insight into the suicidal mind, as well as a critique of society's twisted fascination with suffering, and of the horror of a being a woman in a patriarchal world. Once every ten years, I manage to kill myself and come back to life. I am a kind of living miracle, with my skin so white it looks like a lampshade the Nazis made from the skin of dead Jewish Holocaust victims, my right foot heavy like a paperweight, and my face, without its usual features, looking like a fine piece of Jewish cloth. Peel off the cloth, you, my enemy. Do I scare you, without my nose, with my empty eye sockets, and a full set of teeth like a skull? The sour smell of decay on my breath will disappear in a day. Soon, very soon, the skin that decayed in my tomb will be back on my body, and I will become a smiling woman again. I am only thirty-years-old. And like a cat, I also have nine times to die. I am currently dead, and this is the third time out of nine. What a shame, to destroy each decade like this. See the million flashing bulbs. The crowd, crunching on peanuts, shoves in to watch as my burial cloth is unwrapped from me, like some kind of strip-tease. Gentlemen and ladies of the crowd, here are my hands. My knees. I may be nothing more than skin and bones, but regardless, I came back as the same identical woman I was before I died.

The first time I died, I was ten-years-old. It was an accident. The second time I died was intentional. I meant for it to last, and to never come back. I rocked into a ball, shutting myself off to the world like a seashell. People had to call and call for me to come back to life, and had to pick off the worms, which had already begun to infest my dying body, as though they were pearls that were stuck to me.

Like everything else, dying is an art-form, a skill. I'm extremely good at it. I try to die so it feels terrible, like I'm in hell. I try to die in a way that feels as though I'm actually dying. I guess you could say that dying is my calling (since I'm so good at it).

 It's easy enough to die in a cell (like in a mental hospital or prison. It's easy enough to die and stay in one place. It's the dramatic resurrection, the return in the middle of the day to the same place, the return to the same body, the return to the same old loud and surprised shout: 'It's a miracle!' that really tires me out. I charge for people to look at my scars, and I charge for them to listen to my heart—it beats fast and continuously. And there is a charge, a very expensive charge, for people to hear me speak, or to touch me, or to buy some of my blood, or hair, or clothes. So, Sir Doctor. So Sir Enemy, I am your great artistic work. I am your valuable item, like a baby made out of pure gold that, when dying, melts until there is nothing but the sound of screaming. I turn away from you, and burn alive. Don't think I underestimate just don't know how concerned you are for me. Now I'm just ash, all ash—you poke at the ash, stir it around, looking for my flesh, or bone, but there isn't anything left— just a bar of soap, a wedding ring, a gold tooth filling. Sir God, Sir Lucifer, beware, beware. Out of the ashes, I will rise, my hair red (like a phoenix's feathers), and I will eat men like they are nothing, like I am simply breathing.

  **E.B. Browning : A Man's Requirements**

The poem entitled “A Man’s Requirements” by Elizabeth Browning talks about requirements of a man to a woman but the poem was actually written by a woman, so what it really shows are what the woman wants the man to ask of her. The first four lines show that the woman wants the man to ask her to love him with her whole being and, that she must also love every aspect of him. This means that she must accept him, his strength and weaknesses, and his whole character. During the Victorian period, marriages were usually seen as business proposals. Young men and women, usually didn’t have control on the decision as to whom they were going to be married to in the future. Parents or other family members, decide as to whom they should be married to. The family, especially the women’s, also consider a lot the financial wealth and influences of the whole family of the man. Because of these pressures, the woman wants the man to ask her for her real love “feeling, thinking, seeing,” and to love the wholeness of him and not only some aspects of him, that were important during the Victorian period.

The fifth and the sixth lines show how the woman wants the man to ask her to love him with her “open youth in its frank surrender.” During the Victorian period, both women and men carefully chose their partners to be. They did not “surrender” easily their youth just for anybody but they had to make sure that the first man or woman they will have a relationship with, will also be the man or woman they will marry and be with for the rest of their lives. The women, especially, had to make sure that their virginity will not be lost for somebody who they will not be married to. Also, the use of the term “frank surrender,” involves a natural process and is related to nature. The “open youth” being “surrendered” honestly can also be associated  with the lost of innocence of the woman. The surrendering of her open youth which involves her lost of innocence can be seen as something sexual. It means that the woman must “really” desire for the man and that her body must be ready for their being one.

Lines seven and eight talks about the “vowing” of her mouth, with its “silence tender.” The term, “vowing” here can both be, literal as in vowing when one promises something through words and it can also mean another kind of vowing, such as the kiss in wedding ceremonies, for it involves the word “tender.” The use of the word “tender” can suggest that there is a sense of touch involved. In either of the two meanings, the woman wants the man to ask her for a real love. A love which she can willingly show to the world.

Lines nine to twelve still shows how the woman wants the man to ask for her true love. The use of the word “azure” which is the color of the sky, and the terms “heaven’s truth” shows the woman as a reflection or representation of heaven. Lines thirteen to sixteen still shows of how the woman wants the man to ask for her love. Lines fifteen and sixteen says “love me with thine heart, that all neighbors then see beating.” These lines give almost the same meaning as with lines seven and eight. In either meanings, the woman wants the man to ask for her real love which she can willingly show to the world.

Lines seventeen to twenty say of how the woman wants the man to ask her to love him “open-mindedly” and “with a loitering foot, hearing one behind it.” The term “open-minded” suggests that the woman must love him by her own choice, a choice that is not dictated by the society, but that comes from her own imagination. This is proven and strengthened by the next words “with a loitering foot, hearing one behind it.” The term “loitering” suggests a delay of an activity, with idle steps and pauses. This is done when somebody thinks and wonder, especially when someone is very careful on deciding what to do next or what are the next steps to be done. This involves a careful thinking, and is in contrary to a decision that is done automatically and that is pushed by the society. It means that the woman wants the man to ask for her decision which is a product of her own thoughts and that this decision is something that is very much taken consideration first before making.

