CHAPTER - II

STIRRING AND BEYOND

- A Silence of Desire
- The Coffer Dams
- Possession
- Two Virgins
A Silence of Desire

It is the imperfect understanding of the rational and the scientific outlook on life that alienates the self from its own self and destroys the fundamental vision. The resultant moral chaos turns the universe upside down leaving man as a disillusioned derelict. In a bid to overcome the pull of the divergent forces of skepticism and obscurantism, faith and science, spirit and matter the self loses direction for want of communication with the other numerous selves it comes in contact with and is thus drifted toward dissolution rather than arriving at clarity. A Silence of Desire deals with this dilemma of self, caught between the realm of the spiritual realities opposed to the material. What safeguards the authenticity of the self is knowledge and the understanding of the essential ontological ties between a self and a self to rise above what is unworthy and inhuman. The fact is illustrated by Dandeker- Sarojini relationship verging on the tragic encounter between faith and science, thereby leading to mistrust and misunderstanding to destroy the very essence of compatibility which is the very foundation of marriage.

Dandekar is a senior clerk in a government office, Sarojini is introduced as a mother of three children, satisfied with her lot. The household has had the perfect bliss of marital harmony for the last fifteen years, the basis of which, the novelist tells, is Sarojini's unfailing acquiescence to Dandekar's demands. In the beginning Sarojini in his eyes "was a goodwife, good with children, an efficient manager of his household... She did most things placidly, he thought with affection, and from this calm proceeded the routine and the regularity that met the
neat and orderly needs of his nature."¹

Dandekar, from the unknown sources perhaps, has developed a very ill-founded attitude to female virtue. He has a low opinion about the women that they devour men in love making or that they do not feel any qualms in having extramarital relations provided they can seek a right opportunity:

"Married women may have the opportunity, but where have they the time? Morning till evening there is something to do, and children hanging around them all day wanting this and that done."²

Dandeker is unaware of the fact that one or two cases of harlotry is not a judgement on a woman's morality as a class. The emotional aspect involved in man- woman relationship has no meaning in his eyes, it is only the physical bond, he feels, that sustains their relations which, as a matter of fact, is a reflection of his own moral laxity. He lacks courage to face facts of existence and thus feels astounded. While he is passing through this crises of faith something unusual happens which is sufficient to adumbrate the myth of a woman's purity. He happens to see in Sarojini's box a photograph of an obscure person. Dandekar at once takes it an act of moral violation. But the way he handles the situation is not human. He is a coward. Sarojini is not stranger to him, he could have bluntly asked her all about the photograph but instead of doing so he withdraws within his ownself and lets his mind wander over vague speculation. What is tragic about the episode is his lack of courage and male-egotism that does not let him question Sarojini so that the fog rolls away and reality is out.

¹ A Silence of Desire, p. 7 ² Ibid. p. 24
The shadow of Dandekar – Sarojini imbroglio born of mistrust and moral inertia descends on the two daughters almost like a blight. Dandekar finds the two beds of his daughters empty and he immediately comes to speculate that perhaps there is no one in the house, not even Sarojini who could be out on her usual evenings out. His own part of the house is enveloped in darkness. However, he switches on the light and discovers his daughter, Ram Bai. She has developed headache and shuts herself in the darkness of the room as if it were the only defence mechanism to escape the terror of crisis shaking the household to the roots. Rambai's husky and strained voice is heard:

"Don't put on the light, Father. I've got a headache, it hurts my eyes."

It was too late, the light was on, and he saw Ramabai crouched beside her bed, her face blotchy and smudged with hastily-wiped tears.

"What are you doing sitting all by yourself in the darkness?" he said sympathetically. 'Where is Lakshmi?'

'She's playing outside. I told her to go – I didn't want to, with this headache.'

'Then you should be in bed,' he said kindly, going to her side. 'Come along now, lie down and I'll find you some aspirin.' He bent to take her arm. But to his surprise she shrank back.

'No! I don't want any aspirin. I just want to be left alone.'

He thought she was being difficult – in one of her increasingly frequent moods that varied from pert to sulky. He said firmly, taking her arm, 'Come on now. You can't sit there on the floor.'

'Don't touch me!'

His hand dropped with the sheer shock of it.1

Dandekar, it is learnt, was never good with children for the lack of knowing to be of himself and partly for his being away for most of the

1. Ibid., pp. 164-165
time from home. However, he collects himself and asks his daughter so fondly as to what is troubling her.

"Is the pain bad?" he said gently. 'Just tell me if there's anything you want then I'll go away and you can sleep.'

'I want my mother.' Her control gave way suddenly, she was gulping and gasping with the strength of her sobs."

He consoles the child saying that her mother would soon be here.

'Your mother won't be very long,' he said at last, gently, 'and I'm in the next room if you want me. Don't cry any more, will you, pet? You might wake the baby and what would I do if you were both crying?' And in the words of the novelist Dandekar "managed to make her smile, but his own heart was heavy. Only fools fight, he thought, brooding in his room but all men are fools when it comes to their children."

Dandekar's inner is assailed by suspicion and doubts. Even in bed the two lie as strange bed-fellows signifying the anti-thesis of the self.

"But when he was in bed he could not sleep. He twisted and turned, listening to the bed creaking under him then he lay still as Sarojini came in and lay down; but restlessness was upon him like the plague. Sarojini had slept in that brief respite; then her breathing grew shallow and he could tell she was awake although she lay quite still. He threshed again, lost to all consideration, and felt her hand on his forehead, softly stroking it. In his misery he turned to her, throwing his arms across her body and intending only to draw comfort from her nearness, but at his touch he could feel her withdrawing - gently enough but decisively. He kept his arm where it was, lifeless and heavy from the rebuff, and felt her inert and closed under him. He might have been a stranger - an unwelcome one."2

1. Ibid., p. 165, 2. Ibid., p. 36
The marital harmony and its assorted virtue seem to totter as if it stood on the debris. The destination of Sarojini's pilgrimage is the hermitage of a swamy who, it is supposed, has miraculous power to heal the incurable disease by faith-cure. Sarojini has the growth of a tumour in her womb that might grow malignant. She fears operation and thus taking the faith-cure as the safest therapy, she turns to the swamy. There is no foul play involved in her visits as there are many, like her, to have the holyman's blessings. As does intellect, so faith has its way to go on. But when Dandekar comes to know of the mysterious swamy he begins to doubt his integrity: is the spiritual mentar a Charlton or a genuine faith-healer?

"If only you had told me," he whispered. 'Why could you not tell me?'

'Because you would have stopped me going to be healed.'

'You don't know what you're saying.' He shook his head, trying to clear the mists that gathered. 'Stopped you being healed? I?'

'Yes, you. You would have sent me to a hospital instead. Called me superstitious, a fool, because I have beliefs that you cannot share. You wouldn't have let me be-no! You would have reasoned with me until I lost my faith, because faith and reason don't go together, and without faith I shall not be healed. Do you understand that?'

He said, speaking with difficulty. 'Is he a - a faith healer?'

'Yes. You can call it healing by faith, or healing by the grace of God, if you understand what that means. But I do not expect you to understand - you with your Western notions, your superior talk of ignorance and superstition when all it means is that you don't know what lies beyond reason and you prefer not to find out.'

Overwhelmed by the silent desire to find out the reality of

1. Ibid., pp. 87-88
Sarojini’s man, Dandekar follows her to the swamy’s citadel and much to his amazement finds her sitting by his right getting blessings. She was not alone. There were men and women listening, as if in trance, to his whispering voice. The sight and the calmness of the surroundings creates a stir in the spiritual being of Dandekar and for a moment he feels as if the philosophy of faith – healing and miraculous spiritual power has driven away his ill-digested rudiments of rationalistic and scientific temper. His head began to swim as if he had entered into some new element without preparation. He develops a sense of guilt and shame for following his wife.

“His sense of identity began to slip; he knew who he was – I am Dandekar, he said to himself, but the words had no reality. His knowledge of time had gone. He could not tell whether he had been standing for minutes or hours in this room full of people. A room, full of people. Quite suddenly his vision cleared, his mind began to function. He was wrong. He had followed his wife and seen for himself and he was wrong. He must get out now, at once; go out quietly, not peremptorily as he had come in, and leave his wife here until in time she came home.”

But the spell of swamy’s spirituality is transient. On his returning to home Dandekar relapses into his old usual posture of doubt. He even takes truth as a vicious lie that Sarojini has developed a tumour. “It’s not true,” he said hoarsely. At last Sarojini feels gingerly, her patience sags. She bursts out at Dandekar’s ambivalent attitude to a woman’s moral position:

“So now you know,’ she said harshly. ‘For a month now you’ve been snooping and sniffing at my heels

1. Ibid., p. 80
because you suspected something very different. I've watched you, I'm not blind. You listened to every poisonous word of every petty clerk in your office and you believed it.'

'No!'

