CHAPTER II
NECTAR
IN A SIEVE
The title itself carries a lot of significance. It is borrowed from Coleridge’s sonnet “work without hope.”

“Work without hope draws Nectar in a Sieve.

And hope without an objects cannot live.”

Literally the title of the novel shows how Nectar can be drawn in a Sieve. Here Sieve will stand for social sufferings, social injustice, inequality etc. In this man dominated society, a woman has to suffer a lot. The theme of the novel revolves around the clash between traditional ideas and the forces of material progress.

The traditional ideas are deeply routed in village social life. It is very difficult for any one to eliminate such traditional ideas from the social fabric. The Novelist has depicted very appropriately the Indian rural life and the traditional pattern of life which characterise the Indian village life. It has been rightly stated that

“Based on the traditional pattern of life in countless villages all over India, The book is a passionate cry of protest against social injustice, portrayal of patience in the face of suffering of labour even when there is no hope”. I

It is in the background of village life that man-woman relationship has been properly studied by the novelist. In the present
study an attempt has been made to study the relationship between man and woman on different counts. It can be comfortably concluded that the relationship between man and woman has not only been determined and influenced by mutual belief and conviction and sense of loyalty to each other upto large extent, but it is influenced and determined by the social beliefs, customs, norms and values.

The novel depicts two generations of families the first to which Rukamani belongs and another to which her daughter Irawaddy-nickname Ira. Both the families belong to the lower middle class—particularly the peasant class. Commenting on Markandaya’s novel Iyengar writes:

‘Markandaya writes that fear, hunger and despair are the constant companions of a peasant’-

“fear of the dark future, fear of the sharpness of hunger, fear of the blackness of death.” 2

It is right that village life is characterised by natural beauty of a countryside, love for life and nature, the placid rhythm of life and harmonical relationship between man and women. e.g. Rukmani is very careing and concerned about her husband. The next generation is not solely routed in the rural culture but the setting up of tannery in the village has brought a kind of urbanization. The urban values of life characterised by human degradation, prostitution, hunger, disease, unemployment etc. In the context of these two different settings and also in the rural-urban continuum that man-woman relationship has been analysed and probed into by the novelist.
Rukmani as a child, is much loved by her parents. Being a girl child, she depends upon the decision of her parents about her future settlement. In rural catchments women are allowed a little freedom in terms of her education and marriage. But Rukmani is fortunate to have acquired some amount of education in form of liberty allowed to her by her parents. Her father is in the habit of taking all important decisions in consultation with his wife. So what is noticed is that a balance is there between husband-wife relationship particularly in case of Rukmani’s father and mother. This is proved by the way the father got married his first two daughters—

“Shanta first a big weddings which lasted for many days, plenty of gifts and feasts, diamond earrings, a gold necklace, as befitted the daughter of a village headman. Padmini next, and she too made a good much and was married fittingly taking jewels and dowry with her.”

It is no denyings the fact that grand and magnificent weddings to the daughters are given by the parents who are living a harmonical relationship with each other. So Rukmani’s father and mother are living a conjugal life characterised by balance, mutual trust and unflinching faith in each other.

The mother desires from the core of her heart to wed Rukmani with equal grandeur and magnificence but because the father lost his title, so there was inability and regret expressed by the mother. (which also indirectly includes the emotions of the father.)
"Four dowries is too much for a man to bear" 4

The decision of the parents who have been rendered helpless by the circumstances is acceptable to Rukmani.

"Perhaps that was aby they could not find one a right husband and married me to a tenant farmer who was poor in everything but in love and care for me...." 5

Rukmani's father had found out a tenant farmer as a husband to her, who was unrivalled in "love and care for me." This was a match which Rukmani finds "match was below me," but there is no grumble and discontentment on the part of either Nathan or Rukmani.

Like a docile wife Rukmani goes to her husband's home to render her duties as a wife there. Initially, Rukmani's departure brings tears in the eyes of everyone, including Nathan. Nathan, consoling Ruknani, says to her

"It is a thing that might happens to anybody." He said,

"Do not fret, come dry your eyes and sit up here beside me." 6

It appears that Nathan is going to take much care of his newly wedded wife and it is the wife also who from the very day of wedding reposes her blind faith in her husband.-

"It was my husband who woke me - my husband." 7
It is through Rukmani that we are introduced to Kali, "big and plumb with ample hips and thrusting breasts." and Janki and Kunti. Women’s attitude to men is also revealed. “Men are all the same.” This attitude has not rendered women hostile to their men folks, but simply it conveys the traditional view which makes women subordinate to men.

