ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a comparative study on the theme of love in the selected novels of Thomas Hardy in English and Jayakanthan in Tamil. Comparative literature is a critical approach of recent origin stressing the need for an awareness of the universality of human experience through the study of more literatures than one's own. Since the selected writers are of entirely different cultural backgrounds, this is a parallel study.

The researcher does not expatiate on the life and backgrounds of the selected novelists since this is a thematic study of woman's love. The thesis analyses woman's patterns and process of love, the problems and solutions in her marriage, the relevance of chastity in the modern age and her worldly and spiritual fulfilment.

The researcher investigates the love patterns in the selected novels to discover social, cultural and spiritual similarities and dissimilarities. Both Hardy and Jayakanthan are woman-centred novelists. The investigator discusses the selected novelists' commonness of approach to love and marriage, and their sympathy for woman and her problems.

The method adopted for this study is comparative analysis including the contrastive and descriptive aspects.
Woman seeks fulfilment in love, marriage and chastity at the worldly level, and in detachment at the spiritual level. She is capable of more love and fortitude than man. She is mother earth's equal in fecundity. Man's effort to accommodate himself to woman's sexuality has given rise to divorce laws both in the East and in the West. Thus, this investigation attempts a humble contribution to comparative literature by bringing out the unity of literary creations.

The Introduction presents a definition, short history and aims of comparative literature. It briefly states the social backgrounds of the selected novelists, their life, range and attitudes.

This is the first thematic study comparing Hardy and Jayakanthan.

Chapter II defines love and reviews the treatment of love in fiction until Hardy in English and Jayakanthan in Tamil. Hardy and Jayakanthan were the first to discuss in fiction the difficulties in sex relationships in English and Tamil respectively. They trace woman's hopes and desires, and probe woman's heart. This chapter concentrates on the personal characteristics of the heroines, which determine their love relationships. It attempts a discussion of woman's love under patterns in Part I and of how she falls in love under process in Part II.
Chapter III discusses the problems in marriage under Part I and the solutions under Part II. The heroines of Hardy and Jayakanthan indulge in premarital and extramarital sex. Social factors like education, status and money cause marital problems. Both the writers do not believe that solutions to problems in marriage are easy. Problems, however, suggest solutions either in the structure of a work or in the mind of the reader.

Chapter IV defines female chastity as a cultural trait and traces the problems resulting from its loss under Part I and the solutions through a redefinition under Part II. Both Hardy’s Victorian society and Jayakanthan’s Tamil society were conservative. The heroines in their respective male-dominated societies were deprived of normal marriage prospects by their loss of chastity. Woman has the tendency to preserve her chastity. In case of its loss, she tries to retrieve at least her lost innocence. But, in this process, she experiences rather pain than bliss. The selected writers appeal to man that he accommodate himself to woman’s sexuality, which is in no way different from his.

Chapter V attempts to discover fulfilment, if any, in woman’s life. It deals with the problems hampering fulfilment under Part I, and those aspects of her life, which promote it under Part II. It traces earthly
fulfilment in woman's love, marriage and chastity, and spiritual fulfilment in detachment.

Chapter VI recapitulates the argument and presents the findings in terms of similarities, dissimilarities and significance. Woman rejects suitors and selects a lover. Money and fidelity are the usual solutions to problems in marriage. Both writers recommend fidelity in place of chastity for a happy married life. The English woman rejects her rapist and marries the man whom she loves. The Indian woman tries to marry her rapist and faces innumerable problems from her rapist and her society. Hardy considers woman's fulfilment possible at both the worldly and the spiritual levels while Jayakanthan thinks spiritual fulfilment alone possible for woman.

The teaching that this study deduces is that man has salvation both earthly and heavenly if he has the wisdom to solve his problems.