

## **Chapter- 07**

### **Conclusion**

This study consisting of the works of female and male authors has tried to find out answers to some very important questions. These questions are related to the ways in which female and male authors write about their characters in the novel. In other words, it is about their writing practices; how they describe female and male characters, the presence or absence of sexism in their language etc. The portrayal of female and male characters by authors of both genders has always been a matter of debate among the researchers of language and gender. These are some of the issues that we have tried to cater to in the present study.

Going down the memory lane and recalling the children's books we studied with colourful images depicting members of the family, it will help us get some of the answers. In those books, a mother was inevitably pictured working in the kitchen, serving food, or busy with some other household chore, whereas the father would be going to work or reading a newspaper. Probably these images were meant to be naive portrayals of the family system which existed at that time, but they ended up leaving indelible imprints on the minds of not just children but the entire society. It divided the roles of women and men in our minds. In the present scenario, the roles performed by women and men are being shared and exchanged, but the mental disposition of people has not undergone much change. A husband performing household chores along with his wife still 'helps'. Otherwise, it is considered to be only wife's duty to do so. We need to be mindful that every time we say that a man 'helps', we imply that it was not his responsibility and that he was nice enough to share some of the work load. If we interchange the roles here and put a woman in the position of a man, things will not mean the same. If a husband does a major share of work and the wife only shares a part of it, she will be branded as a bad wife because the household work supposedly should have been her priority. Although things have started to change for good, much work still needs to be done to spread awareness among people about the detrimental effects of sexist practices in everyday life. We will now move on to the commentaries about the subjected texts. In the following sections, one novel has been taken up at a time in order to summarise the findings of the study towards the end of this chapter but before that we will have a brief overview of the analysis done at the

level of word, phrase and sentence. The following table represents the instances of sexism at various levels in all the novels.

**Table 7.0**

The table below provides an overview of sexism present at various levels in all the five novels.

Novel	word/phrase level	Metaphors
<i>Ladies Coupe</i>	woman friend man of the family spinster	Akhila was a butterfly Great big bird (Akhila) little grey sparrow with a tiny mouth (Sheela's grandmother) Ageing peacock (Ebe) filthy animal (Murugesan)
<i>The God of Small Things</i>	cook/servant (Kochu Maria) wretched man-less woman (Baby Kochamma) like a man (Estha) man of the house (Chacko)	melons (Baby Kochamma's breast) Excited mosquito (Rahel) Animal (Ammu)
<i>Show Business</i>	Actor Every other actor and actress Dutiful wife Female human Manservant	Tigress (Abha)
<i>Fire on the Mountain</i>	servant girl	Nil
<i>The Dark Room</i>	Women probationers Lady probationer servant-maid maidservant	Restless rat (Gangu) Temple chariot (Janamma) Fresh rose (Shanta Bai) Bamboo pole (Savitri) Rare bird (Ramani)

In the table above, the names given in the brackets are the characters from various novels that have been portrayed in certain ways through particular expressions and metaphors. It is clear from the table above that the bias in language against women is present in all the novels analysed in this study. The only exception is Desai, as no sexist metaphors could be found in *Fire on the Mountain*. On the word and phrase level, there is just one specimen of sexist usage where the term 'servant girl' has been used. Another remarkable feature of the table is that it brings out the positive usage of terms like 'cook' and 'servant' for a female character by Roy. The remaining usages are sexist because they either undermine the importance of women or treat them as a separate category. Hence it is important to eliminate them from language.

## 7.1 *Ladies Coupe*

We will now try to arrive at some conclusive statements by analysing the selected texts one by one. To start with, we will analyse the ways in which the characters in *Ladies Coupe* have been portrayed. Although the novel has both female and male characters, the major characters around which the story revolves are six women in different stages of their lives. On considering the various characters of this novel; we observed that they have been discussed in numerous ways. As illustrating every aspect of the character would have been a tedious task, it was decided to categorise the features in order to make the work easier. Some of the categorisations that we came up with are facial features, profession, physical features, age, clothing patterns etc. We have tried to study the features in a cumulative way to gain a perspective on how different authors have tried to build various characters.

The feature that has been discussed of most of the female characters in Nair is the hair. Thirteen out of twenty-one characters have a description related to hair. The description is related to various aspects of hair such as colour, texture and haircut. Some of the colours used by Nair to define the hair of her characters are gold, silver, dark brown, with grey streak, reddish-brown etc. She has used adjectives such as 'silky', 'dull and straight', and 'feathery brown' for different types of hair. There are many other descriptions describing various lengths and hairstyles. Quite opposite to the description of the hair in case of women, Nair does not talk much about her male characters. Three characters have a bare mention of their hair which is summed up as 'grey', 'receding', and 'grey stubble'. Nair does not have very keen eyes for this particular feature in men.

