CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION
Indian novelists have dealt with family relationships with high seriousness in their novels. It is so because the traditional ethos of Indian culture attaches great importance to the family unit. They have extensively dealt with the theme of man-woman relationship which has a great historical, sociological and cultural significance.

The family in India, during the last few decades has undergone tremendous changes which have significant change in structure and various relationship in a family unit. In the nuclear family system, the control of the senior family members has weakened. As a result the young generation of male and female get plenty of freedom and liberty to live life very carelessly and comfortably.

Husband and wife is the principal component in a family. The relationship between husband and wife has been immensely influenced by the growing enlightenment and the movement for emancipation of woman. These changes combined with the changes in socioeconomic conditions have changed the patriarchal attitude to gender. In her book Sexual Politics (1977) Kate Millett has used the term “patriarchy” which implies rule of the father. Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male and treats the female as an inferior. In this book she has distinguished “gender” from “sex”. “Sex” is determined biologically where as “gender” is a culturally acquired sexual identity. Millett has attacked the social scientists who treat the culturally acquired female identity as natural. She treats sex “roles” as repressive.
Indian writers—particularly the female writers have been attracted to the changing concept of woman in the modern times. That is why we find that the image of woman presented in the works of Indian writers is totally different from the image of the past. The new feminist movement has contributed to the consolidation of position of woman in society. Woman now refuse to submit to their husband in the servile manner. Thus the Indian writers have been left to redefine the husband-wife equation.

The new changes have brought forth a new woman. The woman today are characterised by conflicting opinions about the values, culture and the traditional etchots of Indian society. The new forces at work demand the woman to follow the life based on Western philosophy of freedom and liberty whereas the traditional self in them requires them to adhere to and abide by the age old customs and norms. The result is that most of woman have developed a kind of indecisive attitude. They are neither willing to adhere the-age old custom nor are they courageous enough to assert themselves, in the society which is largely dominated by the men.

The novels of Kamala Markandaya depict women who embody the conflicting character which in a significant manner determined and influenced their relationship with the males. Markandaya portrays the man-woman relationship from various angles. What is most striking about her is that she doesnot repeat herself in her novels. A critic Henenway calls Markandaya as,

“One of the most productive popular and skilled Indian English novelists.”

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Markandaya’s intention to,

“awaken the polite society to the real problems,” 2

prompts her to throw new light upon the man-woman relationship. Kamala Markandaya shows her deep concern with the contemporary social problems, and in this context the different shades of the relationship between man and woman is delineated. We find in the novels of Kamala Markandaya an authentic portrayal of the contemporary India and its challenges. As Shiv K. Kumar comments:

“Of all the contemporary Indian novelists writing in English, Kamala Markandaya is the most accomplished— in respect of — her authentic portrayal of the Indian scene. What distinguishes her most intensively from other Indian novelist is her acute awareness of a gradual shift in values that has been taking place in this subcontinent during the past two decades or so.” 3

There is dissimilarity between Nayantara Sehagal’s treatment of Man-Woman relationship and that of Kamala Markandaya’s. Sehagal’s treatment of man-woman relationship is based on her strong faith in, “new humanism.” According to which woman is not merely a sex object but as man’s equal and honored partner. In Sehagals novel This Time of Morning Nita does not want to marry because marriage would curtail and restrain her new-found liberty. Kamala Markandaya on the other hand projects her female characters as subordinate and submissive to their male

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counterparts, e.g. Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve* has no choice but to marry a tenant farmer Nathan. She is not concerned about whether the marriage would prove detrimental to her desires for freedom and liberty. The novel *Nectar in a Sieve* illustrates that what is important in man-woman relationship is an affirmation of faith, of hope, of love etc. Rukmani and Nathan experience ownness in life. Rukmani is fully developed and loyal to her husband.