The relationship of all these women to their husband is not balanced one. Women is subordinate to men because the society in India is patriarchal. e.g. Janki is married to Perumal- the village shopkeeper. She does all the household works and so is the case with Kali and Kunti- who remains busy throughout the day, doing their household chorus. Rukmani is also trained into becoming a housewife by these women folks. But her husband goes on appreciating her for all her duties. The husband-Nathan never raised his voice or shouted at her rather his behavior to his wife defies all the traditional behaviors of the husbands. Rukmani is very proud to have a husband like him.

“What patience invited my husband must have had, to put up with me uncomplainingly during those early days of our married lives. Not one cross word or impatient look and praise for whatever small success I achieved.”

Even Nathan calls her as “Ruku” abbreviating the name which betrays deep intimacy between husband and wife.
But this is not to say that their views converged in all matters. In fact, on many counts they hold different opinions. Regarding the setting of the tannery in the village, they had always held different views. Rukmani thinks that tannery pollutes the proverbial atmosphere of the village and corrodes the values of the people. Whereas, her husband does not feel that industrialization might bring much evil and degradation. He advise his wife to accept the change,

"Foolish woman", he tells her, "there is no going back, bend the grass that you do not break." 

The tannery is fully established but Rukmani is not at all jubilant with the change. Even her friend Kunti is happy with the setting of the tannery. She says,

"The tannery ....... a boom to us." 

she asks Rukmani,

"Are you not glad that our village is no longer a clump of huts, but a small town. Soon there will be shops, tea stalls even a bioscope." 

But Rukmani knows that the tannery is going to breed in untold suffering to the people living in the village. She cried,

"They may live in our midst but I can never accept them for they lay their hands upon us and we are forced from the telling to barters and hard our’ silver since we cannot spend it and see our children go without
the goods their children gorge and it is only in the hope that one day thing will be as they were that we have done these things. But like a mystical demon the whole village is devoured by the tannery that turns into a spiritual waste land. It is all noise and crowds everywhere and rude yours hoolingons idling in the street in the dirty bazar and an couth behavior and no man thinks of another but scheme only for his money.” 14

Thus, Rukmani expresses her discontentment with the processes of industrializations. At this point, she differs from her husband Nathan who does not grumble with this change. He accepts it. He is a typical tenant farmer. He is hopeful. Even when he has to work for long hours. He renders his duties most sincerely. His wife is always a source of comfort and consolation to him. When the foodgrains are to end in stock, she believes that her little rice

“will last until times are better.” 15

Nathan had once almost lost his confidence when he suffers the loss of paddy. It is Rukmani who comforts him by saying,

“Never fear all will be well.” 16

Indian agriculture is a gamble with the monsoon. Nathan has become a tragic victim of the vagaries of nature. But he is comforted by his wife. Rukmani tells him

“To those who live by the land, there must always
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"come times of hardship------some times we eat and
some times we starve.” 17

Had Rukmani not been there to assist and encourage Nathan, he would have died a broken hearted man. He owes everything to his wife Rukmani his field, his foodgrains and his survival.

The loss of land due to tannery is lamented by both husband and wife. Rukmani describes her blissful state.

"While the sun shines on you and the fields are green and beautiful to the eyes, and your husband sees beauty in you which no one has seen before and have a good store of grain laid away for hard times, a roof over you and a sweet stirring in your body, what more can a woman ask for? My heart song and my feet were light as I went about my work getting up at sunrise and going to sleep content. Peace and quite were ours.” 18

Nathan also agrees with his wife on the point that the land and good fertile season would certainly make them happy.

The sweet harmony of the peasant life is disrupted mercilessly by invasion of industrializations. Nathan agrees with his wife that tannery has contributed poverty and hunger to their family. The tannery has even snatched away their children from them. Rukmani sorrowfully recollects,

"My sons had left because it frowned on them. One of them had been destroyed by its ruthlessness.” 19
But Nathan as usual exhorts his wife not to think of trials but of joys. This is the kind of mutual understanding and a deep sense of concern for each other between husband and wife that accounts for the happy conjugal life. Commenting on the characters of Rukmani Dr. Rakhi has written.

