

Chapter 5

Feminist Critique in Practice

The current critical inquiry wrestles with “historical”, “literary”, and “contextual” approaches of the Bible and passes through “author-centered”, “text-centered”, and “reader-centered” phases (Surgitharajah 1995:3). In the postmodern era, when people read the Bible and other literature, it is vital to practice different kinds of interpretation. There are a variety of contexts and, therefore, also of perspectives. Feminist literary critique is one of the current critical approaches to biblical interpretation. It criticizes not only simple stories, but also the underlying social systems that affect the situations of people, politics, history, and culture. Women are never the central focus in human history, and are often non-existent also in the records of unofficial history. Feminist theology and feminism places the emphasis on socio-cultural situations and women’s stories about their experiences (Sauter & Barton 2000; Gilbert 1980:391-417). Women can find healing not only by means of the results of rational and theoretical research, but also through oral folklore, by sharing personal problems. Korean feminist theologians and other theologians in the Third World are currently using this method positively. Women are able to express their experiences of oppression in the past.

The starting point of feminist critique is the experience and the situation of the people (see Tamez 1991:61). Questions such as the following are posed: is the main character a woman? Are there black, poor, and marginal people? When these questions are focused on in the text, this approach can be identified as reader-centered. The reader is important, and it is they who look for their own questions from the Bible and texts. The reader-centered approach has the following presuppositions.

- The meaning of the text is produced by mutual interaction between the reader and the text. The reader engages the text and the text also engages the reader. The reader invents the meaning from the text.
- From the text each reader finds personal meaning in relation to his/her social, cultural, and locative situations (Farley 1985:22).

Women read the Bible in their context (Juschka 2001). There are criteria by means of which to evaluate the Bible and any other texts in order to liberate women (Kim YO 1994:81-97; see Farley 1985:44-45):

- Is the system male- or female-centered? What possibilities do women have to liberate themselves and others? How much do women participate to liberate women themselves in the social system? What is the evaluation of women in the society?
- What are the factors that can reform a society?
- What are the women's positions in society? What do women think about themselves?
- Patriarchal texts must be identified and oppression of women exposed (Kim SY 1995:73-74; see Sakenfeld 1985:57-59). It is likely to find these texts in a male-centered mode, or male-advocated mode, or a mode propagating female inferiority. Women need to find out, whether the texts have undergone distorted editing.
- It is necessary to re-interpret oppressive texts from a female perspective. Women need to find texts which are more positive towards women. Then, women's status will be upgraded in society, and the opportunity of women for social activities and employment will be expanded.
- Women can use various methods when interpreting the Bible and other literature – historical criticism, literary criticism, sociological analysis, psychological methods, archeological specimens, and economical and political analysis. Women need to find the origin of female oppression in order to see how it can be changed.

One example of a woman that has successfully made use of the contextual approach is Dorothee Sölle who has read the Magnificat (the song of Mary in Luke 1:46-56) and interpreted it for women. The Magnificat is rewritten by Dorothee Sölle (Schüssler Schüssler Fiorenza 1992:243) as follows:

It is written that Mary said:

my soul doth magnify the lord

and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour

for he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden

for behold from henceforth
all generations shall call me blessed

Today we express that differently:
my soul sees the land of freedom
my spirit will leave anxiety behind
the empty faces of women will be filled with life
we will become human beings
long awaited by the generations sacrificed before us

It is written that Mary said:
for he that is might hath done to me great things
and holy is his name
and his mercy is on them that fear him
from generation to generation

Today we express that differently:
the great change that is taking place in us and through us
will reach all- or it will not take place
charity will come about when the oppressed
can give up their wasted lives
and learn to live themselves

It is written that Mary said:
he hath shewed strength with his arm
he hath scattered the proud
he hath put down the mighty from their seats
and exalted them of low degree

Today we express that differently:
we shall dispossess our owners and we shall laugh

at those who claim to understand feminine nature
the rule of males over females will end
objects will become subjects
they will achieve their own better right

It is written that Mary said:
he hath filled the hungry with good things
and the rich he hath sent empty away
he hath holpen his servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy

Today we express that differently:
women will go to the moon and sit in parliaments
their desire for self-determination will be fulfilled
the craving for power will go unheeded
their fears will be unnecessary
and exploitation will come to an end

Women read the Bible from their own perspectives. Kwok suggests “dialogical imagination” as an alternative way of reading the biblical truth from Asian women’s perspective. Kwok (1987:17) says: “Asian Christians are heir to both the biblical story and to our own story as Asian people, and we are concerned to bring the two in dialogue with one another. It is dialogue. And it is imagination.” According to Kwok (1987:8), “dialogical imagination looks at both the Bible and our own Asian reality anew, challenging the established ‘order of things’”. When women read the Bible, through “dialogical imagination”, they discover both biblical stories and their people’s stories for women’s survival and their liberation. Women’s perspective shows that there are possibilities for women and that they can dream and see new visions (see Gilbert & Gubar 1979; Irigaray 1985b; Jacobus 1979). This allows women to strive for their liberation and achievement of full humanity as women.

5.1 Feminist critique about the story “a good wife”

(Proverbs 31:10-31)

According to Sakenfeld (1985:5-6), recognizing the patriarchy of biblical material, Christian feminist approach the text with at least three different emphases:

- Looking to texts about women to counteract famous texts used “against” women.
- Looking to the Bible generally (not particularly to texts about women) for a theological perspective offering a critique of patriarchy (some may call this a “liberation perspective”).
- Looking to texts about women to learn from the intersection of history and stories of ancient and modern women living in patriarchal cultures.

This text of Proverbs 31:10-31 belongs to the third category. I would like to reread the text from a woman’s perspective. This text addresses the condition of women as persons oppressed because of their sex and as persons yearning to be free (Sakenfeld 1985:52).

In the Bible, a good wife is described in Proverbs 31:10-31. Frequently, women hear in churches what a wife is from these passages. Sometimes, women want to follow this example of a “good” wife. These passages will be analyzed on what being a “good” wife requires a woman to do and what her characteristics and position would be.

The “good” wife” is a “good” worker; she girds her loins with strength and strengthens her arms for work (17). Strength and majesty must be her clothing (25), as she endeavours to work well. She is a good organizer and manager. She gives her maids their jobs (15). Her work is organized in detail. Firstly, she likes to spin (13, 19, 24). She should know how to sow in order to make a dress (21, 22, 24). In today's world, she could be considered to be a clothing manufacturer or in the textile industry. Secondly, she is also a farmer and a trader (16,18,24). In today’s world she would probably be a self-employed worker. Thirdly, her skills and talents are recognized by others. Even her husband believe in her and her sons rise up to bless her (28, 29, 31).

Firstly it is necessary to understand her character:

- She is an optimist. When she works, she has pleasure in the work of her hands (13). In today's terms, she finds her job satisfactory.
- She is diligent, because she rises while it is still dark and she does not put out her lamp at night (15, 18). She does a full day's work. Yet, she does not watch the clock.
- She helps others. She stretches out her hand to the poor, and extends her help to the needy (20). She has a warm heart.
- She prepares for the future, so that even when it snows, her family will be clothed well (21). She laughs at the uncertain future (25).
- She is wise enough to teach others. She opens her mouth to speak wisdom, sound teaching is on her tongue (26). She is a teacher as well as a practical worker.
- She is sincere and devoted to God. Her attitude and life-style are pious. It is this woman, who fears Yahweh, that deserves praise (30). She has great spiritual strength.

Secondly, her position is as follows:

- She is rich: she has a household and maids. She has a vineyard with a good production. She earns good interest from trade. Her economic position is above average (15, 16, 24).
- Her social standing is high. She opens her mouth to speak wisdom and sound teaching is on her tongue (26). To speak wisdom is based on being educated. In the Old Testament one who taught wisdom had a high position which was usually limited to males. The quality of her clothes reveals her high status in society (21). The clothing her family wears shows that they are rich.

Women are socialized to play roles allotted to them because they are female. Ruether (1985:113) describes it as "women's experiences created by social and cultural appropriation of biological differences in a male dominated society". Bons-Storm (1996:55) states that many women are socialized according to the patriarchal socio-cultural narrative. They are trained to play only the roles prescribed to them from childhood. They are warned against all alternatives. Women are trained to be

dutiful and obedient daughters; virgins as long as they are not married; good helpmates for the projects of men; good, serving wives; self-sacrificing mothers; and then nothing. Women are expected to not be a nuisance, but to be silent and quiet.

- At home, her husband has confidence in her (11) and sings her praise (28). Her sons rise up and bless her (29). Her household obeys her. Her maids also respect her because she misses nothing that goes on (27). She has high social and economic status. Proverbs 31:10-31 is clearly about a woman of position and ability in her own right (8). She is not a meek little house-person: she is an efficient manager of large household and business enterprises. She buys property and plants vineyards. She provides her house and servants with all their needs. She has knowledge and charm. She is diligent, wise and caring. She can actually be regarded as a prototype of the modern, liberated women. The role of the mother plays an important part in the passages. This mother is mentioned in a positive way and she is described as a good wife.