The next most discussed feature for women in Nair is the facial feature. Twelve women have been defined in terms of their facial features with only six men having a description in a similar category. Men have been described mostly by mentioning the overall features such as 'pleasant features'; 'finely chiselled', 'widely spaced' etc. Focusing a little more on the face, she also discusses the 'thick moustache'; 'mature eyes'; and 'high scarred forehead' of males. For women, she focuses on features such as 'green eyes', 'double chin', 'dimpled cheeks', 'attractive smile', 'six grey strands on chin' etc. She also takes into account the 'tiny mouth'; 'droopy mouth' and 'turmeric tinted hue'. On comparing both sets of features for men

and women, there was no particular pattern that could be attributed to Nair for describing the facial features of her characters. She takes into account various kinds of features for portraying her characters.

The clothing details of nine women have been provided in the novel against similar details for four males only. The female characters have generally been described in saris of different types like 'Bengal cotton sari'; 'starched cotton sari'; 'sari with a gold border' etc. Other women have been defined wearing 'calf-length dresses' and 'blue jeans and red and white top'. One of the older characters has also been described who wore sari without a blouse. The description for male characters is very limited. They are defined as wearing 'plane' and 'well-tailored' clothes. For another male character, there is a little more detailed account in the form of 'tight-blue jeans, rust coloured t-shirt'. The character of Subramani Iyer is one exception in this case due to the elaborate way his dressing style has been discussed. Nair portrays him as someone who wore ill-fitted clothes with shabby sleeves which kept on flapping. It seems as if the author wanted us to picture the character exactly. Hence, she provided us with more intricate details about his clothing.

Out of twenty-one female characters in her novel, only nine women are engaged in some profession. Two major characters in the novel have been depicted as housewives. The total number of male characters in the novel is ten out of which the profession of eight has been listed. The remaining two have a very brief stint in the novel, hence not much is known about them. To sum up, not even half of the female characters in the novel are employed whereas the number of male characters who have a profession is much more. A closer look at the profession of the female characters revealed that they mostly belonged to the teaching community apart from the two characters one of which is depicted as a dance teacher and other as a helper at the hospital. Mills (2005, p.129), states that the profession of both genders is represented differently by authors. She talks about 'English as a Foreign Language' textbooks, where female characters are depicted in a stereotypical way. There are certain roles which are reserved only for women. Women are more likely to be secretaries or teachers than doctors (Mills, *ibid*). Despite the claims of Mills (*ibid*), the subjected text does not conform to her inferences. The work profile of male characters in this novel is not very different from their female counterparts. Some of the men have office jobs as clerk or draftsman. Others are teachers along with one character in

the capacity of a principal. It can be easily inferred from the analysis above that apart from the imbalance that Nair shows in terms of the profession of women and men; there is no vital difference between the kinds of roles assigned to them.

The next feature that has prominently been discussed in case of women and men is the physical feature. Seven women, including six men, have been described along with their physical features. A stark difference is easily noticeable in the way Nair portrays the physical features for females and males. The male bodies have been described by mentioning broader physical aspects such as ‘muscular’, ‘tall, well-built’, ‘short, stout’, ‘good looking’, ‘frail’, ‘swaggeringly male body’ etc. The same author, when looking at the bodies of females, picks up minutest details about them. She talks about the ‘flat and smooth stomach’, ‘lines on the throat’, ‘lines on the neck’, ‘saggy and scarred belly’, ‘droopy breasts’ etc. At some point, the gaze of the author becomes really deep to notice the flab around the waist, calves along with puffy wrists. She describes one of the characters as trim with a belly that was sucked in. She also notices fatty midriff and wrist in another woman. Although Nair does account for few broader features such as small and thin, such description is very limited compared to the finer ones.

Skin colour has always been given undue importance in the Indian society especially when it comes to girls. Out of all the women characters of Nair, the colour of only three women forms a part of their description. She describes the skin tone of these women as ‘light’, ‘very fair’, and ‘milk and water complexion’. In case of men, she mentions the skin colour only once by just referring to the skin colour of one of the characters as ‘dark’. This helps to establish the premise we started with about the importance of colour for women. The dark colour is acceptable for men but not for women.

Out of the twenty-one women characters discussed so far, only Akhila’s dream of escaping from her present finds a place in the description of her character.

