CHAPTER FOUR
SEXUAL POLITICS/CONFLICTS

Woman is universally regarded either as an adoring angel or treated as a faithful servant. The contradictory nature of the male's attitude is made clear when the high class/society woman is admired and worshipped as a paragon of virtue, the low class/society woman is made to toil as though she were a slave. Thus in a sense she is both economically and sexually oppressed. "The nature of one's 'social darkness' may be dictated by race, colour, creed - or gender. They do not merely influence one's position in society, but constitute different social realities" (Albinski 1). This dichotomy in treating the woman in different ways underscores the nature of divisions in society itself. However there exists a universal attitude around woman's sexuality. A critic observes thus:

Not only the west, but mankind wherever we find it, as anthropologists since Malinowski and Mead have been showing, created a powerful and complex discourse around sexuality in which central concerns of each culture are woven into major sexual events such as puberty or marriage (Maynard VII).

Not only puberty and marriage, woman's chastity and virtue are the chief concerns of any male-oriented society. The
Black society of America is no exception to this generalization. Thus in America by both black and white, women are regarded as their symbols of pride and honour.

While the main institutions of power were as male-dominated as those in Britain, American women were regarded as the guardians of culture but Culture defined in terms of aesthetics and morality rather than in the wider sense of thought and technology (Albinski 4). Wright focuses on this aspect in his writings: The Black male white woman and the honour attached to it.

As in America in India too, the woman is regarded as the protector/custodian of family pride and honour. At the same time she is hopelessly bound by superstitions and religious customs. She is considered to be no more than a useful servant, at once a cook, a sexual partner and a loyal house-keeper. The orthodox and traditionalists defend this status of woman quoting the scriptures and interpreting them to their advantage.

In the Tamil Novels, the portrayal of the woman is quite idealistic. But only Jayakânta has started portraying woman as an oppressed social being in a male-dominated, custom bound Indian society. He is very much
interested in exploring the husband-wife relationship for which purpose he creates a new woman who is against absolute submission and devotion to the social customs. At the same time he records her sufferings and sorrows during the course of her life.

Thus in American as well as in Indian societies, the life of the woman is a miserable one. In the American society, the black woman is oppressed by her male counterpart in the family and treated as an insignificant thing to be used and left out; at the working place in the white masters' houses they are harassed and abused sexually. Wright's black protagonist considers her as a stumbling block for his progress. At the same time, the black male's relationship with the white woman is still worse. In the racially prejudiced American society, sexual taboos prevent black males having anything to do with white women. Any trespassing/violation of this taboo and interaction with white woman means certain death and violence. Wright in his fiction focuses on these kinds of sexual politics/conflicts on the one hand, between the black male and the black woman and the other, between the black male and the white woman.

In India the casteist society keeps the woman in subjugation and the low class woman is vulnerable to the sexual assault of the menfolk. While sexual encounters in
Wright's fiction are purely on black-white racial lines, it is due to caste, class and male chauvinism. The poor women are sexually harassed and assaulted as a result they become unwed mothers and rootless people. Though Wright's writings reflect the racial aspect of the American society, Jayakanta's focus is on the class differences and the poor is always drawn from the low caste people. Here caste is not immediately felt because their being poor itself is the result of the age old practices of segregations and discriminations along the caste line. Thus class in a sense means caste too in Jayakanta. And in some cases the male's oppressive ways lead to the conflict.

In Richard Wright's fiction, the black male-white woman encounter always leads to violence and death. In "Big Boy Leaves Home", Wright shows how the environment threatens the very existence of some black boys who inadvertently make a mistake of 'defiling' it. The environment generally forbids the blacks entering the white territory. Here the territory signifies not only place (geographical) but also person (white woman). The story unfolds the 'White situation' that plays havoc with the life of four innocent black boys. When these boys — Big Boy, Lester, Buck, and Bobo — are in the woods, they feel free and happy. In spite of their school-going age, they have not been
attending school, but choose to spend their time as they like. Today they wander into the woods where they feel free, safe and secure.

For them the wooded place is nothing but a paradise. They express their happiness and want to stay there. Thus they comment upon it:

"Man, don the groun feel warm?"

"Jus lika bed".

"Jeeesus, Ah could stay here forever"

"Me too" (Uncle Tom's Children 18-19).