Lines twenty-one to twenty-four still describes a yearning for a natural love of the woman. This is emphasized by the use of the words “blush that burns.” The woman wants the man to ask for her natural love. A love with natural desire, that might involve chemical reactions from the body. This is somehow the same with lines five and six where the woman wants the man to ask her to “surrender” her “open youth” to him.Lines twenty-five and twenty-six talk about loving with a “thinking soul.” These lines give almost the same meaning as with lines seventeen to twenty. The woman wants the man to ask her to think, not just to accept the dictates of the society, but to love him with a “thinking soul.” This thinking and being open minded must not stop and that her rest must still be “love-sighing.” This is strengthened by the following lines, twenty-seven and twentyeight, which talks about her “thoughts that roll” that must continue until death. The woman wants the man to ask her to love him, not as a puppet, but as an individual with freedom of emotions.

Lines twenty-nine to thirty-two talk about something religious. The words “crown,” “kneeling,” “prayers,” and “angels” refer to something religious and talks about a kind of love which involves spirituality, and is divine. This divine love is pure and clean as what the next lines, thirty-three and thirty-four describe. “Love me pure, as muses do, up the woodlands shady” talks about a natural kind of love, again, emphasized by the word “woodlands.” Lines thirty-five and thirty-six describe a child-like kind of love. A love that is honest and pure. The woman wants the man to ask her to love him honestly and naturally. Lines thirty-seven to forty describe an unlimited kind of love. A love that has no limitations, not temporal, and will exist until her death. These lines give almost the same meaning as with lines, twenty-seven and twenty-eight.

Lines forty to forty-four are the last lines of the poem, and which also show us the sudden twist of the story. “Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear, woman’s love no fable, I will love thee half a year as a man is able,” show what the speaker of the poem, the woman, really thinks of the man. It summarizes what Elizabeth Browning wanted to portray in her poem, and what she probably sees as a reality during the Victorian period – that no matter how a man asks for the sacrifices of the woman, and no matter how a man asks for her almost eternal love, he cannot give the same, equal love, that the woman has given. The end of the poem shows the reality during the Victorian period, that it was a male-dominated society. It was a male-dominated society because women were weaker before. The majority didn’t have jobs or good sources of income so they, as the majority, were the ones who needed to prove their love to men. Men worked and can anytime create a family if they wanted to, and choose a woman according to the standards of the Victorian period. They will usually choose a beautiful, submissive wife who can take care of the children and can do the household chores, depending on the status quo of the man. Because of this, a lot of incapable women competed with each other to get the attention and love of the few men. Today, more women can study, can have good professions, and sources of income so they have more freedom to choose the man they want to be married to. They do not need to prove much their love to men because they can stand on their own, and thus, if they decide to be on a relationship, it usually really means that the woman is in love. The probability of the idea of love is higher than that of the Victorian period, where the actions of the women were influenced by the dictates of the society. Therefore, the poem “A Man’s Requirements” shows a good view of how women during the Victorian period, struggled to prove their love to men.

 **Maya Angelou : Phenomenal Woman**

**Summary**

Stanza One: In a reflective tone, the speaker recalls her interactions with other women. She explains that “pretty women” often look at her and wonder what makes her so attractive and alluring. [The speaker](https://www.gradesaver.com/phenomenal-woman-maya-angelou-poem/study-guide/character-list#the-speaker) is quick to point out that, unlike these conventionally-beautiful women, she is not “cute” and does not possess a model’s figure. For this reason, other women are baffled by her appeal and want to uncover the secret to her powerful presence. The speaker attempts to solve this mystery by describing her unique physical characteristics and mannerisms.

However, she claims that when she tries to explain her allure to these women, they never believe her. The speaker insinuates that they may be jealous, or perhaps they are simply incapable of believing that a woman who does not fit conventional standards of beauty can be beautiful at all. The speaker concludes the stanza with a refrain about being a “phenomenal woman.” She proclaims with pride that she is not merely a lovely woman, but an exceptional one.

Stanza Two: The speaker proceeds to describe her effect on men. She explains how she exudes a powerful sensuality that draws their attention whenever she walks into a room. Each time she walks before them calmly and confidently, they either stand up at her arrival or melt from their desire for her. They then swarm around her, vying for her attention. As in the first stanza, the speaker details her physical attributes and mannerisms as a means of explaining her effect on others. From the power in her look to the swing of her hips, the speaker is capable of seducing the opposite sex by merely standing before them. The stanza concludes with the refrain of being a phenomenal woman, once again reaffirming the speaker’s confidence and justifying other people’s reactions when they notice her.

Stanza Three: In the third stanza, the speaker continues her reflections on men. This time, she draws a parallel between the reactions of both women and men when they notice her. She states that, like other women, men have also wondered what is so special about her. However, she takes her analysis to another level when she suggests, for the first time, that she actually possesses another kind of beauty altogether. She has a mysterious inner beauty that men cannot see or understand even when she tries to show them. They are blind to what makes a woman beautiful from within, as they only judge her—and likely other women as well—based on her physical looks. Using sensual language, the speaker describes physical attributes and mannerisms that make up her beautiful and enigmatic aura. At the end of the stanza, the speaker repeats the refrain about being a phenomenal woman.

Stanza Four: The speaker addresses the listener for the first time, summarizing her qualities and explaining how her previous recollections should help the listener understand her better. Now, at the present time, the listener should be able to comprehend the speaker’s life and appreciate her qualities. The speaker explains that she does not bow her head in shame, as she is proud of who she is. She also does not draw attention to herself willingly—she is simply being herself, which naturally draws others to her. She tells the listener that he/she should be proud of her when she walks by, as she is a confident and self-respecting woman. The speaker details additional qualities about herself, describing her joyous walk, the natural beauty of her physical attributes, and the world’s need for a woman like her. All of these things have happened in her life because she is a phenomenal woman and is proud of it, marching to the beat of her own drum.

**Imtiaz Dharker : Another Woman**

Ms. Imtiaz Dharker is a versatile poet who has been praised for her excellent poetry especially on women. She is a multi-faceted personality.

Her poem “Another Women” garnered adulations due to its originality and the society’s perspective towards women.

The poem explains how a woman starts her day with daily household chores. Her work has no limitations but perfection is always expected out of her. She makes sure to select the best vegetables from the market. Her purchasing should be within budget.

After all, days toil she could not satisfy her mother-in-law. She heads towards the kitchen to accomplish her pending cooking work, like cutting onion, chopping leaves and preparing food. She prepares the food with much effort and bears the extreme heat of the stove. While cooking bad words and torture from her own family members makes her feel miserable.