The “theological meaning” of the concept “capable woman” (*'eshêt-hajil*) (see Whybray 1972:182, 183) in Proverbs 31:10-31 will be explored from a woman’s perspective. This expression can be literally translated as “a woman of parts”. It appears in verses 10 and 29. In verse 29 the plural women/daughters is used: “Many a woman shows how capable she is; but you excel them all” (Whybray 1972:183). “Many women of parts” refers to polygamy in ancient literature. Polygamy and monogamy will not be discussed in depth. The wives often had a good relationship with each other, but there was always some tension among them. Sometimes they were emotionally distressed, for example Hanna who did not have a child of her own and was provoked by her rival until she wept and would not eat (1 Sam 1:7). In Proverbs the husband of the good wife praised her. This could mean that the other wives could have been jealous of her. Could the husband treat his wives equally?

The good wife in Proverbs does housework. Whether she does this willingly or not, she is tied to housework from early in the morning until late at night. The housework is unceasing and unchanging. Her duty is not only housework. She also controls her household and plants a vineyard. She is concerned with trade. She makes dresses and

sells them, and she supplies sashes to merchants. She manages to do an enormous amount of work. Though she is probably overworked, she puts on a brave face as a dutiful wife would. There are many examples of this in today's world as well. For example, a wife and a husband work together in the same factory. During the daytime, they are both engaged in their work. When they return home, the husband can have a rest while the wife is expected to prepare a dinner, wash clothes, and clean the house. This wife has another role at home. This is a common occurrence in Korea. The housework is obligatory women's in Korean culture and tradition.

Compared to the wife's her many tasks in Proverbs 31, much less is about the husband's work. He is a man of high status. He sits with the elders of the district (23). The Korean patriarchal (Choi MJ 1995:103) male also has the opportunity to just sit. Korean tradition taught men that they were kings who had the right to sit and do nothing while women carried water, planted vegetables, fed the animals and did other house work. In the premodern era, boys and men over the age of seven were not allowed to enter the kitchen. Koreans believed that there were specific separate functions to be performed by males and females. Housework was women's work. In patriarchy (cf Kang NS 1995:265-273) men just sit while women work in the house. When women are described it is often done by stating their relation to men – "wife of so and so". Men are not described in relation to women. Sexual discrimination between man and woman can be seen in these cultural traditions. The contention is that, if there is love between man and woman, the woman should give everything, even her life. Therefore, women have been encouraged to sacrifice themselves for their family in order to serve God better. The question is: Did God create man and woman equally?

In Proverbs 31 the good wife is in a good economic position compared to the many poor people in the world today. The poor do not have maids, a field or a vineyard and expensive clothes. How can the poor identify with this rich woman? She is a complete woman, wife and mother. She is "perfect", which makes it difficult for any woman to identify her. This ideal wife is a creation of patriarchal culture.

In the world there are poor women, alienated women, the oppressed, the uneducated, the sick, women whose husbands have turned their backs on them, and many more.

Women experience many different situations. It is impossible to indicate one such situation as the ideal and to state: "This way is the right way. Come here, follow me!"

Many women who live in difficult circumstances are also good wives. I am inspired to write a poem about them.

She is a domestic worker

The madam of the house,

where she works,

calls her "the maid"

She does not have a name

But she is a good wife

She sometimes skips meals

because of the shortage of food

Her face always holds a smile

because she always manages to find something

to make of her husband and children's meals

Her name is "Poor",

But she is a good wife

She knits sweaters for her family until late at night

The light is dim

because she conserves the energy

She saves in every way that she can

Her name is "Love"

She is a good wife

The owner of the house comes

to urge her to pay

for several months rent fees

Today her name is "Crying"

But she remains a good wife
She does all her housework
in the early morning
Washes clothes and dishes,
Feeds children to take them to school
No steady income from her husband
Yet her name is “Hope”
She is a good wife

Compared to the woman in Proverbs 31: 10-31 very few women can be a “good wife”. But there are many good wives who fear God and live faithfully in their given situations. Interpretations of the stories of women in the Bible can help women to gain a new understanding of their lives. Korean literature, which is much read by women, mostly depicts the traditional ways of thinking. Now, in postmodern times, it is necessary for Korean women to analyze Korean literature critically in order to find for themselves a better way of understanding themselves. Ruether (1985:139) emphasizes “God’s affirmation of the full humanity of women and all persons seen in the prophetic witness and scripture against injustice and dehumanization”.

5.2 Feminist critique about Korean literature

5.2.1 Simchung

This story is an ancient Korean novel. A summary of the Korean legend of the Simchung story is as follows:

Simchung was an only daughter born into a poor family. Her father was blind and unemployed, while her mother had died in childbirth. Simchung’s father was able to raise her through her infancy by begging for milk from the village women who

nursed at the time. When Simchung grew up she became a beggar just like her father, pleading for food from others.

One day, some seamen came to the village in search of a young girl whom they wanted to buy for the price of 3000 sacks (80 kg per sack) of rice. They believed that the sea gods would grant them favorable sea conditions if a girl was sacrificed. Simchung decided to sell herself for the 3000 sacks of rice, so that her father did not have to beg for food ever again. Simchung was taken to the deep seas and thrown overboard in worship of the sea gods. The highest of the sea gods saw Simchung's sincerity and love for her father and decided to grant her mercy. On a big floating cactus, he set her above the waters. A few days later she was discovered and rescued. She was presented to the king as a gift, because she was so beautiful. The king wanted to marry Simchung. At their wedding ceremony she asked the king for one wish. She requested a feast to be held for all the blind people of the country.

Simchung's father had become rich and was able to remarry. His wife was a greedy woman of bad morals. She did not take care of her blind husband, but instead, thought only of herself and spent their wealth freely. Soon, Simchung's father was reduced to poverty and his former lowly status once again. One day, hearing of a feast held for all blind people of the country, he headed towards the king's palace.

Simchung, determined and eager to find her father, checked every blind person for the face she loved. She recognized her father and shed tears of joy. She ran towards him and grabbing his hands, cried out to him: "Father! Father! Father!" Simchung's father was in a state of shock and told her that she had the voice of his daughter, but his daughter was already dead. She replied, "Father, I am your daughter Simchung!" Simchung's father shouted, "Let me see my daughter. Let me see!" Suddenly, at the great shock of finding his daughter whom he had thought dead, his eyes opened and he could see.

There are many stories about exemplary and virtuous women in the ancient Korean literature. When the story of Simchung was written patriarchal ideology prevailed. The

intention of the author is to convey the message that a woman's sacrifice strengthens the family; that she should respect her father; and that she should sacrifice herself for her father. According to this story the father (man) is important, but the daughter (woman) is not. The father is old. He does not have a wife, money, or sight. Simchung is young with her life still ahead of her. She begs for food for herself and her father. The question would be why the father did not sacrifice himself for his daughter's life.

There are dramatic changes in the story from the blind gaining sight, the poor becoming rich, and the miserable beggar attaining a high level of nobility. Even though Simchung is a small girl, she has faith and hope to overcome their suffering.

The story of Simchung relates to the lives of many young Korean girls who have been working in factories since the 1970s (cf Song HS 1989:196-200; Chang NS 1989:202-204). They are poor and uneducated. They sacrifice their young lives to develop Korean industry. They work in poor conditions and suffering bad treatment, poor health and low wages. They hope to overcome their suffering and have faith in the future of Korea. Without workers' sacrifices, Korean industry would not have developed as it has. The workers have saved Korea as Simchung has saved her father. Jesus too, saved people in his life of sacrifice and devotion to his calling. Korean theologian, Suh ND (1983:355-356) says: "Christ is the ground of life, and my faith is in the midst of this working life and workers." Many workers in factories see Christ within themselves and their hard struggle for survival. Jesus is not a rich and famous person in their eyes. Jesus is seen as one of the fellow workers who endure despair, humiliation, and hard work, nevertheless share their love and resources with other workers.

5.2.2 Mi-Mang (the widow)

The author of *Mi-Mang*, Park Wan-Suh (1931- alive), is a popular Korean author. Since attaining fame at the age of 40, she has written more than 100 stories. She won a prestigious literary award with her 920-page book, *Mi-Mang*, which was written when she was 65 years old. The setting of the novel is the end of the 20th century Korea. At that time the country was unstable in its politics, economy and social values. The end of the monarchy was approaching, the class system was starting to collapse and people began to see money as the most valuable resource.

Mi-Mang is a family story. The old man, Jeon Cheh-Man, had risen from poverty to become a millionaire. He was born in a city in the northern part of Korea that is still famous for the production of Ginseng. He was very poor in his youth and was a victim of classism. This story spans four generations of Cheh-Man.