'Believed every word. You've come to me - thrust yourself on me night after night after night because, God forgive you, you couldn't think of any reason for my refusal except a vicious one. That you believed easily enough.'1

But it is a pity that Sarojini's anger is taken as the expression of emotional disorientation. It happens when the self is drugged by the sense of supremacy and egotism:

"You don't know what you're saying." He cried. 'You're ill - you're-'

'You must be ill too,' she said passionately. 'Slick - your brain must have been sick, to have believed what you did to have followed me as if I were a common harlot with whom you consorted but were not sure of."2

Dandekar is helpless to take things as they are. He is torn between faith and unfaith, between the innateness of tradition he is born with and modernity he acquired. The pull of the two forces makes his vision imperfect for want of direction. He has not by now seen any moral rebelliousness in Sarojini's conduct, she is a woman suffering from a fatal illness and it is awfully disheartening that she gets such a cold and censorious treatment in place of love, cooperation and sympathy. She can understand Dandekar's depth of love but she feels flabbergasted to discern the rising fog of sexual jealousy. Love as Dandekar says is madness, but he hardly understands that love-madness stands on trust, understanding and involvement:

1. Ibid., p. 86 2. Ibid., pp. 86-87
"I was mad,' he said. 'I went mad because I loved you. Is that a crime? Is it possible to love without jealousy?'
'And without trust,' she said with a deep and smouldering anger. 'Is that love? Is it?"¹

Since the genuineness of Sarojini's visits to the swamy is unfortunately misconstrued, its lurid gleams begin to engulf the domestic happiness. The economy is shattered. Dandekar turns indifferent to household affairs and remains burdened with office work. Later he turns to living a life of wanton pleasures including his visits to the women of easy morality to seek emotional stability which ironically alienates him from his family. The chasm grows wider. Such a life pattern amounting to gloating over the bohemian escapades leaves Dandekar impoverished both in term of the material as well as spiritual. There is a sudden eruption of filial desires in his heart, he wants to give some present to his daughters but it is sad that he has no money. He broods hard like Rodin's Thinker over the genesis of this plight.

"Oversleeping from uneasy nights, three days out of six Dandekar found it imperative, to get to work in time, to travel by bus. There had been the docking of two days' pay by Ghose, plus a ten-rupee fine. In that month he had left the rent unpaid, on which the formidable interest charged by his landlord was accumulating. There were the prostitutes, and he now recalled, the spool of memory remorselessly unwinding the money he had given in so cavalier a fashion to beggars, the boatman, the Swamy, to Cousin Rajam, the unnecessary purchase of an expensive umbrella – the list seemed endless."²

Sarojini's position is precarious in the sense that her walk between the two fires – the spiritual devotion and the familial responsibilities verges on the crisis of existence. One implication that it involves is that the

1. Ibid., p. 87 2. Ibid., p. 144
household articles begin to disappear dramatically because they are to be offered to the swamy as her humble token of undiminished faith. Unless, something is offered to the god-man, it is feared that the prayers might be half granted. Dandekar search for the golden chain of their son and the silver water-lily ash-tray is of no use because these items are in possession of the swamy.

"What are you doing?"
He turned, ashen-faced, and she was ashen too. He got to his feet and dusted himself, stepped carefully over the debris and sat down on the bed.
'I was looking for the Englishman's ash-tray.' He said simply. 'It's not there. Do you know where it is?'
She was still standing in the doorway, framed by it, rigid.
'Yes.' Her voice had no body, it was like dead leaves, I have given it away.'
'The other silver?'
'That too.'
He could only look at her, there was nothing to say. If she hadn't given away their silver he would have sold it...We are being driven he thought; we are straddling a tiger that we cannot dismount.'

In case of clash between science and faith, the subordination of one to the other or the absorption of one into the other in order to seek reconciliation and evolve a viable set of value pattern is not sinful. The real issue is the transcendence of the resultant crisis which, if not surmounted, will drive the self to marginalisation. It is the synthesis of the renaissance world-outlook and the medieval obscurantism that can make the self rise above the incompatibility of the two opposing sets of value. Sarojini's spiritual urgency and enthusiasm is not a threat to Dandekar's self-anointed attitude to suffering and physical ailment, nor

1. Ibid., pp. 148-49
of his rejection of the supernatural cure is a hazard to the alchemy of faith-healing. Both have their respective graces and limitations. Dandekar is more a case of silence of desire in that he is not articulate about what he desires Sarojini to do. She has seen her mother die of the similar malady in the hospital, representing modernity, opposed to tradition. The desire of her silence is to get the ailment cured by some other less painful therapy.

There is a tinge of brilliancy in handling Sarojini's faith without any social trappings. She moves in and out keeping the purity of self intact but Dandekar at the same time is an interesting study in self caught in a dilemma. The novelist has employed the technique of detached irony to reflect the growth and shrinkage of belief. She has shown the self being split into two selves, each following its own leaning and construct. Sarojini's fear of the hospital can be genuine for want of proper knowledge of the benefits of medical science but there is little unwholesome about her visits to the swamy's premises as the belief that a saint or a supernatural character can make miracles fall from the sky is also deep seated in human breast. In every age the two tendencies exist like anti-thesis, being equally held in high esteem and it is by following Aristotelian 'golden mean' that one can escape the dangers of extremity and assert the meaningfulness of his silence of desire. One can come to chastise Sarojini's conduct and surrender to the charm of a supposed holy man to the neglect of her motherly obligations. It is true that she keeps her visit secret, the adolescent daughters are curious to know about the mysterious outings of their mother which generates waves of misdirected notion of moving out like free birds. They begin to
go to the milk-bar and like the unprotected and the unsheltered are exposed to losing their innocence in the midst of a promiscuous crowd at such places.

In the presence of the swamy Dandekar sees things differently from what he sees elsewhere. He realizes the hollowness and vanity of human wishes and desires. The gold and silver coins look trumperies. And thus it is hard for a person like Dandekar in the existing situation to get at reality and take things in right perspective. In the words of the novelist, Dandekar

"knew, now, what Sarojini had meant. When you were with the Swamy, actually there, nothing material, or physical, mattered. You saw them for the worthless trumperies that they were, rose above your body knew for a while the meaning of peace. Then you came away and the pains crept back, the worry, the misery, the lust for gold chains and silver cups."¹

Overawed by swamy's gigantic stature of spirituality, Dandekar drops coins in the collection leather-pouch. What he later tells Sastri is a travesty of his earlier stand. He comes to realize that the holyman may not be an imposter, a Charlton though he continues to be skeptical about the swamy's identity. In such moments of crisis Dandekar feels helpless to take any decision and ultimately resolves to let Sarojini "go her own way. I have fought as far as I know I just do not know what to do next."² But silently the sense of grief and failure keeps gnawing at his psyche, he feels as if the swamy has dispossessed him of his other half by taking away Sarojini, an integral part of his life. At last he seeks

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¹ Ibid., p. 159  
² Ibid., p. 133
the help of C.V. Chari, the head of the department to intervene. The need is to extricate Sarojini from the spell of the swindler who has virtually left Dandekar in state of ruination.

“But the hardest thing of all – I didn’t properly realize it until I was ill – he is taking her away from me...’She’s still with me,’ said Dandekar, ‘but it’s only the shell. All that’s real is left with the Swamy. Sometimes when I look at her I know she has even forgotten that I exist. I know in the Swamy’s world it is not easy to remember – I’ve been in it, I know the forgetfulness it brings – but I want to exist, to exist for her. I want my world back, my children happy, my floors swept.”¹

Thus Dandekar unpacks the spiritual torment and agony of heart. The situation turns highly comical but it is a pure creation of his own moral vacillation and lack of courage. The doors of the holy man are open to all, he will not compel Sarojini, nor anyone else in need, not to come to him. Dandekar can force her to go to the hospital but it is of little use. The unwillingness of the spirit, “will not allow her body to recover there.” The view that the body be sacrificed for the preservation of the integrity of the spirit is held in high esteem in both Indian as well as western philosophy. Chari holds the similar view. However, in order to diffuse the tension and resolve the body-soul complex, deputes Ghose to keep swamy’s activities under surveillance. The reaction to the existence of the swamy in the neighbourhood as Ghosh’s findings reveal is ambiguous. The simple folk regard the interrogation unholy and tyranny of the reason whereas the ‘sophisticated’ and the cultivated accuse him of exploiting people’s faith. In face of the differing view

¹. Ibid., p. 197
points and conflicting evidences it is hard for Chari to see reason and truth. If to some the swamy is a Charlton, to others he is a saint. "His heart spoke one way, head the other, and sometimes the two changed places." At last the reason and the rational triumphs the swamy symbolizing unreason is taken as a sinister force to play false upon people's gullibility. He "is battening on credulous fools here living like a lord on the poor and making them poorer, heaven help them! To let him carry on is to make ourselves the laughing stock of the world."¹

Thus the swamy leaves the place but before he goes he exhorts his patient - disciple to undergo operation for the cure of the disease. The novelist mirrors Sarojini's state of mind: "I am not afraid now of knives or doctors, of what they may do. All will be well. He said so."²

It is wrong to presume that Sarojini's readiness to undergo operation is a part of her newly acquired faith, it is as much a stage of stagnation and inertness as it was in the beginning. The simple disappearance of the swamy, symbolic of faith, from her life is not tantamount to overcoming the inner drives and psychological conditioning of an ignorant superstitious woman. Dandekar may dislike shams on his own terms but what is the logic of his loss of faith in humanity outside the fact that he is bound by the destructive element in faith and not alive to its constructive aspect. Dandekar's hesitancy and Sarojini's unwillingness to accept rationality and scientific truth as the basis of evolution of a strategy of survival bring out the reality of the two selves which for want of understanding life and the world around remain

¹. Ibid., p. 2
². Ibid., p. 218
impassive. What is ultimate is not the creation of faith in the individual or in a supernaturalistic deity. The various schools of faith and ideologies may differ in their approach to enlightening man in regard to his placement in the universe, be it divine or manicheanistic but the moral sense be not obscured which is essential for enabling the being transcend the trivialities of life.

There is nothing unusual if one chooses to recast his vision in accordance with the change as wrought by the scientific world outlook, or he stays to live with what in traditional sense some pent-up beliefs. The self is to be left open to the wholesome impact of the two conflicting philosophies so as to evolve a universally acceptable value-pattern rather than cleaving fervently to false gods. The core foundation of faith is to be built in the context of the human decision that can sustain the illusion to live by. Dandekar and Sarojini are not the finished portraits of the 'Being', they are in the making.