Ironically, they do not stay there forever, in fact, they do not stay there for even one hour more. The adolescents' yearning for freedom of movement in a racially oppressive society leads them to temptation and downfall/tragedy. When the four of the three boys want to swim in a white man's swimming pool, Big Boy warns them saying "git lynched? Hell naw!" (Uncle Tom's Children 20). Big Boy's words become tragically true in the end, when they not only trespass the land and the pond of the white man 'ol Man Harvey', but also commit another, the most serious of the negro crimes: facing a white woman. When the boys are nude, after swimming and sunning themselves, they see a white woman on the opposite bank of the pond. They do not
know the white woman nor does she know the black boys. But
the social convention forbids a nude black man seeing a
white woman and vice versa. The white woman screams
hysterically and the very atmosphere at once changes
dramatically, as the scream of the white woman, that too in
the presence of naked black boys, means nothing but
impending disaster. The woman's custodian and the 'master'
of the blacks, a white man, appears on the scene and without
any question or logical analysis of the scene, shoots down
two of the black boys.

Once the boys transgress by trespassing into the
white man's territory, the atmosphere is filled with fear
and hatred. The context in which the white woman faces the
naked black boys ignites fury and anger in the mind of the
white man, who feels that the black boys' very presence is
an assault on the white supremacy and, what is worse, the
defilement of the purity of the white womanhood. So
everybody is fear-stricken in such a situation: Out of fear
the white woman screams, out of fear the black boys react,
out of fear the white man kills two black boys and out of
fear Big Boy kills the white man. And out of fear the black
community sends Big Boy to North. The white mob, too, out
of fear and hatred, retaliates and lynches a black boy, Bobo.
Thus in a society that is divided on the colour line (black versus white), fear and hatred pervade the atmosphere. What belongs to whites cannot be and should not be touched by the blacks.

In "Long Black song", a black woman Sarah is seduced by a white man. Here the sexual taboo is reversed and Wright indirectly makes the black woman also responsible for it because it is not rape but seduction. That's why when Sarah's husband realizes her betrayal he horeswhips her and drives her away.

Wright portrays how the dominant white male takes advantage of the loneliness of a black woman and defiles her. Her encounter with the white salesman selling gramophone has all the ingredients of a tale of exploitation. Sarah is caught between the white oppressor and the empty black life. He elaborately describes Sarah's loneliness and her feelings, her recalling the memorable days with Tom her lover; this evokes a mixture of feelings, desire and emptiness, in her. "Never in all her life had she been so much alone as she was now. Days were so long as these days; and nights were never so empty as these nights" (Uncle Tom's Children 106). When she is in such a romantic mood, a white salesman emerges on the scene. Not only white
woman - black man relationship but the black woman - white man relationship also brings conflict and tragedy in the society. Wright adroitly portrays her character as the central issue of the wider conflict. The conflict in her leads to the conflict between the white and the black. When she thinks of Tom's fighting in the war she feels that "how come they wanna kill each other? How come they wanna make blood? Killing was not what men ought to do." (Uncle Tom's Children 105). But this is what happens in the end of the story: Killing of each other, black and white. The sexual desire of the white man and the black woman's loneliness fuelling it more intensely and the black woman's unwilling willingness all lead to the fulfillment of the white-man's desire. When Sarah, the black woman, refuses to buy a clock the white sales man explains about the utility of a clock. But Sarah ignorantly says: "We don need no clock"; when the white man says that he intends to study science just to know why things are as they are, she innocently asks him why things are like that. These two questions by Sarah reveal her ignorance but at the same time her inability to defend herself against the white man's advances is psychological on two counts. One, she is already mentally in a sensual mood by recalling her happy days with her lover Tom; two, she considers the white not as a man but as a boy. He greets her as aunty and in the course of the story, she thinks
about him as many as five times as a little boy. "The white man was funny. Jus like lil boy". "Hes jus lika lil boy". The white man was just like a little boy. Jus like a chile". "Hes just lika lil boy" He was just like a little boy (Uncle Tom's Children 108-110). But as soon as the white man takes her physically, her awakening is on the racial/colour line and she instinctively feels that "he was a white man". This is because of the sexual taboo prevalent in the American society. She is consciously aware of the consequences and thus shudders about the presence of the white man. Wright gives us a graphic picture of her struggle between her desire and the racial awareness: "White arms were about her, tightly. She was still. But hes a White man. A White man" .... "But hes a White man! A White man! Naw! Naw!" (Uncle Tom's Children 112).