The title of the book “Mi-Mang” means a widow. There are two different words for widow in the Korean language. One is “Koa-Bu”, and the other is “Mi-Mang”. “Koa-Bu” just means “widow”, but “Mi-Mang” refers to “one who really wishes to die with her husband, but cannot, so she just lives”, or “one who has not died yet”. A long time ago, Indian women followed their husbands when they died. These women were burnt alive alongside with the dead bodies of their husbands. They are called “Sati” (Ahn SY 1992b:214; Ivy 1996: 358-376). If a husband loses his wife he is not called “Mi-Mang”. The word “Mi-Mang” is used exclusively for women. Another oppressive custom of Korean patriarchy was that the widow was to remain faithful to her deceased husband and not remarry; she would stay with her husband’s family until she died. A man, on the other hand, could remarry if he chose to. A woman who got married more than twice, would have been regarded as not better than an animal. If a woman was engaged to a man, but he died before their wedding, she was to never marry another man.

When the Japanese attacked Korea, many Korean women were faced with the loss of their husbands. Because of the ethics, they then followed the steps of their husbands, and killed themselves. “Wives should be submissive” was the principle of the ethics. This ethics had important beliefs such that women “belonged” to men, and girls were to protect their virginity. After the Korean Civil War in 1953, many women became widows. Most of them did not remarry, but struggled to feed and raise the children on their own. Widows at the time were considered unblessed since it was believed that the death of their husband at a young age was due on part of the women’s unfortunate fate. As described, there was lots of prejudice existent in the patriarchal society that widows were isolated and led the most pitiful lives of society.

Stories about widows can be found in the Bible: the prophet Anna in Luke 2:36-38, the widow at Zarephath in I Kings 17:8-16, the raising of the widow’s son in Luke 7:11-17, the widow and the judge in Luke 18:1-8, and a coin offered by a widow in Luke 21:1-4. A Korean feminist theologian, S K Park (in Ahn SY 1992b:213) interprets “Mi-Mang”

as follows: “Mi-Mang keeps hold of a woman’s life and death.” The author (Ahn 1992b:213-233) asks the question, “Does the social system of male dominance allow for man to take God’s rights?” When a husband passes away, it is not due to a mistake of the wife, neither is it her fault. God is in control of life and death. The cultural ideas of marriage should be changed.

Register (1975:1) says about the interpretation of literature that “the reader depends on her/his personal response to the book and evaluates it in terms of her/his own tastes and priorities”. The social background of *Mi-Mang* is patriarchy and a men-centered society, but the main character is a female by the name of Tai-Yim. The author portrays the lives of the people, the changing society, the changing times, and the political and economic circumstance from Tai-Yim’s perspective. The author also gives the reader insight into the different life styles, people’s inner thoughts, their feelings, their conflicts, and their neighbours’ responses. The story aims to liberate women from the accepted social customs.

Once feminist criticism has identified female stereotypes in literature and discussed their political implications, the question is how an antifeminist literary work should be evaluated. Shulamith Firestone (1970:167-169, see Register 1975:6) categorizes male authors according to motive:

- “male protest art” which “self-consciously glorifies the male reality” as a reaction against feminism;
- “the male angle” which fails to achieve a comprehensive world-view because it does not recognize that male reality does not equal reality at large;
- an “individually cultivated androgynous mentality” which gives “descriptions not of a liberated sexuality but of a still-unresolved conflict between the sexual and the human identity”.

Register (1975:19) insists that, to earn feminist approval, literature must perform one or more of the following functions:

- To serve as a forum for women. Literature is illuminated female experience. Then women can become humanized in the cultural value system.
- To help to achieve cultural androgyny.
- To provide role-models.
- To promote sisterhood.
- To promote consciousness-raising. Literature should provide realistic insights into female personality development, self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and other “private” or “internal” consequences of sexism in order to promote consciousness-raising.

This book, *Mi-Mang*, meets Register’s criteria and therefore earns feminist approval. Three generations of women, Tai-Yim’s mother who is a widow, she herself and her daughter try to overcome their difficult circumstances. Luce Irigaray (1976:61) describes the relationship between mother and daughter as one of entrapment: “I look at myself in you, you look at yourself in me.” When these three generations of women confront the dominant customs of their society, they have liberating experiences. Tai-Yim’s mother has a sexual relationship with a servant, which rarely happened in the pre-modern era since it was taboo to socialize across class boundaries. Nowadays there is almost no classism in Korea. Marriages between different classes are acceptable. During her time, however, Tai-Yim’s mother’s act was seen as shameful immorality. She asked the servant to run away with her but he refused. The author’s intention is to break down both the classist system and the prejudice about widows.

Tai-Yim goes against the custom of marriage at an early age. She marries a poor man despite her wealth. Women did not have the opportunity to study, but Tai-Yim is educated. It means she has achieved a respected position in society. The author portrays Tai-Yim as a liberated woman. Her daughter is also an unconventional character. She loves a man who already has a wife. The wife lives with the husband’s parents. Tai-Yim’s daughter goes against the custom and marries the man. She is blamed by others, and experiences much inner conflict. When her friend’s husband tries to rape her, she stabs him with a knife. The author depicts the experiences of the powerless, how they overcome their circumstances and what the neighbours’ reactions are. This story is

woman-centered, even though the social system is still patriarchal. Tai-Yim is not an ordinary woman, because she participates positively in the social system. She continually expands her wealth and supports independent movements.

The story also highlights the prevailing patriarchy. When Tai-Yim's mother is widowed, she sees it as her mother's fault because she had married against her will according to the custom of arranged marriages. In the 1920s some educated women rejected the arranged marriage (Kang JS 1994:101). This kind of marriage was a family matter. The parents, and especially the father's opinion was important. When women got married, they were burdened with all the housework of her husband's family. Women had no time to themselves. They had to learn the rules of the husband's family. The husband's parents expected them to have a baby soon. Offspring were valued as future labourers. People especially wanted to have many sons. Tai-Yim thinks like a liberated woman in the story.

- When Tai-Yim expresses her thoughts to her grand father, he answers that "fate of the woman is not decided by herself, but by her parents". Parents give you your body, so it is right for you to follow the decision of your parents about your marriage. You should marry the man chosen by your parents (Park WS 1996a:96).
- Tai-Yim's mother fell pregnant by the servant. The night her son was born, her mother told her, "After giving birth to a baby, a woman must go out on that day to work in the fields. So your mother did, and your sister-in-law as well" (Park WS 1996a:166). She wanted to have a rest but her mother forced her to get up.
- When Tai-Yim's daughter wants to study, her mother responds with: "What? New knowledge? You want to learn new knowledge? Your knowledge has been much more than any other women's. What can you do with more knowledge, especially as a woman?" (Park WS 1996a:181).
- Woman's fate is even worse than that of animals. It is hard, and harsh (Park WS 1996a:331).
- If woman had lost her chastity, she must only die (Park WS 1996a:332).

Tai-Yim's daughter gets married to a man who is already married. People blame and reject her. "Such a frivolous woman was explained as one who robbed a husband from the other, and one who robbed the living rights of the husband's house. She was wicked, therefore the husband's ex-wife deleted her name from the family register" (Park WS 1996b:316). At that time, the second wife did not have the right to put her name into the family register, a right that people considered to be as precious as life itself.

Marriage customs of earlier times can be seen in the story. The reason for these customs comes from the history of Korea. Korean women were sent to China as maids-of-honor during 88-1400 A D. China was the country of the king and Korea was the slave country. Korea sent many gifts to China, including many young women. During Japanese colonization (1910-1945), Japan took many young Korean women as "comfort women". They were actually prostitutes for Japanese soldiers. Parents were always worried about their daughters' future. Therefore they married them off at an early age, somewhere between 10 and 18.

The preference of a son over a daughter is shown in the story. A teacher says to Tai-Nam: "Who is so blessed as to have such a wonderful son as you?" (Park WS 1996b:36). This notion is the heritage of Confucianism. The first son is especially valuable since he continues the family line and takes responsibility for the ancestor memorial services, a ritual of Confucianism. This idea seems to be bound up with eternal life in Confucianism. A chief or grandfather is the head of the family who should always obey their elders. The hierarchy continued as follows: children should obey their parents; young people should obey older people; women should obey men; the lowly and the poor should obey those of higher social standing; the people should obey the king. There were different classes not only in a family, but also in the society. A distinction was made between men and women. Male names were important for genealogies. The role of women was to bear male children. When a woman gave a birth to a boy, she was acknowledged as a good wife. A woman's role was to be a mother. Even today, Koreans prefer to have male children. In Korea, the population is made up of more men than women.

In the Bible genealogies are also male-centered (Gn 11:29-22:23; Nm 26:33-27:11; I Chr 7:20-27; Mt 1:1-12; Lk 3:23-38). The genealogy of Israel emphasizes the purity of tribe and the purity of their faith. Unexpected people appear in the genealogy of Jesus:

the women Tamar, Ruth, Rahab, and the wife of Uriah. They have two common features. They were gentile women who had bad reputations at that time. The acceptable mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, and Rahel, did not appear in the genealogy. This genealogy provides two challenges: the inclusion of the gentile women challenges Israelite exclusivity and its male-centered society; and the other challenge is the openness of the Jesus community for the poor, the oppressed, the isolated, and marginalized women (Yang MK 1991:338).