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The Coffer Dams

The Coffer Dams draws its strength from the east-west encounter which is at one level a variant of the clash between the technological skill and the human sensibility. In the existing situation, the self in a bid to have a “feel” of humanity has to rise above the antagonistic character of the two divergent forces. It has to develop its own connecting links with the people around by surmounting the barriers which threaten the process of transcendence, whether they are within its own nature or in the outer milieu shaping its ontology. This clash of pragmatism and humanistic concern jeopardizes the generative advancement in thought and action but it occurs only when the self fails to come to term with reality and is unaware of the multiplicity of the complex of choices.

The issues in the novel are the same but the cast changes. The racial discrimination and colour prejudices instead of creating barrier of separateness and isolation nihilate the inherent dualism and spin out the unity of the differing beings. A European woman, Helen whose self gets estranged from the self of her husband, Howard Clinton, seeks fulfilment in the company of a native tribal engineer, Bashiam. What does the alliance of the two opposing value-pattern signify? The truth is that it is not the socio-cultural differences, nor the contrariness of colour or race that brings the two selves closer to each other but a world-outlook and reciprocity that generates love and concern. If it has not been the case then Helen and Bashiam would have been drifted apart like the two disillusioned derelicts.

A dam-building in the tribal hilly valley to channelise the turbulent river constitutes the centrality of action. The characters
involved in the project suggest the essential incompatibility of race and
colour and culture. The construction company is Clinton – Mackendrick
Co. The Chief Engineers are Howard Clinton and Mackendrick. Clinton
was in army, but left it because war in his eyes was a metaphor of
human suffering and destruction. He turned to more wholesome
constructive work in the interest of humanity at large. His dream is to
translate the technical skill into reality. But he, in the midst of the tribal
population, seems a sinister agency to destroy its primeval energy and
Edenesque innocence. The sight chosen for the construction involves
the dislodging of the people from their lawful land because according to
his style and business ethics, the construction work be not hindered by
any material or human consideration. He is conscious of his superiority
and thus always keeps distance from the Indian labourers which is a
reflection of the tragic irony how the self being shut within its ownself
fails to arrive at illumination. The broken pottery- pieces, scattered at
the sight, is symbolic of a moral upheaval which is sure to pervert the
self and destroy understanding between a man and a man. Clinton’s
obsessive pursuit to complete the project is a hysteria of the western
ethics of pragmatism and professionalism which sanctions no regard for
human concern. If the rise of a dam is a token of progress and the
advancement of commercial enterprise on the one hand, it also acts as a
force to generate cultural pollution and destroy the age-long cherished
traditional sociological pattern of existence.

Clinton’s wife Helen is also with him. Her attitude to the
construction of a dam in the valley is not retrogressive. She is alive to
its benefit but what she feels sore about is the manner in which the
tribal population was bulldozed. Clinton tries to give a clandestine twist to the displacement – episode as if they had it by an effort of persuasion.

"What happened to them?"
'They moved.'
'Where to?'
'No idea. Just got up and went, like animals. No moving problems there – I wish to God we traveled as light, we could have done this job in half the time.'

Helen said: 'But they lived here, didn't they? They didn't ask to move.'
'No. We persuaded them.'
'Why?'
'Why?' Clinton repeated irritably. 'Because they occupied a site we needed.'
'Were there no other sites?'
'Not suitable ones. It had to be away from labour quarters and near the river and away from the blasting – a hundred things. Then we found this spot – absolutely ideal from our point of view, except for those huts.'
'How many?'
'How many? Do you mean huts?'
'People.' ...
'I don't know how many people,' he said with a cold distaste. 'I didn't count heads. There was an encampment of sorts and it had to be moved and it was. It doesn't matter, does it?'
'Not now.'

Clinton is a case of late marriage. Helen is handsome but her interests in life hardly fascinate Clinton. The understanding and reciprocity in marriage is summed up in the novelist's words that Clinton hardly knew "Where they lay". Since Clinton lives close to machine and finds little time to take care of Helen's well-being, she develops her own interests to overcome the emotional aridity. She is drawn to the tribesmen. The mysterious call of the jungle is alluring. She sometimes disappears deep into its darkness (symbolic of her being lost in the dark alleys of the libidinal energy and instincts) leaving no

1. The Coffer Dams, pp. 27-28
note behind for Clinton. During such adventures, she happens to encounter Bashiam, a tribal engineer. He acts as her interpreter. She picks up the native dialect within no time which is a surprise for Clinton because in her enthusiasm for a non-native idiom he sees the departure from her original roots which suggests his own domineering tendency.

With the passage of time, Helen’s intimacy with Bashiam develops into a mystifying bond of relationship which finds expression in her passionate utterance: “Sometimes we just gape at each other”, - she said to Bashiam. “It’s a shame really, there is so much one could talk about.”¹ The growing nearness between a native and a non-native self symbolizes the initiation of the process of transcendence. She is aware of the oneness of the Being and the forces to divide it are that of colour, religion and race. “Look at me. I’ve never been a memsahib. You’re not some kind of freak to me. We’re alike, we’re freaks only to the caste we come from, not to each other. I thought you knew. Was I wrong? If I was, I’ll go.”²

Opposed to Helen’s attitude to humanity, Clinton’s outlook of man-woman relationship is shaped by such a set of cultural complex which largely derives its strength from vague assumptions of colour discrimination and racial bias. Hence he feels slightly uneasy. The fury of the monsoon is feared to be devastating and the work is to be finished before its outbreak. Clinton rejects Machendrick’s suggestion “to ease up now, catch up later.” Even Helen’s suggestion is weak to deter Clinton from the work.

¹. Ibid., p. 45  
². Ibid., p. 136
There's time after the nonsoon,' she said. 'It's not an irrevocable date. Unless one chooses to make it so.'

They turned. They had, she could see, forgotten her, and were unhappy to be reminded.

'The choice was made when the contract was signed,' said Clinton. He could hear his voice, overriding and formal, which he could not alter; and he would like to have seen her point of view and been reasonable by whatever alien standard was hers, but he could not do that either. Soon he did not even wish to try. My work, he said, from mounting conviction, which loomed tall as a mountain now; my dam, my business. And grew resentful, walls between these, and his wife, being essential to him and to his side of their marriage.

If the choice was wrong,' said Helen. 'One could go back on that. It would be wrong not to.'

Pursuing it. Unable to take the easy road, to let things lie. Though, if he looked, he would have seen her laboring.

'The choice was the right one,' said Clinton.'...

'The weaker ones,' said Clinton, get shaken out, and that is all. It is a normal process.'

'It is inhuman,' said Helen.

'Are you,' said Clinton, 'trying to teach me my business?"'

The irony about the word 'choice' works at two levels: what choice is wrong – of the contract of work or of marriage? Clinton's ambivalent attitude to Helen stands on masks and draperies. He fondly calls Helen 'Lennie' but hardly cares of her comforts:

"Lennie, you look delicious,' he said. 'You ought to wear these things more often.'

'Perhaps,' she smiled. 'But if I did you wouldn't notice... I ought to take more care of you. Lock you up, as wise men would.'

'But locked up things go mangy, like captive animals, she said, and he thought, anxiously, ... but the thought was unreal, without cause or foundation as far as he could see and he put it down to the imaginings that had plagued him of late."'

The animal imagery suggests shrinkage of Clinton's humanity and

1. Ibid., pp. 123-24 2. Ibid., p. 77
Helen's state of servitude to his male-chauvinism. The feelings of misalliance create mistrust and suspicion in the wake of which the self disintegrates. The two live together under a common roof like the two isolated part of a self. "...we're double talking, she doesn't mean what she says, she means something else and she knows I know, we're like people tied in an uneasy marriage." Reflections as such dig deep at reality: Clinton feels betrayed. He holds the climate of the region responsible for this uneasiness and disorder. "I'm run down, he thought, wrestled with the proposition and abandoned it, substituted another. The country's getting me down, he said to himself."

The situation becomes highly volatile when the servant, Das, tells Clinton about Helen's escapades out in the jungle for trapping birds and the man to escort her is Bashiam. It is midnight and Helen has not come back. She keeps staying with Bashiam in his room. The sirens begin to howl. It is a signal for the workers to be on the construction site in the morning. It is raving but Helen grows insensitive to the smell of the rain outside. This is symbolic of the healing touch of the zone of nature. This finds expression in a comment that becomes a reflection on the ruinous impact of machine on human sensibility.

"Our world,' she said. The one in which I live. Things are battened down in it. Under concrete and mortar, all sorts of thing. The land. Our instincts. The people who work in our factories, they've forgotten what fresh air is like. Our animals - we could earn from them, but we're Christians you know, an arrogant people, so we deprive them of their rights. Deny them. Pretend they haven't got any. Then they don't know about sunshine or rain either. Sometimes they can't move, poor things. We don't allow them to,
in case they yield us one ounce less of their flesh. Where is our instinct for pity? Blunted. We've cut ourselves off from our heritage. We've forgotten what we knew. Where can we turn to, to learn? A million years accumulating, and we know no better than to kick it in the teeth. Now I can't even sense rain although it is there.'

'One has to listen,' he said. 'Yesterday, I could not either. One has to trust oneself before one can feel the - the joinings.'

'Affinities.'

'When one does it returns,' he said. 'Everything is there. Buried. Not forgotten.'

'You can leave it too long,' she said. 'Then it goes rotten. Bury it too deep, it never surfaces again. But we suspect it's there, the dowsing-rod won't hold still, so we feel lost, feel we've lost out on something. I do. A lot of us, do, only we don't let on that we do. But here - now - I don't feel that any more. I belong, I'm not alone. Everything is a part of me, and I'm a part of everything - not just a pop-up cardboard figure.'