Above all, when her husband arrives home she can never share her woes rather should listen what he demands. Her rights are confiscated for a lifetime. She feels like the heat of the flame is engulfing her. She feels tied up with insult and torture by her own family members. She tries to kill herself with kerosene as it will be considered another torch blazed in the dark and that’s what every another woman doing in her life.

**UNIT –II**

**Padmini SenGupta : The Position of Women in Ancient India**

 Since ancient times women were thought to be a symbol of love , compassion,forgiveness,coyly and power .They were given due respect .They were expected to be of strong character and were always supposed to be married in  superior races ,so that they can learn good things from superior people and their virtues could not be misentertained by the mean people.They were always protected first because they were well known for their importance in establishing  the pillars of the society.
The women at that time assumed their husbands like the God and the men gave their wives due respect assuming them a form of Godess .Each one has respect for each other .

In ancient India, Hindu women did not veil their faces rather they enjoyed considerable amount of freedom in society. But repeated attacks on Hindu India by foreigners through centuries changed the situation. During such aggressions, and also when India was under foreign occupation, the honor and chastity of women often became the casualties. There have been numerous cases when Hindu women killed themselves (The Sati pratha ,and the Zauhar )rather than yield to indignities inflicted by the aggressors. As a result, Hindu society, became more protective about its women. The freedom of women was curtailed. To protect themselves Hindu women started to cover their faces with veils and started to stay home. Their participation in social events was greatly restricted.After Mohammadens conquered India ,they treated Indian women very bady so they preffered death ,and voluantrily sought it .

Women in Pre-Vedic Period: Historical studies and the scriptures indicate that Indian woman enjoyed a comparatively high status during the early Vedic period (2000 B.C. to 1000 B.C.), surpassing contemporary civilizations in ancient Greece and Rome. The Aryans, who were mostly busy fighting wars, regarded woman as useful and productive members of society. The condition of Vedic Woman was good. Woman also enjoyed religious status like that of men, especially in Vedic initiation and studies. The Rig Veda provides ample evidence to prove the concept of equality of woman with men as regards access and capacity to acquire the highest knowledge, even the absolute knowledge. The Rig Veda had rendered the highest social status to qualified woman of those days. But status of woman fell in the later Vedic and Epic period. They were not at all treated equally with men or we can say that they were not enjoying equal rights and privileges as compared to men. 25 Though the woman participated in each family ceremony with men but they only played a role as a silent observer not an active participant. As per Manu, men always enjoy unchallenged authority over their wives. Child marriages, Polygamy and Sati were prevalent at that time. Still out of all these things woman at that time were respected by the society. However, changes into the status of woman introduced in 15th century. Saints and supporters of bhakti movement were expounded and spoken about equality of woman with men.28 During these period men were polygamous and widow burning was an accepted norm. Arthashastra imposed more stigmas on woman as Kautilya dismissed woman’s liberation. They were not free even to go elsewhere without husband’s permission. They became worse off in the Gupta period. But in Vedic period position of woman was not worse as that of today. Our history shows that woman in Vedic period was also on strong footage as compare to men and therefore they were not subjected to ‘Female Foeticide’ and Infanticide or people never think about that. Though the overall position of women was lower than men, yet on the whole the position of woman was good. In the post Vedic period, woman started being discriminated on the ground of education and other rights. The ‘Child Marriage’, emphasis on physical chastity of woman and their unquestioned obedience to husband lead’s to progressive deterioration of their position. In the Smriti Sastras as well, as in Manu, it has been mentioned in strongest terms that woman should be honored. But then again Manu has given absolute rights to men to inflict corporeal punishment on her and discard her if she said anything disgraceful to him. Thus, a contradiction in the rules of treatment to woman was there. Manu’s system continued for long after the Mauryan period in the Indian society. However, the upper class woman enjoyed freedom and were respected in society. Besides these woman, a vast majority worked in the fields and homes. Their condition worsened in the 20th century

**Vandana Shiva : Ecofeminism: Masculinization of the Motherland**

 When Vandana Shiva argues that "the marginalization of women and the destruction of biodiversity go hand in hand" she is describing the commonality of gendered and environmental oppression, as well the specific location of women as vulnerable to monoculture capitalism, but also particularly placeAd to conserve biodiversity (Shiva 2014, 164). Shiva believes that women have a special link to biodiversity, and are the best custodians of earth-health through their knowledge of heterogeneity of life. Shiva sees diversity as central to "women's work and knowledge," as the reproductive/domestic work of life is dependent on diverse skills that belie specialization (165). Women are often the people who are most directly involved with subsistence work, and are the safeguards of natural resources needed to sustain the family and community.

Shiva argues that "women's work and knowledge is central to biodiversity conservation and utilization both because they work between 'sectors' and because they perform multiple tasks" (166). This work "found in spaces 'in between' the interstices of 'sectors'" is what allows the reproductive cycles of the earth to sustain life (167). When the environment, specifically farming, is fragmented by the productive desires of capitalism, it is women who move between to link the interdependent systems that have been falsely and dangerously isolated from each other. In this way, Shiva states, "ecological stability, sustainability, and productivity under resource-scarce conditions are maintained" (167).

While women are positioned to be keepers of sacred diversity, this is exactly what makes them so vulnerable to a monoculture economy. Shiva goes on to describe the multitude of ways in which women, particularly those in the agrarian global south, are marginalized by the implementation of monoculture schemes. Using GMO seed to the destruction of local biodiversity ultimately serves to break open the "closed cycle of production and consumption" inherent to subsistence farming (170). Once the self-sustaining cycle is broken, colonialist powers of the global north are able to extract commodity value in the form of the monoculture crop on the global market. This process literally takes food out of the mouths of indigenous communities, and women and girls are usually the first to suffer. Shiva writes that "seed diversity and nutritional balance go hand in hand" (169). The new, monoculture crop is less able to support bodily health, and simultaneously destroys environmental health by destroying the fertility of the soil (169).

In addition to the negative health effects of monoculture, women are particularly marginalized by their alienation from the seeds. Shiva argues that "purchased seeds displace women from decision making and custodianship of seeds and transform them into unskilled labor" (169). Similarly to the way textile workers lost their status as artisans and became interchangeable parts of the industrial machine in 19th century Britain, women farmers are being reduced to homogeneous hands at the plow of gmo agriculture.