Y A Kim (1994:174) points out that, "the patriarchal society divides everything into two structures: one is powerful, namely men who are identified with anything that is positive, another is the powerless group, namely women who are identified with anything that is negative". Patriarchy has dual moral structures. The feeling of "shame" was emphasized in order to maintain patriarchal ethics. The ideology of "shame" and "honour" is emphasized to function as the standard of norms. Korean culture, just as that of the Bible, may be called a culture of "shame and honor" (see Choi MJ 1995:103-145). The "shame" attributed to women in such cultures give them a basic feeling of guilt (Plevnik 1993:161; Gilmore 1966:391-417). Korean culture especially teaches that a woman who is shy or feels shame is feminine, so the Korean society has emphasized women's shame. On account of this women consider themselves to be inferior and have difficulty finding their true identities. Korean women do not experience their "real lives".

Also similar to biblical culture, Korean society was a composite family-centered structure. One member's shameful behaviour brings shame on the family as a whole, and also on their community. Emphasis on the value of "shame" is therefore a means of social control. This shame made women doubly oppressed. For example, in comparison to the other countries, there are many patients of anthropobia in Korea. Their mental instability is caused by their fear of others. Kim YA (1994:175) finds that "Korean women feel more shame than men do, because of false education". However, if a man felt shame, he would not be considered "masculine". This was commonly accepted in patriarchy, which meant that the feeling of shame is connected with gender roles. Hisako Kinukawa (1994:16, 17), a Japanese theologian, explains that "honor is claimed only in negative ways by avoiding shameful behavior, thoughts and language, and honor has always been attributed to men". Thus, "honour" is a norm of the community; the

individual is expected to restrain her/his deeds and words for the sake of maintaining a good reputation in the community to which she/he belongs. Riet Bons-Storm (1996:18) says, "being ashamed easily leads to silence". Each member of society should adapt to social norms. Avoiding disgrace means being honourable; people did not want to be shamed, so they remained silent in pre-modern and even modern societies. Korean parents also use "shame and honour" to control their children. In this story, all the characters thinking primarily about "shame and honor" whenever they are confronted with new situations. Schüssler Fiorenza (1985:127) defines patriarchy as:

not just ideological dualism or androcentric world construction in language but a social, economic, and political system of graded subjugations and oppressions Patriarchy as a male pyramid specifies women's oppression in terms of the class, race, country, or religion of the men to whom they "belong" In patriarchal society or religion, all women are bound into a system of male privilege and domination, but impoverished. Third World women constitute the bottom of the oppressive patriarchal pyramid.

Patriarchy is basically built on the imbalance of power. Oppressing others or taking what belongs to them is the result of a lack of ego strength. Those who feel incompetent or insecure on the inside, try to gain power on the outside. The powerful group perpetuates their oppression of others by means of religious legitimation and social control. They advocate absolute power for themselves and want others to obey without questions. The powerful group has illusions of being permanently powerful and in control. This, however, leads to a vicious circle: men control women and think that they have real power; however, this power is not real and brings them to a feeling of emptiness and isolation. They are alienated from their own humanness, from nature, other people and the cosmos. Women were considered to be weak which required men to protect them. But protection was not women's real need.

An insidious problem of patriarchy is male violence. A powerful man, who is the head of a family, is free to make use of violence without being challenged. The reasons often given for their violence is they demand recognition and "respect" from their family.

Y A Kim (1994:169-210) says that “women, who have had violent experiences, feel the same as one who is in prison, psychologically”. Consequences for women are low self-confidence, impulsive acts, non-identity and dependence. They take the blame for everything that goes wrong. They do not find their rightful place in society and often experience isolation and alienation from society. Women under patriarchy have an experience similar to being in prison. They are in the prison of an oppressive ideology, propagated by men. Even though the woman may have good relationship with her husband, she cannot be honest about her feelings toward the husband’s family. She is to endure all in order to maintain the welfare and harmony of the family.

Patriarchal principles have also caused the relationship of human beings and nature to become one of exploitation. It is a necessary for systemic change to be brought about: powerless people should be empowered and the world changed for the better. A woman’s problem is not only personal and individual, because she is part of society. Women’s problems can be seen as a social problem. The well-being of *all* its members contributes to the health society as a whole. Therefore personal and social reform are necessary. Social ideologies of dominance are not easy to change. Though both husband and wife may aspire to an egalitarian relationship it is difficult to overcome the social customs or tradition. A new paradigm is not easy to be settled into at home or in the society.

In patriarchal theology, femaleness is understood in two ways: good femaleness and bad femaleness. The bad femaleness represents the creative will, which is identified as the desires of the body, and revolts against the mastery of the divine male mind. Ruether (1979:3-4) says that “femaleness in its ‘natural status’ is expressed as sin, which is to be mastered or spurned in the flight to the Father, the flight away from the body, the woman and the world”. On the other hand, good femaleness is being the passive or receptive container for the divine male will. Here, creation is symbolized as a female in relation to the transcendent Creator – the Father. Christ is the bridegroom and in relation, the church is the bride. The male clergy is depicted as the bridegroom, and the laity as the bride. Males, who have higher authority, can also experience their “feminine” side ultimately in relation to God. Women, however, never represent God, Christ, or

masculine leadership. This theological notion has been a root cause why women were excluded from ministry.

A human being is not defined only in terms of psychological individualism. A new psychological and religious understanding takes social, political, and religious contexts of suffering into account (Miller-McLemore 1998:188). There have been many factors contributing to Korean women's oppression throughout their history. Though women differ, come from different backgrounds, religions, have different spiritualities and personalities, belong to different age groups and are on different levels of economical, educational, and political development, Korean women's experiences in patriarchy can be summed up as follows (see Kim YA 1994:196-198, 203-206).

- Women suffer from dual oppression under patriarchy, which results in their feeling inferior.
- Women's roles are limited and they are often excluded from participation because of the social values. Women need to be affirmed in the society, at home, and within themselves.
- Women often have negative experiences of males because of their father's excessive authority. This causes them to distrust males.
- Women and their children have often had painful experiences on account of violence perpetrated by the head of the family. Repetitive cycles of violence are found in families from generation to generation.
- Women have inner conflict and guilt feelings on account of their faith that requires them to accept patriarchal ideology in the Korean church and Christian communities.

General female experiences Kim YA 1994:139) include those related to their female bodies. Women experience menstruation, parturition (childbirth), and feeding babies. Because of their biology, women cannot compete with men and are treated as inferior. People were conditioned to believe that the female gender is negative, and the male is positive and aggressive. This resulted in the custom that women should work inside the house and men in society. Women's experiences of oppression were also caused by social values and the social system. According to the power game, the powerless should

learn the language and viewpoints of the dominant culture. If not, the powerless cannot survive. As a result the powerless become bi-cultural. They are using both languages, that of the ruler and that of the powerless.

There are two factors that are relevant when considering women's position in society: how they feel about themselves and how they are perceived by and treated in society. In the story, Tai-Yim's mother is forced to play the traditional role. She stays at home. She does not have any position in society. Society demands from her to conform to the values of female morality. She experiences shame because of her immoral behaviour. In patriarchal society women are burdened with excessive shame. The woman struggles with non-identity and, at last, commits suicide. However, Hai-Jeong also lives in patriarchy, but her lifestyle is different from that of Tai-Yim's mother. She marries a man she does not want. He has strong patriarchal ideas. He tries to rape her daughter, who then stabs him with a knife. Hai-Jeong comes into the room and sees everything. She is disillusioned with her husband. He asks of her to conduct herself according to the traditional role of a woman, but she demands a divorce and leaves the house. She proclaims herself liberated, free from tradition. She is self-confident. Both her social position and inner evaluation of herself are definitely positive. She shows that a woman does not marry without mutual love, respect, appreciation, and responsibility between the husband and wife.

The author depicts Tai-Yim as a woman with self-confidence and inner strength who cannot be ignored. Jongsang has a friend whose name is Park Sung-Jai. When Park sees Tai-Yim, he falls in love with her even though he is already married. He has a high political position during the time of Japanese colonization. He has a desire for Tai-Yim, who is so elegant and self-confident. Park cannot ignore her and this creates inner conflict, even though he is a powerful person and he thinks of himself as the absolute being. Park's inner conflict shows how he gradually breaks away from patriarchal ideology. According to the story, women can have self-respect and self-confidence, and then they can achieve a positive position in society and feel positively about themselves. Factors in the story indicating reform in society are the following:

- Women started getting the opportunity to study in public schools. Tai-Yim's daughter and some female actresses are lucky enough to receive an education. Many girls' schools were only opened in the 20th century in Korea.
- Tai-Yim has her own business. It shows that she is not financially dependent on her husband. Due to unemployment this is not possible for many women in Korea. Until the 1960's women did not have the right to inherit. In order to gain a good position at home and in society, women need to have jobs and earn their own money. Therefore, Tai-Yim can be seen as a role-model.
- After Jongsang's marriage, he does not touch his wife's money. Rather, he encourages his wife to do well in her business. The husband supports his wife and discusses everything with her as an equal.
- Tai-Yim confronts all male dominance. Even though she has her inner conflicts, she does not let herself be defeated by male authority or patriarchal ideology. Such individual courage is the beginning of reformation in society.
- If family members are healthy, the family as a whole will be healthy and then society will be healthy. To reform the society is to reform all members of the family. In this story, the author transforms distorted ideas which harm society and people. For example, she propagates the idea that man and woman are equal; all human beings are worthy of respect; people should try to use their personal abilities to the fullest; people should try to overcome unfortunate circumstances.