In total, there are ten male characters in *Ladies Coupe* out of which the profession of eight has been stated in the novel. The facial features of six of these characters have been included in their description. We do not have much information about the hair of many characters but for three. One of them has grey hair, the second; a receding hair, and third had a grey stubble. Rather than a very detailed analysis of

the outfits of these characters, just an overall idea has been provided by the author for example well-tailored and plane outfits. Only for one of the characters named Subramani Iyer, (see table 2.6) many details have been furnished. This was done to describe how ill-dressed he used to be. There is no mention of accessories of male characters apart from the horn-rimmed spectacles for one, and a cane for another which intended to display the authority of his position (Ebe as a School Principal). There is no mention of dreams and aspirations of any male character. Only one male character has been discussed in terms of other relationships. It is mentioned that the father of one of the characters had a sweet shop, whereas another character was discussed as having a very good family pedigree.

## **7.2    *The God of Small Things***

The next analysis will be from Roy's *The God of Small Things*. There are ten female and seven male characters in the novel. It becomes evident from the analysis of the characters of Roy that she likes to portray them in a way that enables her readers to picture them in flesh and blood. No wonder she went for a detailed description of outfits of nine of the female characters out of ten. She also discussed five male characters in terms of their clothes. Roy has a keen eye for details which is evident in the way she depicts the clothes of her character in the novel. All kinds of blouses (backless, sleeveless or waist length), saris, gown, skirts, t-shirts etc. are mentioned of her characters. She skillfully portrays every little detail right from the starched, perfumed sari to the rumpled and ironed one. The noteworthy point here is that how cleverly she has summed up every possible nuance of the characters wearing different clothes. The way fabric appears to be darker in colour when it is taut on the skin, also does not escape Roy's canny sense of examination. On considering the clothes of the male characters, Roy is found to exhibit the same sense of detail. She has a unique way of bringing colours to life. Instead of referring to a colour as pink or strawberry pink, she opts for calling it 'crushed strawberry pink t-shirt'. She notices everything from the type of outfit worn to the fabric, colour, print and the peculiar style of wearing them. Be it the mundu folded up over knees, or the wrongly buttoned rumpled shirt, the author notices both.

Another feature that is prominent in the portrayal of Roy's character is physical feature. She uses it to describe nine female characters and six male characters. Roy has

a peculiar style of describing every feature of her character. She talks about 'shiny shoulders' 'strong waist', 'dimpled fat knees', 'long and strong legs', and the 'space between her toes'. Her imagery appears bizarre when she likens someone's fingers to cocktail sausages. The author has zoomed in on various aspects of the body of different female characters like 'round and heavy behind', 'minute, dangling feet', 'blue veins', the hair on knees etc. She has also defined six males in line with their physical features in a similar manner. The 'smooth, slim, muscular arms', 'stomach suck inwards', 'hairy forearms'; 'hairy chest', 'bloated belly', and 'long, narrow, thin legs', all find a mention with the characters. Some broader features have also been described as 'small, well-built frame', 'muscular body', 'athletic built', 'unathletic', 'narrow body' etc.

Facial features also form a part of the description of the characters. Seven female characters out of ten have been studied in accordance with these features. Various aspects of the face have been taken into consideration such as 'deep dimples', 'black eyebrows', 'small straight nose', 'thin eyebrows', 'flared nostrils', 'thick dark unibrow', 'rosy cheeks', 'puffy cheeks', 'huge eyes', 'puckered mouth', grey-blue eyes etc. Some broader aspects like 'chiselled face', 'swollen face', the nose and chin area resembling a snout etc. are also mentioned. The analysis of some characters is really elaborate such as for Ammu, Rahel, Kochu Maria, and Margaret Kochamma.

Six characters have been defined on similar lines out of seven male characters. The details of 'hunted eyes', 'yellow teeth', 'protruding ears', 'hooked Roman nose', 'high cheekbones', 'white sudden smile' etc. have been mentioned. Overall description of the face is also present like 'unshaven saggy face', 'alert face', and some very meticulous descriptions like that of a neat pencil moustache divided the upper lip horizontally.

Detailed information about the hair of six females is also a part of their description. The colour of hair, its texture, quality, length, hairdo and thickness, all have been discussed. Only two male characters have been discussed in terms of their hair, and the description is also very brief. Roy only refers to the 'carefully brushed hair' of one character and the 'receding hairline' for another character. The outward appearance has also been included for seven female and five male characters of the novel.

