

Representations of the Archetypal Indian Women in the Female Characters of K.S. Maniam's "The Return"



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ABSTRACT: The existence of religion and its practices or beliefs do rely greatly on myths. This study attempts to analyse the subconscious of myth through the archetypal and mythical approach by studying the woman characters in the text "The Return" by K.S.Maniam. The women characters in the text represent the image of Hindu Goddesses such as Parvathi and Durga. For the purpose of this article, I have used mythical and archetypal approaches in classifying the characters. I have used Guerin's (1999) classification of archetypal images of women such as the good mother, the terrible mother and the soul mate. This analysis reveals the representation of the mother as the good mother, the grandmother as the soulmate and the stepmother as the terrible mother. The mother and grandmother represent the image of Goddess Parvathi and the stepmother who is the terrible mother however does also carries the positive aspects of mother, therefore she represents both the Goddess Parvathi and Durga.

KEYWORDS: archetypal, female characters, myth, the Goddess, Devi, Parvathi

INTRODUCTION

K.S.Maniam is one of the well-known writers in Malaysia. His writings are often classified as complex works. He never stereotypes any female characters in his writings. Maheswary (2000), he had commented about writing about his community, he said that; "being of Malaysian Indian origin myself, it is only natural that I write about my own community". This explains that writing about one's culture can preserve a particular religion or community. Many studies had been carried out on K.S.Maniam's writings. But most of the studies focus mainly on feminist criticism compared to the archetypal approach to animal symbolism has been carried out by Shanti Thiruchelvam (2002) and the exploration of Indian myths and archetypes on Githa Hariharan's the thousand faces of the night has been done by Uma Malar Maniam (2000) in UKM.

For the purpose of this study, I will analyze the "Representations of the archetypal Indian women in his novel "The Return". This analysis helps in highlighting the representations of archetypal images in textual characters. The aspects of the Mother Goddess as the complementary figures for the more benevolent Parvathi and the fiercer Durga will be used in analyzing the characters. The Goddess is the female God who represents a diverse range of beings that impress one with many characteristics and functions (Kinsly, 1993).

SYNOPSIS OF THE TEXT

The Return is K.S. Maniam's autobiographical novel which was published in 1981. The text is about the self-discovery of Indian culture and western culture. The setting of the story is Bedong, Kedah. It focuses on the Indian community in Malaysia and the conflict of self-identity experienced by the immigrant community. The story revolves around Ravi and his family. The protagonist's education shows that education is the most important aspect of his young life because it represents the fulfilment of his individuality and his overcoming the repressive social system of his inherited culture which has kept his family poor.

The protagonist Ravi grew up in an immigrant community. He was shielded back by beliefs and practices and he was frustrated because of this. He wanted to explore the larger world beyond the small passions and expectations of Kedah. However, he manages to leave his roots to fly to England for his education. Yet he still has to run to his family as he cannot escape from his blood ties and his cultural roots. A brief look at the characters indicates that they are mainly Indians. Among them, four characters stand out in this story. The first is Ravi, the protagonist; Periathai, his grandmother; Kauppi, his stepmother, and Kannan his father.

Ravi is the protagonist who faces complexities in his immigrant community. Even in his own community, he faces difficulties because of a different caste. Therefore, he decides to go to England and be educated in English, hoping there will be a change in his society. However, when the British ignored his father's and his grandmother's wishes to own a house, he realized where he belonged. Periathai is Ravi's grandmother and she is the first generation of an Indian immigrant in Ravi's family. Even though she was separated from her motherland but she still follows the culture and tradition of her religion. Another character in this novel is Kauppi, Ravi's stepmother. She does not project the ideal image of an Indian wife compared to his mother who always

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obeys his father and hardly voices her opinion. Kannan is Ravi's father who wishes to fill his mother's wish which is to own a house. However, it was not achieved in the end and this is the main incident, which causes the return of Ravi to the society and community where he belongs.

Before I go further, I must re-emphasise this paper's aim, which is to identify and analyze the archetypal images of women used in this novel. In this analysis, I will use Guerin's classification of the image of the archetypal women as the good mother, the terrible mother, and the soulmate. I will also explain the archetypes of the characters based on the roles of the characters similar to the characters of Hindu Goddesses.