The interests of Helen and Bashiam coalesce, "it coincided in bird-trapping". To Clinton's confusion, the campaign is less an exercise in bird-catching and more a trapping of their selves. He looks upon Helen's outing with Bashiam as something extraneous and unholy force. Bashiam "was the man with whom Helen went, someone with whom one had to reckon. It was a queer sensation: he had not thought to come face to face with what had been a faceless cog in complex machinery, or to find it impossible of dismissal as a ludicrous adversary."2

Clinton has served in English colonies and is thus well aware of the expected protests of the native population. He has developed a characteristically colonial temper which is reflected in his authoritarian attitude to those working under him. Mackendrick, Rawlings and the leader of Indian team, Krishnan discuss the construction programme.
They think of postponement of the work, fearing the outbreak of the monsoon. But such a suggestion is contrary to Clinton's philosophy of work which manifest during the process in intruding his desire upon other without weighing its technical or human aspect. Krishnan wanted to re-examine the date which looks to be rather sensible to Mackendrick:

"the pulsing jealousy and pride that a poor nation could feel and transmit to its nationals: the pride of an ancient civilization limping behind in the modern race, called backward everywhere except to its face and under-developed in diplomatic confrontation – a euphemism of sheltering intent but dubious minting and no less humiliation."\(^1\)

Clinton takes a note of the suggestion in regard to reframing the date of completion of the project. But he keeps the final judgement for himself as if he were the sole force behind the corporate exercise involving the skill and labour of many Britishers and the Indians. He hardly cares for any of his subordinates. Even Rawlings is equally critical of Krishnan and grumbles about his suggestion.

"...he must know we've gone into it one hundred times before. But no, he's got this kink they all have, that he knows his country better than anyone else – as they damn well ought, but they don't. So he brings us this thing and that thing and expects us to build round them – what the hell does he think we're building, a cow-shed?"\(^2\)

Both Rawlings and Clinton represent the typically British bias against the Indians. Their vision is distorted to the extent that even the manifest truth seems superficial and slippery. If Clinton, per chance, is softened, Rawlings raises it again to the usual pitch of racial supremacy. To Clinton's asking to speak to Krishnan for resolving the issue, Rawling's

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1. Ibid., p. 18  2. Ibid., p. 20
stance speaks of failure and defeat:

"You must tell Krishnan all this.' Clinton smiled. 'He's the one that needs convincing.'

'That fool,' said Rawlings, 'do you think he'd listen? Needs slapping down."1

Helen's humanity is wounded to see the miserable conditions of the tribal community. The wheel has reduced the existence to a primitive level of existence. They live in the ramshackle huts and their helplessness and unfree movements within the narrow dismal space make them look like peas "rattling in a tin." The noise of the blasting rocks and of the tremors of the machines are not human sounds and thus the whole place looks like a dungeon horrible for human habitation. Her query is the cry of a despairing being having its own morality.

"Can you care? Don't human beings matter anything to you? Do they have to be special kind of flesh before they do?"2

Clinton's apathy to Helen's problems is manifest in his locating the cause of her melancholic broodings in the indigenous pollution that he thinks has affected many.

"The country's affecting her, he told himself, it's getting on her nerves: well, she's not the first person it's happened to nor by any means the last. Get the job done, he thought, get back quick, home to sanity, that's the drill."3

Helen's humanism clashes with Clinton's pragmatism and professional business ethics. Clinton deliberately alienates himself from the native population which is 'herd' in his eyes and in the midst of which he feels he would lose his identity. In his view the tribe "was the severe

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1. Ibid., p. 20 2. Ibid., p. 105 3. Idem
retardation of its civilization and who presented to him only blank opacities of their total incomprehension.”¹ For Helen the interaction between the two segments of humanity is a thrill as it makes one to measure one's moral position. She turns the argument into a faith of birth-cycle to distract the concentration of Clinton’s suggestion of not mixing with the native population: “It's nothing to do with age. I just think of them as human beings, that's all.’ ... ‘You've got to get beyond their skins, darling. It's a bit of a hurdle, but it is an essential one.’... I expect it's something to do with being born in India in my previous life.”² For Helen, the jungles are at the symbolic level the extension of her ownself and thus their mystifying character is a great comfort to her for the fact that they have kept their purity and innocence protected.

Clinton's materialistic outlook on life is not appreciated by Helen because the system is a moral menace to the growth of finer values of life. The self feels suffocated. “It's stuffy in here. I think I'll go out for a bit.” It is nine o'clock in the night and despite Clinton's forbidding to be out at such odd hours, Helen refuses to stay in the house. The refusal is a protest against Clinton's authoritarian attitude to man-woman relationship. He feels the ego inflated while controlling “over her as he did over his men.”

He fails to face Helen's logic in regard to the right of legitimacy as to whether the stay of the Britishers is moral.

“You'll get lost. It's pitch dark.’
'I'm used to it,' she said.
‘Jungle,' he said, thickly, 'not a park to play in.'

1. Ibid., p. 33 2. Ibid., p. 12
'I'm used to the jungle too,' she said. 'I'm not afraid of it.'
'You're too damn familiar with it,' he said, and felt something beginning to bolt, his strength, or control. 'What you don't understand is that what lies out there is verboten. Not our country, not our people. Nothing to do with us.'
'Then we shouldn't be here.'
'I bloody well wish we weren't.'

The sophistry of Clinton's wistfulness of not coming to India for the construction work is ironically manifest in the idiom and rhetoric. His mind perhaps gravitates more toward Helen's drift rather than telling about its being misfit in the alien setting. The truth is that he could have avoided his coming to India but what has hurt his male-egotism and the instinct of possessiveness is Helen's alliance with Bashiam. Since his own vision is shadowy and imperfect he cannot appreciate the healthy relation of the two selves. In the sub-conscious the ego to possess Helen's self keeps the murmur alive: "She is min," he said stubbornly; why should I let her go? What I have I hold." In absence of understanding and involvement, their existence is reduced to formal living; all human ties seem to have frozen. The novelist has well brought out the inner mechanism of their mind to reflect the alienation of the being:

"Burning, or seared, but cold, the two of them cold, and the breath that should have warmed rising in lone chill columns in the silence. They each knew that something, some restraining line, had been severed."}

It so happens that during the operation, a 15 ton Avery-Kent model AK.614 mobile crane serial no. 9861 fails for "the collapse of the jib." There could be two factors for its failure: "First, the abnormal forces

1. Ibid., p. 125
2. Ibid., p. 126
produced by the incorrect procedure adopted in setting up the lifting operation, subjecting the structure to unduly severe stresses, and second, the disconnection of the safe load indicator, resulting in the mechanism being required to hoist a load which was beyond its capacity." Bashiam is the chief crane operator. He is injured.

Clinton takes the accident as "the natural run of things". What is vital is the whole, not the part of it. The commitment to construct the dam in two years. His role is cast in the mould of the old racial lines dividing humanity into 'they' and 'we'. The innate obduracy of nature is hard to reconcile with the changes in nature. The engineer-managers can make the world more a place of security, comfort, prosperity but not of real happiness and create illusion of belongingness. That is why Helen takes the accident as an assault of an outer force on man. She suspects some foul play being played on Bashiam to destroy the adversary. If the machine had some concealed defect and if Clinton had its knowledge, why did he allow Bashiam to operate it? If Bashiam had known it, perhaps he himself would have withdrawn. The accident is kept a mystery. Each is assailed by the thoughts whether the failure of the machine is accidental or a man-made guile to destroy the operator. The truth is reflected in Lefevre's words:

"Bashiam was used, ... 'For that is what it amounts to, whatever the end, or the object, or the motive. He was used, and it was a violation of his rights.""

Nevertheless its impact has left the two, the novelist tells, as strangers and this makes the whole episode interesting:

1. Ibid., p. 194
2. Ibid., p. 199
"The two hideous worn-out strangers stared at each other, recognizing the signs, though held in some petrifying mixture that would not allow, beyond the simple recording.

She said: 'He was not told, and could not know, since it was a concealed defect.'

He answered: 'He could have withdrawn had he wished, but was prepared to take any risk. As his own action showed.'

Running around the perimeter, when there was a heart to this matter.

Then it seemed indeed as if both were converted to stone, such was the quality of the silence between them; but something was struggling, which could not be allowed to die, which presently emerged.

'I did not wish to destroy,' he said.

'If you are sure,' she replied.

And he could not answer that."

Helen's visit and the query 'why did you do it?' is responded by the laconic utterance which enunciates the epistemological and aesthetic truth. Life has no completeness as such and the completeness of art is a relative wholeness. This suggests that the self is on the path of experiment to arrive at illumination but what nihilate its course are the forces and their assault on its nature.

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1. Ibid., p. 195.
**Possession**

It is the spiritual oneness of all that transcends the barrier of the mundane realities of this world and can enable the self transcend the ensuing crisis born of the conflict between the spiritual integrity and materialism, the 'possession' and the dispossession. If the act of possession of a self by the other is taken as if it were like owning a mercantile commodity, then such a view will jeopardize the process of transcendence. The idea of possession implies dispossession at the other end which is at the philosophical level shows that the self is dispossessed of its moral inadequacies. The painful, the transient and the individual is burnt out during the interaction and it is the stretch of the spiritual that sustains the essential ties. The transplantation of a plant may strengthen the roots, growth and its size but if the self is uprooted from its soil, it may not develop the Emersonion concept of Oversoul – the essential oneness of all beings.

