CHAPTER II

GENERATE OR DAMAGE: THEME OF MARRIAGE

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

Marriage, the most sacred institution, a union for life, is the major premise of the Bible. Through out the holy book, one finds a consistent discussion on marriage and its spiritual sanctity. Marriage is one of the two important doctrines God taught Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the other doctrine is the Sabbath. Both the doctrines, the Sabbath and the Marriage, are interrelated. The Sabbath demonstrates man’s relationship with God, and marriage divulges man-woman relationship, which ultimately enhances building relationship with God.

The Bible explicitly presents the concept that marriage is purely God’s idea. Marriage is emanated from God’s reasoning. (Genesis 2:18–24). God endorsed marriage as good and honourable. (Hebrews 13:4) It is a permanent bond. (Mathew 19:6) Ideally, only death should dissolve marriage. (Romans 7:2-3) Marriage of man and woman is a symbolic reference to the marriage of God and His
chosen people, the church. (Ephesians 5: 23-32) The principled practice of love is the pedestal for marriage. (Ephesians 5:21-23) The prerequisite for a successful marriage is commitment. (Genesis 24:58-60) The bond of trust, which is the foundation of all relationships, is ruined by unfaithfulness. (Mathew 5:32) Marriage is a covenant giving no provision for divorce. (Malachi 2: 16)

The holy institution, according to the Bible, is a ‘covenant’ but not ‘contract’ because the Bible portrays the church as the bride of Christ. That is the reason why John, the disciple of Christ in his apocalyptic writing says:

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: For the marriage of the Lamb (Christ) has come and his wife (church) hath made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)

Apostle Paul also writes in his letter to the church at Corinth saying:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2)
As such the church is “betrothed, espoused and promised” as the proposed and intended bride of her husband, Jesus Christ. The marriage is not accomplished but yet to come. The very concept of marriage between God and his people is not a uniquely New Testament idea. It also occurs in the Old Testament. Prophet Isaiah foretells:

For thy Maker is thine husband; The LORD of hosts is his name; (Isaiah. 54:5)

That is the reason why God advocated Ten Commandments or the Decalogue (Exodus 20:1-17), the most concise, clear and vital ethical laws and rules that regulate human behaviour, to His spiritual bride, His chosen people, Israelites to ascertain an everlasting covenant between Him and His people.

Though all the commandments of Decalogue are indirectly related, two of them directly speak about marriage and family. The commandments “Do not commit adultery and do not covet your neighbour’s wife” (Exodus 20:14, 17) invariably warn against defiling infringement of the marriage bed.
Besides the Old Testament, the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament also made the vows of marriage more binding and obligatory. Attributing supremacy and honour to the wedding knot, the first miracle that he performed, changing water into wine, was in a wedding ceremony at Cana of Galilee. Apostle Paul in his Epistles also, did not thin down the tradition taught by Christ and advocated the notion that marriage is for life. (Romans 7:1-3 & I Corinthians 7:39) Thus the Bible campaigns no provision for divorce at this revered institution, marriage.

The holy bond is glorified in scriptures and eventually it is endorsed by established legal institutions. Precisely marriage is a holy and legal affair. Dockery, Union President of the University faculty members of Christian studies at the Baptist-affiliated University, in his article Importance of Marriage to Society Underscored by Professors views the same when he says:

Marriage was established by God to reflect the relationship of the Godhead, to foster the loving communion of the spouses and to provide a means of populating the earth and nurturing children. Creation of male and female is not an incidental fact or afterthought, but the very apex of God’s creative activity....Good marriages create happy individuals and families, stronger communities, and a more stable society.3
However, this sanctified, important and blessed institution is no longer treated as permanent and sacred. The oneness of the matrimonial bond is nearly torn asunder. Today, this relation of marriage is almost defiled and distorted. “Divorce after divorce is recorded in daily papers. Divorce and marriage is the order of the time”.4

Shobha De also opines the similar view in her interview with Vaihayasi P. Daniel, Deputy Managing Editor of Rediff, as:

Marriage is one of the most enigmatic, most fascinating relationships on earth....Marriage is becoming like the dinosaur. It is going to be extinct very soon.5

The Bible aptly provides a solution for this arduous and complicated issue of shattering of marital bond delegating the responsibility to woman in a family unit. According to the Bible every wise woman builds her house but the foolish plucks it down with her own hands. So it is in the hands of a woman to build or break her home. She has been given the power to erect or ruin. Thus a woman
has a vital role to play in a family to strengthen this matrimonial bond.

The Bible begins with the creation story, creating the earth and the humankind. It is recorded in the Bible in Genesis as:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. (Genesis 1:26)

This doesn’t imply that there are many Gods. There is one and only God. But God is identified as Trinity because He is Three in one: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, signifying three separate persons, in one essence. In several cultures woman is given a subordinate position and even considered as evil, whereas man is adulated as God. But the Bible says in Genesis, the first book of the Bible:

In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

That’s why Paul Heiligenberg, a preacher, in his book entitled *Head & Helper: An Understanding of Biblical Marriage* succinctly observes:
God is spirit. But in his nature, in his character, He is both male and female in one. So a woman is just as much as the image of God as a man.\(^6\)

Thus both man and woman are the equal parts of the image of God. Both of them are the reflections of God’s nature and character, thus constituting the complete image of God and as such, both of them are equally precious beings in the sight of God.