Lastly, Shiva shows how the reproductive, cyclical nature of women's work is being imitated and perverted by biotechnology companies in the name of monoculture. Shiva writes that "women produce through biodiversity, whereas corporate scientists produce through uniformity" (172). Despite their oppositional modes and goals, corporations now claim patents on seeds, as if they were the true creatures and reproducers of life. Shiva argues that "the claim of 'creation' of life by corporate scientists is totally unjustified, it is in fact an interruption in the life flow of creation" (172). Thus, in the destruction of biodiversity, women are not only displaced as keepers of the ecological life in their communities, they are pushed aside as creators of life by corporate claims of god-like science.

 **UNIT – III**

 **Caryl Churchill : Top Girls**

[Marlene](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/marlene), a London businesswoman, hosts a dinner party at a nice restaurant to celebrate a recent promotion. Her guests are not friends, family members, or coworkers; however, they are women plucked from history, art, and myth. Among them are [Isabella Bird](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/isabella-bird), a nineteenth-century writer, explorer, and naturalist; [Lady Nijo](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/lady-nijo), a thirteenth-century concubine who became a wandering Buddhist nun after she fell out of favor at court; [Dull Gret](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/dull-gret), the subject of a Flemish renaissance painting by Pieter Brueghel the Elder; [Pope Joan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/pope-joan), a woman who disguised herself as a man and was appointed Pope in the Middle Ages; and Patient Griselda, a character from the stories of Boccaccio and Chaucer, whose obedience to her husband in the face of horrible mistreatment made her the stuff of legend. As the dinner party unfolds, the women eat ravenously, grow deeply intoxicated, and talk over one another as they share the stories of their often-painful lives. The women discuss motherhood, love, abuse, and disappointment, and as strikingly similar coincidences emerge, it becomes clear that all of these women’s sufferings stem from the crushing violence of a life lived on the terms of the patriarchy.

The following Monday, Marlene is back at her job at the [Top Girls Employment Agency](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/symbols/top-girls-employment-agency), interviewing a woman named [Jeanine](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/jeanine) who hopes to be placed in a job that will pay more money and offer more opportunity for advancement. When Jeanine reveals that she’s saving money for a wedding, Marlene discourages her from sharing her plans with any prospective employers, as her preparation for a role as a wife and, ostensibly, a mother will hurt her chances of getting hired.

The action moves to the backyard of Marlene’s sister [Joyce](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/joyce), where Joyce’s sixteen-year-old daughter, [Angie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/angie), and Angie’s twelve-year-old friend [Kit](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/kit) play in a makeshift shelter assembled from junk. The girls bicker, insulting each other and calling each other names. Angie reveals a desire to kill her mother. Joyce comes out the yard and calls for the girls to come in for tea and biscuits; when they don’t answer, she tells them to “stay [in the fort] and die.” Joyce goes back inside the house, and Angie reveals that she is soon going to go to London to visit her aunt Marlene, whom she believes is her true mother. Joyce comes out and calls, once again, for the girls to come inside. Angie and Kit want to go to a movie, but Joyce insists Angie clean her room before going out. Angie goes inside and comes back in just a moment later in a fancy dress which is too small for her. She picks a brick up off of the ground and holds it. It begins to rain, and Joyce and Kit run inside to avoid getting wet. Kit calls for Angie to come inside—Angie reveals that she had put the dress on to kill her mother. Kit implies that Angie is too chicken to go through with it, and Angie puts the brick down.

Back at the Top Girls Employment Agency, two of Marlene’s coworkers, [Win](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters) and [Nell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters), gossip about Marlene’s recent promotion. Marlene has been promoted over a man named Howard Kidd—another prominent employee. When Marlene arrives in the office, the girls tease her about taking advantage of coming in late now that she’s the boss, but then congratulate her on her success. Win interviews a woman named [Louise](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/louise), a woman in her forties who wants to move out of the job she’s been at for twenty-one years in order to make her employers feel sorry for never having noticed her or promoted her for her hard work. Back in the main office, Angie arrives to visit Marlene. Marlene is surprised by Angie’s presence, and asks if Angie is just visiting for the day, but Angie reveals that she has come to London to stay with Marlene indefinitely. When Marlene exhibits some uncertainty about housing Angie, Angie becomes upset, and asks if Marlene doesn’t want her around; Marlene overcompensates and tells Angie that she can stay as long as she wants. A woman enters the office, looking for Marlene—she is [Mrs. Kidd](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters/mrs-kidd), Howard’s wife, and she has come to ask Marlene to forfeit the promotion so that Howard, deeply distressed at having been overlooked, can claim it. Marlene refuses, and Mrs. Kidd calls Marlene a ballbreaker; she warns Marlene that she will wind up “miserable and lonely” before leaving in a huff. Marlene tells Angie she has to go take care of some business, and leaves Angie alone in her office. Nell interviews a young woman named [Shona](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/top-girls/characters)—it becomes clear over the course of the interview that Shona has lied about everything on her resume, and has never held a job in her life. Win and Angie get to talking—Angie asks for a job at Top Girls, and Win bores Angie with her long, dramatic life story until Angie falls asleep. Nell comes back into the main office with news that Howard has suffered a heart attack. Marlene returns to find Angie asleep. Win tells Marlene that Angie wants a job at the agency, but Marlene says that Angie won’t ever be anything more than a bagger at a grocery store; she tells the other women flatly that Angie is “not going to make it.”