"It is clear that sexuality is totally absent" 4

between Dr, Kenny and Rukmani. Further referring to man woman relationship in the novel, Uma Parmeshwran writes:

"However, between the lines, Markandaya has an inright into human bonds, those includable bonds that can from between two people which is definitely different from natural sibling affections and yet is on a plane of chastity where sex is irrelevant. In short, Nathan was justified in being jealous, but not for sexual reason." 5

Nathan is, however, reported to have a clandestine relation with another woman named Kunti. The disclosure of this relationship shocks Rukmani but it does not affect her bonds of feeling to her husband. What Markandaya seems to suggest is that, the wives-particularly in Indian society must be large-hearted to tolerate the delinquency of the husbands. All the wives, in the novels of Markandaya strangely embody this characteristic.

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In Nectar in a Sieve the relationship between father and daughter is a bit different from that in other Indian novels in English. Nathan is deeply concerned with the welfare of Ira that is why Ira is brought home when she is deserted by her husband on the grounds of infertility. No Indian father would do that. A typical Indian father would attempt to bring a patch-up between husband and wife in such context. Further, Nathan grants Ira plenty of freedom during Ira’s post-divorced life. Ira resorts to prostitution to support the family and protect her ailing brother. Ira’s father does not prevent her from doing so. Nathan shows, however, some indigence over his daughter’s unacceptable behavior but later on he goes to the extent of accepting the illicit child of Ira.

Nayantara Sehagal has exemplified in her novel, “Storm in Chandigrah.” that alienation between husband and wife results from the lack of communication and temperamental in compatibility. Markandaya appears to accept this theory of Sehagal. In A Silence of Desire. there is a lack of communication between Dandekar and Sarojani which amount to create alienation between their relationship. This lack of communication is caused because of the woman’s attempt at dissimulation. In this context Uma Parmeshwarn has rightly remarked.

“I agree with Krishnaswamy that Markandaya’s woman resort to dissimulation, but I don’t think it is for self. Protection but for protecting the man they love. Women in her novels dissulate and her for various reasons: for sparing hurt to their men’s egos; for keeping from them knowledge that would cause them
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suffering, as with Sarojani’s illness; to prevent unwarranted jealously: to allow for their loss of touch with the earth and spirit, and so on: But each time, it is to spare the men they love.

Carolines lying about Ellie in, “Possession” is a little more problematic.

“I am not sure I agree that the lying in inept. In each instance, note the smoothness with which the lie slips off her tongue as she pre-empts suspicion.” 6

But in relationship between father and daughter the daughters are found to be disrespectful to the authority of the parents particularly that of the father. The daughters like Ira, Lalitha, Nalini, Ramabai etc. do not make any attempt at disimulation. Ramabai in A Silence of Desire does not want to remain silent when she finds her liberty restrained. Her father Dandekar dislikes her going to a milkbar. But Ramabai very boldly replies:

“Why not? Doesn’t mother go to see someone none of us know? Don’t you?” 7

In the Two Virgins Lalitha goes to the world of glamour in a most defiant manner. But the defiant and obdurate attitudes of the daughters donot amount to strain their relationships with their parents. Despite all displeasures, Nathan, Appa, Dandekar etc. love their daughters.

The treatment of man-woman relationship in Kamala Markandaya’s fiction reveals that she is very much unlike. Mohan Rakesh an eminent

Hindi writer. Mohan Rakesh holds revolutionary ideas about marriage and man-woman relationship. Man-Woman in Rakesh's view are two questioning individuals facing each other. Mohan Rakesh has presented a new philosophy regarding man-woman relationship in context of modern times. He firmly affirms that the social and conventional basis of marriage is being eroded, and this would ultimately lead to a situation where marriage may not need to be solemnized. In his novel, "Ek Aur Zindagi" Mohan Rakesh depicts the changing relations of husband and wife in the society. Obviously Kamala Markandaya does not subscribe to this view of Rakesh. She has strong faith in the traditional marriage. Marriage, is Markandaya believes, a sacramental bond that ends only with the death of any of the partners. It is not easy to break the bond and affinity of marriage either by the husband or by the wife.