But first God created man, Adam, a complete being comprising male and female characteristic traits, and saw that it was not good for him to be alone and so made a helpmeet, Eve, taking a part of his body, thus splitting man into two separate beings. The reason behind the creation of two beings, male and female is aptly articulated in the Bible as:

\[
\text{Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)}
\]

The primary principle and rationale of God for instituting marriage is that both man and woman should live in complete
physical, emotional and spiritual unity. The implications of the term
UNITY which has a lot more additional meaning than the sexual
unity is suitably elucidated by Dr. Ron Jenson, an expert in the area
of personal coaching and leadership development, in his book *Make
a life, Not just a living as*:

Uplift one another
Need one another
Intimately relate to one another
Trust one another
Yield to one another. 

As a deep and solid foundation is compulsory for a building, so is
the case to build a strong and successful marriage. The house
should be not only strong enough to endure storms but also a place
where one feels pleasure to spend time. The two major foundational
beliefs for a successful marriage, according to Heiligenberg are
equality and unity.

The design and picture of Biblical marriage is specified by Apostle
Paul in his epistle to the church at Ephesus:
Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: ...Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; (Ephesians 5:22-25)

Accordingly a wife should do her duty first and a husband should love (in Greek Agape) his wife. This love is unconditional, selfless and sacrificial. A woman should be a suitable helper, submitting herself to her husband in response to love. She alone is the equally (or even more) qualified helper for her husband. However as Paul Heiligenberg appositely remarks:

The role of the wife is probably one of the most misunderstood roles in human history. 8

That may be the reason why woman is given subordinate position in a family. In the patriarchal society woman suffers an inferior status. It was not God’s meaning when He created the husband and the wife. He created them not to compete against but to complement each other and function as one in unity and equality. After the culmination of the creation process God gave the commandment to man and woman saying:
Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:28)

God blessed both man and woman to rule over the earth and build their family. But when they showed disobedience to God’s command and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree God punished Adam for his failure in executing his spiritual headship and Eve for her transgression. Then God said to Eve:

...and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. (Genesis 3:16)

For a husband to dictate or rule over his wife was not God’s plan but a consequence of sin. The whole of mankind is in anguish as the man has lost his partner, his helper. But as Jesus has paid the price on the cross for the sins and set free from the curse of the law of sin, the Paradise is regained. Per se woman can go back to her destined plan of God, to be a ‘helpmeet’ for her husband. As a completer and helper, she does the work of the Holy Spirit in the family. Rev Jack
Hyles, Pastor of First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana compares a family with the Trinity in his article *Woman, the Holy Spirit of the Family* saying:

The Lord chose to compare a family with the Trinity. In so doing, He called the head of the family, the man, after His own name, Father....Then He likened the son or children in the family to His own Son, the second named Person in the Trinity. Hence, we have in the family a person who represents God the Father, and we have a person who represents God the Son. By process of elimination, we come to realize who represents the Holy Spirit in the family.... The woman represents the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

Just like the Holy Spirit, the woman counsels, comforts, instructs, teaches, encourages, leads, gives fellowship and brings joy. Thus, by carrying out all these activities she becomes the Holy Spirit of the family. Pastor Hyles also appropriately states:

The word ‘helpmeet’ means ‘completer’. So man is not complete until he has her.¹⁰
There, woman was created because the whole of Edonic Bliss was incomplete without her. There she stands with the devotion and meekness of Hannah, as she made a vow to dedicate her son for the service of God, with the loveliness and submissiveness of Ruth, as she obeyed and accompanied her mother-in-law to a new land, with the gentleness and devoutness of Elisabeth, as she got her share in a barren condition.

But amidst this beauty and loveliness incredibly evil also could find an entry. Though she potentially possesses all the virtues of the biblical women she also holds another potential. She encompasses the lying and deception of Sapphira to ruin her own life or the rebellion of Jezebel to destroy her own race or the disobedience of Eve to end the entire race of humankind. So Pastor Hyles fittingly remarks:

Whether it be good or bad, there is one thing that woman always does; she determines the spirit and the atmosphere of any place where she is present....Woman can make Eden a paradise if she so chooses, or she can curse everything in it, as she did....She can save a nation as did Esther or she, like Jezebel, can destroy one.
Thus the Bible candidly explicates the truth that a woman who is virtuous can build her house with her good qualities and becomes a successful wife and the woman who with her vices breaks her own home and becomes unsuccessful in her marital relationships. The roles played by these successful and unsuccessful women in biblical times are almost similar to the lives of the present day women.