It is really a pathetic situation when her husband returns home and finds out about his wife's bitter adventure. He tries to horsewhip her but she dodges him and leaves the house. He screams that he works hard and earns things but the whites take everything that belongs to him, including his wife. He says: "Ah comes n fins they been in Mah house! Ah cant go into their houses, n yuh know Gawddam well Ah cant!" (Uncle Tom's Children 117). This situation, the predicament of the black in the white society, drives
the blacks to an extreme position. While whites enjoy the freedom of going to any place they want to, blacks cannot do the same. They are not only restricted in their movement but they are denied opportunities too. In short, they control and direct the black life. Silas moans thus: “The white folks ain never gimme a chance! They ain never give no black man a chance! There ain nothin in Yo whole life yuh kin keep from em! They take Yo lan! They take Yo freedom! They take Yo women! N then they take Yo life!” (Uncle Tom's Children 125). And Silas resolves to fight the whites. Wright here highlights the importance attached to a woman in society and family and the vulnerability of her succumbing to sexual passions and desires leading to the destruction of the family. Though blacks are treated like animals by the white society, the black woman is considered to be their play things and they exploit their social conditions. The black male is as sensitive as a white male. He is unable to bear the truth that his woman has been defiled by a white man. His knowledge about the betrayal ravages his senses because, he cannot simply accept the truth. The woman is considered to be the custodian of the family's honour and self-respect. When she has fallen or taken by force, the very honour of the family is at stake. That is why the husband reacts violently. The family is
completely in shambles after that betrayal of the woman. Every thing is at stake because of this action and thus the black male gives his life to salvage his lost pride.

Wright’s attack on the absurdity of the white civilization and “the psychological links between sex and racism and in the conditioning imposed by latter” (Fabre 7) are the two vital issues in “The Man who killed A Shadow”. Saul Saunders, the protagonist of the story, a handyman in charge of sweeping and preparing the fire in a library, is bewildered and attempted by the hostile environment. His emigration from a little town to Washington means that “he came into a world that was split in two, a white world and a black one, the white one being separated from the black by a million psychological miles” (Eight men 157). Saul is pained and baffled by the “white world that was unreal to him and not his own” (Eight Men 157). Though he could understand nothing of the white world in the beginning, gradually and quickly he learns that the whites to whom he works consider him inferior but he does not think so. The white female librarian makes him terribly frightened because, alone with a white woman means death to the black man. The immodest white woman flirts and makes advances and her overt postures horrify him with fear. Above all this fear compels him to kill her. When he strangles her she screams wildly; the
louder she screams the tighter she grips her but his intention is not to kill her but just to make sure she does not scream again. Saul knows well that "if you were alone with a white woman and she screamed, it was as good as hearing your death sentence, for though you had done nothing, you would be killed" (Eightmen 159). And to his ears the cry of the white woman sounds like the shrill sirens of police cars chasing an alleged rapist. This fear propels him to kill her seizing a log in the fireplace. After killing her he feels better than ever because he has surrendered himself to the white shadows which he has feared so long. The killing is not just of a white woman but an evil force because it tempts him sexually and "his reaction is attraction and fright, incapacity to turn away from the cause to dizziness and the perception of evil which attracts him" (Fabre 138).

If the violence and racial oppression are directed against a particular community in Wright's other novels it is mainly the conflict with women that runs as an undercurrent in The Outsider. The most important aspect of The Outsider is its thoughtful presentation of a man and his hunting after a personal freedom in the American society. In this endeavour, he hopelessly ditches his loving and affectionate mother, dutiful wife, cunning girl friend, an
ambitious prostitute and an innocent woman. It is this conflict, his conflict with these women, that almost leads him to his tragedy.

Cross Damon, the protagonist, is a sensitive but weak-willed man. He has read widely but he has not found anything worthy in them to believe in, when his friends confront him with a question about his reading one book after another he says: "I was looking for something," Cross said quietly.

"What?" Pink asked.

"I don't know, "Cross confessed gloomily.

"Did you find it? Joe asked.

"No" (The Outsider 6-7).

It is this voraciousness in reading to find out some thing new that propels him to act as he likes. Though he is an intelligent reader his behaviour is conditioned by his inclination towards sensual appetites. Thus in the course of his life, apart from his wife Gladys, he is involved with a few other women: Dot, a teenage girl; Jenny, a white prostitute and Eva, a white communist leader's wife. His problems are his own creations and instead of seeking solutions, he either ditches his women or betrays them. In the end they are mere puppets in his hands and become innocent victims.
The wife is the worst affected because she has to feed her children also. When a husband who really loves a woman and marries her, later ditches her for another woman, the wife has no alternative but to cling to legal means to maintain the stability of the family; knowingly or unknowingly, the teenaged girl after establishing a relationship with somebody's husband, becomes alert and tries to get his hand in marriage. Otherwise she has to undergo the ordeals of an unwed mother, breeding a bastard. Or she has to get her child aborted. When she confronts Cross with this question, he simply cannot give her any specific/concrete assurance because he knows pretty well that his wife will not release him from their wedlock. After having made such a mess, he simply escapes through an accident. When he meets a third woman, here also he is not truthful to her, instead he kills her husband and when she realizes the dimensions of his killing, she herself commits suicide. Thus neither he nor his three women are happily settled in life. All of them have only one thing in common that their lives are hopelessly devoid of any stability and it is utterly tragic.