5.2.3 A happy woman

The summary of this story is as follows: The novel begins with Chang-Soo, interviewing his prospective bride named Young-Ja. Chang-Soo is a commissioned officer. His parents force him to have the interview with this woman from a large neighbouring town. Chang-Soo loves a widow named Bok-Hee from another town. He calls her Na-lit, meaning wild lily. This wild lily is a small and beautiful, precious and rare flower that grows in the high mountains. Four years earlier, she had moved from the big city to be married to the son of a chief magistrate named Mun-Tae. When Mun-Tae was 14 years old, while swimming in a river, he met with an unfortunate accident after which he could no longer have children of his own. This was kept a secret. His parents forced him to get

married since he was an only child and they wished to have grandchildren. His father, who alone knows the secret about his son, begs his son's wife Bok-Hee to sleep with him. Bok-Hee falls pregnant with the child of her father-in-law. After one year of marriage, Mun-Tae, knowing that his wife had slept with someone else commits suicide. Bok-Hee gives birth a son and her son is now 4 years old.

Chang-Soo and Bok-Hee fall in love, but their love is illicit. Chang-Soo's parents cannot accept the fact that their son is in love with a widow and immediately prepares for his wedding with a woman he has only seen once. Chang-Soo is forced to marry Young-Ja. But even after this marriage, Chan-Soo's relation with Bok-Hee continues. Chang-Soo goes to live in the military compound since he is a commissioned officer. His wife Young-Ja lives with his parents in town. Chang-Soo does not come home very often, but every time he returns home, he sees Bok-Hee again. Although Young-Ja is bound to the role of his wife, she is not a very loving person and he receives more love from Bok-Hee. Young-Ja does not mention the relationship between her husband and the widow, though she knows about it. After the birth of twin girls, however, she demands that Chang-Soo should make a clean break and end all contact with Bok-Hee. Chang-Soo does not consider this a reasonable demand from his wife. After some serious quarrels, Young-Ja proclaims that she will remain only under one condition: that she and Chang-Soo meet Bok-Hee together. Chang-Soo should then tell Bok-Hee that he wishes to end all relations between them. Chang-Soo agrees to do this only for his parents' sake. After he had done as they wished, his male pride is shattered and from then on he treats his wife coldly and distantly.

The widow Bok-Hee soon falls pregnant with Chang-Soo's child. A widow falling pregnant is extremely shameful in society. She bears her humiliation patiently. Her first child was also the fruit of immorality and therefore born in sin. Meanwhile Young-Ja falls pregnant a second time. Because of her husband's behaviour she feels very lonely during her pregnancy. Her loneliness causes her leave home one night and to sleep with another man. She returns home with a venereal disease. Chang-Soo finds out and Young-Ja eventually turns into an alcoholic. One day she falls into the river and dies – her distant and cold relationship with her husband uncured.

Sodam is a friend of Chang-Soo's sister. She has loved Chang-Soo from an early age. She lost her mother at the age of six. Her stepmother hated, abused and beat her. Sodam has never felt love from her family. Bok-Hee had often asked Sodam to deliver her letters to Chang-Soo. Despite Sodam's feelings for Chang-Soo she has kindly acted as a messenger between Chang-Soo and Bok-Hee. Sodam does this out of pity for Bok-Hee, as she appears to be very lonely. Sodam leaves her house because of her stepmother's terrible mistreatment. Living in a big city, she gives birth to a son for a woman who could not have a baby of her own. She earns good money from this. Afterwards, she moves to a place close Chang-Soo's army base which is also near her birthplace. She uses the money to open a shop. Sodam is kind-hearted and helps her neighbours. She take care of Chang-Soo's children when Young-Ja turns into an alcoholic and also after her suicide. Chang-Soo feels responsible for his wife's death and therefore stays away from Bok-Hee. Finally, Chang-Soo marries Sodam with whom he is comfortable. Chang-Soo's three children already love Sodam and together they begin a new life. Chang-Soo makes duty-bound visits to Bok-Hee and his daughter though he no longer loves her.

The author portrays life in a small town very well. In such a town most villagers know of everything that is going on. The author describes the minds and social lives of the people: the widow's loneliness, Chang-Soo's wife Young-Ja's feeling of jealousy and isolation, Chang-Soo's feeling of guilt and love. This story happens in rural Korea of the 1960-70's. After marriage, the daughter-in-law lives with the husband's parents, even though the husband works and lives away from home. Traditional belief is that the new bride should learn the life style of the husband's family and should serve her husband's family for a while or for her entire life. A large family living together under one roof, includes parents, the brothers and their wives and children. About 30-40 people lived like this under one roof until approximately the 1960s. The relationship between husband and wife was less important than a good relationship between the bride and the husband's parents. Even the husband did not want to live with his wife, she would still have to live with his parents. After marriage women were treated as a member of their husband's family. There is an expression which says that "when a baby girl is born, her parents

think that the girl would be of no help to them". When she grew up, she would leave to follow her husband anyway.

While the designations "female" and "male" are *sex* categories, the imaginative ideas associated with these differences include a range of cultural and individual ideas about *gender*. Preconceptions about gender might include the idea of women's obedience and men's domination. So "*gender* can be read in sexual stereotypes and in power relations between individuals and groups" (Goodman 1996:viii). Stereotypes about *gender* are connected with social values of *gender* in society. The stereotypes about *gender* can be seen in many texts. For example, stereotypes of the relationship between *gender* and genre are shown (Goodman 1996:27, 50):

- Feminine: soft, suggestive, non-linear, symbolic, flowing, helpless, joyous.
- Masculine: strong, assertive, focused, clear, powerful, pride, possessive, direct.

In this story, the strong influence of the stereotypes that reverberate throughout society at all levels can be seen. Life is clearly men-centered in the rural village, whereas women have little possibilities and are underestimated in the story.

Young-Ja saw the immorality of her husband from the start, but she could not blame him or complain about it until she had the twin girls. When a woman has a baby, her position in the family is assured. Only after the birth of her babies was Young-Ja's position strong enough that she could demand of her husband to break with his concubine. It is a reasonable request for a wife to make. Young-Ja wanted to bury the past start a new life together. It is natural for Chang-Soo to feel guilty towards his wife for what he had done, but he could not stop meeting Bok-Hee. There are two reasons for this: he had strong feelings for Bok-Hee and in patriarchy a man's immorality is met with silent approval. After Bok-Hee had a baby girl by Chang-Soo, his parents became involved. They suspected that the baby girl was their son's child and they wanted her. This is another trait of patriarchy. Women are seen as containers for the production of babies. The question of who is the father is, is the pertinent one. In Korean terms, the "seed" (paternal blood) is of the utmost importance.

Bok-Hee is not portrayed in traditional Korean way. She is not depicted as an ordinary Korean woman. She has liberated ideas for herself and her miserable life. Even though she is a concubine of Chang-Soo in the story, she is an encouragement for women who feel shame. Bok-Hee could survive through her pregnancy. It must have been an extremely shameful experience for her. She was the main topic of neighbourly gossip and was definitely isolated by them. But she can overcome the situation. The reason for that is that she was rich which meant that she could afford to feel superior. The neighbours, who are poor, officially had no right to blame her because of her standing. Bok-Hee tolerated her shame because of her “superior” power over the “inferior” neighbours. Another reason for Bok-Hee’s survival through this shame could be the great love between her and Chang-Soo. My opinion is that the main reason is the power games of patriarchy: even though Bok-Hee displayed the most shameful behaviour, she could overcome the shame with her powerful, “superior” position.

Sodam is described as a self-sacrificing woman, who tries to make others happy without demanding happiness for herself. Sodam is the typical figure of the woman in patriarchy: unconditional obedience is the virtue of the woman’s role. When Sodam meets K, she sees how K’s son, who is blind and without a child, is greatly influenced by his father. While his daughter-in-law is away K tells his son that “it is not shameful that a man has many wives. It is important for us to have many babies, to increase our chances of having a baby who will grow to be a successor. We are rich enough to have two daughters-in-law. Sodam has a warm heart and her face is pretty, so there is nothing wrong for her to become pregnant by you” (Lim SY 1989:120). Sodam accepts and falls pregnant. When K’s daughter-in-law returns home, K tells her of Sodam and her pregnancy. K’s daughter-in-law does not feel angry or act in any way against Sodam, but she feels so sorry for herself that she can not fall pregnant herself. K’s daughter-in-law says to Sodam: “I really thank you for being pregnant for me” (Lim SY 1989:127-128), and she continually tells her husband that he had done the right thing for the good of their family.