The grandiose inauguration of the literature of women in the post-independent era marks its identity and gains recognition by way of its self-sufficiency. An opulent crop of women novelists germinated and enriched fiction in English. In order to relate biblical or spiritual and moral characteristic traits in women characters to bring out her role in a family, certain novels are culled from the treasure of Indian fiction for the present study because, in human history, one of the most misunderstood roles is the role of a wife. Many people throughout the world are suffering and are discouragingly unhappy in their conjugal relationships because of lack of understanding the divine concept of God’s plan, purpose and principles of marriage, which resulted in a lot of problems and misunderstanding, leading to rapid increase of divorce rate. Majority of people get very much disheartened and upset in their marriage and as such, it is far from God’s good, pleasing and perfect will.
The marriage, which is physical, emotional, spiritual and legal union of individuals and man-woman relationship form the theme of fiction for so long. The theme of marriage and man-woman relationship is as old as literature itself. The commercialisation and globalisation adversely influenced the family values besides posing threat to the sacred bond of marriage. Materialism reigns and relationships especially marital are not pursued on permanent basis. Against the backdrop of even the contemporary trends that started affecting the societal and familial relations, certain Indian novelists have attempted to depict the theme of marriage. All the four novelists selected for the study, sufficiently dealt with the theme of marriage besides convincingly touching upon the woman’s role in building or breaking their marital bond.

Kamala Purnaiya, who writes under her pen name, Kamala Markandaya, is considered to be one of the most sensitive writers who vehemently exposed the shortcomings of the societal apparatus. She was born in an elite and orthodox Brahmin family in Karnataka in the year 1924 and breathed her last breath in London in 2004. In 1948 she emigrated to England and married Betrand Russel, an Englishman and settled there but frequently visited India, her native land.
She occupies an enviable prominence with the publication of her very first novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, the most admired and popular work of hers, which has become a bestseller. Ever since, she has been encouraged by the readers to trek on the path yearned and the subsequent ones added her laurels. She has been the recipient of National Association of Independent Schools Award (U.S.A), 1967 and English-Speaking Union Award, 1974. Her writing career now spans 40 years and so far she has produced ten novels. Two of her popular novels *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* are prescribed as course books in American Schools and Universities and even research programmes are carried on her novels by the students in British and American Universities. The present study focuses on Markandaya’s two novels *A Silence of Desire* (1960) and *A Handful of Rice* (1966).

In Kamala Markandaya’s novels, the traditional attitude of women is brought out. Indian woman identifies herself by maintaining certain modes of conduct in her relationships. About Markandaya’s women, a literary critic, P. Geeta, in her article *The Novels of Kamala Markandaya: Reassuring Feminine Identity* says:

Despite the changes in norms, the impact of western culture, and alien mores, economic and social progress, she is essentially Indian in sensibility.\(^{12}\)
An eminent and well-known novelist Nayantara Sahgal herself has a corner for Markandaya, which is obvious from the following lines:

But among the Indian authors I have read...I haven’t read all their books....I am very partial to Kamala Markandaya.  

With her mellifluous style of writing and adept use of language, she effectively presents her views through her women protagonists portrayed in her gripping and exceptionally readable fictional works. By way of this befitting medium of fiction, she reveals the powerful role, a woman can play in moulding her husband and family. These women have adhered to certain values, spiritual and moral. In the words of an academician, Dr. Arora, the author of the poetic collection *A Thirsty Cloud Cries*:

The development of her women characters is along moral and spiritual lines which means, commitment to a system of values, the longing for a life of fulfilment where fulfilment comes when the woman has a value system and there is also present an environment in which such values can find expression through sharing and participation. Her feministic approach is of cooperation not of confrontation, as she knows that there is no
replacement model and ultimately a woman has to merge herself in this male world.\textsuperscript{14}

Thus the novels selected for the study show women who are prominent figures in their marital relations. In the novels selected \textit{A Silence of Desire}, which depicts the relationship between the husband and the wife, the protagonist Saroja stands for a spiritual and faithful woman, and \textit{A Handful of Rice}, which describes the family life of a poor couple, Nalini represents a truthful woman who struggles of her poverty but plays pivotal role in reforming her husband.

\textit{A Silence of Desire}, Kamala Markandaya’s third novel portrays the life journey of a loving middle class family of Sarojini and Dandekar and how Sarojini’s faith in a Swamy becomes a cause for the clash and wide differences between the husband and the wife. Dandekar, a clerk in the Central Government office marries Sarojini who is a religious person and theirs is a blissful married life because she is content with what she has and builds her home in an efficient way by managing all the domestic expenses and making it blissful by her extremely pious life. She visits the temple regularly to listen to the teachings of saints and swamis and spends a good deal of her time in prayers. Her faith in God gives her the strength and sustenance for life.
Though Dandekar’s outlook is modern, he wants his wife to be traditional in her attitudes and ways of life. He gets upset with slight disturbance in her behaviour because he has been used to her submissiveness and loyalty. She develops an ailment in her womb but she believes in the divine healing. She visits the Swamy with faith that she will be cured of her ailment. She goes to the temple secretly without the knowledge of her husband, which evokes suspicion in him about her fidelity and he doubts her faithfulness.