The Image of Women and Hindu Goddesses in Hinduism

In the spiritual world, women seemed to occupy a very important position. Women are described as "Shakti" which means "power" and "strength". Male power is believed to come from feminine counterparts. The Hindu epics prove that Kings and towns were destroyed because of a single woman, as in Valmiki's Ramayana. Valmiki's Ramayana tells us that Ravana and his entire clan were wiped out because he abducted Sita, the wife of Ramachandra (Ions, 1967).

Furthermore, in Mahabharata, Veda Vyasa tells us that the Gauravas were killed because they humiliated Draupadi in public (Ions, 1967). Another epic, which shows the important image of women, is Sillapathigaaram. In Sillapathigaram Madurai, the capital of the Pandavas was burnt because Nedunchezhiyan, the King of Madurai mistakenly killed his husband on theft charges. Kannaki's curse is an expression of Shakti, the powerful, ferocious feminine cosmic principle (Pillai, 2000). However, there is still a slight change in portraying the image of women in Sillapathigaaram. Kannaki was viewed as fierce and the queen of Madurai was viewed as a good wife because she immediately followed her husband in death. Sunder Rajan writes:

"The queen's death is a manifestation of sati while Kannaki's curse is an expression of shakti. But it is the excess of sati that is converted into Shakti. These two are generally opposed aspects of femininity in Hindu representations of the goddesses are linked in Kannaki, indicating that the source of feminine power lies in the virtue accumulated as a good wife" (Pillai, 2000).

In the spiritual world women and men are seen as equal. The goddess in Hinduism is associated with wealth and power. Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswathi and Kali are among the most popular Goddesses. Durga is a cosmic battle queen who is usually depicted as having sixteen arms. This warrior Goddess plays the role of protecting from the demons more effectively than the male deity. The goddess Lakshmi is often associated with wealth, good luck, well-being, fertility, political power and royalty. Saraswathi is associated with wisdom, knowledge and culture. Kali is usually mentioned in the context of fierce battles (Kinsley, 1993).

Significance of Mythology and Archetype

There are only a few reviews written on research related to mythology and archetype. J.G. Frazer is one of the writers who write on this approach. According to Frazer in the book, *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915), elemental myths and rituals could be shown to run through and recur in very many diverse cultures (cited in Uma Malar, 2000).

C.J. Jung is another psychoanalyst who believes that human life contributes to particular central types of experiences, which repeated themselves continually regardless of the historical and cultural background of the society or individual involved. In addition to that, religion is the controlled use of archetypal myths. Religion aspects the collective unconscious is the theory related to our "psychic inheritance". It occurs with our staging experiences; it is a kind of knowledge we are all born with. It influences all of our experiences and behaviours, most especially the emotional aspects embedded in our subconscious mind.

Theoretical Framework

Through this study, I hope to identify the representations of archetype images of female characters in K. S. Maniam's "The Return". For this purpose, I will use Guerin's (1999) classification of the image of archetypal women. In this journal, the archetypal image of women is classified as the good mother, the terrible mother and the soul mate.

According to Guerin, the good mother is the positive aspect of the earth's mother. She is associated with the life principle, birth, warmth, nourishment, protection, fertility, growth and abundance. Jung defines the mother archetype as rather abstract and he said that we are likely to project the archetype out onto a particular person, usually our own mothers.

The mother archetypes include love, warmth and trust. The terrible mother includes the negative aspects of the Earth Mother such as the witch and is associated with sensuality, fear, danger, darkness and the unconscious in its terrifying aspects. The soul mate is known as the Holy Mother, which is known as spiritual fulfilment.

I will explain how the archetypal image of the Hindu Goddess is being interpreted and represented by the female characters in Maniam's "The Return". The Hindu Goddess that I will be focusing on in this analysis is Durga and Parvathi. However, I will also include a brief explanation of other Hindu Goddesses such as Lakshmi, Saraswathi and Kali. Parvathi, Lakshmi, and Saraswathi are the more benevolent goddesses whereas Durga and Kali are fiercer. I will compare the characteristics of the Hindu Goddess to K.S. Maniam's female characters. Making such comparisons will help me to analyse how the images of the Goddesses are represented by those characters in the text.

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Characteristics of Hindu Goddess

According to Stutley (1985), the goddess represents a generation and the glories of life with the everpresent process of disintegration and death. Therefore, the Goddesses have two aspects; one is compassionate gentle and loving; the other is fierce, cruel, violent and dark with destruction. Even in the goddess's fierce form, she protects her devotees from evil or demons.