As far as the professions of the female characters are concerned, Ammu did odd jobs to support herself; Mammachi ran her own pickle factory; Kochu Maria was a cook and servant, and Rahel did odd jobs to fend for herself.

Three of the men have also been analysed for some accessories, and hair of two males out of six has also been defined. None of them is described in relation to other characters, and the dreams and aspirations for any character have not been mentioned.

### **7.3 *Show Business***

Tharoor has portrayed seven female characters and at least thirteen male characters in *Show Business*. There are few more male characters playing technicians and junior artists who have a very brief stint in the novel. We will be discussing the female characters first. The most prominent feature that defines the women is their profession. All women in the novel have been portrayed as actors excluding two characters. One of them is Christine who is a hairdresser of a famous actor Abha, and another woman is Radha Sabnis, the columnist in a film magazine.

The hair of five female characters has also been talked about in the novel. The length, texture, quality, colour, hairstyle etc have been discussed, e.g. black hair, grey wild hair, long hair, plaits, lustreless and shoulder length, dripping with henna, mostly white and pigtailed hair. Tiny details for hair have been given in case of the male characters as this feature has been discussed very briefly only for four of them. Two of the men have been described as balding, one has short hair, and another character has 'lot of oil' in his hair.

Another defining feature of the women in the novel is their clothes. Four out of the seven women have been described in terms of their clothes along with other features. Tharoor has been very meticulous about the description of this aspect. He talks about the different outfits worn by various characters in the films they had worked. One of the actors named Abha, has been portrayed essaying several roles through her career. From the 'sari clad' avatar of Abha to the drenched chiffon of her sari, the 'sheath like gown slit at calves', the colour of various other outfits have been mentioned. Along with the information of the outfit, the author also provides information about what the outfit implies. For instance, when he defines a character



wearing a 'salwar kameez', he does not forget to mention that the outfit did not look like it was tailored in the metropolis. He goes further to clarify that the character looked good in sari and not so good in salwar kameez. This is how the author chooses to make the readers aware of the fact that the particular character Maya did not have a very flattering figure. He also closely mentions about the fit of the clothes like 'close fitting dress' which resulted in enhancing the figure. Tharoor has paid much attention to the clothes of his male characters. Nine characters have been discussed in terms of their clothing. He describes his protagonist in very stylish attire who looked good at all times. He is portrayed wearing clothes like 'tuxedo', 'black bow-tie', 'churidar and kurta' etc. and is also described as the 'best-dressed undergraduate'. He talks about the colour, style, pattern, material and also the fit of the attire worn by other men in the novel, such as we have descriptions like 'tight fitting teeshirts', 'corduroy pants', 'checked shirts', 'sleeveless teeshirt', 'tight corduroy trousers' etc.

Coming to the facial feature of these characters, it has been mentioned in case of four characters. The description considers various aspects of the face like 'perfect nose', 'large eyes', 'hooked nose', 'exaggeratedly shaped eyebrows', 'frightened black eyes', 'bridgeless snub nose', 'lip covered with fine hair' etc. Some features have also been analysed in totality like 'exquisite face', 'round, unlined face'. Other minute details such as the hint of yellow colour on cheeks, the deep lines on the face that appeared while talking, and the perpetual expression of interrogation on the face have also been brought to the notice of the readers.

The facial features of six men have also been mentioned among other aspects of their personality. Some of the descriptions by Tharoor are the following: 'white teeth', 'black eyes and pupils', 'narrow eyes flecked with red', 'narrow mouth', 'white beard', 'thick, drooping black moustache', 'no moustache at all', 'marvellous smile', 'grey beard up to someone's chest', 'lined and gaunt face', 'buck teeth', 'beaky nose', 'prominent ears', and 'kohl lined eyes'. The author is taking into consideration each and every aspect of a man's face. Very minute features have been studied, which is why it can be said that Tharoor has paid equal attention to the appearance of male characters.

Another important aspect of the male characters in Tharoor is their accessories. Six of the men possess some accessories like 'cap', 'rings gleaming on

fingers', 'gold maharaja shoes', glasses and pipe, dancing shoes etc. Two women also have been portrayed with accessories like 'black sandals', 'fake diamonds at throat and wrist', 'oversized sunglasses', 'snake skin handbag', and 'purple rimmed sunglasses'.

The skin colour of none of the female characters has been talked about, but has been mentioned for four male characters, while the technicians have collectively been called 'dark'. The protagonist has been called 'fair' while three other men have been described as 'dark'. There is no attempt by Tharoor to intensify the colour talk. He also does not wish to use exotic terms in place of simple 'fair' and 'dark'.