The possession is an incisive criticism of the acquisitive thrust and over-possessiveness which perverts the fundamental spiritual vision and destroys the essence of purity. The desire to possess what one is not born with is archetypal having its own morality but what frustrates the quest is the imperfect understanding of the limitations and thus the 'overreaching' will pervert the transcendence process. In place of developing a cogent view of life to seek fulfillment, the individualistic attitude to self and society will result into defeat and despair. Markandaya uses 'possession – dispossession complex' to spin out the thesis that the self, unless freed from the desire of possession, will fail to seek self-realization. The daughter of a British resident, Caroline Bell
and a South Indian shepherd—boy, Valmiki are provoked into unnatural relationship and the machiavellian desire to possess something for self aggrandizement remains unfulfilled. The woman sets her eye to possess Val but fails to do so for the lack of basic understanding of the ontology of the self.

Caroline is introduced as a rich handsome divorcee by Anasuya, the narrator. The encounter of the two women with Valmiki during their visit to his village is dramatic. They happen to meet this rustic Tamil boy whose painting genius has not been properly nurtured and appreciated in the surroundings. It is a family of eight children and if one is taken away it will not matter much to the household. Thoughts as such rise in Caroline’s mind, her fancy takes wings and she unhesitatingly resolves to take Valmiki to England with the understanding that there he would have opportunities and exposure for the full flowering of the painting skill. The novelist throws over her portrayal a sort of imaginative imperialistic colouring. In the words of the narrator, Caroline “was supremely confident born and brought up to be so, with as little thought of fallibility as a colonial in the first flush of empire as a missionary in the full armour of his mission, dogged by none of the hesitancies that handicap lesser breeds.”

Valmiki’s dissociation with the family is marked by the two women. “He had already detached himself from his family and sat in line with us—with Caroline and me, denizens of a world which did not. Quite, think a painter a simpleton fit only for goats” A dialogue with the

1. Possession, p. 15
2. Ibid., p. 17
boy's father is initiated and Caroline pays five thousand rupees to compensate the family for the loss of his services. Both the father and the mother yield to the deal and the manner in which Caroline takes possession of the other self is sufficient to presage the seeds of incompatibility and cultural disparateness. "The matter was settled then. We won for she put her arm round the boy. As it were taking possession of him in full view of his family."¹ The sense of possessiveness verges on irony when the boy expresses a wish to seek permission and blessing of his guru, the swamy and the English woman asserts her legitimacy by right of purchase.

"Well just remind him I'm his guardian now and he is to do as I say," she said furiously. "You can do that can't you?"

I did; and when I had finished the boy said scornfully: "She has not bought me. She has only compensated my family for the loss of a labourer."

Since Valmiki is over insistent to meet the holy man before his departure, the absurd impasse is eased by Anasuya and the three reach the swamy's cave amid the rocky inhospitable hills. What transpires between the guru and the disciple is the usual idiom replete with both moral exhortations and the discussion about the possible hazards which might pervert the pilgrimage. When the goat-boy asks if it is proper to go with the woman, the holy man's answer has the ancient wisdom that the ultimate choice as to what one ought to do lies with the heart. That is one should be true to heart:

"My heart."
"What else?"
"Myself."

¹ Ibid., p. 20  
² Ibid., p. 22
"You have learnt your lesson well," said the Swamy, laughing again. "Yet still you come to me."

"Because people say you are a wise man and a holy man," said Valmiki, wheedling, soft soap in his voice, "and so I would have the answer from you, not from donkey or monkey, or my heart or myself."

"Whether it is right for you to go?" The Swamy spoke gently, no longer teasing.

"Yes."

"Do you want to go, still?"

"Yes. More than anything else."

"If you want to, then you must. Because if you did not you would have no peace yourself and you would take it from whoever you met, for the sound of chafing is like the croaking of bull-frogs, it has little charm. And once you have gone, and looked and found in yourself the answer, then you will know whether to stay or return."¹

The boy is caught in a dilemma, because the swamy's words strike as a linguistic puzzle. A wise man looks upon wisely what the world procures to human eye, "The world offers its fruit in plenty, but they come in halves, the bitter and the sweet. That is a lesson you should have learnt by now."²

What happens to the artist in Europe is an interesting study. Instead of making progress, the graph of the painting genius dwindles under the care of a person whose philosophy of human relation is based on the instinct of commercialization. The artist needs not material but spiritual richness which is the master-light of his inspiration. Caroline takes Valmiki to places of rich artistic heritage, such as Switzerland, France, Italy and France. In the process of exposure to the outer world, the curves and furrows of the spirit are straightened and the village idiot boy becomes sophisticated. This spiritual odyssey of the self enables

¹. Ibid., p. 29  
². Ibid., p. 30
Valmiki understand better the ways of the world and the complexity of human relations. He has acquired knowledge, his talent is certainly polished and channelised into a better artistic form. But the freedom that the spirit needs for creation is not assured. He finds within something lacking that impels the artist to go on. As such, he is able to paint only one picture of a desert whereas Caroline evidently desired him to do more. Her pressure for 'more' makes him feel 'dizzy'. That is the artist in Valmiki is not fully possessed the way the English woman desired to possess. The dream of possession is not fully realized. Caroline does not realize that the possession of the body, the matter, is not the possession of the soul.

The painting evidently nettles Caroline in that its appeal falls below her expectations. She says to Anasuya "you see, He has everything he needs and nothing has come of it."\textsuperscript{1} The word 'gamble' is an expression of Caroline's instinct of commercialization of the artistic talent to the level of game.

"It was always a gamble." Caroline stood with her back to me, looking up at the painted desert on the wall. "You always thought so, didn't you? I didn't, because I didn't think talent like his could simply dry up. I still don't, except at moments. I feel it must still be there, though I don't know what if anything is ever going to set it moving again."\textsuperscript{2}

To it, the narrator's answer is worth scrutiny:

*I don't know how talent works ... does anyone? But some people work best when they have a little peace, and some people only work when they're pushed, when they're under pressure.*

"Under reasonable pressure." She turned and faced me. "But the conditions Val was working in were

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Ibid., p. 46
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Idem.
\end{itemize}
gross, disgusting. He couldn't have kept going for long— he'd have been washed up by twenty. That's why I took him away, and when I did I meant him never to have to grove like that again. I wanted him to be free to work as he wanted, and never anything else. What are you asking me to do—make some sort of ghastly mock-up of those conditions? or take him back—return him to the exact crevice in the rocks I found him in?1

Anasuya is equally in a dilemma about the morality of art. What can come out under pressure is the blood of the artist, not the soul. Creativeness has its own natural flow at will, like a river, the purity and its naturalness is hampered by man-made rigidity and regimentation. Caroline provides all that one needs to feed the body, but not to soul. It is a fallacy that a healthy body can house a living soul in a stuffy atmosphere which is inimical to the natural growth of the artist. Caroline like a hard task master seeks to fashion the artist on the whipping post by battering his soul and remould it according to her own mechanically preconceived framework of mind. That is why the artist in Valmiki begins to show signs of disgust and disenchantment with the existing situation. He begins to understand the alphabets of Caroline's metaphysics of possessiveness by way of dispossessing all that he is born with and that he needs as an artist to make mark. He sees nearness in Anasuya and thus unpacks his heart which is a candid confession of how the self stands in relation to that of Caroline:

"She does not care for me. She cares only for what I can do, and if I do it well it is like one more diamond she can put on the necklace round her throat for her friends to admire; but when I do nothing I am nothing to her, no more than a small insect in a small crack in

1. Ibid., p. 47
the ground. It was not a slip of the tongue, a manner of speaking: it is what she thinks of me when I am as I am now."¹

During this phase of crisis of creativeness, the novelist drops a letter of the Swamy which works as antidote to Caroline’s dream of possessiveness. It's entry into the world of Caroline assumes alarming proportions in the sense that a battle line is drawn between the materialism and spiritualism to possess Valmiki's soul. The novel henceforth takes the pattern of a morality play – the struggle between the good and evil to possess human soul. Anasuya had earlier a different view of the holyman that he could be nothing outside an Indian ascetic whose aim is to seek detachment from the world. But now she saw in him “a past image of priest, a missionary, a revivalist, concerned with keeping tabs on a human being to plot his spiritual progress.”²

Anasuya feels highly exhilarated to read the text of Swamy’s letter telling that “he is always near in spirit.” This spiritual closeness of the swamy is the “fountain light” and not Caroline’s eccentricity that Valmiki needs to attain perfection and fulfil the task Nature leaves for Art to accomplish. The message was brief written in Tamil, a few lines to say that the Swamy “often thought of the boy whom he greatly missed; that his dearest wish was to hear he was working hard at his painting and that he was always near, in spirit to him.”³

Anasuya also becomes aware of Caroline’s evil designs. She sees her triumph in kicking out all decency aside and crushing other’s freedom for her own. The self in her in this situation can never attain

¹. Ibid., p. 55
². Ibid., pp. 60-61
³. Ibid., p. 61
the third modality of Sartrean Being which is the Being-For-Others. The Swamy and Carline represent the two contrary pulls symbolizing the East-West dichotomy. Valmiki symbolises the raw spirit of Indian psyche in the making, Caroline in all her aggressiveness is symbolic of the British Colonial dominance and thus makes all efforts to possess and govern the artist. But the dream of possession can be realized only when the self takes care of the otherness of the self. Caroline’s approach to make the self yield in Valmiki is basically wrong in that her acquisitiveness and exploitative tendencies are a reflection of the Britisher’s colonial subjugation of India.