In spite of her husband’s accusation of infidelity she carries out her responsibilities as a dutiful wife. This strength she gets from her innate spiritual feeling that she is not doing anything wrong. She has not become weak by accepting tradition but retains her distinctiveness as a devoted wife. She even refuses the advice of her husband to undergo operation in a hospital. Dandekar, because of the disturbance in his placid life, suffers negligence in his work place and even goes unto the stage of dismissal. Dandekar appeals to his chief and ultimately his chief succeeds in sending the Swamy out of the town by making him a controversial figure. Before leaving Swamy advises Saroja to get cured of her tumour by medical treatment. And in the end, as per the valuable suggestion of Swamy she undergoes operation, which solves her health problem and family problem. Finally Dandekar goes to the Swamy where he finds the
needy and the ill people lingering for him in an endless hope. He even rejects to take his jewellery perceiving the new set of ideals.

The attitude of Dandekar and Sarojini towards faith and rituals mark the basic difference in their characters. Dandekar is modern and Saroja is traditional in their outlook. But with her spiritual strength and implicit obedience, she obliges to her husband and undergoes operation and gets cured of her problem and dons her role efficiently to become a successful wife in her family.

In Kamala Markandaya’s fifth novel *A Handful of Rice*, Nalini, the protagonist’s wife, is portrayed with excellent feminine qualities. She is decent, virtuous with low and soft voice characteristic of women, who can transform the errant life of a man. Ravi, a country lad leaves for the city, with a hope of leading a better life and thus escaping the poverty and ennui of his village life. But his insufficient education leaves him unemployed and he inevitably resorts to physical labour. There he is influenced by Damodar, a wily city slicker, born and bred in the streets of the city, whose gang deals with smuggled goods. One day while trying to escape a policeman he goes into the house of a tailor, Apu and falls in love with her daughter Nalini at first sight. When Apu offers him an apprentice post, he accepts at once for the sake of Nalini. He changes his way of
life and works hard honestly to prosper Apu’s business. He becomes gentle by the magic of her persona. He marries Nalini and leads a happy life. But at times when he meets the Memsahibs, the people of higher class, for whom he is working, he gets discouraged. One day he meets Damodar again, who makes fun of his poor way of life and incites him to follow his path of dishonesty to lead a luxurious life. Thereby he suffers an internal struggle between the paths of Damodar and his wife, between dishonesty and honesty. After the death of Apu, he snubs the principles of Apu and as a result, his business disintegrates and within no time he falls into the bottomless pit of debts. Choked by the husks of despair he loses his balance of mind and torments his wife. The death of his son makes him angry with the society, which is cruel and responsible for his unemployment. He meets Damodar again but doesn’t get the opening to work with him. Then in this utter disillusionment Nalini alone becomes his support and strength. She pacifies him with her soft touches. His conscience doesn’t allow him to follow evil deeds but he decides to be content with what he has.

The novel is a realistic portrayal of how poor and innocent young persons are trapped by criminals owing to their frustration of unemployment and how a woman in a family motivates her husband towards good and honest behaviour. She is responsible for a drastic
change in him. Thus because of Nalini’s good and devoted character alone, the story ends in a memorable climax.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, an Anglo-Indian writer, who has attained reputation internationally, is reckoned to be a very talented writer and one of the most admirable novelists in the contemporary literary scene. As Vibha Mishra praises her saying:

No survey of contemporary Indian literary scene would be complete if it failed to take note of the writings of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala.¹⁵

Ruth Jhabvala’s career as a writer spans five decades. She is possibly well known as a novelist of India though she was born in Cologne, Germany. She has to-date twelve novels and seven collections of short stories to her credit. Her fictional works have given her a special place in the field of world literature and she has been elevated by an opulent number of awards and prizes. In the year 1975, her novel *Heat and Dust* bagged the Booker Prize, the prestigious literary award. Later many feathers were added to her cap, to name a few, Mac Arthur Foundation Award in 1984, Academy Award and first Oscar Award for writing screenplay for E. M. Foster’s novel *A Room with a View* in collaboration with
Merchant-Ivory film in 1986, and she has received her second Oscar Award for her screenplay for *Howards End* in 1992.

She was born of a Polish-Jewish father, Marcus Prawer and German-Jewish mother, Eleonora Cohn Prawer on 7\textsuperscript{th} May 1927. In 1939 the Prawers family escaped from the reign of Nazi Germany, and emigrated to Britain and settled in London. She did her M.A in English literature in 1951, from Queen Mary College, London. She married Cyrus Jhabvala, a Parsee architect and came along with him to India. Thus a polish-German by birth grew to be English by education and ultimately became Indian by her wedding knot.