Cross Damon's life and his interactions with his family and friends are guided by his 'eccentric' notion about himself that he is outside of his family, friends and
in short, society itself. Though he is a well read, loud thinking intellectual, he is driven by a passion that is on a par with sexual gratification. His obsession with reading books, moving with women and drinking heavily leads him nowhere. His mother's strong Christian faith makes her try to make him a good man. But all her efforts are met with failure, since he dodges telling one story or another as an excuse. His mother is left alone because her husband has almost abandoned her after failing to take her as his wife. This drives her to Christianity where she identifies her suffering with the religion and feels consoled. But Cross's conduct, especially his relationship with women, makes her sad. Cross' leaving his mother alone in order to live as he wishes almost disrupts his family life.

Cross always tries to avoid facing his mother and when he has to, he resorts to lying. This further makes her feel sorry for her son and especially his waywardness and his habit of alternating between wife and concubine almost shatters her peace. She pities his wife and children. Her puritan principles, the white society's code of conduct imposed upon black women like her, her Christian convictions - all these makes the mother an adviser, a guide and a moral authority. But Cross is not prepared to follow his mother's advice, on the contrary, he disobeys everyone of her
strictures. This conflict paves the way for the other conflicts he has with the other women in his life.

There is perhaps an allegorical significance to his name. Cross Damon may refer to the tendency to cross any one in his life in a demonic manner and the additional sense of crass behaviour may also have been suggested by Wright's naming process. His tendency to cross and double cross the closest persons in his life starts with his mother and gains greater force in his affair with the girl friend, Dot. In a cold-hearted manner, he advises her to abort the conception caused by him, which she automatically rejects. The situation threatens to develop into a crisis with Dot ready to expose him, his mother on an advising spree, and his wife Gladys refusing to bail him out of the crisis. Everyone of the women in Damon's life has enough justification to behave in the manner they do, for it is Damon's own attitude and behaviour that have led them all into conflict after conflict.

As Cross is trapped in his own maze of problems he tries to find ways to escape from this vicious situation. Suddenly he meets with a train crash and he is declared dead. Taking his "death" as a cover, he plans to renew his life again and hides himself.
Even in his "renewed" life Cross cannot behave in a better way as his personality and attitude to life have been the chief contributory factors to his downfall. The girl after the train accident, though a person deserving very sympathetic treatment on account of her previous bitter experiences with men, is ditched by him in a callous manner.

Cross Damon's conflicts with the members of the opposite sex continue when he enters into an affair with Eva, Gil's wife. There is a casualness in his attitude to women and a lack of moral purpose. Not surprisingly he gets killed by the communist party at the end of a series of controversial events. The whole life of Cross Damon happens to be a series of conflicts but the gender conflict assumes a primary place in contributing to his downfall.

Wright's philosophical concern with existentialism has made him present Cross Damon as another Mersault - the protagonist of Camus' famous novel of the same title. Cross Damon is in conflict with himself, with his women and with the society. At his death bed he realizes that; "Alone a man is nothing. Man is a promise that he must never break...." (The Outsider 439).

Thus Cross has violated the most precious thing in life: breaking the relationships with mother and wife. And
all other relationships negate these vital relationships of a man and finally destroy him. Though the novel has some other qualities and especially it has been regarded as an existentialist novel, it is fitting enough to look at from the aspect of gender conflict which remarkably underlines Cross's downfall.

Yet another familial discord is to be seen in "Lawd today". Wright here focuses on the plight of a black housewife in the hands of an angry, frustrated black husband who bubbles with contradiction. This behaviour of the protagonist may be attributed to the social situation itself. Jake, the protagonist is seen fighting with the circumstances to make a decent living. He is trapped by such social forces as racism, economic depression and above all a failed marriage. He always quarrels with his wife because he feels that at the time of their marriage, she, a seventeen year old girl, has tricked him by claiming to be pregnant and later when she has become really pregnant, he has tricked her into an abortion and this has multiplied her health problems resulting in a denial of conjugal happiness for him. This further infuriates him and he time and again kicks and slaps her and ignores her but enjoys his life.