In Nectar in a Sieve, Rukamni does not separate from Nathan even in adverse circumstances. The disclosure of Nathan's secret affair with Kunti displeases Rukmani at the same time Nathan feels humiliated. Rukmani does not express her anger for Nathan's relations with Kunti. This is so because they consider themselves as being made for each other because of the bonds of marriage. Marriage is not only a relationship of two physical bodies aiming at achievement of sexual satisfaction but marriage has a more important function which may be called procreative function. This procreative function is so important that, in absences of this the marriage can be derecognised. Ira is disowned by her husband because of her barrenness. The importance of marriage in the eyes of Markandaya can be determined from the fact that in A Handful of Rice she does not allow Nalini to come closer to Ravi. It is only after marriage.

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that their relationship is deemed to be legalised and they are allowed to live freely. In *A Silence of Desire* the bonds of marriage compel Sarojani to tell her husband lie to continue her meeting with the Swami. She lies to prevent any kind of bitterness and acrimony between her self and her husband. In *Two Virgins*, Lalitha’s premarital pregnancy panics everyone in her family. Appa immediately rushes to Mr. Gupta to press upon him for marriage, because Lalitha’s virginity becoming defiled is a big disgrace to the family. Thus marriage is very important in the eyes of Kamala Markandaya. For her marriage implies faith and trust in and lot of love for each other.

Man-Woman relationship in Bharti Mukarji’s novels is treated from the point of view of the cultural alienation. The tremendous difference between two cultures, two ways of life lead a person to a feeling of shock. The cultural conflict affects the personal relationship between husband and wife. In her novel *Wife*, Amit and Dimple migrate to U. S. A. after marriage. In America Dimple develops an illicit relationship with Milt. But she doesnot find peace of mind as she couldnot imbibe the American culture. She lives a life of hallucination and kills her husband Amit.

Kamala Markandaya doesnot believe in reconciliation of East and West. Cultural, racial and geographical differences are the greatest impediments in bringing two hearts closer. In *Possession* Valmiki cannot come closer to Caroline despite all kinds of allurement Caroline offers to him. Even after impregnating Ellie, Valmiki disowns both Ellie and her child. What Markandaya suggests that union of two hearts is not possible between man and woman belonging to two different cultural backgrounds.
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In The Coffer Dams the relationship between Helen and Bashiam does not flourish, because for Helen Bashiam turns out equally indifferent. Bashiam does not treat Helen as his own because Helen belongs to a different cultural setup. So like E. M. Foster, Markandaya thinks that the East and West cannot meet. For Survival and for a healthy relationship, Markandaya thinks roots are very important, and if one's roots are injured or lost one dies spiritually. Rukmani's love for her husband and the strength of emotional bond is reflected through what Rukmani say's.

“This home my husband had built for me, with his own hands, in the time he was waiting for me. In it we had lain together, and our children had born this but with all it's memories was to be taken from us---- and the land itself by which we lived.”

Cultural alienation cannot lead to a harmonical relationship between man and woman. In addition, the balanced relationship requires a mutual feeling of trust and faith in each other and respect for the individuality and freedom of each other. Any attempt at overdomination or possession may be disastrous and suicidal for the relationship between man and woman. Valmiki is possessed by lady Caroline. Caroline hails from a different cultural background she thinks that India is, “A wilderness” “A waste land” and that valmiki's work has been a waste here:

“All of it. wasted beauty wasted work, a wasted man.”

Caroline wants to put on his art “like a necklace of diamonds.” to
beautify herself. She tries to dominate Valmiki. But Val realises that,

"However strongly western influence, it was from India that his strength came." 10

Valmiki seems to be determined to be released from Caroline and England. But he is checkmated by the love-hate relationship that has developed there.