The action transitions to Joyce’s house, one year earlier. Angie has, unbeknownst to Joyce, summoned Marlene for a visit, and Marlene has arrived bearing numerous presents for both Angie and Joyce. Angie opens one of her parcels to find the fancy dress from the first act. She declares that she loves it, and runs to her room to put it on right away. Angie is clearly thrilled by Marlene’s presence, but Joyce is less than happy to have her sister around. Marlene and Joyce begin drinking whiskey and catching up, but Angie is confused by Joyce and Marlene’s shared memories and soon goes off to bed. Joyce tells Marlene that she is worried about Angie, who has been in remedial classes for two years. Marlene and Joyce begin discussing their mother, who is in a nursing home nearby—Marlene reveals that she went to visit her earlier in the day. This angers Joyce, who is upset that Marlene, after having left their hometown years ago, returns only every five or so years on a whim and has no real part in her own life, their mother’s, or Angie’s. Marlene defends herself for choosing to leave, but Joyce berates Marlene for having left her own daughter behind. Marlene claims that Joyce was all too happy to agree to raise Angie as her own after Marlene had an unwanted pregnancy, but Joyce confides in Marlene that Angie has, in fact, been a burden. Marlene becomes upset, and Joyce comforts her; the two women switch the subject and begin discussing romance. Though Marlene has no love life to speak of, she is optimistic about her future, and believes that she is going to enjoy great personal and economic success in the coming years due to the recently-installed prime minister Margaret Thatcher’s policies. Joyce and Marlene get into a political debate; Joyce is angry with Marlene for her fancy lifestyle and upper-middle-class aspirations, while Marlene looks down on Joyce for remaining stuck in a working-class town and never striving for more. Marlene tries to stop the argument and asks Joyce if they can still be friends in spite of their differing beliefs, but Joyce admits she doesn’t think they can be. Joyce readies the sofa for Marlene to sleep on, and then heads to bed herself. As Marlene settles in on the couch, Angie comes downstairs in a daze, calling for her mother. Marlene tells Angie that her mother has gone to bed and asks Angie if she was having a nightmare; Angie only replies, over and over, “Frightening.”

 **'night, Mother by Marsha Norman: Summary**

'night, Mother a world-class play by Marsha Norman opens in the kitchen scene. The main two characters Mama Thelma and her daughter Jessie futilely talks about the trivial things and Jessie reveals her wish and plan to commit suicide that night. To commit suicide, she looks for the gun that belonged to her father.

Thelma without knowing her intention tells her the location and she gets it in the old shoe box.While cleaning the old gun, Jessie tells her mother that she will kill herself, but Thelma does not believe her at first. But with the course of their dialogue she realizes that her daughter is serious in her intention. She then starts to dissuade her. Neglecting her Mama's talk, she continues to instruct her how to handle all the chores of home after her death. She has even planned for the Christmas gifts for them for several years. In order to keep her Mama Thelma busy, she asks her to make some hot chocolate for them, though nobody in her house enjoys hot chocolate.

Jessie keeps on talking about her mother's friends and her family. It is revealed that she is in her mid-thirties, divorced, unemployed, ugly and epileptic. She is divorced from a man whom she still loves. She was addicted to smoking; her husband gave her ultimatum either to leave smoking or him. As she was abjectly addicted to smoking, she decided to leave her husband. Her son turns to be a thief and a drug addict. She has now no hope for the future. She knows well that her mother, Thelma keeps her at her house not because she loves Jessie but to kill her loneliness. Mother Thelma's self interest in keeping Jessie in also creates a sense of futility. Jessie sees no rays of love and hope to continue her life further.

To divert Jessie's mind from suicide, Thelma tells Jessie that her married life was not happy. She had expected a sweet home, a good family, a caring and loving husband. But all her hope turns to the ash when her husband died. She then aspires same love and care from her son, Dawson, but again her son gets married and starts living with his wife, away from Thelma. She feels too lonely and keeps her daughter Jessie with her. She tells Jessie that she loves her and she should not commit suicide. Jessie states that whether she lives for more fifty years, her life will be the same as now. So to stop living now and after fifty years does not have any difference for her. So, she is hell bent to her decision to commit suicide.

Their interaction makes clear that Thelma and Jessie love one another, but, to Jessie, her mother's love is not reason enough to continue living. Till now, they have not expressed love for each other. It is too late for Jessie to change her mind. Thelma pleads with Jessie to change their lifestyle. Her motherly love is clear in her attempts to convince her not to commit suicide.

In the last moments of the play, a desperate mother, Thelma sticks to her daughter and she is pushed aside. Jessie leaves the room with her muted farewell 'night, Mother.  She goes and locks herself in her room. After a few second, a gunshot is heard from the room and Thelma cries calling her son, Dawson.

**UNIT - IV**

**Joyce Carol Oates : The White Cat**

There was a gentleman of independent means who, at about the age of fifty-six, conceived of a passionate hatred for his much-younger wife's white Persian cat.

Julius Muir is in his fifties; Alissa, his wife, is in her thirties. It's her second marriage, and his first. She's pursuing an acting career in the city and spends a lot of time with her circle of theater friends, including men her own age. Julius meantime hangs around his large estate outside the city collecting valuables and wondering why he still feels lonely.
 Into this picture of marital health steps Miranda, the cat. Miranda seems to show affection to everyone but Julius, and it drives him up the wall. He bought her, didn't he? Out of his loving, considerate heart he gave her as a gift to his wife, to cuddle and dote on. He sustains her, provides her with a home. Why won't she let him touch her? Why won't she love him? If someone were to ask him, "Julius, dear boy, is it really the cat that's bothering you or is it your wife?" he would say that of course it's not his wife. He *loves* his wife; it's just her cat he can't stand. Her beautiful ungrateful cat.
So he starts plotting how to kill the cat and make it look like an accident. It's a sad spectacle for the most part. Creepy and pitiable. He married a woman who is unsuited to him and to his ideal of marriage, and he thinks offing her cat will change things? But he's not really thinking, is he; he's going off the deep end.
Sometimes a story has a dominant color, and for this one it's a pale icy blue. Husband and wife may be cordial to one another but there's a chill on the marriage. Even Julius Muir's passions give off little heat. I see him bluish and oxygen-starved, with little to nourish him from within or from without.
Love can't be bought or demanded. And revenge doesn't always go as planned. It's painful to watch Julius square off against a house cat, and feel the futility of everything he does. Tormented by the thought that maybe a man like him can't inspire love.

 **Flannery O’Connor : A Good Man is Hard to Find**

 “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” is one of O’Connor’s most frequently anthologized short stories, and it makes an excellent illustration of her ability to combine grotesque humor with serious thematic material.

The story opens as a family prepares to go on vacation in Florida. The story focuses immediately on the grandmother, who wants to visit relatives in east Tennessee and who uses the escape of the Misfit, a murderer, from prison to try to persuade her son, Bailey, to change his mind. He refuses. The two grandchildren, John Wesley and June Star, are quickly characterized as smart alecks who nevertheless understand their grandmother and her motives very well. When the family sets out, the grandmother is resigned to making the best of things. She is first to get into the car and has even, secretly, brought along her cat. As she rides along, her conversation is conventional, self-centered, and shallow.