So it is obvious that, the family life is put to great peril because of the husband's debauchery and
extravagance. When the wife seeks money for her medication, the husband borrows money from his office only to throw it away by spending it on drinks with his friends. The picture one gets from the life of this couple is that husband, through his whims and fancies, can waste his money, but the wife has to put up with all the indignities that are heaped upon her. Thus when the husband suspects her fidelity, he becomes too jealous of her and even goes to the extent of beating her. It is ironical that the man goes to a brothel with his friends and squanders the money. But what is to be noted is that the simple life which they live is complicated only by extravagance. Life is now not smooth for them because the wife needs medical attention which will cost a great deal of money. The husband is a jealous, easy going, lucky guy who is always after some sort of thrill in life. When the wife realises that her life is going out of gear, she reacts violently. Thus their life is totally in tatters. Richard Wright's protagonists, especially the male members, make things worse for their female companions. This some do on the social compulsions and others simply out of frustration. In short the bickerings of the husband and wife lead to disharmony in family life.

Though critics point out that Richard Wright does not focus on women characters adequately and develop them
fully, his women characters especially the, mothers/wives/mistress play crucial roles in their respective fiction. The racial compulsions prevent Wright from highlighting the problems of women. Since the entire black race is treated as inferior, Wright is preoccupied with the problem of achieving racial equality and freedom. For which he obviously pushes the male members of the black to the forefront to confront the whites. In such a situation the black woman, whether she is his mother or love, is given a secondary role. And invariably out of fear of the dominant society, she does not support her male companion but she too becomes a burden and thus makes the black male's task more difficult.

In Native Son, Richard Wright creates two pairs of lovers, one pair, black and the other, white. He subtly draws comparisons and contrasts between the two. While the black pair is hopelessly poor, the white pair, especially the white girl, is enormously rich. Apart from the economic imbalance, the nature of relationship is strikingly different. While the black girl is timid, fearful and submissive, the white girl is free to do whatever she wishes because of her belonging to the dominant race and bourgeois class.

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When the black male, Bigger reveals his actions and future plans to the black girl, fear grips her and she wants to dissociate herself from his plans. Though she loves him wholeheartedly, he doesn't have such a sentiment. She finds solace for her sufferings in whisky, religion and sex. Her hopes of becoming his wife is belied when she learns of his plans. She first makes her mind open by saying that it is better they keep away from the white folks. Bigger senses her reluctance and goads her into accepting his plans and decides that she will be a great danger to his life itself. So he stealthily murders her while she is in sleep.

Thus both of them become estranged when danger lurks in the near future. Their mutual distrust reveals the superficiality of their relationship. Their relationship at last turns to be a 'love' of convenience. But Bigger never treats this relationship very seriously. He simply exploits her innocence and makes use of her body and finally throws her away. Most of the relationships in black life are devoid of any strong bond because at any time the tie may be snapped by the racial conflict. Thus the relationship between a black male and a black girl turns out to be a disastrous one. The destruction of the relationship is the
direct consequences of the social conditions. This in turn makes family life simply difficult.

While the sexual encounters between black male and white woman are explosive resulting in violence and death in Wright's fiction, in such encounters in Jayakantag the woman is submissive, meek and made to suffer. This she inherits from the Indian tradition. The Indian society treats woman as a slave and gives her only a secondary status in family and society. Her frailty, her innocence, her ignorance of the male dominated chauvinistic society make her an easy target for all sorts of abuses. Jayakantag more than any other Tamil Writer, highlights the sufferings of the Indian Woman. In his very first collection of short stories, he portrays the Man-woman relationship in such a context that in his story a situation is taken as the beginning of the civilizations, in which a woman from an opposite group rescues and loves a man, but she in turn is betrayed by him and when he sees his group of people, he kills her and joins with them. This is one of his first stories and this theme—the betrayal and oppression of woman—takes a prominent place in his writings. In Kōkila Enna Ceitu Vittāl (What has Kokila Done?) he makes explicit the theme declaring that society means only the male society. Woman is not at all considered to be a part of the Indian society. She is
always at the mercy of one male or another during her journey of life. She is dependent of her father, brother, and after her marriage, of her husband. She is guided and controlled by the male members of the family and she has to conduct herself according to the codes and conventions of the society. Even after four decades of Independence and wide spread improvement in literacy and education, the Indian woman is subjected to oppression. In Tēvan Varuvāra? (Will God come?), Jayakānta focuses his attention on an unwed mother's struggle in society. He simply accuses the society of making some people orphans; if the orphans happen to be women, they are abused sexually and are made to give birth to bastards. This happens only to the poor, rootless people. Āḷakammāḷ is such an orphan struggling to cope with the realities of the world. When she is pregnant, an old woman whose daughter has eloped gives shelter to this orphan. Soon she gives birth to a child and she of course does not remember who the father of the child is. She is very eager to know the identity of the father of her child. Looking at passing men she says, "That man is father to that child, who is the father of my child" (Tēvan Varuvāra? 21). With her accusing stare at every man she happens to meet, she fixes responsibility on the menfolk of the entire society. To be sure, one of them should be responsible for
her becoming a mother. All her sufferings are rooted in her being an orphan, and poor and a woman. She is twice oppressed by the society as a woman and as a poor person. There is no escape from this dead end of the society. The environment is such that the ever gnawing poverty and hunger keep these people away from the broader society. They have their own social codes and ethics of love and marriage. A woman can live with a man without marrying him. No importance is attached to the 'ritual' aspect of marriage. The more acute the poverty, the less they adhere to the social conventions. Since these people are marginal people without wealth and power, they are socially inferior and invisible to the society. Hence, they are free of the codes, conventions, and social values of the society. In a sense, it is free society as for as morality is concerned because promiscuous relationship is not the exception but the rule.