The outward appearance for five women has been mentioned along with the accessories for two. One female and one male character each have been described in terms of other relationships. Maya has been referred to as the 'sisterly type', and Ashok has been called the 'son of minister of state'.

#### **7.4 *Fire on the Mountain***

In Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*, there are six women characters in total. The details about clothing have been provided for three of them such as 'grey silk sari' with another character being depicted as 'always wrapped in cashmere shawl'. Desai has depicted the tattered look of the third female character through the details of her petticoat which looked more like a grey rag. Another striking fact about the novel is that only one female character has been described through her facial feature in the form of 'large, bulging eyes'. The description about the face is usually provided regardless of the gender of the character with varying degrees of detail, but Desai certainly does not toe the line.

Some details about the colour and texture of skin have been provided for two women i.e. 'beautiful Kashmiri complexion', and 'unwrinkled skin'. The hair of only one woman has been described as 'long and glossy', and four women have been portrayed donning accessories. These accessories consist of some jewellery worn by Nanda Kaul in her younger days. Ila Das has also been described with her spectacles tied to very old purple ribbon along with a moth-eaten shoulder bag and an umbrella in tatters. Raka, the great-granddaughter of Nanda Kaul, is also described as carrying a sling bag which appeared too heavy for her body along with old sandals heavy with

dust. Nanda Kaul's mother has also been described with a red Brahmin thread looped through her ears.

A remarkable feature of Desai is that she opts for a very minimalistic description of her characters. It is as if the props that the characters have been described with, speak volumes about them. The pearl and emerald jewellery worn by Nanda Kaul conveys her affluence. It might also be an implication of the fact of her being devoid of anything worthwhile in her life as her husband never loved her, and that she felt suffocated inside her own house. The very old purple ribbon tied to the spectacles and moth-eaten shoulder bag also narrates the story of Ila Das' misery and poverty. Raka has been discussed in terms of her fragility as a sling bag is heavy enough to weigh her down. Raka's sandals have been described as dirty and full of dust which also suggests that she was not very well taken care of by her parents.

Three female characters have also been described in terms of their physical features. Nanda Kaul's frame of the body has been discussed as tall and thin with long fine fingers. A more detailed account of the child Raka has also been provided in terms of thin neck and shoulders, and small and light feet.

None of the women have been discussed in terms of their dreams and aspirations. One of them has a peculiar habit of working towards her beauty only, and she has also been discussed in terms of other relationships for example she had little time for her daughter.

There are four male characters in *Fire on the Mountain* out of which the readers are told about the age group of two men. The facial feature of only one character has been mentioned, i.e. he had whiskers. These characters have not been defined in terms of their skin colour, texture, accessories and other relationships. Only one of the four has been talked about in terms of hair and clothing, i.e. 'dusty hair flopping up and down' and wearing 'large khaki shorts'. The habit of one of the characters is also mentioned in the novel. No male has been described in terms of other relations. Nanda Kaul's husband has been called a scholarly man who read many languages.

## 7.5 *The Dark Room*

In the novel 'The Dark Room', there are five female characters, and the feature that has been most prominently discussed about them is their hair. The hair of the central character, Savitri, has been discussed in great detail starting from the length of her hair to the manner in which it was braided. Some flower arrangement or an eccentric arrangement of hair and straight hair of other characters have also been talked about. The clothes and complexion for three women also form a part of their description. The attire has not been discussed in great detail and the only detail present is the colour and material of the sari. Skin colour has been analysed in terms of fairness and duskiness. A third woman is also said to have exquisite complexion. The facial and physical features have been mentioned only twice in each case. The age group of two female characters is present in the novel.

There are three male characters in Narayan's *The Dark Room* who have been elaborated. There are a few others too, but we have not been told anything about their appearance and personality. Out of three that we are familiar with, the age of none of them is mentioned. The facial features of one of the characters are there in the novel. The information about the way of dressing for two of them forms a part of their character analysis. Two males have also been defined with regard to the accessories. The outward appearance has been described only for one character. Features like age, skin, hair, dreams and habits have not been discussed for the male characters. None of the male characters have been discussed in terms of other relationships.

The analysis of all the five texts leads to a clear idea of how despite the huge time gap between the publication of *The Dark Room* (1938) and *Ladies Coupe* (2001), many grassroot level things remain the same for women. The women of today are more educated, independent, and ambitious, but that has not made their lives any easier. The expectations of people related to women have not changed but have increased manifold. Women are still expected to take care of the house and family in addition to their work so that they continue to provide financial assistance. If we look at it this way, things have worsened for women as they are now expected to perform multiple tasks with limited resources.