"Rukmani is not simply a village girl a loving and devoted wife and a sacrificing mother. She transcends these limited physical identities to represent the universal mother figure. She is not an educated woman but she is literate and aware. She has been taught to read and write by her father and this accomplishment invites the derision of the women folk in the village, where she sets down after her marriage. She is conceived as the encompassing, encoring, devoted, sacrificing, sufferings, loving and forgiving mother figure. She is the eternal mother. Her most prominent feature is her serenity and sense of balance in direct situations. She has no illusion in life and is not disturbed by any desire or longing." 20

Rukmani does never show any defiance to her male counterpart as many of the women (feminist) characters do. It may be so perhaps because she finds in Nathan most caring husband. Nathan has always admired her for whatever decision she had taken.

Rukmani says,

"What patience indeed my husband must have had, to
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put up with me uncomplainingly during those early days of our married lives. Not one cross word or impatient look and praise for whatever small success I achieved.” 21

Nathan never treats his wife as an object. Objectification of women is not perceptible in the relationship of Nathan and Rukmani.

Objectification of women is so pervasive in the novels of Shobha De. In Socialite Evenings, Shoba De has drawn characters like Anjali, Ritu, and Karuna. Anjali is treated like an object by her husband. She is only a sex-satisfying device for her husband. Even her husband Kumar Bhandari being a homosexual, marries her only to protect his image in the society. Ritu is also sexually exploited by her husband, Karuna equally is neglected by her husband Seth. All these three women turn to other men when they find that they (men) admired and appreciated them. Their own husbands never extolled their womanhood and the result is their indulgence extra marital relationships.

But in case of Rukmani one may easily trace her deep attachment and caring for her husband and vice-versa. Both the husband and wife are not only caring and concerning to each other. But they have a lot of forbearance. Nathan had shown forbearance with his wife, when for many days a son is not begotten by Rukmani.

“Nathan had wanted a son to continue his line and walk besides him as the land.” 22

But he never cursed or rebuked his wife as long as she didnot
produce a male child. This is a rare example of forbearance and endurance. Rukmani also shows a spirit of acceptance and endurance. The knowledge of Nathan’s illicit relationship with Kunti, lives her heart disillusioned and broken in utter agony.

But the intensity of her feeling knows no manifestation. She is a mute sufferer. It is this kind of sense of sacrifice for and faith in each other, which characterised the relationship between Nathan and Rukmani.

Rukmani is a typical Indian woman. She upholds and strives to glorify the Indian tradition. She is devoted to her husband and her faith is deeply routed in the traditional fabric of the society. She opposes her sons joining the tannery. She thinks that the tannery work is not the profession associated to their caste. Rukmani represents the large mass of suffering women in rural India. Their backs are bent with unrewarded labour.

Krashna Aahuja Patel conducted a survey on working women and concluded:

"Women constitute half of the world population and one third of the official labour force, perform nearly two thirds of the hours worked out according to some estimates (based an UN ICO- Statistics) receive only one tenth of the world income and possess less than one hundredth of the world property." 23

Rukmani is a hardworker. She works hard to get scanty reward. The traditional Indian attitude of suffering by women is also presented in the
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novel. Rukmani shows forbearance not only in matters of working and earning but also in matters related to the clash of Western ideas with that of her own. The Western ideas came to her through English doctor Kennington-called by Rukmani as Kenny.

The relationship between Dr. Kenny and Rukmani throws a new light upon the theme of East-West encounter in the novel. Rukmani is a fatalist. Whatever tragedy befalls her, she blames fate. Dr. Kenny is a realist. Dr. Kenny advises her to be practical. Once the floods have destroyed the crops. Rukmani tells Dr. Kenny that she has little rice which will last until times are better. But Dr. Kenny doesnot endorse this view of Rukmani. He says angrily:

"Times are better, times are better" He shouts. "Times will not be better for many months. Meanwhile you will suffer and die, you meek suffering floods, why do you keep this ghasty silence? Why do you not demand - cry out for help - do something? There is nothing in this country, oh god, there is nothing.