In Jayakantan's "Ākṣipiravēcam" (Entering into Fire) an innocent college girl is seduced by a rich young man. Her status as a poor and orthodox brahmin makes the seduction doubly important. Though there are sexual assaults on other caste women by different caste people, here the seduction is deliberately of a brahmin girl. As in Wright's "Long Black Song", here also we find the innocence
of the girl and her loneliness in a rain ravaged evening at a bus stop. Left alone by her college mates, she is waiting for her bus when a big car comes and the man in the car invites her to get into the car. Though she hesitates for a moment she is unable to refuse his call and accepts the invitation.

Jayakānta presents her as innocent as a child, when her feelings are made known immediately after getting into the car. She looks wonderingly at everything in the car. The majestic appearance of the car itself makes her imagine the palatial nature of his house and a horde of servants waiting at his disposal. All these feelings are indicative of her innocence but at the same time, she is afraid of the engulfing darkness and the fact that her return home is delayed. Until he touches her shoulder after reaching a desolate place, she does not doubt his motives. Even after the physical contact, she is initially taken aback and shudders, but finally makes no attempt to either protect herself or to escape. Right from the beginning of the story, Jayakānta, skillfully evokes the atmosphere and especially the incessant rain and her loneliness and her being torn by wonder and fear simultaneously.

When he drops her near her house, she is in a state of shame and fear. Though her mother hides her
daughter's seduction many other people could not manage to do so. Unlike in Wright's fiction, and in the American society, the victims of the sexual assault are treated contemptuously in the Indian society, because, in most of the cases they cannot identify the culprit. And especially the orthodox brahmin and high caste never compromise on such fallen women. They either remain as unmarried or live with somebody as a concubine or commit suicide.

Thus in Jayakanta's fiction, the unwed mothers are the victims of such sexual assaults and in this story, the victim, an innocent but college going girl, is seduced; her mother knowing well the social conventions and codes hides the fact and Jayakanta gives an elaborate explanation in defense of her hiding it. He reverses the final part of the story in Cila Neraṅkalil Cila Manitarkal (Some Persons in Some Situations) and gives a detailed account of the victim's sufferings when her mother reveals the truth about her seduction. The victim is ostracised by her community, and discarded by her own brother. She is further subjected to terrible sufferings and sorrows.

Jayakanta portrays in his novel Cila Neraṅkalil Cila Manitarkal how the protagonist of this novel, Kaṅka who is sexually abused, tries to articulate her feelings and
establish her identity against the background of her lower middle class, orthodox Hindu family, Brahmin community that professes morality, and a class-conscious society. The story of Kanka as revealed in three stages in the following order, "Aknipiravēcam" Cila Nērankalil Cila Manitarkal and Kaṅkai enkē pōkirāl? (Where is Kanka Going?) is at once both the story of a fallen woman and the struggle she wages in a society which abuses her sexually and denies her freedom and equality and a serious indictment of the society's attitude to woman.

The focus of the conflict may be stated as a piquant situation that arises when the poor, teenaged, not so urbanised brahmin girl, Kaṅka, is seduced by a non-brahmin named Pirapu. Her immaturity and diffidence are such that she cannot even resist wholeheartedly when Pirabu makes his advances. Out of fear she confesses to her mother about the sexual assault on her. The expulsion of Kaṅka from the family is something common in such families for, she cannot be retained within her household according to rigid brahmin canons, for she is considered defiled. Matters become worse and the neighbourhood turns hostile against her. Not surprisingly we can find an echo of this incident in The Outsider's Jenny.
Now the mother seeks the help of her brother. Indian society specifically speaking, Brahmin community, offers no compromise formula for salvaging the fallen women. Once fallen, a woman has no place nor future both in the family and in their society, a striking contrast to the mores of the American society. The only alternative open to her is to live as a concubine. The idea is too shocking for Kaňka and she shudders when no less a person than her own uncle indirectly hints at this alternative to her. Insult is added to injury as more and more people torment and oppress her. Her brother spreads calumny about her; her mother lives with her and urges her to get married; her uncle tells her and substantially pressurises her to be his illegal wife or hunt out Pirapu and get married to him.