We got to see numerous examples that hint at the position of women in India in all the five novels that form the scope of study for this research. To start with, let us talk about one of the central characters of *Ladies Coupe*, Akhila. She gave her sweat and blood for the upkeep of her family. Nair also calls her the 'man' of the house giving in to the prevalent stereotyping of strong single women, but the treatment meted out to Akhila by her family was beyond unfair. Her siblings wanted to keep a tab on her despite she being the eldest. At the level of word, Nair uses terms like 'woman friend', 'man of the family', 'spinster' etc. Akhila has also been defined in terms of the absence of the husband, children, home and family. We do not come across many occurrences where men are defined in terms of women.

Nair defines the female characters in a pretty detailed manner. She touches upon all the physical attributes of the female characters. Not many male characters have been described in such an elaborate way as the females.

The other major female characters also face different challenges because of other people in their lives. Margaret gives up her dream of a doctoral degree after Ebe told her to do so. Prabha Devi becomes the kind of woman her mother had always wanted her to be. She turned herself into a woman who devoted her life to her family and had no dreams and aspirations of her own. Marikolanthu suffers more than all the women combined in the ladies coupe, because she is doubly marginalised as a woman who belonged to the lower socioeconomic class. Her situation became worse after one of the Chettiar's relatives raped her, as a result of which, she had to bear a child. The child grew up without having any clue about his mother's hatred for him and the fact that his face reminded his mother of her rapist.

The women in Roy's *The God of Small Things* have a similar fate. Women of all three generations in the family have to go through hardships. Mammachi got beaten up by her husband quite often. Her daughter Ammu, became victim to a drunkard husband who asked her to sleep with his boss in order to save his job. When she later found love in Velutha, he was brutally killed by the police. Rahel, the third generation woman from the family also faced hardships in her life. She got divorced from her husband and towards the end, the author shows Rahel in a romantic involvement with Estha, her brother. Like other women of her family, Rahel also broke the 'love laws', and the end suggested doom for everyone.

Tharoor brings to light the darkness of Indian film industry. He mocks at the hypocrisy of people working in the Bombay film industry. Politics is no different when it comes to double-faced people. Everybody seems pretentious and extraordinarily sweet, and all have ulterior motives. Religion is another important thing that features in *Show Business*. Tharoor focuses on the transformation of religion into business through people like guruji who was an old friend of Ashok Banjara disguised as a God-man. Another point of focus is the treatment of women in the Hindi film industry. In the novel, it appears that women age faster than men, especially for the film industry. For example, Abha, who is hailed as the yesteryear superstar in the novel, starts playing mother to actors from her generation whereas Ashok kept on starring as the lead hero in movies opposite young female actors.

The bias on the word level is also visible through gender-specific use of words like 'actor'. Also a word like 'female human' shows that the word 'human' stands for a male. Adjectives like 'dutiful' are only collocated with wives and not husbands. This also shows the bias of people who have different sets of expectations from males and females. Tharoor also uses the word 'manservant' which is not a very common term as the usual term is maidservant. The word servant is usually used for males. Such use of words such as 'manservant' can prove to be good for language equality.

There are other shades of bias hidden at the level of discourse in *Show Business*. Some of them are as follows: Tharoor hints at the inflated male ego when Abha, the famous actor, expresses shock at Ashok saying sorry to her. She says that she had never heard any male actor say sorry to the female actor even when it was a part of the script. At a different juncture in the novel, the definition of normal life for a woman has been defined in a way which makes marriage and children the be-all and end-all of her life. The role essayed by Maya asserts to have wanted to finish her studies and marry a man chosen by her parents and raise kids.

*Fire on the Mountain* by Desai brings to the fore a different kind of bias that women face. Nanda Kaul lived alone although she had a huge family full of sons and daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Towards the end of the novel, the readers are told that she lived such a life because she had no other choice. During her seemingly happy days when she played the role of the Vice Chancellor's wife, she just pretended to be a happy wife and a mother, but hated the chaos around her. Her

husband had a life-long affair with another woman while she merely acted as a trophy wife tending incessantly to countless guests who always flocked at the Vice Chancellor's house. She is unwillingly made to look after Raka, however, Raka does not demand any attention. After sometime, Raka's indifference to Nanda Kaul becomes a worry for Nanda Kaul leading her to weave fake stories to attract her attention. The story of another troubled soul, Ila Das also forms a part of the novel that ends with her tragic demise.