Although her literary career started at an early age, she began writing seriously and vigorously during her stay in India as “most of her novels and short stories were set in Delhi”.\textsuperscript{16} She penned her novels as an “initiated outsider” with fine agility because she is considered to be an “outsider with unusual insight”.\textsuperscript{17} She considers herself not as an outsider or insider. In her biography itself she comments:

I am a European living permanently in India. I have lived here for most of my adult life and have an Indian family. This makes me not quiet an insider but it doesn’t leave me entirely an outsider either.\textsuperscript{18}
Gifted with an extraordinary bent of mind Ruth Jhabvala, depicts the life of middle class families in India presenting a true picture of their lives, modes, manners, and morals in a realistic and an exceptional manner. Kushwant Singh whilst bringing R. K. Narayan and Ruth Jhabvala under the same umbrella identifies her as “a fine interpreter of contemporary India in fiction”. This observation is obviously proved in her literary career as she occupies an admirable position in the current Indian literary scene.

Jhabvala’s novels mostly focus on domestic and social existence and problems faced by Indian middle class families in the post-independent era. She has to her credit twelve novels and eight collections of short stories. In collaboration with the filmmakers Ismail Merchant and James Ivory, Jhabvala brilliantly crafted screenplays starting with her novel The Householder in 1963. Later on, in this partnership she has produced as many as twenty films and bagged six academy awards.

Her stories are very much gripping, transfixing the reader and extremely clear with her lucid language. Readers are lost in the world of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala feeling enthralled and time ceases without their noticing it. Though all the protagonists are not women in all of her novels, they do have their pivotal roles in the family and
society. The present study concentrates on her third novel, *Esmond in India* (1958) and her fourth novel *The Householder* (1960).

*Esmond in India* deals with the theme of marriage and man-woman relationship. The novel is a family chronicle encompassing the lives of husbands and wives. Jhabvala has introduced the theme of mixed marriage in this novel demonstrating a clash between traditionalism and modernism. The title character Esmond is an Englishman who gets mixed up with Indians and stays as a guide for tourists who visit India and also teaches Hindi, Indian History and literature to English *memsahibs*. Gulab, a beautiful Indian girl gets engaged to Amrit, son of Hardayal and Madhuri. Esmond falls in love with Gulab, and she also likes him considering Amrit as an ordinary man. Against the wishes of her parents she marries Esmond treading on the path of modernity. Esmond in the early days of his married life finds a flush of excitement and pleasure. Gulab, who is fascinated by the Indian way of life, Indian food, Indian culture and everything Indian feels that she is caged in the well furnished flat and leading a lackadaisical life. Her opinions as regards to an ideal marriage are precipitated when she gets a clash with her husband. His belief is that as a wife she should adopt western ways of life. She is traditional in her outlook and he is modern. The clash is because “the English are rational and the
Indians are emotional. Thus the clash between the two is also a clash between two concepts of culture”.20

The sharp contrast in their way of life resulted in some disturbances in their marital life. They realised their unsuitableness for each other. But she never argues with her husband. She supports her husband even if her parents find fault with him. But Esmond on the other hand becomes irritated with her ways and treats her like a beast. But Gulab, in an orthodox and conventional way considers him as her God. But towards the end of the novel, when her servant tries to molest her, she changes her mind. The sense of insecurity makes her realise that she does not need to be bound to her nuptial bonds, and so leaves him and goes to her parents.

In contrast to the character of Gulab the other woman character depicted in the novel is Indira, who marries Amrit who is neglected by Gulab. Through the character of Indira, representing the young wife in the Indian societies, the relationship between the husband and the wife, and the traditional relation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and the successful role of the wife in the family building by her virtuous traits is well portrayed in the novel, without whom the mother-in-law thinks that their survival is not viable, thus realizing her true value resulting in co-existence and harmony.
Jhabvala’s *The Householder*, “unique among Jhabvala’s novels”, is totally circled round the conjugal life of the newly married couple Prem and Indu, united in an arranged matrimony. The world of the householder is woven around these two central figures.

Prem, the protagonist of the novel is on the threshold of the second of *ashrams*, called ‘Grihasthashram’ that is, just entering the family life. He, with his second class B.A., works as an underpaid, Hindi teacher at a private college owned by Mr. Khanna and his wife in Delhi. He lives with Indu, his wife and a domestic servant, in a small flat, which is beyond his affordability. As a householder, Prem suffers from his precarious financial position to meet the requirements of the family. He gets a meagre amount of Rs175/- per month with which he has to pay Rs 45/- towards rent and support himself and his wife, who is in the family way and also run the household. He is being exploited by his Principal as well as the landlord. He uses his abilities but he is unsuccessful in maintaining discipline in his class and he is obviously not respected by his students. On the contrary, Mr. Chaddha, a senior colleague at the college, receives good response and regard from his students, even outside, because of his impressive teaching. Prem becomes disappointed and disillusioned. He develops inferiority complex but gets some advice and chequered consolation from his colleague.
Sohan Lal, Professor of Mathematics, and an ex-colleague friend, Raj, who have travelled farther than he has, as ‘householders’. In addition, he also experiences certain disagreements at home in certain issues. In the words of Gooneratne:

Prem strives to establish himself in the linked roles of husband, breadwinner and householder, Indu finds some difficulty in accommodating her individual, lively outlook to the requirements of her role as a married woman and housewife.22