Before her marriage to Chang-Soo, Sodam was held in contempt by Chang-Soo’s mother. Sodam had to endure constant insults from her. Though Chang-Soo himself had three children, his mother tried to find a virgin for him to marry. Chang-Soo’s mother

did not like Sodam very much because she was not educated enough. Her lack of education was due to her stepmother who beat her, treated her harshly and did not care for her. Chang-Soo's mother rejected Sodam for many reasons. One such reason was because of Sodam's giving birth to a child. This is an indication of the patriarchal dual evaluation: the pattern that "what the man is doing is all right, but for a woman it is not acceptable". In patriarchy, man is valued. Chang-Soo's mother said, "if a man is handsome and excellent, he can have ten women as sexual partners" (Lim SY 1989:186). This patriarchal idea came from a woman's mouth. It is sad that women, themselves victims of patriarchy, have been so conditioned by patriarchy that they cooperate to perpetuate these ideas.

According to patriarchal ideology, a woman should sacrifice herself for her family, even at the cost of her own happiness. Sodam's role in the story is to take care of the three children of Chang-Soo. After her marriage to Chang-Soo, her role is always helping parents, feeding children, caring for her neighbours and supporting her husband. She is portrayed as a "silent being". The author knows the traditional woman's role, for she is depicted as a "good" wife, a "good" mother, a "good" daughter-in-law, and a "good" neighbour. Sodam is invisible but she absolutely necessary just like air. People need air but it is not visible. In patriarchy, women are like air.

Young-Ja, who is the first wife of Chang-Soo, agrees to their marriage. She says, "I willingly follow the decisions of my parents and your parents about our marriage" (Lim SY 1989:61). In premodern and even in modern times marriage in Korea was not a personal choice, but was dependent on the family or on the decision of the parents. In the pre-modern era a bride and a groom often had never seen each other before the day of the wedding. The honour of the parents who had arranged the wedding was at stake. Because of this women in particular never thought of divorce. Instead they would do what they could to fulfill her husband's needs. This custom is no longer followed today. In Bok-Hee's case, she knows nothing of her husband's sexual malformation. Her husband's father rapes Bok-Hee for the sake of bearing a successor. In those days, to continue the paternal line was of crucial importance. When a woman was raped, she experienced much shame in patriarchal society. Bok-Hee wants to escape from her position of being a widow and asks Chang-Soo to run away with her to somewhere far

from their village. But Chang-Soo refuses her request and Bok-Hee accepts this as fate. Bok-Hee is a depiction of the many Korean women who were in misery. Korean women of those times could not express their feelings freely. They were taught to keep their feelings inside and to accept everything, fortunate or unfortunate, as destiny. This is why they simply distinguished themselves as either the “unfortunate woman”, or as the “blessed woman”. The Korean church has taken over this idea and emphasizes being “blessed” by God. Silent women who could not express their feelings were often actually very unhappy. They were the victims of patriarchal ideology. Women in patriarchy expected far too much from their children. Their children had to be everything; they were their only happiness. Children became spoilt and incompetent. Either this they were treated as their mother’s personal possessions. This left them without a future.

Chang-Soo’s male pride causes his wife Young-Ja to commit suicide. In patriarchy, the male pride and honour were of the utmost importance. Without that a male person as not “a man”. If man had lost his pride it was as though he had lost his identity. In this story the main character’s pride caused much tragedy.

5.2.4 Gasi Gogi (a thorny fish)

The summary of this story is as follows: This novel’s main focus is on Daum, who is a ten-year-old boy with leukemia. His father, Jung Ho-Yun is a poet, who remembering his own unfortunate childhood, is striving to be the “perfect father”. Jung Ho-Yun’s father was a coal-miner who had lost his leg in an accident. Without any compensation, he was forced to resign. He threatened his employers with a knife and was thrown into jail. Finally, when he was released, he had not chance of employment. Because of the growing poverty within the family the mother ran away from home. The father lost all hope and suggested to his son Ho-Yun, that they should eat rat poisoning and die together. Ho-Yun did not want to die, so his father took him to the police station and was never seen again.

Ho-Yun was moved from orphanage to orphanage, trying to be accepted, and faced much misery, loneliness and pain. He was seen as the stereotypical orphan who could never succeed in life. Nevertheless, he made the most of his opportunities, managed to complete his university studies and became a successful poet. His wife had studied art at

the same university. They had a son whom they named Daum. Daum was the great joy of Ho-Yun's life. Jung Ho-Yun worked with the press and continued writing poems. But his salary did not meet his wife's expectations, since she came from a wealthy background. After 6 years of marriage, Ho-Yun's wife demanded a divorce in order to continue her art studies. She remarried an art teacher 20 years older than herself and they left for France. She sent a letter to her ex-husband, saying that she would no longer take responsibility for her son, Daum.

Daum's leukaemia was discovered shortly after the divorce of his parents. The first time he was admitted to hospital, but soon recovered sufficiently to return home. Six months later when the sickness reappeared, he was sent to the hospital and there was no telling when he would be able to return home. Daum suffered immensely, from radiotherapy, the countless pills, to the unsalted food. The treatment for leukemia was too much for the 10-year-old boy. He decided that he would record all his feelings and emotions in a diary. These entries are especially focused on the main source of his encouragement, his father. Without him he would not have been able to make it. Regardless of his yearning to have a mother just like all of his friends, he believed that he owed everything to his father.

After two years of treatment, there was no sign of recovery for Daum. The painful radiotherapy did not offer recovery either. It was then that they were left with only one other possible treatment: to transplant some blood cells from someone who had the same blood type as Daum. This was going to cost a fortune and cause twice as much pain as he had already experienced. The father had not money. He had already sold his house and all their possessions to pay for Daum's stay of two years in hospital. He suffered much but hoped for his son's recovery and agreed to the treatment. Their search for a donor proved to be unsuccessful. Hope faded and Ho-Yun requested that his son be released from hospital.

A week before Daum's release, Jung Ho-Yun read in the papers that his ex-wife had returned to Korea to hold an art exhibition. Ho-Yun went to the exhibition to find his ex-wife. He wanted to tell her of the situation and urge her to come and see her son before it was too late. But there was no sign of her. Eventually the day of Daum's release arrived. With what they had left they managed to buy a car in order to drive down to the coast. It

was Daum's final wish was to see the ocean. Down at the coast they unexpectedly came upon an old man who lived in the mountains. He was a herbalist, selling medicinal plants from the mountains for a living. The old man had had a fatal lung disease. That brought him to the mountains where he recovered. That is how it came that Daum and his father went to live in the mountains. After about a month Daum's illness recurred and they had to go back to the hospital. They discovered that the doctor and Ho Yun's ex-wife had been searching for them. The doctor told them that he had found a girl in Japan who had the same blood type as Daum. The transplant was now possible, if only the father could afford it. The father had heard that one could make much money by selling an organ. He secretly planned to sell one of his kidneys to pay for the transplantation. When Ho Yun went for a physical checkup in order to sell his kidneys, they discovered that he had severe liver cancer. His was going to die within a month. During the last years he had been too focused on his son's health to realize that he too had problems. He was despondent. His ex-wife suddenly decided that she would share in caring for Daum and paying the hospital fees. The father felt that the best he could do for his son before his death, was to care for him until the end.

Secretly, the father sold the cornea of his one eye and earned just enough for the transplant. Daum fully recovered. Jung Ho-Yun forced Daum to go to France with his mother in order for him to have a better life. His own sorrow, pain and suffering should be kept secret from his son. That was for the best, he believed. Ho-Yun died alone in the mountains where he and his son had spent a peaceful month together.

The explanation of the title "a thorny fish" is as follows. Daum's father reminded him of a thorny fish. A thorny fish is one of the smallest fishes in the sea. The mother fish lays eggs and leaves immediately. The father fish remains to keep watch over the eggs. When the eggs hatch and the baby fishes grow, they go their own way, leaving the father fish behind. The father fish knows that his job as a father is completed, hence he bangs his head on a rock and kills himself.

The rapidly changing Korean society since the 1960s has been influenced by science and technology, the unification of world trade, travel and communication, certain cultural trends and religion (see Lee HS 1992:45-53). Lifestyles, practices and relationships have

been modernized in the Korean family and society. Fundamentalism has led to conservatism in culture and religion, people defending their privilege and attacks on what is considered to be “different” as well as on other religions. Capitalism and free enterprise encourage freedom of religion, but support the values of the capitalistic system. Consumerism is spread through trade, aid, education and development policies. Its negative effects include abuses such as drug addiction, prostitution, corruption and the undesirable influence of the mass media. The world powers through their impact on economic, political, and military issues have an influence on Korea’s culture and even on the religious attitudes of Korean people.