More Benevolent: Goddess Lakshmi

Lakshmi is the consort of Vishnu and is the goddess of wealth, good luck, well-being, fertility, political power, royalty power and material prosperity. She is the most popular Hindu Goddess throughout India. She is fabled to have risen together with many other precious things, from the milk ocean when it was churned for ambrosia, and as such is the Hindu counterpart of the Greek Goddess of beauty. Some Puranas speak of Lakshmi as the daughter of the sage Bhrigu. On account of Rishi's curse on Indra, the celestial had to leave their kingdom and Lakshmi took asylum in the milk ocean which when the memorable churning took place, gave her up to the Gods again (Thomas, 1973).

Her image is found enshrined in small household altars, shops and temples. She is often shown holding a lotus and seated on a lotus. Thomas (1973) adds by saying that the lotus is described as lotus-eyed and lotus loving. In addition, to that Kinsley (1993) defines the lotus as a particularly common and typical Hindu symbol for the organic world and the rhythmic and exuberant powers of fertility and growth that pervade the world.

Lakshmi is often depicted with the God Vishnu as his spouse. Kinsley argues that it is fitting that Lakshmi should accompany the cosmic King Vishnu because the prosperity of Kings is directly related to their ability to attract and keep Lakshmi at their side in their kingdom. Therefore, if Lakshmi decides to depart, a king and his kingdom would fall into poverty, infertility, disease and disorder.

Lakshmi is well-known for qualities we consider feminine. Each time, when Vishnu descended to the earth in his various incarnations, Lakshmi is generally worshipped together with her consort. When she is worshipped alone, her devotees exalt her to the position of the energy of the Supreme Being. Lakshmi is also represented as sitting at the feet of Vishnu in his repose on the snake Anantha or as flying with him on his Vahana Garuda (Thomas, 1973).

Goddess Saraswathi

Saraswathi is the consort of Brahma, the creator and hence is considered the goddess of all creative sciences. She is associated with wisdom, knowledge and culture. Saraswathi is also associated with the river Saraswathi which is mentioned in the Vedas, a river that has long since disappeared (Kinsley, 1993). She is often depicted as a beautiful woman riding on a swan or peacock, with a Vina in her hand (Thomas, 1973). Once a year scholars, students and musicians worship her, and books and musical instruments are placed for a day in front of an image or picture of Saraswathi. This day is known as Saraswathi Pooja.

Saraswathi was produced by Brahma who then married her. There is another story about the origin of Saraswathi. One day Brahma visited Vishnu to consult him on some important matter and they, by their divine power, summoned Shiva to Vaikunta. While all three gods thus sat deliberating from their combined energy three sprang forth a refulgent feminine from illuminating the whole firmament.

Each of the Gods wanted to possess her and she divided herself into three, Saraswathi, Lakshmi and Durga (Thomas, 1973). Saraswathi is a god associated with purity, intellectual and artistic inspiration, spiritual wisdom and the refinements of culture in general. She is therefore revered widely in a culture that extols all of these things (Kinsley, 1993).

Goddess Parvathi

Parvathi is the consort of Shiva. She is the daughter of Himavan (the Himalayas) and the Mena. She was so beautiful and was over-confident and hoped that Shiva will come to her but Shiva sat on Mount Kailas in meditation. Parvathi try to win his favour through devotion but still, she failed. Finally, when she became contemptuous of physical beauty and began to practice severe penances and starve her body, Shiva went to Himavan and married Parvathi (Thomas, 1973).

The married life of Shiva and Parvathi is a faithful representation of the average human life. Parvathi is a fond mother, a prudent though somewhat assertive wife and like all women, wise and childish at the same time. Parvathi is often described in the Puranas as an ideal housewife cheering Shiva with her delightful company and sweet conversation. However, there are certain quarrels between them, which highlight her character.

Parvathi is a prudent woman, which means that she will think carefully before making any decision even in a complicated situation. One day while Shiva was reading and explaining to his wife some abstruse philosophic points, Parvathi felt sleepy. When the great God asked for her approval of his interpretation of the text, he happened to look at her and saw her nodding. He rebuked her for being inattentive. However, in this situation, Parvathi became prudent and maintained that she was really attentive and had closed her eyes to contemplate the meaning of his words better. She was wise in her words because she knew well about Shiva and his anger (Thomas, 1973).