When the family stops for lunch at a barbeque stand, their conversation again turns to the Misfit, and the adults agree that people are simply not as nice as they used to be. Later, back in the car, the grandmother persuades Bailey to take a road which she imagines (wrongly, as it turns out) will lead by an old mansion. Suddenly the cat escapes its basket and jumps on Bailey’s neck, and the car runs into the ditch. As the family assesses its injuries, a man who is obviously the Misfit drives up with his armed henchmen. The grandmother immediately feels that she recognizes him as someone she has known all of her life, and she tells him that she knows who he is.

Methodically, the henchmen lead first Bailey and then the mother and children off to be shot in the woods while the Misfit begins to talk about himself and his life of crime. He blames his career on Jesus, who, he says, threw everything “off balance” by raising the dead. Because the Misfit cannot be sure that the miracle really occurred, he cannot know how to think about it. If Jesus really raised the dead, the Misfit says, the only logical response would be to drop everything and follow him. If he did not, then life is meaningless and only crime makes sense: “No pleasure but in meanness.”

The grandmother is terrified; she knows that she, too, will be shot. Yet she knows something more, and suddenly she stops her empty prayers and meaningless assertions that the Misfit is a “good man,” to utter perhaps the truest words of her life in telling him that he is one of her own children. At that, the Misfit shoots her, but he says that she would have been a good woman if someone had been there to shoot her every minute of her life. O’Connor intends the reader to take the Misfit’s comments seriously (he is the most serious-minded character in the story, after all) and notice that the grandmother, in her moment of receiving grace, has recognized that she and the Misfit (and presumably all the rest of humanity) are related as children of God. She is left in death smiling up at God’s sky. There are five child characters in this story. They are the Burnell daughters and the Kelvey daughters. Besides this, there are grown ups like the Aunt Beryl, Mrs. Kelvey, the school teacher and so on.

**Katherine Mansfield : The Doll House**

This story reveals that small children are innocent but they are poisoned by the grown ups and become cruel very slowly. Once Mrs. Hay had sent the Burnell children a doll's house. It was more beautiful than a real house. It had bed rooms, living rooms, kitchen, chimneys, bedclothes, doll family and all painted, decorated and excellent ones. It was unique and large. It was newly painted so it was kept outside in the courtyard for a few days until the smell of the paint was disappeared. Above all there was a lamp that Kezia thought to be a real one.

The Burnell children were overjoyed to find the excellent doll's house. The next day they reached school with great excitement. They were burning to tell about the wonderful doll's house. Burnell's eldest daughter Isabela told her friends about it during the lunch hour at the school. All the children came together. Among them there were Emmie Cole, Lena Logan and the rest. But two of the girls did not come near them. They were downtrodden, lower class children or the daughters of Mrs. Kelvey. Mr. Kelvin was a jailbird. Mrs. Kelvey used to walk from door to door, asked for bits of cloth and gave them to her daughters. Besides, the Burnell's mother had forbidden their daughters to speak with the Kelveys. All the school children, two at a time came to the Burnell's house to see the doll's house. Only Else Kelvey and Lil Kelvey were left uninvited. Nobody spoke with them.

One day, Kezia, the youngest daughter of the Burnells asked her mother to call the Kelveys her home, but her mother abused her and she was silenced. The Kelveys were shunned by all, hated by all. Only the two sisters understood each other.

Then one day Kezia saw those two girls coming towards her gate. She invited them to go and see the doll's house. With much hesitation they went into the courtyard and saw the wonderful house. Else saw the little lamp. At this very moment Aunt Beryl's harsh voiced was heard. She shooed them off as if they were chicken. Afraid of the situation, they squeezed through the gate and ran away. Far off they sat on a drainpipe and the younger sister expressed her pleasure. In this way the poor children were hated by all. Innocent child like Kezia saw no difference between one and another but the elder people create difference in society.

 **C. S. Lakshmi : A Deer in the forest**

In the title story, ‘In a Forest, A Deer’, who is everyone’s favourite aunt. She tells the best stories, but carries a secret that only the adults know about and children cannot understand. She finally describes her position to the children through a story, about a deer caught in a forest. It may be difficult being different but it takes you to places others cannot go.

The most wonderful thing about this collection of stories, that it celebrates differences and being unconventional, something that is often admired in men but is very difficult for a woman. There are so many women here, who question the norm and turn rules on their heads. There is Chenthiru in “A Forest’, who is refused a partnership in her husband’s firm in spite of the long hours she has spent working there, and decides to do something so radical that she has her family worried. She travels alone to stay in a forest for a few days, an experience that very few of us have. This leads her on her own voyage of self discovery, and she turns to writing, imagining Sita rewriting the Ramayana from her own perspective.

‘Unpublished Manuscript’ is another story about a very brave unconventional woman, Thirumagal. She is described in three different roles – as a cherished daughter experiencing the overwhelming love of a father, as a wife to an increasingly abusive husband, and finally as a mother, who seeks to start afresh with her daughter, leaving behind traumatic memories of her marriage. It is a powerful story, beautifully told and will stay with you for a long time.

Ambai examines a gamut of relationships in this collection – husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, teachers and students, lovers and friends. With a few broad strokes of her pen, she manages to give us the essence of each one, and to find something beautiful.

The stories that I found especially touching, reminded me of my own childhood. ‘First Poems’ is about a young girl, dreamy and innocent, whose first attempts at poetry and achieving wisdom, come to an abrupt halt when she discovers the brutality of the world we live in. ‘Journey 3’ is about a girl’s discovery of worlds outside her own, when she goes with her maid Maruthayi, to give an offering to Mariamman, considered a ‘lower class’ God by her own mother. There is the feeling of excitement and pleasure in the forbidden, in doing things that her mother has expressly warned her against, something we can all relate to.

The stories of exile, have been written with such insight and sensitivity. The home-sickness and the search for some connection that can bring home just a little bit closer. And the disillusionment when the real thing does not match up to our memories. All of that has been captured perfectly in ‘A Rat, A Sparrow’. As also the tendency to cling to your roots while abroad, described in ‘ A Rose Coloured Sari Woven with Birds and Swans’

Ambai is a pseudonym under which C.S.Lakshmi writes her Tamil short stories. Her writing takes you along to all those places she describes, you can see those sights and smell those wonderful things that she talks about. But it is the women who carry the stories, many of them seem quite ordinary and yet their strength is inspiring as is their ability to stand their ground and question an unfair society.