Desai has used terms like 'servant girl' which hints at the tendency to use the word 'servant' specifically for males. Such uses have been very common in various texts, and in a majority of cases, they are done unintentionally due to the lack of awareness of the consequences of such uses.

Desai discusses her female characters using physical attributes, but for her male characters (who have minor parts in the novel), she limits her illustration to bare minimum. She talks about Nanda Kaul as a tall and thin woman. We are also told that during her younger days, she wore silk saris with pearls and emerald jewellery. On the other hand, she defines the Vice Chancellor as a learned man who knew many languages. A certain grain seller is described as an elderly man with whiskers.

There are certain other instances of sexism at the level of discourse. Women certainly did not enjoy a respectable position in India during the pre-independence period. Women certainly were treated like commodities. "...they were packed...shipped back to England-virginity intact, honour saved,..." (Desai, 2008, p.10). In this example from Desai's novel, one can look at the kind of verbs used for sending women back to England. 'packed' and 'shipped' are certainly used for goods and not people. In another example from *Fire on the Mountain*, Ila Das recollects her childhood memories with Nanda Kaul and talks about their favourite game which was cooking doll's meal. There are also other examples illustrated through Ila Das where it is told that women could not make independent decisions and had to rely on the male members of the family for everything.

When we consider sexism at the level of word, Narayan succumbs to the use of words like 'women probationers', 'lady probationer', 'servant-maid' and 'maidservant'. All these terms referred to females. Had they been referring to males, they would have been very different.

While considering the description of female characters, Narayan employs various strategies from describing the physical attributes to the husband's profession etc. For describing his male characters, however, he uses a different technique. He barely mentions the physical aspects of the characters but gives a brief idea about the clothing and a few accessories. This is almost everything about the males in Narayan's novels.

Savitri in *The Dark Room*, protested against her husband by sulking in the dark room for a couple of days. Women in India during the pre-independence days could not do much to show their disagreement towards men in the family. Many women certainly could not even resort to this method. At one point Savitri got so disillusioned by Ramani (her husband) that she left the house at around midnight and tried to commit suicide. After three days of determined effort of trying to fend for herself and live on her own, her resolve to stay alone grew weak. She finally returned home to her children, but a part of her had died. Narayan depicts the struggle of a woman who had to surrender to her emotions at the cost of her self-respect.

Also, there are other instances of sexism at the level of discourse in the novel. A boy concerned with the arrangement of dolls for Navratri is considered to be a 'sissy'. Savitri's son faces ill-treatment at the hands of his father for trying to help his sisters with the dolls. In another example, a girl is always expected to behave in a certain way to qualify as one with feminine traits. To some extent, this is also true for boys. They are also made to feel bad about themselves if they do not acquire 'manly' traits. In other instances, we are told that on several occasions a wife has no say between the argument of her husband and son.

All the main characters of *Ladies Coupe* are women. In total, there are twenty-one female and ten male characters in the novel. It undoubtedly is focused much more on the sentiments of women than men. A significant difference that we notice with reference to the characters is that male characters are not usually defined in terms of other relationships. In this study, we do have a few instances where a male is also described in terms of other relations. Prabha Devi's husband, Jagdeesh was described as a person with excellent family pedigree. Ashok, the protagonist of *Show Business*, was also defined as son of the Minister of State for Minor Textiles. Roy's *The God of Small Things* has ten female characters and seven male characters. Although this picture looks much more balanced as compared to *Ladies Coupe*, female characters are still more prominent than the male characters. Estha is the most



significant one out of the male characters. Velutha and Chacko were also important for the construction of the story. Roy pays more attention to the clothes of her female characters than the male characters. There are seven female characters in *Show Business* and thirteen female characters. Seven male characters have been talked about in terms of their physical features. Desai weaves her tale around three females. Her approach to providing details about her characters is also very different. She talks about the women in her novel with minimal description of their clothes. There are four male characters too in the novel who are not at all central to the theme of the novel. There are other male characters too, but nothing has been said about them in this novel. Narayan also has five female characters and three male characters. The most common features used to describe the female characters are hair, complexion and clothing. For the male characters, Narayan goes for a minimal description of clothes and accessories. The facial feature for only one character has been focused upon. Features like age, skin, hair, dreams and aspirations, habits etc. have not been touched upon. We will now try to summarise all the findings of this study. They are as follows: All the authors in the study have used expressions with sexist connotations with the exception of Desai as she only uses 'servant girl' which sounds problematic. She certainly uses it because of lack of awareness about the sexist connotation of the term. Another reason could be her preference as she might have referred to a small boy as 'servant boy'. Some features like the description of hair, clothes etc. are common with all the authors in this study. Desai however stands out as she provides minimal description of her characters. Nair describes the facial features of women and men in almost the same way but the description of clothes for female characters is very elaborate as compared to that of the males. All the authors in this study discuss the hair of female characters in an elaborate way. For example Nair describes the hair of some of her characters as 'feathery brown', 'reddish-brown', 'silver coloured', 'long and black' etc. but while describing the hair of male characters, she calls it 'grey' and receding. This kind of description also holds true for Roy. The reason for such a description is related to the importance that is associated with the hair of women in real lives. It is considered to be an important part of their beauty. Things are different for men and their outward appearance is considered secondary. Tharoor also describes the hair of his female characters in a detailed way but does not do so while describing the hair of male characters. Narayan does a lot of detailing as far as the hair of his female characters is concerned. He does not talk about the skin and hair