Another characteristic of Parvathi is he is assertive and sometimes childish at the same time too. In one incident Parvathi got angry because Shiva teased her skin colour which was dark. Shiva said, 'Your slender body, shining darkly upon my white body, looks like a black female serpent coiled around a white sandalwood tree. You look like a dark night touched by the light of the moon,

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like the night during the dark half of the lunar month; indeed, you offend my sight.' When Parvathi heard this, her eyes grew red with anger and she decided to leave Shiva and go to the mountain to practice asceticism (from the Skanda Purana, cited in Wendy, 1975). Shiva was just making a jest but Parvathi was too childish and misunderstood the meaning of Shiva's words and decided to leave him. She even decided to bring along her son Ganesha, for the fear that her husband may tease and laugh at him too. When Parvathi makes a decision, she was very stubborn and did not even hear about Shiva's explanations.

Parvathi is also a fond mother. She persuades Shiva to let her create a son Ganesha as she was so eager to bring up a son. At first, Shiva got on Parvathi's request. However, later he made a son for her. The Goddess took the little boy and was filled with maternal love. His face then broke into a smile and he gazed up at his mother's face and she kissed his face all over. She gave the beautiful little boy to her husband and said, 'Husband, take my son. You gave me this son when your heart was softened by pity, and I want you too, to know how great the happiness of having a son is (Wendy, 1975). It clearly shows that she is a woman full of love for her child.

Fiercer: Durga

The consort of Shiva now assumes a very different form from that in which she was so far represented in the form of Goddess Parvathi. In those incarnations, though the wife of Shiva, she acted as a common woman and manifested feminine virtues; as Durga, she was the most powerful warrior and appeared on earth under many names for the destruction of demons who were intolerable to gods and men. Durga is represented in art as a woman of gentle countenance with ten arms in each of which she holds a weapon, with one foot she presses on the body of Malisha and the other rests on her Vahan, the lion. She wears a crown on her head and her clothes are magnificently jewelled.

According to Puranas, Durga was produced from the radiant flames that issued from the mouth of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva as well as from the mouths of other principal deities (Thomas, 1973). She obtained the name Durga because she slew an asura named Durga as depicted in 'Skanda Purana'. 'A giant named Durga, the son of Ruru, having performed penance in favour of Brahma, obtained his blessings and grew so mighty that he conquered the three worlds and dethroned Indra and the other gods. Durga was then sent to destroy him' (Ameresh, <http://www.greatestcities.com/users/amreshvashisht>).

Durga is a cosmic battle queen created by massed power of the male Hindu gods after they have been defeated in battle by a demon who is invincible to all but a female. Durga usually is depicted having sixteen arms, each of which wields a weapon and riding a fierce lion or tiger. This warrior goddess plays the role of protecting the cosmos from the disruptive influences of demons. She upholds the order of dharma by assuming a traditionally male role and playing that role more effectively than any male deity. Durga is widely revered and worshipped in India and is known particularly as a goddess who rescues her devotees from exceptionally dangerous circumstances. One of the most popular, colourful and lavish Hindu festivals. Durga Puja is celebrated every autumn in honour of this mighty cosmic queen (Kinsley, 1993).

Analysis and the Findings

Each society has its own distinctive mythology that may be reflected in legend, folklore, and ideology. In other words, myth takes their specific shapes from the cultural environments in which they grow. Myth in a general sense is universal. Furthermore, similar motifs and myths may be found among many different mythologies and certain images that recur in myths of societies widely separated in time and place tend to have specific comparable psychological responses and serve similar cultural functions. Such motifs and images are called archetypes. In other words, archetypes are universal symbols (Guerin, 1999). An archetype is an unlearned tendency to experience things in K.S. Maniam's writings he portrayed the archetypal images of Hindu goddesses in his characters.

Myth is also an account of events that took place "in the beginning," in a primordial and nontemporal instant, a moment of sacred time. This mythic or sacred time is qualitatively different from profane time, from the continuous and irreversible time of our everyday existence. Myth is supposed to happen in a non-temporal time (Eliade, 1969 & Shanthi, 2002).

The Good Mother

The good mother in Guerin's concept is the positive aspect of the Earth Mother and the image of the good mother is always associated with the life principle, birth, warmth, nourishment, protection, fertility, growth, and abundance (Guerin, 1999).

K.S. Maniam reveals the image of the good mother through the protagonist's mother. The archetypal image of the Hindu Goddess that was portrayed by Maniam in Ravi's mother is the image of Goddess Parvathi. Parvathi is often described in Puranas as an ideal housewife. The character of Ravi's mother who obeys her husband's word matches her to the image of Goddess Parvathi. Laws of Manu explains that a wife who obeys her husband's words will be placed in heaven:

"If a wife obeys her husband, she will for that (reason alone) be exalted in heaven" (Maniam, 1993).