Lakshmi Holmstrom has done a wonderful job capturing the flavours and nuances of the original stories in this collection. At no point do we feel that we are reading a translation. Like Ambai says in the foreward, “This magic of a story taking shape in another language can happen only if, like pushing a fishing boat into a sea, a translation gently nudges a story into the vast ocean of another language”.  And Lakshmi has managed to do just that.

**UNIT – V**

**Arundhati Roy : The God of Small things**

[The God of Small Things](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things) tells the story of one family in the town of Ayemenem in Kerala, India. The novel opens with [Rahel](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#rahel)'s return to Ayemenem after hearing that her twin brother, [Estha](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#estha), has come home. We switch to the funeral of [Sophie Mol](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#sophie-mol), when the twins are seven years old. Rahel believes that Sophie is awake during her funeral and buried alive. The rest of the family refuses to acknowledge the twins and [Ammu](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#ammu). On the train ride back to Ayemenem, Ammu cannot speak except to say "He's dead ... I've killed him." Rahel and Estha have not seen each other since Estha was sent away as a child to live with [Babu](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#babu) in Assam. Both twins have traveled somewhat aimlessly until returning to their childhood home. Rahel looks out on the family's former factory, Paradise Pickles & Preserves, and contemplates how all the strangeness in her family resolves around the incident of Sophie Mol's death.

Next, we find the family traveling to Cochin to greet Sophie Mol and her mother, Margaret Kochamma, upon their arrival from England. On their way, they see their servant, [Velutha](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#velutha), marching with a group of Communists. Back in the present, Rahel watches Estha undress in the moonlight, neither of them saying a word.

The narrative returns to Cochin, where the family goes to see [*The Sound of Music*](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-sound-of-music) in the cinema. Inside the theater, Estha cannot stop singing, so he is sent out into the lobby, where the [Orangedrink Lemondrink man](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#orangedrink-lemondrink-man) molests him. After he becomes nauseated, the family leaves the movie early. Rahel senses that the Orangedrink Lemondrink man has wronged Estha and talks back to Ammu when she praises the man. Ammu tells her that she loves Rahel a little less, a statement that haunts Rahel for a long time.

Back in the present, Rahel runs into [Comrade Pillai](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#comrade-pillai), and he shows her a photograph of the twins and Sophie, taken shortly before Sophie died. In a flashback to Sophie's arrival at the Cochin airport, Rahel cannot handle the nervousness surrounding her cousin's arrival, and she is scolded for hiding in the window curtain. Everyone tries to impress Sophie and Margaret Kochamma with new clothing, English sayings, and forced upbeat attitudes.

The narrative turns to Ammu's death at the age of thirty-one. After being banished from the Ayemenem House, she dies while out of town on a job interview. Estha watches her body being pushed into the cremation oven. No one writes to Estha to inform him of Ammu's death. Roy introduces the refrain, "Things can change in a day."

Back at Sophie Mol's welcome ceremony, a crowd gathers to sing and eat cake. Rahel retreats to play with Velutha. As Ammu watches her daughter and handyman together, she is attracted to Velutha for the first time.

Rahel joins Estha, who is alone in the pickle factory. They plan to visit the History House, where the Paravans live. They push an old, decrepit boat into the river and row to Velutha's side of the river. There, he promises to fix the boat for them. Velutha is trying to suppress his growing love for Ammu despite his constant association with her children. (Ammu dreams of a one-armed man making love to her.)

Back in the present, Rahel watches fondly as Estha bathes in the moonlight. The twins meet by coincidence at a temple, where they watch kathkali dancers act out a violent story of retribution all night.

We turn to the story of [Chacko](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#chacko)'s and Magaret Kochamma's marriage. It began happily but soon crumbled because of a sense of disconnection. Margaret left Chacko for [Joe](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#joe), who later died in an accident. After that, she took Sophie to Ayemenem as a distraction; she can never forgive herself for leaving Sophie alone in Ayemenem the day she died.

We finally hear the story of Sophie Mol's death and the events surrounding it. [Vellya Paapen](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#vellya-paapen) comes to [Mammachi](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#mammachi)'s door and offers to kill Velutha with his bare hands for having an affair with Ammu. [Baby Kochamma](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-god-of-small-things/study-guide/character-list#baby-kochamma) makes sure that Ammu is locked in her room and that the police think he raped Ammu. Mammachi summons Velutha to her house and fires him, banishing him from the property on pain of death. He goes to Comrade Pillai for help but to no avail. Roy begins to call Velutha "The God of Loss" and "The God of Small Things." The telling of Sophie's actual death is short. She joins the twins as they run away after Ammu insults them terribly. After their boat capsizes in the river, she drowns. The twins fall asleep on the veranda of the History House, unaware that Velutha is sleeping there. The next morning, the police come across the river to arrest Velutha. They beat him nearly to death and take the twins to the station with them. There, Baby Kochamma pressures Estha into saying Velutha is guilty of kidnapping him and Rahel. She tells him that doing so is the only way to save Ammu and avoid a life in jail. Estha complies, thus saving Baby Kochamma from being arrested for filing a false report about Velutha. After that, Baby Kochamma coerces Chacko into evicting Ammu from the house and forcing Estha to go live with Babu. As Estha leaves on the train, Rahel cries as though a part of her is being ripped out of her body.

Back in the present, Estha and Rahel finally share a fond moment in Ammu's former bedroom. They make love out of "hideous grief" for the deaths of Ammu, Velutha, and Sophie Mol.

The final chapter describes the first night of Ammu's and Velutha's affair. They are both drawn to the riverbank, where they meet and make love for the first time. After that, they continue to meet in secret and share their admiration of "Small Things" such as the creatures of the riverbank.." On the last night they meet before Velutha's death, Ammu is compelled to turn back and repeat one more time: "Tomorrow." This story tells how a person should be loved and how much.

**Margaret Atwood : Surfacing**

**Missing Parents**

The story is told by an unnamed female narrator who grew up in a town near the border of Quebec. Before the action of the story begins, the narrator's mother has already passed away from disease. The narrator's memories of growing up, of her parents and brother, and of her young adult life emerge as flashbacks throughout the novel.