The Valmiki-Ellie episode is a foil to Caroline-Valmiki affair to show how the self can arrive at illumination, provided there is an urge to approach the other self with sense of involvement, reciprocity and fellow-feelings rather than asserting dominance which can ironically slackens the process of transcendence. Ellie is a victim of inhuman atrocities heaped on man in Naziz concentration camps. In the wake of the shifting from the concentration camp to liberation center, to resettlement center, she came to Britain and then to Caroline. She is a Jewish girl of twenty and is working with her as a domestic help. She is described as a victim of “European crime in European confine”. She is like any innocent girl whose grinding poverty makes her easy prey of man’s appetite. Her physical description speaks of the suffering her race experienced when the spectre of Hitlerism haunted Europe. Her one hand had been deliberately ground into uselessness under a Nazi Jackboot. The fingers are ‘curved’ stubbly round and thus she uses the other hand to manage household chores. The concealed mutilation of
this clumsiness has its own grace for the self out to be other than what it is.

“She had no parents, no state, no passport, no papers – none of those hollow stacking blocks on which the acceptable social being is built. Her one asset was that she was a trained and fully experienced domestic help, which may or may not have been so, but that was the rumour put about by those in whose care she had been.”¹

Valmiki sees in Ellie a part of his ownself and is thus drawn to her as if the two selves were bound by spiritual filiations. As Caroline is a sinister agency to destroy the primal innocence in Valmiki, so Ellie fears her as a child fears darkness. The breaking of a China during washing is a common thing in a household. But one day it so happens that the Coffee-set is broken which for Ellie is a great upheaval. She starts weeping placing her head on the knees. Valmiki approaches her with sympathy to console. This act of natural generosity and a display of elemental human passion transcends the barriers of race, culture, nationality.

“Valmiki knelt beside her blanched with the horror of it unable to believe that this could happen, anguished because he had no option – poor Valmiki, gentle member of the gentle clans of the southern plains, taught by a Brahmin teacher, a man of the one caste which above others could disclaim a particular guilt, even if stained by the general dishonour, and stand some chance of being upheld in a neutral court.”²

But Ellie is removed in a crafty manner by Caroline since she is unwanted. The torture of the Nazis could not break her spirit but it is Caroline who kept Val in the dark about Ellie’s plight and drove her to

1. Ibid., p. 72 2. Ibid., pp. 73-74
death. The novelist terms her suffering as "that other Calvary, the lonely crucifixation, the stifled cries, neatly packaged into a printed paragraph."\(^1\)

Val always thought of Ellie, but it was Caroline's vile tricks that she was 'edged out' from his life for ever. He feels grieved the way she was removed.

"There was no bond between us, no special tie, yet that most irrational of links, the chance circumstance that had made us acquainted. Constantly propped up her shrinking image in front of me. What kind of thoughts were locked in that shorn skull? What decisions would they cry for, that could possibly be implemented without names, or identity or influence? And beneath this benign clarity ran the silt the feeling of injury that Ellie had ever manifested herself, the terrible corollary to which was that the sooner the manifestation was over the better."\(^2\)

Annabel is another woman who suffers the loss of self and individuality. As a result of it her alliance with Val remains a case of unrealized self. She is in distant relation of Caroline. She had her schooling in art in Switzerland. She is an artist and it is her art that draws her near to Valmiki, though she lives in flat with two girls. Annabel is a different girl, a rebel who turns down "her family's traditional plans for organized displays in the marriage market" and leads a free life. Val comes under the spell of her beauty:

"Annabel was eighteen. She was small, slim, ordinary-looking: bright brown eyes, brownish-gold hair cut in ragged urchin style, the short spiky ends appearing all over her head. She had on black silk stockings, a tight skirt, a floppy purple silk mate lot blouse reminiscent of Ellie's shapeless sacks - not a patch, anyone with eyes would have said, on Caroline's elegance on Caroline. But the freshness of

1. Ibid., p. 213 2. Ibid., p. 232
eighteen years was there, which nothing but being eighteen can give: and this girl’s mouth was soft whether she spoke or laughed or argued or disagreed—soft all the time, not merely when she remembered the lines a hard mouth would carve on her face in time, or when people and plans fell into line exactly as she meant them to.”¹

Annabel develops relations with Val and the liaison generates optimism of having the casual appetite realized into nuptial knot. The two make efforts to understand each other and surmount the obstacles that could threaten their alliance. One such force is Caroline. The flat they share with her is “that eerie household, as far as I could gather Caroline and Valmiki continued to sleep in the same bed at night. By day it was Valmiki and Annabel.”² When Caroline comes to know of their growing intimacy she feels highly dismayed and tries to create waves of mistrust and betrayal. In the existing situation the narrator reports that Val finds himself standing between the two fires where a cogent solution is not within sight. He does not want to hurt Caroline, nor he wants to degrade himself in Annabel’s eyes, though he avoids meeting her even at telephones. “...he was frozen with misery, unable to bring himself to hurt Caroline, and in the mood where a man begins seriously to think of a painless solution like having two wives.”³ The Being in him finds more comfort and nearness in Annabel, he is sure of the fact that Caroline would not be a hindrance:

But Caroline’s plans work when she very cunningly exploits Val-Ellie’ affair to break their alliance. In Annabel’s presence Caroline accuses Val of seducing Ellie. It so happens that one day Ellie

¹. Ibid., p. 189  
². Ibid., p. 199  
³. Ibid., p. 198
disappears fearing pregnancy in the darkness of the night and destroys herself. She was hounded by Caroline the sufferings, she experienced under the Nazis transformed her into a new being. Instead of sharing the blackness of life with Val, she acted on her own choice. The newspaper reported it a case of suicide. Caroline picks up the clipping of the newspaper which emanates sickening sensations. The blood in Val’s vains congeals. Caroline brazenly blames him for Ellie’s tragedy to disgrace him in Annabel’s eyes. “Of course it was Val’s child. You don’t blame him for not wanting it.” The revelation of this shocking relationship shakes Annabel violently. The woman in her feels jilted and miserable. She wants Val to disown the entire story. “It can’t be true story, it’s not true, Val. Or is it? Is it the truth, Suya?” Anasuya stands helpless to say anything and thus she against turns to Val pleading and crying because whatever she sees is contrary to the image she cherishes of Val in her mind.

“Val, please, please – I don’t want to know anything more, only that ... she killed herself for that. Val, please...”

“The child was mine,” Valmiki spoke thickly. “But she never said – I didn’t know she would – was going to kill herself.”

“Emotional,” Caroline murmured. “Unstable. Foreigners are. Dear Annabel, you must realize they aren’t like us... you would never be able to rely on one of them.”

“You let her go,” said Annabel. Her eyes were wide, tearless, fixed in a rabid contemplation of Valmiki. “Your child, and you simply let her go, you –”

Val is a victim of irony. Caroline has thrown colouring over lie to look more authentic and beautiful than truth itself. He has mastered

1. Ibid., p. 206
the art of romanticizing life in his paintings but fails to pick up the basic alphabets of art of living. Being overwhelmed by evil, however, he breaks silence to explain his position and the responsibility in Ellie's tragedy.

"I did not do everything I could," ... "I meant to go after Ellie and see that she was all right. I meant to, I talked about it a lot and I worried endlessly but in fact I did nothing because it was easier not to. Can you understand that? It's the easiest thing in the world to let that happen, it only becomes impossible afterwards, afterwards it is the unforgivable. How could you? How could I? Well I did because I wanted the whole thing to end without blooding me. I knew that was impossible. I had been told it was impossible but I tried. Hundreds of poor sods do. Like me. I didn't want to think what sort of an end it would be for her. "I didn't want to think at all. I didn't want to know."¹

But the woman in Annabel is not satisfied with Val's explanation. She feels as if it were all a drama. She grows cold and angry. "You ran away,"... "You got her into trouble and you got out quick before the whiff of suicide could offend your nostrils and curl up those holy eastern sentiments of yours about the sanctity of life. Well, so much for them. So much for decency. More bloody fool I to have thought you had any because how could you, you aren't like us, you wouldn't even know what decency means."²

Caroline's letter to Anasuya brings out her real self and the motive behind the act of possession.

"Do you want me to be terribly British and congratulate the winner? I can't, because it wasn't all your doing whatever you may think, I handed you quite as much as you took. But the game was worth the playing.

Caroline."³

¹. Ibid., p. 207 ². Idem ³. Ibid., pp. 220-21
Val severe his ties from Caroline which is symbolic of something that the self struggles to transcend the evil embodied in Caroline and in his own self. It is a moral and artistic salvation which I sure to be effected by way of purging the self of the extraneous, no matter howsoever one may try to crush it by way of possessing the soul. Caroline holds the 'emotional instability' as the sole factor of Ellie's death but what of her own role? Thus Val's return to his native hills is moral, he regains his lost self and is on the path of progression as the Swamy tells, "Not only me, I am the least; there is also a divine spirit ... He works for that, and therein is the glory... it gives men a satisfaction so rich they cannot explain it, and mostly they do not even wish to."1

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1. Ibid., p. 232
Two Virgins

The novel is an attempt to show how self, if drugged by the illusion of romantic liberation of self, without accepting its limitations is drifted away from its own self to marginalisation. The parable of the timeless and universal anti-thesis between body and spirit, passion and temperance is used as the central motif to spin out the course of self which, in spite of moving in the right direction fails to be of itself for want of knowledge and continence. The fact is illustrated and exemplified by the adolescent awakening of the two sisters to womanhood of a middle class South Indian family, Lalitha and Saroja. The basic pattern of the novel is mythical, a Christian version of the pastoral, the direction being from the corruption represented by the city to virtue and innocence as enshrined in the countryside. In a bid to seek self realization, if the self is shut-out from its legitimate territory, its odyssey from impassiveness to activation, from non-involvement to involvement becomes an ordeal and its progression against the current of delusion is slackened. The novel fuses together the two episodes – 'Lalitha-Gupta' and 'Saroja- Devraj' to explicate how a woman, being caught in a welter of exploitation, acquisitiveness, overambitiousness and lustfulness loses sense of direction and vision.