Without male guidance and control, women are thought to be socially irresponsible and dangerous. Hence, there are not many changes to the image of women in literature. Even though the knowledge of women and the images in literature has been shared in conferences and journals but to understand the reality of women's lives, one needs to consult historical sources, psychological insights, and biological facts (Ferguson, 1977). Ferguson also argued that women are stereotyped, as passive people,

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and passivity has a lower value since assertiveness is needed for success and it is men who succeed. He said that. Aggressive women who usually succeed in male spheres are considered unfeminine and unnatural.

Ravi's mother carries many similarities with the characteristics of Goddess Parvathi. First, she is a loyal wife who is faithful to her husband. Ravi's father had married Karupi in order to stop the unnecessary rumours:

"My father had taken Karupi and her sister Ragini into the household in an act of kindness. He had promised her dying mother that he would bring them up and marry them off. But when Karupi turned eighteen, ugly rumours circulated among our neighbours. My father took her to the Civil registration in Sungai Petani, to put a stop to all the talk (Maniam, 1993).

Even when Kannan married Kauppi she still did not leave her husband. She is still loyal and willing to share her husband with another woman. Even though she had lost her priority and rights as the ruler of the house, which was now being taken by Kauppi. His mother seldom voices anything but she never ignores her duty as a fond mother. She is a silent and weak woman who obeys each and every command of her husband, Kannan. She represents the image of a typical traditional woman whose voice rose hardly toward a man called husband:

"My mother's voice rose hardly above a whisper and only in the kitchen" (Maniam, 1993).

She also was not involved in the financial aspects of her house management, which is controlled by Ravi's stepmother Karuppi: "We'll have to reduce the household expenses," Karuppi said. Naina was silent for a while; while their mother worked hard in the kitchen. She didn't take part in these family councils, which moved around money (Maniam, 1993).

The family management was taken over by her husband Kannan and his second wife Kauppi, she also does not go against Kauppi for her rights.

However, when it comes to her son Ravi, she does voice her feelings against her husband. When Ravi insists on buying a toothbrush as requested by his teacher, his mother who was busy preparing a meal complained about it to Kannan. Suddenly, when Kannan was harsh towards Ravi, Ravi's mother shouted at her husband:

"You'll break his bones!" my mother wailed and I fell again, shuddering against the wall. As I blacked out, I felt my mother's hand on me."

"My mother brought me a mug of tea hurriedly" (Maniam, 1993).

Ravi's mother's emotion shows the protection and warmth that she wants to give to her son. She is a fond mother who wishes to fulfil her son's life with love and care similar to the Goddess Parvathi who loves her son Ganesh more than anything in this universe. She who normally does not go against her husband had increased her voice and shouted at her husband who was harsh to Ravi. These incidents clearly explain the endless love that a mother has for her son.

She wants his son Ravi to be an educated person and therefore she prevents others from disturbing him.

"Don't disturb him! He is reading," my mother said if any child crawled close to the lines (Maniam, 1993).

She is so assertive with her decision not to disturb Ravi whenever he was studying. She even does not sweep near the place where Ravi was studying because she is afraid it might disturb his concentration.

"My mother didn't even dare to sweep that corner" (Maniam, 1993).

Ravi's mother was not only a good wife to her husband but she also plays a role of a responsible mother who protects her son and also defends him when others complain and scold him:

"How can he talk to you?" his wife said from inside. "The golden tongue may wear away. Why do you speak about my son like that?" my mother called from our house. "He's only a boy. He has done you no harm" (Maniam, 1993).

In this situation, she carries a similarity with Goddess Parvathi, who brings along Ganesha with her when she went to the mountain to practice asceticism because she was afraid that Lord Shiva will tease and laugh at Ganesha.

"Then the elephant-headed Ganesh bowed to her and begged her, with tears in his throat. Take me too, Parvathi", and she answered, "He will laugh at you because you are elephant-headed, my son just as he laughs at me. Therefore, come with me; go where I go, for death is good when it results from the humiliation of arguments, my little son (Wendy, 1975).