of the male characters in his novel. The number of male characters who have been described in terms of skin colour as compared to the female characters is less across male and female writers. This certainly has to do with the norms of our society. The skin colour of a female is more important than that of a male and people are more accommodating of a 'dark boy' than a 'dark' girl. Roy is very particular about the description of skin colour of her characters especially the female characters however she describes the colour of some of her male characters in an equally detailed way. Nair discusses the physical features of women with very fine details whereas male characters have been described in terms of broader physical features. The number of female characters having a profession in *Ladies Coupe* is less than the male characters however the work profile of women and men is not very different from each other as claimed by (Mills, 2005, p.129). The number of women depicted as working is all the subjected texts is less than that of the male characters except in Tharoor's *Show Business*. Almost all the women in his novel have a profession. It is not easy to ascertain whether it was a conscious attempt by the author or because the protagonist of the novel is surrounded with the film fraternity being a star and that is why all the people around him had to be portrayed in the same profession. Roy has a keen pair of eyes when it comes to the description of attire of the female as well as male characters. She describes both equally well. Her description for the physical features of female and male characters is equally elaborate. The facial features of female and male characters have also been accounted for with the same amount of detailing. Tharoor also pays close attention to the clothes and facial features of his female and male characters. He has also provided us detailed analysis about the accessories of men certainly because most of them are actors and accessories are important to accentuate their personalities. Another author who pays attention to accessories is Desai. The accessories of her characters speak volumes about them. All the writers writing about women in the study portray the deplorable condition of most of the women. This stands true regardless of the gender of the author.

It is clear after looking at the points mentioned above that the writing styles of Indian female and male authors do not have huge differences. Infact, there are more similarities if we look at the features closely. The way female and male authors define female and male characters is more similar than different. The main features used to describe female characters like hair, clothes, physical features etc. have been used by females as well as males. If Desai does not provide as many details about her

characters as other authors, it will be attributed to her style of writing and not her gender as there is no explanation in this regard. The reason why authors portray characters in a certain way is mostly related to what Culler (2002) has to say. Culler (ibid, p.131-152), talks about the reserves of the conscious and unconscious knowledge that speakers have and also explains about how they put it to use while trying to interpret all kinds of communication. In the same fashion while reading literature also, people approach it with the same set of preconceptions that they have. He also quotes Genette who is of the view that literature is also based on conventions which literature itself is not aware of, barring a few exceptions. These conventions are the implicit knowledge of the reader as well as the author. According to Culler (ibid), when people write something, they interact with some kind of literary tradition and although one might try to write outside the tradition, her/his work would always be seen in the context of some genre. Hence according to Culler, the readers want the characters to come across in certain ways and writers unknowingly describe the characters based on their implicit knowledge and hence end up doing what the readers expect them to do.

Towards the end of the conclusion, it is important to underline that there is a lot of scope for further study in this research. It is not possible to come up with generalisations on the basis of five novels only. Other novels of the same author and novels from different authors will also be studied in future to provide more validity to the research. Hence it can be said that that present study paves way for many further researches. The factor of transitivity could not be analysed in this research as it was not feasible given the length of the texts. Interested researchers could also analyse point of view in all the texts under the feminist-stylistic perspective. The work of transgender people can also be included in the study to see how they treat characters of different gender. Having talked about the different aspects of the present study, it can be inferred that it is relevant in today's times and will continue to be so because the discrimination in language based on gender is not yet a thing of past. The awareness of feminism is very important because the bias in language, especially against women needs to be eliminated. As Pauwels (2003, p.554) rightly states "Most feminist language activists were and are proponents of language change as a measure for achieving a more balanced representation of women and men in language".