Appa, their father is a freedom fighter. He got a piece of land that raised his status slightly higher than that of the peasantry. He was not a boot- licker to fawn upon the sahibs, the Britishers called him "a terrorist". His wife known as Amma told that he lost all the "ancestral home was stuffed full of freedom-fight leaflets which he had printed. He should have distributed them too, but he hadn't got round to it."
When the British Tommies found them they simply set fire to the whole lot, not being finicky about what caught light, and the house went up as well. So did the printing press and every stick of furniture bar four chairs."¹

The two daughters grow up in such a picturesque setting which is at once a curious amalgam of conservatism and modernism. They develop their own outlook on life, nature, religion and God. Saroja becomes conscious of her own femininity after having a 'feel' of mother's soft body and hardness of her father's bones. The novelist from the start has not imposed any moral pattern of her own to fashion their outlook on life. They are left free to make choices in life with the understanding that man is nothing outside a choice making animal. And much, in existential sense, depends on one's mode of choice outside the operative mechanism of the biological and cosmic forces. If they happen to encounter failure in life, they alone are held responsible for moral, spiritual and psychological colours. Lalitha from the very outset of her life is projected as Appa's darling daughter whereas to Amma, the two daughters are alike in every respect.

"Lalitha was his favorite because she was pretty and pert in the same way that Manikkam's wife favored the old cow above the others because it was decrepit and helpless. There were always reasons, Appa said, and Saroja knew it was true."²

In a patriarchal social set-up in which male-dominance is the law to influence a woman's individuality, the two daughters are less a victim of the male tyranny and orthodoxy. Lalitha is elder and is swept away by her own hysteria, the romantic day-dreaming. She has her own

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¹. Two Virgins, p. 8
². Ibid., p. 14
passions and romantic gaieties of life whereas Saroja is less enthusiastic to be familiar with the mechanics of living other than she inherits. Lalitha develops a dislike for coarser rusticity of the village life thinking that the rural touch destroys the essentials of femininity in a woman. She leaves the task of tending buffalos for Saroja for which she receives the moral rebukings of her mother. However, she resolves to escape the country culture and milieu and settle somewhere in a city to live a life of much sought-after pleasures associated with the city. As such, the self in her turns restless and violates the bounds of the temperance. She is blind to the moral muddle pervading the city life. One can say that such a finished portrait of art is not created to rot in earth-earthy. The whole village is overwhelmed by the spell of her darkened eyes:

“Lalitha had status. She had no husband yet, but every-one could see when she did she would have more than her fair proportion. There was no lack of emissaries. The young men’s mothers sent them, and the women came and spoke to Amma and pinched Lalitha’s cheek, and Lalitha was demure, pressed her delicate feet together and cast down her eyes to show off her lashes, which were long and lustrous. Saroja knew it was for show because Lalitha told her. It was a pity, she said, that Saroja had such an insignificant fringe, since a lot could be done with sweeping eyelashes. She gave Saroja some of her scented castor oil and Saroja rubbed it in but her lashes never grew thick and smudgy like Lalitha’s, which didn’t really surprise her, Lalitha’s lashes were quite phenomenal. It is a pity, some people are pretty, some people are plain, said Lalitha, examining herself languidly in her hand mirror.”

Her unconventionality is reflected in her dancing naked in the rains once when she went out to bring the buffalao back to home and when Mannikkam’s wife reported about this wantonness to her mother, she

1. Ibid., p. 13
brushed it aside in jest that perhaps the poor woman had seen the spectre of some naked woman and not a woman in flesh and blood.

Partly by virtue of her eclectic education and partly by her own individualism, Lalitha develops a philosophy of life which is advanced of her age and which is much admired by Appa. She was a student of Miss Mendoza’s Three King’s School, a mission school, not a state school where she learnt the western ways of living and consciously developed an impervious attitude to Indian ways of living. She learns music and dancing which is a reflection of her finer tastes of life. On one occasion, Appa and the family were invited to the school function where Lalitha was to give a maypole dance performance. It was a classic performance that threw the entire family into delirious ecstasies. The novelist tells

“Lalitha was dressed in rose-pink, and pink ribbons fluttered from her waist as she took little dancing steps around the may pole, which was painted in rainbow stripes. As she danced, and the girls danced, the ribbons which dangled from the pole were woven into pretty patterns. Saroja had not seen anything so pretty. She clapped hard and wished the state school taught may pole dancing.”

Soon Lalitha’s fame of dance expertise swept across the neighbourhood, the offer of her marriage began to pour in but her eye is fixed somewhere else to find a room at the top and thus she spurns away the offer on the plea that a marriage with a village lout would destroy her artistic excellences. Lalitha has seeds of her tragedy in her in that the success of marital alliance is not measured in term of a village or city milieu. It is all a matter of understanding involvement and honour to each other’s individuality.

1. Ibid., p. 15
Markandaya in her portrayal of the two sisters has drawn a line to reflect the two facets of the self on way to progression. Saroja, in fact, is the other half of the split consciousness of Lalitha but it represents the rational and the cognitive self in progression. That is why what is alluring for one is disgusting for the other. And it happens when the vision is not mellowed down to moral and spiritual maturity and thus delights in the surface reality whereas the self-realisation needs a deeper insights into the nature of things.

The Diwali night is the night of all nights when in a joint Hindu family all children and children's children gather to celebrate the festival. But Lalitha is away with Miss Mendoza to celebrate the festival in the city which is like flouting the teaching of the ancient scriptures:

"Lalitha had celebrated Deepavali with Mr. Gupta in the big city. Lalitha told them about it. It was grand, she said, a really grand affair. Mr. Gupta had invited a hundred guests and they all sat on a balcony and watched fire-works set off by relays of servants. There had been a series of tableaux, she said, depicting scenes from the epics; the one she had been particularly impressed by had shown the demon king Ravanna being devastated by a barrage of Catherine wheels. Aunt Alamelu gave a loud sniff. People like Mr. Gupta, she said, remembered to be Hindus only when it suited them, gave them the chance to indulge in pyrotechnics. Appa requested her to be quiet. He wanted to listen to his daughter. She had been away only a week but it could have been years the way he could not leave off looking at her."¹

Lalitha's absence made the house wear rather an empty look which created the feelings of loneliness and melancholy in Appa's heart. But Saroja at symbolic level represents the very 'light' needed to

1. Two Virgins, p. 124
eradicate the darkness. But it is Saroja who lit the diyas which signifies the self nearing its goal. Appa

"looked lost. He watched Saroja, who was filling little mud saucers with oil. He was nice to her, admired the wicks she had made and laid out ready in a row. Wicks are easy, said Saroja. She soaked one in oil and twisted it into place. She wished she could do something for Appa but she knew she could not, could not take the place of her missing sister, no human being could fill the place of another, the shape of the space was different.

When it was dark, a real black velvety darkness without streak or stripe of purple or indigo, she began lighting the wicks. Lalitha was not there to do her share."¹

Lalitha was away for a week but to the entire household it seemed as if it were six-months absence which speaks of the strength of the familial ties. Her zest and enthusiasm for becoming a film-actress is seen in the manner in which she tells about her acceptance of the offer Mr. Gupta has made her for the next film. But it is doubted if the film-making project would ever be realized. Nevertheless, she is very much optimistic that Mr. Gupta is serious about its making soon:

"That is his intention, said Lalitha primly. It is a question, she said, of finding the necessary backing, it is not easy in a philistine city which prefers to keep to rutted commercial paths."²

The novelist further digs at the differing cultural tastes of the two sisters. Referring to the Shakuntla film, which was edifying for Saroja, Lalitha talks of Mr. Gupta’s quality of film-making. She says he “has no time for old-fashioned long-winded epics, he is only interested in making

¹. Ibid., p. 120
². Ibid., p. 125
artistic pictures, pictures of social realism." To Amma's pointblank query, "Are we to understand that you are an actress?" Lalitha's laconic reply, "Oh yes"... Mr. Gupta says I am a natural", creates the taint of mystification as no one could be certain what the word 'natural' implies, though "there were clues in her voice, her demeanor". When Aunt Alamelu interpreted that the word 'natural' suggests "a simpleton, a creature without wits", Lalitha's defence of the use of the word as Mr. Gupta did suggests comicality of her progression.

"He meant a natural actress, said Lalitha. She rose, went outside and sluiced the crumbs of their festivities from the tips of her fingers, came back and stood in the doorway. She looked quite regal. Your day, dear Aunt, she said, is as dead as the dodo."¹

One can appreciate Lalitha's curiosity to share her experiences with others for the restoration of the emotional stability. But it is used as a device to reflect the dreaminess of her spiritual journey to the city and the loss of self in its romantically foggy atmosphere. Lalitha invites Saroja to act as listener:

"They sat together on the charpoy which Lalitha had dragged out into the courtyard and Saroja felt very close to her sister sitting beside her in the starry darkness.

What was it like? Asked Lalitha. Bleak, said Saroja, we missed you. What was it like? She asked in turn. Heaven, said Lalitha. She sighed. It is my spiritual country, she said, it is my spiritual home. What is? Asked Saroja. The city, said Lalitha, and my acting, it is all jumbled up in one bright parcel. How bright? Asked Saroja. Do you think you will become a star? Who knows? said Lalitha softly. I would like to think so, she said, hugging Saroja tightly; I would very much like to think so."²

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¹ Ibid., p. 127
² Ibid., pp. 127-128
Being so overwhelmed by the lure of city-glamour, Lalitha accompanies her teacher, Miss Mendoza to Mr. Gupta’s residence. He is a film director who was invited to attend the school function. It so happens that he approved her dancing-skill which is sufficient for anyone’s fancy to take flight. His assistant, Devraj was also with him. Shots were taken for a documentary film on “village market, the funeral of a youngman who had obliquely died before his time, and the beggars who queued up at the temple and the monkeys that were plaguing the countryside.”¹ The film unit took the shots of the school also with Miss Mendoza standing on the top steps to welcome the unit. There were several shots of Lalitha in between as if she were an important cast in the drama.