Korean society no longer teaches the necessity of values in life, values in society and moral values. The most precious value has been economical growth. Koreans have become materialists and money has become the first consideration. The materialism sets Koreans on a competitive course, which drives people to desire social success and promotion. Materialism has brought about a trend toward nuclear families rather than large families. Many people do not know how to teach their children social and moral values. In the traditional family system, children naturally learned the values of life from the many members of the family. However, modernism made people meet in dialogue around basic core values and fundamental inspirations, which contribute powerfully towards integral human liberation and the fulfillment of people.

Since the end of 1980, Koreans have been experiencing postmodernity (Kim AY 1995:224-230; see Choi MJ 1995:103-145). This included a loss of authority and instead, the democratization of social, economic and political life occurred. People seem to be lost their search for a new direction and clear objectives. Some Koreans are living in the pre-modern, some are in the modern and some in the postmodern era. There are divergences that emerge from peculiar historical, cultural, religious, and social factors.

The context of this story is the 1990s. At that time the social position and image of fathers had changed from being the absolute authority and the only powerful one to having lost many of their traditional “rights”. The father as dictator to be obeyed and respected by children remained until the 1970s. At the beginning of the 1990s the fathers’ authority has declined and many fathers lost their prestige. Postmodern thinking denies the “absolute”. Also, many fathers work very hard and are rarely seen by the

children. They are treated as the “money maker” or “money machine”. The father’s role in the home has become much weaker since Korean industrial development. The father works from early in the morning till night. The father comes back home only shortly after the children are sleeping. The father could not play with his children during the holidays, because he needs rest. So the children sometimes think that the father is “a worker” or “a sleeping person”. However, the mother organized the family finances uses in a family’s economy. The mother provides for the family’s needs. During the 1990s, many wives, who had enough time and enough money but their husbands could not fill their sexual desire, have deviated from their proper roles as mother and as wife. This has become a big social issue. In this story, the author replaces the image of the authoritarian and powerful father with that of a father who cares deeply for his child and is prepared to sacrifice all for him. In this way the author broke away from the traditional male role.

Here, it is necessary to study “God the Father” in contemporary culture and theology. Hamerton-Kelly (1979:foreword) says that, “a near century of psycho-analytic research and reflection on the cultural importance of traditional symbols has shown that the term ‘father’ is both more significant and often more problematic than prior generations explicitly realized”. The description of God as Father seems to portray a judge and a fearful image to the Israelites in the Old Testament. People’s initial preconception of God is contradictory to the surface reading of the biblical texts.

The psychologist, Sigmund Freud, insisted on the centrality of the “father” in human consciousness. This cannot remain unchallenged, because the Father’s figure is the reflection on the place of that figure in people’s cultural heritage (Hamerton-Kelly 1979:5). Mary Daly’s opinion about the image of God as father is expressed in her book “Beyond God the Father”. She sees the image of the father as the cornerstone of a self-alienating mode of existence, which produces rape, genocide and war. When the father-God and his works are renounced, a new heaven and earth of mutual respect, truth, and vitality will come about. She argues for symbolization which is not anthropomorphic. “....Neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the mother is God who transcends anthropomorphic symbolization” (Daly 1973). She argues that a re-visioning of God must focus on the experiences of becoming, rather than the sense of structure and permanence, and in this emphasis acknowledges a certain affinity with theologians.

Mary Daly analyzes societies where patriarchy was and is the root of all evil. However, there are many other factors that need to be considered when analyzing the roots of societies: the individual's perversity, the love of death and destruction that defeats all attempts to strive for goodness. Daly's (1973:6) challenge is that "the patriarchal shape of Judaism and Christianity has contributed mightily to the ills which these religions are committed to relieve; that the religions are, in short, self-contradictory; and that this is caused by their devotion to the symbol of 'father' for God". Her promise is that, when women move beyond the father symbol, they will enter into new realms of energy and possibilities for human happiness (Daly 1973:6). To share in God's blessing, one had to belong to a family, so the status of the father was divinely sanctioned, and the divinity was involved in the history of the individual and society at the most intimate level – the level of family. From early on in the history of the development of god conceptions, earthly fatherhood was seen as the source of life and the guarantor of order in the family. God was associated with the experience of sustenance and education from the history of fatherhood in Israel (Daly 1973:27; see De Boer 1974:966-969). Israel was a patriarchal society which was organized in families, tribes and clans according to patrilineal relationships. A family was called "the house of the father" and usually composed of three generations. It was essential to be buried with the father and to remain within the sphere of the family blessing. Therefore, the father's power was absolute.

In the Old Testament, God is depicted as Savior (Ex 3:7-8), as a sincere God (Ps 146:6), as an almighty God (Gn 17:1; Ps 91:1), a fearful God (Jr 5:24; Ec12:13), as a warrior (Jr 20:11), as a wise God (Job 12:13), as a judge (Is 33:22), as The Holy One (Hs 11:9), as the creator (Is 40:28; Dt 33:27), and as God the Father (Ps 89:26; Jr 3:19; Is 64:8; Ps 68:5). The Israelite God is expressed in many ways. God is also seen as mother or woman:

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them (Gn 3:21).

He shielded him and cared for him;

He guarded him as the apple of his eye (Dt 32:10).

You deserted the Rock, who fathered you;
you forgot the God who gave you birth (Dt 32:18).

Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings (Ps 17:8).

I cry out to the God Most High,
to God, who fulfills his purpose for me (Ps 57:2).

Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings (Ps 63:7).

He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart (Ps 91:4).

But I have stilled and quietened my soul;
like a weaned child with its mother,
like a weaned child is my soul within me (Ps 131:2).

But now, like a woman in childbirth,
I cry out, I grasp and pant (Is 42:14).

Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all you who remain of the house of Israel,
you whom I have upheld since you were conceived,
and have carried since your birth.
Even to your old age and gray hairs
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you;
I will sustain you and I will rescue you (Is 46:3-4).

Can a woman forget the baby at her breast
and have no compassion on the child She has born?
Though she may forget, I will not forget you! (Is 49:15)

This is what the Lord says:
“A voice is heard in Ramah,
mourning and great weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because her children are no more” (Jr 31:15)

This what the Lord says:
“Restrain your voice from weeping
and your eyes from tears,
for your work will be rewarded,”
declares the Lord (Jr 31:16).

I will extend peace to her like a river,
and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream;
you will nurse and be carried on her arm
and dandled on her knees.
As a mother comforts her child,
so will I comfort you;
and you will be comforted over Jerusalem” (Is 66:12-13).

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
But the more I called Israel
the further they went from met
they sacrificed to the Baals

and they burned incense to images.

It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,

taking them by the arms;

but they did not realize

it was I who healed them.

I led them with cords of human kindness,

with ties of love;

I lifted the yoke from their neck

and bent down to feed them (Hs 11:1-4).

The use of female sexual imagery for God in Hosea is illuminated by feminist theoretical considerations. Setel (1985:95) says that “a central issue for contemporary religious feminist is the extent to which the use of these (and other) biblical writings continues to so define women in our own societies”. The passages of the female features of God provide acknowledged female experience and allow women to redefine the relationship between God and women”.

There was a serious ambivalence in the early Christian attitude towards the father’s authority. It is most evident in the sayings about the status of women, which express contempt (I Cor 14:34) and unparalleled affirmation (Gl 3:28) sometimes. This situation represents the confrontation between the impulse for reformation of the patriarchy on the one hand, which Jesus shows, and the resistance of entrenched privilege on the other. Jesus broke the forms of the patriarchal family in the name of God the Father and recognized the natural right of women to equal humanity with men. Jesus had women in his entourage (Mk 15:40-41). Jesus spoke with women in public (Jn 4:27). Jesus spent time teaching them (Lk 10:39). Jesus let a woman wash his feet, and let her perform a service for him, which was a sign of the characteristic of a wife’s duty for her husband (Lk 7:36-38). Jesus paid special attention to mothers and children, regardless of the characteristic objections from his disciples (Mk 10:13-16). Jesus refused to condemn an adulteress, knowing how unfair the law on adultery was to women, upon whom alone it laid the obligation of absolute marital fidelity (Jn 7:53-8:11). Jesus allows neither the subordination of one partner to the other, nor the treating of women as a chattel, whose

adultery infringes the man's property rights. Jesus seems to reject patriarchy – the absolute authority.