After the narrator's father disappears, her friends [David](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Surfacing/character-analysis/#David) and [Anna](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Surfacing/character-analysis/#Anna), a married couple, drive her north to her childhood home. [Joe](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Surfacing/character-analysis/#Joe), the narrator's boyfriend, accompanies her as well. Her friends intend to fish for a few days and take video footage for their movie, *Random Samples*, while she tries to find out what happened to her father. When they get to her hometown, David, Anna, and Joe have a few drinks at a bar while the narrator visits an older couple, Paul and Madame, who are the closest people her family had to friends. Paul is unable to provide any additional information, so the four friends hire Evans, a man from town, to take them by boat to her parents' cabin. The cabin sits on a small island in the middle of a large lake adjacent to the town.

The four arrive at the isolated cabin and unpack. The narrator takes the lead in gathering vegetables from the garden and making dinner. The next morning, the narrator rises early to find Anna putting on her makeup in front of an old mirror. They eat breakfast and go out to search for signs of the narrator's father. It quickly becomes apparent they are not going to find him by random searches. Later the narrator finds a stack of papers. Among them are strange drawings made by her father with what appear to be random words or letters scribbled on them. The narrator becomes worried her father might have gone insane.

**Memories and Mystery**

During the first hours of staying at the cabin, the narrator revisits memories. She thinks of her parents and brother, of her own failed marriage, and of her child who now lives with her ex. She also thinks about whether or not she loves Joe, and she realizes she doesn't feel love for him. She doesn't feel much emotion at all—a fact that worries her with increasing urgency. She knows she needs to find out why she can't seem to feel anything. So as she is solving the mystery of where her father is, she is also trying to solve the mystery of her own lack of emotion.

The next day Evans comes to retrieve them, but David has decided he'd like to stay a week and do some more fishing, and the others go along with this plan. It makes the narrator uneasy to have them stay. She thinks her father may be insane and still nearby. But staying gives the narrator an opportunity to look for clues to her father's disappearance, weed the garden, and try to resolve some of her personal relationship issues. Through flashbacks, the narrator reveals greater detail about her wedding and giving birth to her child. These details are unpleasant and disturbing, and they do not seem to quite fit together correctly. She recognizes there are gaps in her memories.

Living in close quarters with David and Anna gives the narrator a chance to examine their relationship. This observation reveals a dark side to the marriage. David does not treat Anna well, and he looks for excuses to humiliate her. He takes lovers and then boasts to Anna about them.

**Below the Surface**

One day when the narrator is looking through the stack of her father's papers again, she finds evidence that they are not insane drawings but tracings of ancient rock paintings he had been researching. She decides to visit the site of the paintings since this is the only lead she has. The four go by canoe to the place the rock painting is supposed to be, but they do not find one. After this failure the narrator decides to check another possible location. This one is underwater because of changes in water levels.

She canoes to the location and dives down, looking for the rock painting. Although she does not find one, she finds something else: a suppressed memory. She realizes her memory of giving birth was really a memory of having an abortion. Her "husband" was really just a man she'd had an affair with who convinced her to get the abortion. When these painful memories surface, the narrator spirals into a psychotic, delusional state.

When word comes that her father's dead body has been found by some fishermen, her state worsens. When it is time for them to leave the island, she hides, and the others must leave without her. After they leave the narrator lives as an animal for several days, sleeping in a lair outside and eating foraged food. She believes she can summon her parents back from the dead. She has delusions there are rules to obey and sacrifices to make in order for her parents to come back. She believes she is pregnant again, with Joe's baby, and the baby is a god. She hallucinates seeing her mother, then her father.

Even though she has broken from reality, she seems to be processing her grief over losing her parents and giving up a pregnancy. Eventually she emerges from this psychotic state, somewhat healed from her pain. She looks in the mirror and sees she is just herself, a natural woman. When Joe comes back to the island to look for her, she watches him from the woods. She realizes she trusts him, and she might even come to love him.

 **Manju Kapur : Difficult Daughters**

 Virmati, a simple and educated woman is the central figure of the novel. Virmati, hails from an affectionate and well protected family goes to Lahore for further studies, accompanied by her mother. The limitation that women is weaker than man is foremost in India and the idea that she is a girl is reinforced by innumerable tragic instances in the novel. Virmati’s father does not accept her going alone to Lahore questions ‘who will go with her to Lahore’. Though the questions seems to be simple it mirrors the consideration of women to have no courage to make decision for herself and her future.

                 As Kasthuri, mother of Virmati is busy in delivering a baby year after year, it is Virmati who is in charge of the family and sacrifices herself to bring up her siblings. She remains as second mother for those children. Amidst this Virmati has no time to realize herself. She loses her days in taking care of the family. The family's old tradition of getting marriage is delayed for Virmati as she doesn't have any interest in it. Though her mother forces to get married she ignores, because she has interest towards education.

                      Shakuntala, Virmati's cousin is a symbol of modernity whom Virmati inspires a lot. Kapur portrays Shakuntala as an independent, defiant, and assertive girl. She does not have any limitations towards the tradition of getting marriage, and family relationship. This is shown through the voice of Shakuntala “These people don't really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are, fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else”

                      Virmati refuses the engagement with Indrajit and marries Harish, a professor whom she falls in love with at Lahore. Her passionate attraction for the professor makes her haunted by an overpowering sense of failure. This failure results from her unconventional path of selection that she has decided to be the co-wife of the professor. Experiencing her position of a co wife, the real purpose of marriage for Virmati is lost.

                      Ganga, Harish’s first wife very dedicated to him and his family. There is a lot of difference between Harish and Ganga, their match is totally inharmonious. Ganga’s negligence about study and lack of awareness brings Virmati to her husband’s home as a second wife.

                       The next phase of problem arises when Virmati gives birth to her girl baby. As a remembrance of independence she names her baby as Bharati. But this is rejected by her husband saying that,“I don't wish our daughter to be tainted with the birth of our country. What birth is this? With so much hatred?” .Though the country has got freedom, the man who speaks about the country's freedom, cannot provide freedom for his wife even for trivial matters in the family. When India was fighting for the freedom from British government, Virmati literally fights for her own identity and affirmation. Her life from beginning to end is full of sufferings, searching for 'self', her own identity, conflict between mind and heart. She loses all her hope. Even her daughter doesn't want to be like her mother.

                       Thus the novelist has explored and traced the journey of many such young women in this award winning book. They truly reflect the complexity of female psyche.

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