“She danced one of the Indian dances she had been assiduously practicing, and posed gracefully beside the well to which she hardly ever went, and there was to have been a picture of her tending the buffalo, but Lalitha refused, said it would render her a cowgirl, which she was far from being.”²

Lalitha’s pilgrimage to the city is frustrated for want of her precise knowledge of the city. She goes to the town with the film unit and is very much impressed by the life-style in Mr. Gupta’s house. On her coming back when Saroja asks what the city is like, she calls it her spiritual home. It so happens that she is engaged to work in Mr. Gupta’s film. The dream of becoming a film actress has been translated into a reality. Appa feels proud of this achievement of his daughter. Mr. Gupta, Lalitha tells her father, has three telephones whereas they have none installed in their house which is a sure sign of backwardness and

1. Ibid., p. 105  
2. Idem.
ignorance.

“She told them of the three telephones he had on his desk, one of which was colored red. Fancy that! Said Aunt Alamelu. It’s so primitive, Lalitha said, not being on the phone. It hampers one’s career. It would have been simplicity itself for Mr. Gupta to have kept in touch, if only ... Amma made no comment.”

The uneasy signs of disapproval appears on the face of her mother but she finds herself helpless to check the day-dreaming of her daughter. She herself does not understand that this romantic outlook of life will take her nowhere. As such, she disappears one day leaving a note behind tucked in her bedding. The note tells that she “couldn’t face going back to the village: it stifled her, her talents, her ambition. She intended to stay in the city where she belonged. She could look after herself. They weren’t to search for her, which in any case would be a waste of time because they would never find her.” The search was futile since one can be easily lost in a vast impersonal stretch of the city. In the night of anguish, the search for Lalitha was like a mirage in the hideous maze of a big city. They came to the YWCA premises thinking that they help a girl in time of need but there was no trace of Lalitha. And then the thought of Mr. Gupta came to their mind. Even the search at the temple where the poor stand in line to beg food was of no avail. There was no girl like Lalitha, no well dressed, well-brought up. The mother consoles Saroja:

“Your sister is isolate, said Amma. Her anger surfaced. Made isolate by that Western punk Gupta she said, curse the day he and his ways crossed our threshold.”

1. Ibid., p. 133
2. Ibid., p. 236
3. Ibid., p. 240
After some days, Appa received an unaddressed letter telling about Lalitha's living in a three piece suite, well-furnished with velvet cushions and an arbour covered in grape vines. Her lodging arrangement, it is clear, was made by Mr. Gupta who is now in America.

In the midst of city-culture and crowd, Lalitha is to seek self-realisation. After having a taste of such a life-style, the village life now no longer seems attractive. The place be a city or a village is not significant to fashion one's world outlook, but it is one's attitude to self and society that is material. One can not afford to overlook the possible hazards and evils of day-dreaming that ironically destroys the progression of the self. The transient trivial rainbow world of a city offers to a new comer a sight that preys on his sensibility to frustrate the ideal. Lalitha too loses the sense of limitations and comes to lose the essential of her womanhood during her city-pilgrimage. She is robbed of her beauty, of feminine in charm, artistic excellences. The city made a whore of her and thus ends her romantic quest for self.

The Saroja - Devraj story is a foil to Gupta-Lalitha episode. One seduces the girl from conventional morality, the other makes the younger fly back from it. Saroja's quest betrays certain positive symptoms of progression. She is as much interested in life, in sex as Lalitha has been but unlike her elder sister, she is less a victim of delusions that destroyed Lalitha's ideal. She is a simple plain country girl and does not respond so romantically and thrillingly to the show of art of wealth as Lalitha did. She has keen observation and insight to look into the ways of the world. She has a curiosity to see things beyond surface reality. She happened to see her mother's body bare
"from the waist up when she was oiling her hair, and bare from the waist down when she stood on a plank and washed between her legs. She was careless about closing the bathroom door when only the girls were about. Lalitha said Saroja should not look at their mother when she was like that, but Saroja didn’t see why not, she liked Amma’s body, which was plump and soft and as comforting as a cushion, especially when you had one of those miserable spells. Appa’s body was hard."

She also takes a note of the quarrel and love-making of her parents which willy-nilly shapes her attitude to feminine-mystique. She has seen how after a quarrel, Appa and Amma make love in the night. The creaking of charpoy “it disturbed her, made her thighs flutter and her inner lips moist; she longed to know what it was like for Amma, who was constructed like her, same openings only larger, Manikkam’s wife told her, because of the babies pushing out, not mention what was pushed in.” There are various shaping influences which make Saroja open out life and be familiar with the interplay of the mechanism of human urges and appetencies. The sources through which she picks up knowledge about life include her observation of her own body, her parents’ bodies and their actions, Manikham’s wife’s spurting white bluish milk from the nipples, the dallying of Lachu with the girls, Miss Mendoza and others and her participation and close association with the life of her own sister, Lalitha. She is not averse to those allurements that destroyed the dreamy vision of her sister but she is not blind to their superficial character. She discards the traditional values which, she thinks are hostile to the expression of one’s individuality. But it is under the direction of Aunt Alamelu that she follows the middle path and seeks

1. Ibid., p. 12
2. Ibid., pp. 24-25
escape from the dire consequences of extremity in morals. Lalitha's tragedy has a moral to teach that serves a lamppost for Saroja to keep her virginity unsullied. She responds to the biological urges and filial ecstasies of human flesh, but she never grows oblivious of her virginity. When the search for Lalitha took Appa, Amma, Saroja to Gupta's place there Saroja happens to encounter his assistant, Devraj. The way these people indulge in coaxing and cajoling a victim is not something unexpected of their professional ethics. Devraj advances, comes near to her and places his hand evidently to make love. She starts up and cries,

"Take your hands off me, she cried, and Aunt Alamelu of all people loomed up, put words she was fighting for into her mouth. What do you take me for, she screamed, a virgin in your whorehouse? She couldn't stop screaming. They couldn't stop her. They put her in a taxi and all the way back those rasping sounds kept bursting out of her throat, for the life of her she couldn't throttle them back."¹

Saroja knows it well as to where the wandering male - fingers are likely to end. The city is associated with seduction and failure. It is a place where great expectations turn into great deceptions and the stage seems to slip away from under the feet. The place symbolizes the artificialities and sophistries of the civilization. It is a place that deprive one of his humanity and breed evils of whoredom, moral perversion, falsity and betrayal. She returns to her village which is a moral return of a self which is less deceived. The memories of village fields, the varying moods of the seasons throw her into lyrical joy:

"She hated the city. She didn't belong to it, she wanted to go away and never come back.

¹. Ibid., p. 245
She wanted to go home. At home there were fields to rest your eyes on, colors that changed with the seasons. The tender green of new crops, the tawny shades of harvest, the tints of freshly turned earth, you could have told the week and the month of the year by these alone. You knew each grove, each acre, each homestead on it, who owned them, and the owners of the names. You knew every pathway. No one could ever be lost, not by trying. The wells, the fields, each had its name: the well beside the water meadow, the well by the banyan, the field next to the mill. You always knew where you were. You knew who you were.

The city took it all away from you. You were one in a hundred, in a thousand, you were no longer you, you might have been an amoeba. You drifted, amoebalike."1

If Lalitha finds the village "stiffly" and "sparkles" and the city a natural hermitage of her soul, it is so because the self is a deluded self. It has a zest for stirring but in absence of illumination chooses to wallow in moral filth. Saroja craves for the village, the place being safe for one’s identity. "You always knew where you were... you were one in hundred, in a thousand" After her return home she is herself once more, for "the unconnected pieces had meaning after all."2 Lalitha symbolizes the impetuosity of the beatnik philosophy that drives one to ruination. Saroja is a case of balanced and placid outlook on life. Mr. Gupta represents the fast-changing, superficial and immoral exploitative tendencies associated with a city which Lalitha highly appreciates but Saroja aggressively hates. The village signifies identity and continuity which is blighted in the anonymity of the clatter of the city like. Markandaya in the portrayal of the two selves has not imposed any pattern of her own. She has left the choice open to represent the two

1. Ibid., p. 243
2. Ibid., p. 167
opposing set of value - pattern: the one representing simplicity, innocence and purity of the ideal, the other stands for betrayal, perversion, lustfulness, ambition and machiavellian ego-centricity. Lalitha's fate is left vague. Nothing is told about her plight, whether she became a class film star or sank into the morass of whoring which is a common lot shared by many village girls who are drugged by city hysteria to make good there. The novelist leaves for the readers to judge Lalitha's fate in the moral framework of conventionality. She does not rise above the level in her rejection of the tradition and the family. The self in Saroja at the end gets stuck where it was in the beginning. The struggle shatters inertness of the being, the spirit hears the mysterious call of the jungle and moves to find its way facing its cobwebs for onward movements. But for want of clarity of vision is lost in its darkness. And thus the entire initiation and the urge to rise above the impediments is rendered 'sound and fury' signifying nothing. The struggle of self is a strenuous human exercise but it's attainment of success and unbounding happiness issues from the realization of those primary affections and instincts which bind man and man into the essential bond of relationship.

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