The protagonist's mother's character is a benevolent character similar to Goddess Parvathi's character. Even Parvathi and Shiva sometimes have misunderstandings, but they were always regarded as happy couples that lived together. Similarly, to that, even the mother character in K.S. Maniam's 'The Return' does sometimes mumble when her husband scolds her but it does not remain long. The mother character was portrayed as a dependent wife. She is only involved in her duties of preparing a meal and looking after the children and the husband. Her character was portrayed as an ideal wife who spent most of the time attending to the needs of her husband as well as the children.

The Soul Mate

The soul mate is the figure of the Holy Mother, the princess or "beautiful lady" whose incarnation of inspiration and spiritual fulfilment plays a role in one's life. Ravi's grandmother carries the image of the soul mate in the representation of Goddess Parvathi. The image of Goddess Parvathi is also portrayed in the character of Ravi's grandmother, Periathai. She is devoted to Goddess Parvathi because she embodies the perfect wife as she still remained a widow until death as stated in the laws of Manu.

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"Until death let her be patient (of hardship), self-controlled, and chaste, and Strive (to fulfil) that most excellent duty which (is prescribed) for wives who have one husband only" (Maniam, 1993).

Periathai was not only Ravi's grandmother but also the source of his intellectual, emotional, and particularly, spiritual development. Her presence pervades the work; her open eyes at death indicate certain unfulfilled hope in her life. This image of Periathai represents, within the larger context of the novel, the spiritual strength and vision of society. Periathai represents rhythm and vitality, characteristics often associated with creativity in Hindu mythology (Maniam, 1987 & cited in Pillai, 2000).

Periathai can be seen as a powerful widower who does all kinds of jobs to obtain income for her living. She is depicted as a brave and persistent woman. She is the first generation of an Indian immigrant in Ravi's family. She comes to the new land widowed but still, she possesses strength of her own in being able to survive her fate.

"My Grandmother's life and her death, in 1958, made a vivid impression on me. She came, as the stories and anecdotes about her say, suddenly out of the horizon, like a camel, with nothing except some baggage and three boys in a row. And like that animal, which survives the most barren of lands, she brooded, humped over her tin trunks, mats, silver lamps and pots, at the junction of the main road and the lateral trail. Later, she went up the red dusty path, into the trees and bushes, the most undeveloped part of Bedong. The people of this small town didn't know how she managed, but they saw her before a week passed, a settled look on her face, a firm gait to he walks" (Maniam, 2000).

The quotation above indicates her as a powerful person. She came to the new land widowed but still was strong enough to survive in the land which is totally strange for her. Besides that, she still brings with her the cultural items from her motherland, India and it is later seen to bring them out now and again as some form of "immersion, a recreating of the thick spiritual and domestic air of the home she left behind in India (Pillai, 2000).

Periathai is depicted as a brave and persistent woman who does various works in order to survive in the new place. She is a prudent woman too. Because in order to survive in a new place, which is totally strange, one must be prepared before coming to a new place. She first sells the sarees that she brought from India:

"She was a great walker in those days. She trudges to the estates, sometimes ten miles away with a load of saris she had brought from India on her shoulders. They were soon gone (Maniam, 1993).

The decision to sell a saree might not be a sudden decision. She had already thought about it and brought the sarees from India. She did plan and think carefully about how she wants to survive in a stranger's place, which portrays her character as a prudent woman similar to Goddess Parvathi. She then becomes a tinker, mending old pots and pans.

"But she had become a tinker, the white flour sack of tools bulging on her back". "From the white sack, she took out a tiny stove, anvil, hammer, spatulas, rolls of copper, silver foil, aluminium, lead and husky bellows" (Maniam, 1993). And when they were no more damaged items to mend, she looks for other alternatives and cast away the evil eye of ailing children:

"For a time, she said, she went around casting away the 'evil eye' from ailing children" (Maniam, 1993).

Even as a widow, she works hard in order to manage household affairs by being careful and economical in her expenditure. As a single wife, she was depicted as a wise mother who carefully plans her economic expenditure in order to have a smooth average life so that she can bring up her children well.

Periathai is known as "Big Mother" and represents her high position in the family and is respected by each of the family members. This indicates the power that is vested in Periathai by her community. She becomes an allegorical Mother goddess who presides over the community.

The Terrible Mother

The terrible mother carries the negative aspects of the Earth Mother, the witch, and the sorceress and is associated with fear, danger, and darkness. In this text, Ravi's stepmother carries some of the images of the terrible mother as well as the image of Goddess Durga. Durga is a cosmic battle queen who plays the role of protecting the universe from the influence of demons. She upholds the order of dharma by assuming a traditionally male role and playing that role more effectively than any male deity (Kinsley, 1993).