Caught in the cross currents of social tension and communal prejudice, Kaňka has to wage a solitary battle with the society, before establishing her identity. After rejecting the compromise formula suggested by the mother, brother and uncle, Kaňka turns to a new direction to seek and win over Pirapu to marry her. Kaňka finds Pirapu after twelve years and seeks his companionship. Pirapu wants Kaňka to settle down by marrying someone else. But she insists on marrying him only. Pirapu refuses the proposal because the communal/social conventions permitted a brahmin
woman to marry only a brahmin man. Thus after having rejected by one and all Kaṅka has now decided to lead her own life in her own way. When she wants to be a woman the Hindu society expects her to be a white (brahmin) woman. so she discovers herself and establishes her identity by violating brahmin community's codes and conventions. Here Jayakānta has created Kaṅka as a victim of frustrations, inhibitions and suppressions. It is her fate to end her life following incidents for which she is not directly or indirectly responsible or at least unable to control the turn of events. Where is Kanka going? bears abundant testimony to the bitter events that climaxed in Kaṅka drowning in the Ganges. Perhaps this was the only alternative before her - the poor lass caught between the shackles of caste barrier on the one side (brahminism) and the cruel hand of society on the other. Thus the Indian society hunts down an innocent woman mercilessly.

Jayakānta depicts another dimension of the sexual conflict in Cuntarakāntam (Cītā's Struggles). By taking the archetypal character Cītā as his heroine and comparing a Russian folk heroine Katrina to Cītā, he implies that the oppression of woman transcends time and space. The protagonist, Cītā is a brahmin woman doing research in Tamil Literature. She accepts her marriage with a widower because
her father insists on this alliance just to tide over his financial crisis. This situation is the crucial one in this fiction because the consequence - the oppression of Cītā - centers around this. Both her husband and father do not take into consideration Cītā's feelings. At one stage when Cītā refuses the marriage proposal, her father threatens to commit suicide saying that unless she marries him, he cannot manage his financial crisis and that will bring doom to the whole family. Her husband Cukumāraṇ also in the beginning feels proud of conquering a queen (Cītā) through marriage. But when he comes to know about Cītā's feelings he gets disappointed and disturbed. He vows not to touch her until she accepts him as her man. But in the mean time he continues his relationship with a nurse, Mīnā, a young widow. Mīnā's life also is portrayed as an instance of oppression and it simply supports Cītā's situation strongly. Cītā's friend Cucilā, whose life is miserable because of her broken marriage, also makes common cause with Cītā.

Though she is not given any prominence in the novel, the three women represent three different kinds of the oppression of the woman in India. Cītā as a wife, Mīnā as a widow and Cucilā as one suffering from a broken marriage. Jayakāntaṇ seems to highlight how the male dominated society oppresses woman in various ways. But at
the same time he does not effect any change by way of solution to these three different situations. In the end Cītā leads her life without any physical relationship with her husband. As a result her husband as usual continues his physical relationship with Mīnā and Cucīlā is inevitably left to struggle in her own situation.

But the strange thing is the character of Mariyam, an untouchable woman, studying with Cītā, taking her illiterate nephew as her husband. When she initially talks about her feelings of fear and doubt whether in marrying an illiterate man would lead to misunderstanding, surprisingly Cītā advises her to go ahead with the marriage. Cītā, unlike Jayakāntaṇ's other woman characters like Kalyāṇī, Mālati and Kauri who bubble with love and compassion and who forgive and accept their men as they are, does not, even after agreeing to the marriage of her father's arrangement, takes Cukumāraṇa as her husband. Jayakāntaṇ by highlighting the caste factor, creating the three oppressed women, Cītā, Mīnā and Cucīlā from brahmin caste and Mariyam as untouchable, again attacks the rigidity of the brahmin caste and its shackling of its women folk unabashedly.

In Jayakāntaṇ's fiction we encounter protagonists with the same kind of disposition as we have seen in Richard
Most of his protagonists are polygamists, in that either they marry twice or develop extramarital affairs. As in Wright's fiction, Jayakănăn also portrays some of his protagonists resorting to alcoholism. The family life is always complicated with the entry of a third individual, invariably a woman. But not all of his protagonists make their lives in a similar pattern. For instance in his story "Herŏukku oru Herŏine" (A Heroine for a Hero) the author makes two women characters ditch their man since he betrays the wife. It is impossible for the "hero" to digest such a stand taken by his women, because he is under the impression that they love him deeply. Moreover, his belief that a housewife can be easily persuaded upon to adjust her position by taking another woman into the family just to serve his husband's carnal desires is also shattered. The second woman's refusal to accept him drives him into loneliness and he becomes a man without any essence in life. His attempt to boss over the two women misfires and he leaves the house reluctantly. The family becomes a disjointed one because the head of the family is almost pushed out of it.