We shrink from his violence what con we do - what can he mean? The man is raving we go on our wap" 24

The passivity of Rukmani is what Dr. Kenny despises Dr. Kenny has told her several times:

"I have told you before... you must cry out if you want help. It is no use whatsoever to suffer in silence." 25
But Rukmani holds altogether a different view which is typically rural Indian one. She thinks:

“What profit to bewail that which has always been and cannot change.” 26

Dr. Kenny, however suggests her that she must protest, he says:

“Do you think spiritual grace comes from being in want or from suffering”. 27

Rukmani says affirmatively;

“Yet are priests fast, and inclined one themselves sever punishment and we are taught to bear our sorrow in silence, and all this is so that the soul may be cleaned.” 28

The relationship between Dr. Kenny and Rukmani has some autobiographical reference. Kamala Markandaya herself married an English man. So she is obsessed with creating an English character in a novel, which depicts a pure rural Indian life. Dr. Kenny is a very striking character. He has sacrificed his personal family life simply to work for the welfare of the people.

We are informed that his wife and children have, perhaps, renounced him. He is living in India particularly rural India, and makes all possible attempts to upgrade the living style of the rural folks. It is he who has treated Rukmani and cured her of her barrenness.

He has got very cordial relation with the family of Rukmani during
times of crises in Rukmani’s family. He regularly calls on her with some present in form of sweets or a ten rupees note.

Dr. Kenny is a very interesting and humorous character. Rukmani has approached him for curing her barrenness, because she was married for six years and could not beget a male child. Dr. Kenny talks to her humorously:

“come and see me” he said at last.

“It is possible, I may be able to do something......
Remember, I do not promise.” 29

Her profound attachment with Kenny is revealed during her expression of anxiety, when Dr. Kenny does not turn up to attend the feast hosted on the tenth day of the birth of a male child Rukmani does not conceal her liking for Dr. Kenny from her husband.

She declares:

“The one person I had wants most to see at our feast was not there..” 30

Further says:

“It is just that I would have like to see Dr. Kenny under our roof.” 31

She does not want to hide anything from her husband. Even if the husband minds her deep liking for Dr. Kenny. She thinks:

“What harm if he does not know I have not hide to him.” 32
Perhaps Rukmani thinks that lying is the greatest evil, that spoils mutual relationship. It is upon the foundation of this belief that the huge structure of her relationship with her husband, with Dr. Kenny and with others, is rested. After the birth of male child several male children were born to her. Dr. Kenny’s visit to her house overjoys her and she does all the formalities to please him extolling him as a great well-wisher of her family. She says:

"Your are my benefactor" I said stoutly

"Have I not five sons to prove it." 33

She is full of admiration for Dr. Kenny. She introduces Dr. Kenny to her husband. Dr. Kenny helps Rukmani’s family in times of crises. He wanted to create in her a firm sense of conviction. He also advises her to open her eyes to the realities. Regarding social security. Dr. Kenny tells her

"There is no provision at all.... Neither for old ... not young .... nor sick. They accept it; they have no option." 34

But Rukmani appears to be quite reluctant to change.

Despite this sense of unwillingness on the part of Rukmani, her liking for Dr. Kenny is really very deep. There is no harm in agreeing with the contention of Uma Parmeshwaran that relationship’s are often found without sexual component. Sex is not the sole factor for coming closer for men and women. This is well exemplified in the character of Irawaddy. Ira is married and because of her barrenness she is deserted by her husband.
So the relationship between Ira and her husband, sex does not play much important role. Had it been more important, Ira would have been retained by her husband. In place of sex, what is more important for forming a close relationship between man and woman, is procreation and mutual understanding and love for each-other.

The mutual understanding is so vital a factor for proximity between man and woman that the novelist has reiterated its importance in many of her novels.

The character of Kunti is very important from this point of view. Kunti is very attractive sexually. She is not a spiritual woman. She does not want to ruin any one’s familial life. She keeps Nathan’s secret until driven by her children hunger, Kunti’s characterization is a superior one. Kunti appears in the novel soon after a week of Rukmani’s coming to Nathan’s village as his bride. Rukmani meets her at the river along with Kali and Janki.

Kunti is.

“Small and narrow moving gracefully.” 35

despite her burden. She is newly married and soon after marriage she becomes pregnant. Kali even humorously comments,”

“As you see her husband has not wasted any time.” 36

Kunti is to deliver a child and during the birth, the only woman present is Rukmani. But Kunti dislikes her presence. Several reasons are described for the dislike of Rukmani by Kunti. Uma Parmeshwaran writes:

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"It could be that a woman in labour would not want the help on one who has not gone through the experience herself; but note a word, "entreatings"; it would be that she fears that in her pain she might blast out that Nathan is the father and thus incriminate herself; It could also be that she is considerate of what it might do to Rukmani if she were to blurt out the truth; and so entreats her to go away, I prefer the last reading because I think Kunti feels for and with Rukmani she is part of the woman's network in the early years. But then! Her innate differences take over." 37