Ravi's stepmother Kauppi is an adamant and strong-headed woman. It shows that she does not project the traditional image of an Indian wife because an ideal Indian wife should attend to the needs of her husband. Kauppi, when she has misunderstandings with her husband Kannan, she would not attend to his needs:

"She didn't attend to my father's needs during lunch. We were familiar with such behaviour" (Maniam, 1993).

She also does not obey her husband's words. Kannan wants to send Ravi to Tamil school but Kauppi does not agree with him. She finally wins when Kannan decides to send Ravi to an English school. However, later when Ravi focuses more on his studies and does not help Kauppi in the laundry she started to complain about him:

"He has to grow up first, then work," my father said. "He has to work now."

The Amah said Ayah and the Big House are angry. They haven't seen Ravi for some time. They want him to deliver the clothes or they will send them to A Chinese laundry," Karupi said (Maniam, 1993).

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She does not want to lose her customers just because of Ravi's education. In this situation, she plays the role of a saviour to Goddess Durga who saves humans' life from demons and in this context, Durga wants to protect her family's economic situation. She wants to save the economic aspect of her family in order to fight the demon called poverty so that her family can live in a stable condition. She takes over the responsibility to look after the laundry shop and also manage the house, which is supposed to be done by her husband. It shows that she holds supreme power over her husband in certain aspects which is similar to Goddess Durga who plays her role more effectively than any male deity. Guerin's classification of a terrible mother stereotypes the mother's character. In real life, this may not be true. In this context, Kauppi also carries the image of a good mother.

The points above clearly show that Kauppi wants to make changes in their life. She wants Ravi to enrol in an English medium school as a tool to change their standard of living. She also had been depicted as a hardworking woman willing to work more to have a better life. She even offers a few suggestions in order to attract customers so they can still run their business:

"We have to change some things in this shop. People will go back to Chinese Dhobi if we do business in a cave." "We must put in electricity," Karupi said (Maniam, 1993).

Kauppi might not be as soft as the mother character but still, she carries the image as a responsible mother who wishes to give protection, fertility, and growth to her family. Kauppi is portrayed as a harsh woman who might not carry the image of a typical Indian woman who obeys each and every word of her husband yet she does carry the image of a good mother in her character.

Kauppi's character was represented in a similar to the image of Goddess Durga and also Goddess Parvathi. I believe that it is possible for a woman to carry the image of more than a Goddess. She was portrayed as Goddess Parvathi when she wants to provide an English education to Ravi. In fact, Ravi himself is not Kauppi's son but still, the love that she has for him had caused her to be a prudent woman who cares for the future of Ravi and urged her husband to enrol him in an English medium school. Even at first when her husband laughs at her, still does not give up and holds firm on her decision finally, she wins she is portrayed as an assertive wife similar to Goddess Parvathi. However, when it comes to protecting her family, she was portrayed as Goddess Durga.

By analyzing the women characters in K.S. Maniam's "The Return", I find out that the women characters do represent the image of the Hindu Goddess. In order to analyse the representations of the archetypal Indian women in the text, I used Mythical and Archetypal Literary Theories to understand the characters and features of Hindu Goddesses. Myth is a complex of stories some no doubt fact and some fantasy, which for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life (Guerin, 1999). Furthermore, Guerin also argues that every people may have their own distinctive mythology that might be reflected in legend, folklore, and ideology. However, he says that similar motifs or themes may be found among many different mythologies, and certain images are widely separated in time and place and such motifs are called archetypes.

Hindu mythology is more than mythology because it is a living religion. Hindus perceive myth as their tradition of living. Thomas (1973) says that Hindu mythology developed out of a fusion of various cultures and this is mainly responsible for the existence of many self-contradictory myths in it. In order to understand the meaning of myth in one particular ethnicity or religion, it is necessary to understand the social and traditional aspects of the religion. This indicates that the setting also plays a part in order to understand the concept of faith in one's religion. Since I am focusing on the next "The Return" by K.S. Maniam, it is necessary to highlight the community in the text, which was the immigrant Indians who still hold strongly to religious practices and beliefs. The female characters in this text are seen as representations of Hindu Goddesses. Studying the image of women and Hindu Goddesses helps me to draw the connection between the Hindu Goddesses and Indian women in the text. Here, I intend to use Guerin's classification of the image of the archetypal woman as a good mother, the terrible mother and the soul mate.