In *A Handful of Rice* Ravi has migrated from his village. He tries to develop roots in the city but he fails because of his weak determination and unwillingness to face reality. Like Dr. Faustus, Ravi wavers between his way of life and that of Damodar's. His idealism is quiet unrealistic and therefore it remains unrealised. It is Nalini with whose help he could restore balance. Nalini is:

"Constant, a rock to which he could cling and keep his head level when his views and values began their mad dance." 11

According to Kamala Markandaya marriage between two partners who are Indians bring them closer never to be alienated. Marriage makes them powerful and sensible enough to repose faith in each other. In the novels of Markandaya the bonds of marriage never break-Nathan-Rukamni, Dandekar-Sarojani, Appa-Amma, Apu-Jayamma, Ravi-Nalini—all these couples remain united to each other till the end of their lives. But the relationship between Helen and Clinton, is not static and Helen proves to be disloyal as she forges a new relation with Bashiam. Helen turns away
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from her husband because the culture and tradition in which they were brought up and groomed does not oblige them to remain chaste and undefiled.

Thus Kamala Markandaya has deep faith in and respect for the strong bonds of Indian marriages. She is very much unlike Shashi Deshpande, who thinks that marriage ends in frustration and alienation. In Deshpande’s *The Dark Holds no Terrors*. The happy conjugal life of Saru and Manohar becomes very soon disintergrated. Regarding the relationship between Saru and Manohar Seema Suneel writes:

“Saru is a woman who is fettered by her marriage to a man who has sadistic tendencies: Shashi Deshpande makes an extensive use of interior monologue to bring out Saru’s suffering due to the husband’s sadistic treatment and the mothers callous attitude towards her. Throughout, the novel shifts between the present and the past events. At her father’s house, Saru has enough time at her disposal to review her relationship with her husband. It gives her a chance to have a better understanding of herself and relation with her husband. At the end, she is able to confront reality and the dark no longer holds any terror.” 12

Regarding the relationship between husband and wife Markandaya endorses and accepts the traditional Indian view, according to which man’s affinity with woman is most often the bond that exists between a master and his slave. But among Markandaya’s character the beauty of this
relationship is enhanced by the presence of love, faith and respect for each other. As a result the master-slave relationship becomes non existent.

In his book *Frailty, thy name is (w)omen*, R.W. Desai very excellently portrays the relationship between man-and-woman. Indian woman, as depicted in this novel is the true representative of transitory phase of Indian society where traditional values have come in conflict with the liberal values imbibed from the West. The Novelist writes that in our society marriage is considered a great ambition and ultimate goal of a girl. The girls are taught to inculcate the traditional feminine virtues so that she could prove attractive in the marriage-market. In this context Simone De Beauvoir’s observation that “marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to woman by society” is better reflected in Indian society. Kamala Markandaya agrees with R. W. Desai’s portrayal of man-woman relationship.

In Markandaya’s novels all the female characters who are married are morally very strong. They are very loyal to their husbands. They are never portrayed as practising promiscuity. They always encourage their husbands to follow the path of virtue and eschew evil. Rukmani is a source of inspiration to Nathan. Jayamma and Nalini provide moral support to their respective husbands. Similarly character of Sarojani as revealed to her husband after his doubts and scepticism are dismantled which makes him feel very proud of his wife.

Finally it can be said that the man-woman relationship as delineated in the novels of Markandaya can be properly understood only when the various themes and issues of the novels are analysed and studied. The views
of Uma Parmeshwaren regarding the issues of characterisation and the language in Markandaya’s novel is very appropriate in this regard:

“Each novel has a different voice, for the main character in each is very different from all her other protagonists. Markandaya’s prose style is well synchronies with each protagonist’s sensibility. It is interesting to note the evolution of her prose style. Her earlier novels are written in simple and affective language. Unlike Mulk Raj Anand which courses down tempestuously, or Raja Rao’s which meanders tortuously as it punctuates the anguish of the soul, Markanday’s language flows, even and beautiful. Like Ganga in the plains. Their is translated language. The fluent, Unending stream of abuses so characteristics of Anand’s Coolie and the involved loquaciousness of Raja Rao’s Kantapura are literally translation from the vernacular or have the rhythm of the vernacular. Markandaya’s is not a translated language. She doesnot attempt to adapt the vervacular idiom or patterns; the language of her earlier works is unobtrusively pure. Yet she succeeds in bringing not the texture of the speech of the social classes by varying the degree of simplicity and articulation.” 13
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