Kunti keeps coming to Rukmani's house but gradually she is avoided by Rukmani. Kunti is called "as a devast women by Nathan and Janki." Soon the novelist informs the reader that Kunti has turned to regular prostitution. Even Rukmani, while returning from Dr. Kenny's house finds Kunti in a dress of a prostitution. The reason for her turning to prostitution is perhaps stated by Kunti for herself that her husband left her for another woman. But this does not appear to be sound reason for her degradation. Soon after marriage she turns to Nathan. It may be possible that Kunti is the kind of woman who has "fire in a body." Commenting on this Uma Parmeshwaran writes:

"There are different kinds of women, and Kunti is one kind - who has fire in her body and exults in using it. Or is "exult" a wrong word? Did she turn to other men because her husband was important? Was he physically impotent or is the word "impotent" used figuratively?

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If the forma, it makes sense that Kunti has turned to Nathan very soon after her wedding." 38

There may be some basic inclination on the part of Kunti to tread on immoral ways but it can be strongly said that the processes of urbanization of village is largely responsible for causing moral deviation in simple village folks. In the wake of urbanization people from different caste and class flock in the village and Kunti is naturally drawn towards the different pattern and types of living. Hunger is one of the evils which the tannery has brought along with it. Hunger drives the most beautiful Kunti to dubious ways of telling lies to get a handful of rice. She, even blackmails Nathan. What is perceptible here is that the social and economic ethos is, to a large extent, instrumental in shaping the man-woman relationship. To this social and economic ethos the prevailing culture may be added which also determines the course of man-woman relationship.

On the social front we see that Ira is rejected by her husband because of her in fertility which the society strongly disapproves.

Ira’s husband’s family ridiculed her barrenness and they always indulged in throwing humiliating remarks upon her. The result is Ira comes back to her fathers house never to go back. It is no where hinted in the novel that Ira was not a good match to her husband or that emotionally and sexually she couldnot satiate her husband. The only factor for disrupting this relationship is the social disapproval. Even Ira’s own father considers this abandonment of Ira by her husband as most logical and natural.

Back home Ira decides to lend a helping hand to her parents. Initially, she is submissive and yielding, but gradually she becomes revolting and...
her attitude becomes defiant. Regarding the change in her nature Rukmani says:

"She had been tender as modest and obedient, now she had relinquished every one of these qualities." 39

Even Nathan who is an upright and one who lives strictly in conformity with the norms and values of the society, finds this defiant attitude of Ira as quite shocking. Because of her being a "harlot" and a "common strumpet." Commenting on the Ira’s character the novelist writes:

"Ira stood defiant before him, uttering no denial, fingers plucking at the fringe of her sari." 40

And thus Ira was forced into prostitution against the desire of her parents.

"So we got used to her comings and goings, as we had got used to so much else." 41

Here the relationship between the father and daughter is strained because of the compelling social circumstances. Ira rejected by husband could not tolerate the miserable condition of her ailing brother ‘Kuti’, who is struggling for life and is bedridden for long time without any sign of recovery. On the face of such misery and dismal picture before eyes, the futility of ethics and morality is apparently evident. Ira understands this, but she is unable to influence her father’s attitude to traditional social values. She brings home money but the father refuses to accept it. He says:

41
"I will not touch it." Nathan is according to Rukmani, very strong and he was upright man." 

Initially Ira’s help to Kuti brings some improvement. But at last Kuti dies. Ira could not save Kuti.

The death of Kuti is a big blow to the parents as well as to Ira. But utter helplessness of man before the scheme of Divinity is manifest. When Rukmani utters:

"The strife had lasted too long and had been too painful for me to call him back to continue." 

The relationship between Dr. Kenny and Rukmani is further strengthened after death of Kuti. One of Rukmani’s sons Selven is sent into the services of Dr. Kenny. Dr. Kenny is building a hospital and Selven is looking forward for a job with Dr. Kenny. Selven says:

"Kenny is building a hospital, when it is ready he will need an assistant, and he has offered me the job."

The parents of Selven immediately consents to the wishes of Selven and he becomes an assistant to Dr. Kenny.