Prem, unfortunately, has been influenced by his orthodox father who is patriarchal in his attitudes, which eventually created a sense of superiority in his familial relations. He takes pride in his father’s position, who had been the principal of a distinguished college. As he has adopted the traditional mind-set of his father, he expects unquestioning submissiveness and obedience from his wife. In the story, generally cordial relationship is maintained by the husband and the wife but for certain instances. At times, some disturbance is noticed between the man and the woman but the dissonance is appeased by the ‘household’ Indu. In all his distress and frustration he gets support, encouragement and solace from his wife.
In the early days of his marriage their relationship is formal and impersonal. He is too young to understand the things and so he is not happy and discontent but in the later stage he likes her for her good qualities and feels that he immensely misses her when she goes to her parents. That is why towards the end of the novel when his German friend, Hans, leaves he doesn’t feel much like him because he knows that he has a friend at home.

Though the story starts with dissonance in their matrimonial relationship, it ends with marital consummation, which makes the bond of wedding more invincible because of the virtuous traits exhibited by Indu, in spite of shortcomings. Thus through the character of Indu, representing the young wife in the middle class Indian societies, the relationship between the husband and the wife, and the traditional relation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and the successful role of the wife in the family building is well portrayed, without whom Prem thinks that his survival is not viable, thus realizing her true value in the end resulting in co-existence.

Another woman writer in Indian English Literature whose writings are reflected through an understanding of contemporary women and their attitudes, aspirations and problems, is Shoba De. She has carved out a special niche for herself in the world of fictional
writing. She has started her career unpredictably with her inadvertent entry first into the alluring field of modelling, then as a magazine editor and finally has settled as a best-selling novelist. She is also one of India’s best - cherished columnists, whose lines are widely read. Giving a new definition to the mass market best seller with her barnstorming pieces, she occupies a prominent place in the Indian literary scene. Shobha De shot into an enviable distinction in next to no time after the publication of her debut novel *Socialite Evenings* in 1989. The novel added new dimensions to the literary scene and fetched her laurels.

Owing to her wide readership, several of her books are prescribed for reading in Universities in Chicago, Sydney and at the University of London, School of Oriental and African studies. Some of her works have been translated into Korean and Italian. Indian students of English Literature use her novels for their doctoral theses on women’s issues.

Shobha Rajadhyaksha, a reputed Indian novelist and columnist, was born in 1948, in a Saraswati Brahmin family in Maharashtra. She did her graduation in Psychology from St. Xavier’s college, Bombay. She donned varied roles such as journalist, editor of magazines-Stardust, Society and Celebrity and presently
contributing her services as a freelance writer for some newspapers and magazines. She has sixteen books to her credit now. The positive and approving response from the readers motivated her zest to plug in the enchanting path to go ahead successively.

Interestingly, almost all her novels are women-centred, focusing on the predicaments of women in family and society. Her major concern in her novels is to delineate the theme of marriage and man-woman relationship. Almost all of them present this theme because marriage is not only an institution but also destination for the couple. But there is a change detected in the modern scenario. Her novels project the picture of conjugal relationship affected by various reasons like “big city fashionable life”, “industrial advancements”, “modern lifestyle”, “capitalistic attitude” and so on. In many of her novels the bond of marriage is not permanent and the causes may vary from one novel to the other. According to Priya Wanjari, a literary critic, De depicts:

...the lives of young men and women, particularly rich upper class people who no longer considered faithfulness and constancy in love a virtue. That is why he depicts the people in their true colours i.e. what they are rather than what they should have been. 24
As such majority of the women in De’s novels do not have reverence for their marital and familial bonds and marriage is for convenience and for status and not the source of ultimate gladness. They are not serious about the marriage and have no hesitation to fix up extramarital affairs also. The two novels selected for the study are her maiden novel *Socialite Evenings* (1989) and seventh novel *Second Thoughts* (1996) where women play prominent roles in their families.

The plot of the novel *Socialite Evenings* is woven around two couples whose marital relationships form the major concern in the novel. The central figure Karuna, a famed socialite in Bombay, begins writing her tales of woe, seeking a window therapy for her suffocated state owing to disgusting affairs. With the intention of fleeing from the current abyss she tries to escape into the past. The novel is all about the rift caused in theirconjugal relationship. Karuna, from a middle class conservative family migrates to Bombay owing to her father’s transfer where she meets Anjali, a well-known socialite, and opts for a career in the shunned world of modelling under Anjali’s mentoring, much against the will of her parents, in order to become a part of the alluring and glamorous world. She is an audacious and liberated woman. She marries a rich person. Her parents feel that hers is a comfortable life but she feels that it is a failure. She has status and wealth but, when she really comes to
know the realities of life, she realises that hers is a wrong choice in marrying him. Eventually it becomes a sour and listless marriage without love and affection of her standoffish and cold-hearted husband. There is no understanding between the husband and the wife. He is not at all bothered about her feelings and desires. He is busy with his own rise in the corporate world. She bears with the indifference of her conservative husband, who is just an average Indian, unexciting, uninspiring, untutored.