Woman was required to give up in her individual profession for the sake of the traditional idea of a woman's role of keeping peace and maintaining the family. Daum's mother's opinions are very different. She breaks away from this idea; she wants to study. The mother tries to further her own position in the society as best she can. She seems to be a liberated woman. She is portrayed as the opposite of the traditional model wife and mother. She does whatever she pleases. Whatever she wants to say, she says. The author portrays a model father. The author describes the mother as follows: She leaves her family because of the poor conditions; she gives up the right of nurturing her child when she is divorced; she is described as careless, unkind and unfaithful. She seems to be influenced by financial matters. She changes her mind, depending on what is to her advantage; she denies responsibility for her child at first, but later she wants to help him. Daum's father is portrayed as mild and gentle. He is most attentive to his son. The mother does not endure any pain and seems to act on momentary impulses. She does not consider others' conditions and feelings. The author expresses dualistic notions of good and bad. Daum's father is caring for his son very well without a wife. Readers can feel the betrayal of Daum's mother. She does not act in the traditional way. The author leads the readers to trust and have confidence in Daum's father.

The role of Daum's mother is not that of a traditional mother or wife. The theory as seen in the story, is that the one who has money and power, can have a child too. The powerful person (Daum's mother) continually maintains power, but the powerless person (Daum's father) seems unable to overcome his difficulties. She suddenly proclaims a divorce without consideration of what the husband and her child have to feel and go through. The husband must endure many things: his loneliness, the pain of rejection and abandonment, his dissatisfying work and financial problems, his lovely son's bitter suffering, the lack of proper treatment for his son, and the pain and anguish at his incapability to be of any help to his son. Even though Daum's father is male, his actions are like that of a female in the traditional culture and still in current times. The author tries to describe the good father, but he has made a mistake in opposing male and female in this way. The patriarchal power game is depicted in the story, the only difference

being that the roles related to gender, are reversed. Some factors concerning social reformation can be distinguished in the story.

- Daum's mother tries to liberate herself from her circumstances.
- The definite roles of male and female are changing. A father also has the responsibility to feed his children. Child-rearing is not only a woman's task. Daum's father took really good care of his child. This challenges many Korean men and fathers. The author breaks through the traditional thinking about male and female roles.

The father, Chung Ho-Yun, said to his son in his mind when he died: "I am not going to die forever, even though I am dead. I am living in you, whom I have left behind in the world. You can see, hear, and touch me, because I am walking with you always. As I accompany you, I worry that you may fall down, be tired, or stop walking." Daum becomes the successor of his father. Herein the meaning of resurrection can be seen. The successor is important to Oriental thinking, because the old generations have to die but the new generation can live on with their images and passion. A female model in Confucianism is "motherhood", which means that a mother must bear a son as a successor of the father. Only after giving birth to a boy, is a woman recognized as a "human being". This idea is still prevalent among women today who want to get a firm position in the family, irrespective of how educated they are. A Korean female novelist asks: "Is it natural for today's women to try to get a boy in so many ways?" (Lee NH 1996:188).

When Ho-Yun loses all hope, he goes to the hospital chapel. He is anxious for the recovery of his son, so he begs the absolute being to let his son receive life in the place of his own life. He is not a Christian so he does not know who the absolute being in whom his son believes, is. Religion is necessary in people's minds, especially when people are weak. Christ can be imaged through Ho-Yun who gives his body for his son.

In Ho-Yun's prayer, the prayer of Korean mothers over the centuries can be recognized. The ancient ritual has been passed down through the oral tradition. A woman's prayer is her own wishes or blessings on her and her family; her own divinity or

family's blessings are honored in a ritual within herself. It is very private and a self-affirmation for Korean women.

5.3 A woman's prayer

Women believe in the work of the Holy Spirit whose characteristics are life-creation and the spirit of freedom. Firstly, women can understand the role of the Holy Spirit as creator of life because they have the experiences giving birth and feeding children. Women believe that God gives people life and love, because of their own experience of raising children. Women pray for their children's safety from accidents and sickness. The most frightening matter for women is war, because through wars, many children and family members are lost. It is women who suffer most from this. Women also want to protect nature. Their loved ones need to eat fresh produce, breathe fresh air and drink fresh water. Women's minds are connected with life-creation.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is the spirit of freedom. Women need freedom from oppression. Women realize that the reason for their subordination in society or in the church is due to sexism, which is immoral, unjust, improper and unrighteous. Women did not receive proper treatment politically, socially and economically in the past. The Holy Spirit does not seem to give women the gift of the Spirit equally with the men in Korean churches. Korean Christian women have been hearing the message of service and sacrifice continuously. A feminist theologian Yang Hyun-Hai points out the problem within the Korean churches. When Christianity first came to Korea, women experienced liberation and independence when they heard the message (see Yang HH 1997:136-166). Liberal ideas in the Gospel, revitalized Korean female Christians. But after the Korean churches had become institutionalized and systematized, sexism and "male-stream" theology appeared. Korean women want to be free of this. Only the Spirit of freedom could help Korean women to feel free from political and social sexism and discrimination in the church.

It is necessary for women to express their spirit in various forms, through the Holy Spirit. Naomi Janowiz and Maggie Wenig (1979:176) expressed this in the article "Sabbath prayer for women". Magnified, sanctified, blessed, glorified, exalted and

honored and praised is the great Name of God through the world that She created according to Her will. It is a start for women to refer to God as “She”.

Blessed is She who spoke

Blessed is She who spoke and the world became. Blessed is She.

Blessed is She who in the beginning, gave birth.

Blessed is She who says and performs.

Blessed is She who declares and fulfills.

Blessed is She whose womb covers the earth.

Blessed is She whose womb protects all creatures.

Blessed is She who nourishes those who are in awe of Her.

Blessed is She who lives forever and exists eternally.

Blessed is She who redeems and saves. Blessed is Her name.

Women struggle with the meaning of their relationship with God. Women’s ideas and metaphors have the power to shape their worldview and give meaning to their experiences. Christian women need to re-interpret the Bible, Christian tradition, liturgy, and prayers in order to encourage women. Women need to look critically at literature in order to find the renewed the meaning of all that has been passed down already structured to women.

Women need to exorcize patriarchal ideologies. They need to cleanse the deeply rooted mindset of men-centered dominance. Women need to be filled with positive images of the strength and beauty of feminism. They need to reform the old system and the old ideologies of society and the church, and the dominant customs. Women need to proclaim the new world, filled with righteousness, peace, and equality.

In preparation for the ancient Korean rituals, a woman firstly purifies herself through a bath or a shower. She starts at dawn. She prepares some water in a bowl. The place of ancient Korean women was usually a terrace where soy sauce crocks were placed. Every house had a terrace at the back of the garden. Zsuzsanna Budapest (1979:269) says that the altar is an important part of woman’s rituals, and a very female part of dwellings. It

was a woman's own place, so Korean women used to have a clean altar there, for the house spirits, for the ancestors. She arranges the altar in a creative manner, for example, with a white cloth. Ancient Koreans always wore white cloth. The water is a powerful symbol: there is no organic life without water, it is the life force. After preparing herself, she kneels down in front of a water bowl. During her prayer, she joins her hands and continually rubs them, murmuring: "Bless myself and my family members." She mentions each family member by name and prays for their needs, one by one. Her wishful blessings can be divided into five categories: health, having a son, wealth, success or honor, and longevity for herself and for her family members. The most important wish of a Korean woman is for their peace and well-being. When she finishes the ritual chanting, she scatters some salt on her altar and around the house. The salt has the meaning of cleansing a dirty mind and environment, and exorcising bad conditions. Koreans started their daily lives with this blessings of their mothers' prayers.

A Hungarian-born woman, Zsuzsanna E. Budapest (1979:269-272), found the "woman spirit from a ritual" similar to that of Korean women. The self-blessing is very important: women affirm the divinity within themselves through the ritual. Women have internalized their oppression, inferior experiences, and unclean feelings, therefore they need to change the influences working deep in their minds. Through rituals, women can fill their minds with positive thinking.

The male stream theology distinguishes the roles of man and woman. For example, even though both man and woman have been spiritualized by the Holy Spirit, the proclamation of the Gospel is the role of man, and the service of the church is the role of woman. Woman is as an assistant to the male. But there is a female prophet, Anna, in Luke 1:36-38. The news of Jesus' birth was proclaimed by Anna. There are female prophets in the New Testament. Philip's four daughters preach God's words and God's will in Acts 21:9. There was a woman who was called a female disciple in Acts 9:36-43. She was called Tabitha, or Dorcas in Joppa. She was good enough to share many things. When the church was started, the style was that of a house church, closely related to women's activity. The houses of John's mother Mary (Ac 12:12-17), the house of Lydia who was a seller of purple (Ac 16:11-15), and the house of Nymphas in Laodicea (Col 4:15) were used as house churches. Priscilla was a teacher and a leader of worship

services, with her husband Aquila (Ac 18:26-28). She was called a coordinator of Paul, in Rome 16:3. Phebe was working in the Cenchræ church. She was a female minister in today's language. Paul recommended her to the Rome church in Romans 16:1-2. Paul called her "sister". "Sister" means the evangelist or a leader of a church. There are many women whose names are recorded in the Bible. For example, salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured in the Lord, and the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord (Rm 16:12), salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother (Rm 16:13). Christianity was spread in the world because of the many undiscovered efforts of women, in the past. Women's undiscovered stories are not unimportant.