The archetypal images of Indian or Hindu women in mythology are associated with the image of Hindu Goddesses such as Goddess Parvathi, Letchumy, Saraswathi, Durga Kali, and also Sati. Hindu goddesses do not conform to a few stereotypes but represent a diverse range of beings that impress one with their many characteristics and functions. This is similar to the image of woman, who carries different characteristics in relation to their role in family and society. The women who were soft and caring were often depicted to carry the image of Goddess Parvathi or mostly known as Devi. In fact, the Goddesses themselves can be categorized into two main categories: benevolent Goddesses, while Durga and Kali are the fiercer Goddesses.

The archetypal images of Indian women are also associated with their stages in life. The stages of a woman are divided into three: unmarried young woman, married woman, and widow. When Hindu women get married, they were urged to imitate the image of a good wife by carrying the representations of Sita, which was Lakshmi's incarnation during the Ramachandra avatar. As a wife Indian woman must carry the image of the ideal wife as Sita who is entirely devoted to her husband (Kinsley, 1993).

When the husband dies before the wife, remarriage of Indian women is rare and strongly opposed in most Hindu writings. As a widow, a woman becomes a symbolic representation of a mother goddess who poses a primal power. As such, her identity is constituted by the various icons of female authority, motherhood, and wifehood within the duration of Indian cultural thought as represented by the character Periathai in "The Return" (Pillai, 2000).

K.S. Maniam portrays the three characters in his text in relation to two forms of Goddesses, the benevolent and the fiercer. The portrayal of the characters is strongly influenced by archetypal images of Indian and Hindu women in mythology. The short story *The Return* focuses on the representation of archetypal images of Hindu or Indian women. Through this writing, I gain awareness of how the characters of one can be influenced by the image of Hindu Goddesses. I also find that the characters portrayed

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in the text are deeply influenced by the myth of one's religion, which I discovered by applying the Mythical and Archetypal approach. It also enables me to understand the concept of Hinduism.

The characters' portrayals are strongly influenced by archetypal images of Indian or Hindu women in mythology. The mother is seen as an ideal wife because in Hindu mythology a wife who obeys the husband's words and attends to the husband's needs is seen as a good wife. In Ramayana, Sita is seen as an ideal wife and therefore after marriage, a woman must imitate the image of Sita as an ideal wife towards her husband. She must be loyal to her husband and should not go against his words.

The epic Ramayana explains how Ravana kidnapped Sita because she did not listen to her husband's advice and was in the care of her brother-in-law until Rama returns. Rama went into the jungle to get the golden deer that Sita had requested. He left Laksamana to search for Rama when she hears the voice of Rama who screams for help which finally causes her to be kidnapped by Ravana. The mother had been portrayed as an ideal wife compared to Karupi, the stepmother who did not carry the image of an ideal wife.

Karupi often went against her husband's word, which is sometimes for good intentions. However, in most situations it creates problems and she was depicted as a bad wife. The image of Perithai is influenced by the image of the Hindu Goddess. She was portrayed as a strong widow who remained loyal to her late husband and who did various jobs in order to survive in the new land. Even though she was moved far from her motherland but she still practice her religious belief and spread it to the younger generations through stories which indicate her spiritual representation of The Goddess.

Karupi, the mother and the grandmother somehow act similar to the image of the Hindu Goddess. Karupi was strong-headed influenced by the image of Goddess Durga who fights demons and protects people who needed her. She plays a role as a saviour similar to Goddess Durga who saves humans from demons and in this context Karupi wants to protect her family's economic situation. She wants to safeguard the economic aspect of her family in order to fight the demon called poverty so that her family can live in a stable condition. She takes over the responsibility to look after the laundry shop and also managing the house which is supposed to be done by her husband. It shows that she holds supreme power over her husband in certain aspects which is similar to Goddess Durga who plays her role more effectively than any male deity. Whereas the mother's and grandmother's characters are influenced by the image of Goddess Parvathi. Their characters are similar to Goddess Parvathi because they are portrayed as an ideal wife and a fond mother who spend most of their time attending to the needs of the children.

CONCLUSION

The short story "The Return" focuses on the representation of archetypal images of Hindu or Indian women. Through this journal, I gained awareness of how the characters of one can be influenced by the image of Hindu Goddesses. I also found that the characters portrayed in the text were deeply influenced by the myth of one's religion, which I discovered by applying the Mythical and Archetypal approach. It also enables me to understand the concept of Hinduism better.

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