In another story "Paurusam", (Manliness) Jayakănăn exposes how some husbands even try to sell their wives in order to make a decent living, and how their
attempts have been foiled by their wives themselves by leaving their husbands forever. A rustic woman is married to a city rickshaw puller who occasionally takes up a pimp's job. His poverty drives him to resort to this means. On one such scandalous occasion he brings a customer to his own house to make a fast buck by selling his wife. As he simply misjudges her temperament because of her rural background, he thinks that she is innocent and amniable to anything he asks her to do. The very idea of his making the wife obedient and pliable is indicative of the status of the woman in this society. When the wife is confronted by such a situation, she is utterly contemptuous and abuses him. The very situation transforms her innocence into one of rage and she simply deserts him at once. Here the family is driven to distress because of the husband's shameless act.

Jayakanta repeats the same situation with a slight variation in his novel Pakalil Oru Vēsam (A Mask during the Day). Just because the wife is a rootless, poor woman, the husband displays such a disgraceful attitude in an unashamed manner by asking her to share her bed with his superior officer for some future gains. Again and again, Jayakanta portrays the agonies of rootless women in a male dominated chauvinistic society. The audacity of the husband making such an arrangement, taking her consent for granted,
smacks of arrogance. The very tone and tenor of his instructions leave her dumb founded and when the husband treats his wife in such a manner, the wife retaliates by severing all her ties with him and leaves him forever.

Even the notion that husband is the be-all and end-all will not prescribe such an action as has been envisaged by the man. The wife's innocence is tested but she quickly recovers from the traditional values attached to the relationship between husband and wife. What her father at the time of her marriage could not see and judge, she does it in a fraction of a second and moves away.

In Kāttirukka Orutti (A Waiting Woman) Jayakāntaṇ resorts to portraying his protagonist as a man who takes a second woman in his life. As if it is not enough, he also takes to drinking. This pattern is evident in most of Jayakāntaṇ's third period novels. In this story also the husband acts in such a way that the wife's feelings are simply trampled upon. She is treated like a petty doll in the house to decorate it with her presence. The husband is the centre of all the activities in the family and all other members of it are there to serve his needs. When he goes away, the entire family is put in to shame, agony and distress. The two vital members of a family are the wife
and the husband. When the wife is unfaithful and takes to an entirely unconventional way of life the family disintegrates.

In this story, when the protagonist becomes a drunkard and returns home every night late, the wife is furious; after some time she refuses to let him in. So he goes away and the family loses the head, forcing the wife to tend for her son and herself.

Though there is a patch up between the wife and husband, the husband sticks to living away from family. Inspite of his love for his wife and son, his being pushed out of the house and the way he has been received and treated by his second woman, a drama actress, all linger in his mind fresh. Not only that, over the years he has become addicted to drink. If he returns to his wife there will be a chance of making fresh quarrels over the same old issue. Hence he decides against coming back to his wife, even though his son extends an invitation. The family remains divided for ever.

Thus Richard Wright and Jayakāntaṇ portray sexual politics/conflicts at the social and familial levels and especially the fissures and frictions that develop between two different races/castes, between parents and children,
husband and wife and lover and love. Though poverty and hunger play covertly in dividing the society and family, the pressures of social conventions like the sacredness of the womanhood and motherhood, the duties of children and the truthfulness of relationship between man and woman, make things difficult for members of the society to adhere to them. This in turn makes room for tensions and divisions in family, and in society.

While Wright gives more importance to the devastating nature of the black male and white female encounter and underplays the black male's ill-treating the wife/love he gives a variety of situations that lead to sexual conflicts. The very presence of naked black boys results in a horrifying tragedy, he reverses the same situation by making the white woman as the initiator which is understood by the black male as his death warrant and he reacts violently. The seduction of a black woman by a white man brings out the wider aspects of Male-female relationship in general and husband and wife relationship in particular and above all the values attached to the status of woman as wife and the pride and honour a husband draws/acquires from her fidelity.

In Jayakantā, the woman is treated/abused sexually if she is poor, young and alone. And he portrays
the agonies of sexually abused women of the brahmin caste. As in Wright the innocent and meek women become victims but in many situations they reject their husbands and settle for a better life. In Wright too, only Lil Jackson of Lawd Today reacts but violently. Both in Wright and Jayakant the male protagonists, especially the husbands, act more or less in similar fashion though there is a marked variation in the manner and the degree of their abuses of their female counterparts.