She becomes frustrated and disappointed and craves for fun and excitement and initiates a torrid affair with her husband’s friend Krish. Identifying this issue her husband sues for divorce. Breaking the holy bonds of matrimony, she divorces her husband hoping to marry Krish but he is reluctant to tie the wedding knot. Then Karuna realizes that their affair is a mere sex game and she has been obliterated. She is not timid to end her life but takes valiant decisions to lead a single life. She breaks off with Krish and leads an independent life. She even aborts the unwanted pregnancy because she feels that a baby is a lifelong responsibility. Her actions reveal that she is not serious about marriage and family.

In the beginning she gets herself involved with theatre enacting small roles. Then she begins writing script for the ad films. The firm she works for bags the Ad club award for the best Ad of the year and
she gets an individual citation as the copywriter of the year. She makes a mark in the professionally competitive world of advertising and enjoys unrestrained freedom. When once she is happy with her financial sustenance, she leads a carefree life against Indian traditions.

The other important character in the novel is Anjali whose influence is ubiquitous on Karuna. She joins Air India as an air hostess to escape from her conservative middle class atmosphere. She meets Abe, a filthy rich man, on one of her voyages and she gets impressed with him. It is love at first sight. She marries him to fulfil her dream of leading a very comfortable and luxurious life. Marriage gives them licence to develop illicit relationships. Abe proves himself to be a womanizer and Anjali is also reckless in her sexual encounters with her set of lovers. She divorces her husband and flirts with a chain of lovers, first with a very young boy, then with a French man, and after that she divorces Abe and marries Kumar Bhandari because she fancies money and men. Thus she becomes a rolling stone defying the traditional norms and customs. She enjoys uncontrolled freedom, acts independently and flirts unlimited.

Thus both Karuna and Anjali are responsible for their marital disharmony directly or indirectly. Consequently they prove
themselves to be unsuccessful in their marriage relationships and become causes of ruined families.

From “Socialite Evenings” to “Second Thoughts”, Shobha De exhibits more maturity as an insightful and perspective writer. The story of Second Thoughts reflects the present day marriage. The protagonist Maya, a pretty young girl who is trained as a textile designer, hails from a middle class family in Calcutta and gets united with Ranjan, a handsome bank executive and foreign-returned Bengali, settled in Bombay, in an arranged marriage, with lots of dreams and desires in her heart. After marriage she realises that her husband is too conservative to cope up with.

Though Ranjan is foreign-returned, he inflicts a lot of restrictions on Maya. She is not allowed to go out on her own and not permitted to talk to the salesmen. She is not given liberty to wear whatever that she likes and does whatever that she wishes. She doesn’t dare make STD calls without his permission. Thus even in minute things his supremacy is displayed. His exit always generates a sense of exhilaration because she feels free to breathe normally. She is in a way scared to be in his presence. All these happenings and restrictions make her feel that she is cooped up in closed bars without any freedom. She wants to make a new beginning in
Bombay, discovering the city, meeting people and learning to keep a good house. She feels like laughing, singing, enjoying the salty sea air on her face. But with all the limitations of the old-fashioned, and conservative husband she is totally dejected and her dreams get devastated.

But Maya decides to find fulfilment of her dreams in bold and unconventional ways. She flirts with a spoilt brat, Nikhil, a college going neighbour. In order to flee from the drudgery perpetrated by a cold, unfeeling and suspicious husband, Maya develops a liaison with Nikhil in order to keep her individuality intact. In the words of K. K. Sinha who has expressed the difference between Ranjan and Nikhil, in his article *The current Agenda of the New Woman: Feminism in Some Novels of Shobha De* as:

Nikhil is appreciative, Ranjan, dictatorial, disparaging. Nikhil is friendly. Ranjan, derogatory, Nikhil makes Maya feel that she belongs. Ranjan’s act of love-making is always a let-down.  

But when Nikhil gets engaged with the girl arranged by his parents, the ray of hope in Nikhil disappears and she finds her dream world shattered. She decides to adjust to the stark realities of
life. So Alka Saxena in the article *Second Thoughts: A Slice of Urban Life* aptly remarks:

> For those who have been taught to conform to the traditions, it is difficult to snap the pious cord that binds them in matrimony. Freedom is permitted in a very restricted manner, it is the ancient story of sacrifice and adjustment that a woman is destined to. Sooner or later she learns to adjust, as there is no other alternative, if she needs to live a respectful life. Maya, too, accepts to remain enveloped in the loneliness and sadness. On second thoughts, she learns to survive the sultriness of not only Bombay, but also of her marriage.26

Thus Maya in *Second Thoughts* is an exemplar of a traditional woman who craves for freedom in the traditional Indian marriage system but learns to live with the stark realities of life not snapping the pious chord of marriage. Her adjustment to live according to societal norms gives her a respectful life.