The man-woman relationship particularly relationship between Ira and her father, despite, being strained is once again revived. It is the birth of Ira’s illegitimate son - Sacrabani which is not despised by Nathan, but it is hailed and legitimatised by throwing a feast to the villagers. Here the father appears to have exhibited a kind of real parental love to his daughter not with standing the revolt of Ira and the disgrace brought by Ira to the
family. The father supports and stands by his daughter. The result is the relationship between father and daughter ameliorates.

The family of Rukmani suffers one casualty after another. In addition to poverty and hunger the family also has to undergo the emotional shocks caused by the dismissal of Raja and Kuti. The family weathers all the storms quite bravely. But ruthlessness of the Zamindars in collection of taxes sends Rukmani’s family into exile. They had to sale all the items of the house to repay their debts to the Zamindar but it could not be sufficient. In all hardships Nathan and Rukmani remains close to each other. They never raised the finger against each other. This sense of unflinching faith in each other can be noticed earlier when Nathan confesses to have given the hidden rice to Kunti.

“I took it” he said.

“You? My husband? I do not believe it.”

“It is true ....”

“I am the father of her sons.” 45

The confession stunned her, but gradually she recuperates, the relationship between husband and wife is restored.

The burden of taxes once again put husband and wife in a great financial crunch, they are uprooted. They move towards city in search of their son Murugan.

While in search of Murugan’s house they meet Puli the beggar. Puli helped them in finding out Murugan’s house. Initially Puli promised to
help them for payments against his services. But later on Puli comes closer after distress of the family is revealed to him. The belongings of Rukmani is robbed off in the temple where they go to seek shelter. They sunk in utter gloom and disillusionment. What is noticed during all this adversities which Nathan-Rukmani are faced is that they remain close to each other.

Nathan and Rukmani finally come across Ammu - Murugan’s wife. Ammu is living in a wretched condition. The revelation made by Ammu regarding her association with Murugan is surprising.

“We are Murugan’s parents”, Nathan said gently.

“You must be his wife..:”

The girl nodded, then recollecting herself she drew aside so that we could enter, come after us and stood biting her lip as if uncertain what to say.

“These must be our grandchildren”, I said, trying not to notice her attitude. “I have long wanted to see him.” “No doubt” the girl said, her lips twisting a little. “No doubt you want to see your son, too. He is not here.” “Not here”, Nathan repeated. “I was told he was here! When is he coming back?”

“I wish I knew”, she replied. “I do not think he will ever come back.”

“What do you mean? Are you not his wife? What makes you say he will never return?”
"He left me", she replied bitterly. "He has been gone nearly two years."

We had come a long way to meet bad news and now it seemed there was neither going back nor going forward. What we had saved had been taken from us, there was nothing more.... nothing left to sell; neither youth nor strength left to barter." 46

The callousness of Ammu surprises and shocks Rukmani and Nathan, but they do not grumble. They think that what is written in the fate is bound to happen. They are fatalist, otherwise also they accept that a forsaken wife is not obliged to offer them hospitality. The reasons for Murugan’s deserting his wife are not mentioned. Perhaps the novelist is aware of the subordinate place, the women have been ascribed in man dominated society. In the society particularly in rural areas-the man-woman relationship is lopsided and not balanced. Despite this imbalance we find that the relationship between man-woman is characterised by amicability, harmony and mutual understanding. This is so because the woman accepts the reality. They are not ready to face the revolutionary upheavals because the structure of the society in rural India in according to Dr. Kenny is ‘stupid’. One of these stupidities is poverty, commenting on Dr. Chote Lal Khatri says :

"Indian’s grinding poverty affects the Western people most of all though it is the west that is in many ways responsible for it. Even Kenny tells Rukmani that he would return to his country when tired of India’s
follies and stupidities; your eternal shameful poverty; one of these
stupidities is the social structure in India.” 47

The poverty stricken Nathan and Rukmani are ushered into the stone quarry job by Puli. They work more and earn less. Excessive work is extremely detrimental to health. Nathan is not able to bear up the burden of the stones. He dies. His death leaves Rukmani directionless and without any shelter.

“A woman’s place is with her husband.” 48

There has no man, whom she would call in for her emotional support. Therefore she takes Puli along with her because perhaps a woman cannot survive without man in Indian society. Puli is brought to the village where he is warmly welcomed by Ira and Selven. Puli becomes a member of the family. Puli has perhaps joined the family to provide solace and comfort, a spiritual and emotional not only to Ira but also to Rukmani and to others members of the family.
Notes & References

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