> “An Indian novelist, activist and a world citizen”27, “a celebrity and a tall literary lioness persona”28 who has shot into an enviable prominence in the realm of international limelight with her maiden venture is Arundhati Roy. Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things*

Suzanna Arundhati Roy was born in 1961 to Mary Roy, a Syrian Christian from Kerala and a Hindu tea planter from Bengal, in Meghalaya, India. Her early childhood days were spent in Ayemenem, Kerala and finished her schooling from Corpus Christi School, Kottayam and the Lawrence School, Tamil Nadu. Later she joined for architecture course in the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi. In the beginning she has been offered a small role of a village girl in Massey Sahib, an award winning film. Later she has become financially stable with her prize winning debut novel. She drafted screenplays for which she won National Film Award. She also received Lannan Foundation’s Cultural Freedom Award and Sydney Peace Prize in 2004 and the Sahitya Akademi Award. She has to her credit some non-fictional works and collections of essays. Along with Medha Patkar, an activist, Roy has campaigned against the Narmada Dam Project.30

Apart from dealing with many themes she deals with the current problem of divorce in her novel. According to N. K. Mishra a literary critic:
One dominant note that surfaces in the plot is the strained man–woman relationship. 31

The backdrop of the novel is Ayemenem, Kerala. The story is woven around the family relationships of an entomologist Pappachi who gets settled in Ayemenem, Kerala after his superannuation. The women in his family undergo sufferings as a result of lacking harmony and adjustment, and observance of established family customs, traditions and moral values resulting in marital discord. There is no mutual trust, adjustment and harmony in the families portrayed. Thus they face failures and dissonance in their marital relationships. The present study focuses on the central character Ammu.

Ammu takes decisions in her life, which prove fatal to herself and her family. The entire narrative is presented through the eyes of Ammu’s twin daughter Rahel. Ammu, the daughter of Bennan Ipe gets disillusioned to face violence from her ill-tempered father. She is not allowed to go to college as it is considered unnecessary for girls by her conservative and domineering father. When her father cannot pay sufficient dowry for her marriage, she gets much more disappointed. Then she manages to get his father’s consent to go to Calcutta to spend one summer at her aunt’s house. There she meets a person who is working as an assistant manager of a tea estate in Assam. She gets attracted towards him and he also likes her.
Without taking her parent’s consent, she marries him and leaves for Assam. After marriage she realises that her husband is not a suitable one for her. For his selfish interests, he wants to send his wife to his boss. With this, she leaves her husband and returns to her parents’ house with her twin children, Rahel and Estha.

In her parents house she again faces troubles with her paternal aunt, Baby Kochamma who insists that a married daughter had no position in her parents’ home. At Ayemenem Rahel and Estha love Velutha, an untouchable, who is working under Chacko, Ammu’s brother. The twins get attached themselves to him like their own father. This relationship is solidified further by the intimate attachment of Ammu and Velutha, which is illicit. When their illegal relationship is discovered, her family members have locked Ammu in a room. That very night Rahel, Estha along with Chacko’s daughter, Sophie Mol, travel across the river to go to the abandoned house. But Sophie drowns and dies as their boat is capsized. Baby Kochamma accuses Velutha for the death of Sophie Mol and files a case in the police station for abduction and rape. She even threatens the children and compels them to testify against Velutha. Basing on the charge, the police beat him savagely until he dies. Chacko insists that Ammu should leave the house and finally she faces a miserable death. Thus Ammu with her frivolous attitude when grapple with
struggles and puzzles of life takes decisions hastily resulting in her failure and also proving disastrous to her family.

Accordingly, almost all the characters selected will prove the fact that women for sure have a prominent role to play in making or marring the family, where the divinity and the serenity of the marital relationship is crumbled down in the modern society in spite of the advancements in various fields. Virtues are like pearls, which do not afloat on the surface but are traced only on sea churning. Under the garb of the story, meaningful and life changing messages and visions lie hidden. A careful and keen reading is required to reap the spiritual values and the pearls. Vices in the characters also play a key role to bring destruction on their lives as well as families.

Thus, not only the Bible but also the fiction gives women an identity in a family setup. The image of Indian woman over the ages has been portrayed as an icon of purity, patience and sacrifice occupying a place inferior to man in the male prejudiced society. All the four women novelists have centred their attention on the plight and position of the woman weighing on her responsibility and role that has to be donned in a family and society because all these women writers view the world from a woman’s standpoint. All the four novelists have deftly broached the theme of marriage and man-woman relationship and the role of woman in building or breaking
the nuptial bond. They have delved on the plight and position of women in family and society and her role to bring up for success or gloss over for destruction is visibly presented in their novels. They have also initiated to expound the predicaments of repressed and suppressed women in a male chauvinistic society.

The novelistic vision of the writers singled out for study offers ample scope to diagnose and critically inquire the problems of conjugal harmony and familial relationship. Problems vary from context to context but the universal values embedded in scriptures certainly can remedy them. The discussion in the chapter is confined to the delineation of the theme of the marriage as presented in the Bible and certain novels of the selected novelists and a more detailed discussion against the biblical perspective is undertaken in the succeeding chapter. As such the study concerned to these works selected, do not exist in isolation but they have to be discussed in the light of biblical notions.
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