CHAPTER-II

THE THREE OF US


As an Indian born American novelist Abha Dawesar must have been inspired to express in this novel what she noticed in American life. It was not only the post war American society, but the society at the beginning of 21st Century. The process of perversion that began in America and elsewhere in European societies, reached its climax at the end of the 20th century. The values in human relationships diminished to its lowest ebb, and still worse, mental and physical perversion, can be noticed everywhere at the beginning of 21st century. Being an Indian Abha Dawesar must have noticed this withering of American society more horrifying in nature.

There are half a dozen characters in this novel that illustrate as samples or examples of American Society. The main Character, Andre Bernard, Who is also the narrator of the story, is a young man of twenty four years, who has jointed a Japan, based American Investment Bank. The main theme of the novel deals with its protagonist, Andre Bernard’s predicament, who finds that not a single man or woman, including himself was a normal human being in his or her relationships, particularly sex-relationships. Andre is entangled in sexual relationship with a husband and wife separately and secretly. It the climactic scene he finds himself trapped terribly in between them, causing the couple’s relations not only strained but tragic. Andre is caught in another trouble with his office secretary, Martha by having unguarded sexual relations with her and making her pregnant. Thus, he would be a father much against his wishes. At the end, we find Andre drifting to an unknown destination.

Homosexuality and lesbianism dominate the whole novel – its characters and incidents Andre Bernard, the narrator is a banker at New Your based ‘Kenji Japan Bank’, having a good experience of homosexuality and sex with his girl-friends at school and college days.
On the first day of his job, Andre was approached by a middle-aged man, his boss’s boss, Nathan Williams; Nathan took Andre to a ‘Strip-club’, i.e. a club where people go to watch performers take their clothes-off in a sexually exciting way. In the strip-club, they were aroused sexually by two women. Thereafter, they both went to a dark bar, where a lot of barely clad men were indulging in sexual activities. There, Nathan had sex with Andre.

Afterwards, they went to an Indian restaurant, ‘Karma’ for vegetarian food. Nathan stated that he was married man, having a young beautiful wife, Sybil. After dinner Nathan suggested to go to Andre’s place to pass night. That was the first night when Nathan and Andre enjoyed full-blooded gay-sex. Andre narrated the incident:-

“Nathan moved me around a lot and made love with every part of his body his hands, his tongue, his legs, I felt as if time did not exist. After we had sex, we fell asleep in each other’s arms.” (1) P-11

The next day at work Nathan and Andre decided to spend the night together at Andre’s place. Thus, it became a routine for both of them to sleep together for the whole night. Nathan also helped Andre in the purchasing of furniture and pots and pans and a list of Thai and Indian spices to buy. Andre loved music and bought a music system, enabling him to listen Mozart and Saint Saenz. Andre also bought straw-colored cotton curtains, table and a reading lectern.

Nathan also helped Andre Professionally. He was given responsibility for working on the ‘New-risk-management system’. Thus, Nathan was consistently around him, a mixing of personal and professional relationship.

Nathan told Andre that he would be going to Tokyo for two weeks, and before going, he would introduce Andre to his wife Sybil. Then, Nathan narrated, the whole history about his relationship with Sybil that he knew Sybil for the past twenty years but got married last year only. Sybil was a furniture and interior designer who designed the insides of offices and banks. She had been mathematician at the Fed but had switched to design after a few years. Sybil and Andre shared one interest – abstract mathematics.

Nathan left for Tokyo, and the relationship between Andre and Sybil developed quite rapidly, leading to sex-relationship. It started with designing of a desk for Andre, and soon they
indulged in sex. Sybil told Andre about her relationship with Nathan that she knew Nathan for about twenty years, and Andre thought her to be in late twenties in age. Sybil was in her early thirties and looked five or six years younger to her actual age. Sybil further narrated the history of her relations with Nathan. They were neighbors, and she was just twelve years of age when she met Nathan. Nathan was twenty-five.

They used to go on picnics to the country-side and Nathan would join them. Later Nathan moved away to London for a few years. When he comes back Sybil was sixteen, and felt a great attraction for him. After that she did everything to make him fall in love with her. He also liked her, but for a long time he just couldn’t see her that way because he had known her before she was a teenager. Then they got married. About her married-life Sybil told Andre that it was an ‘Open’ marriage. Explaining it further she said,

“We think monogamy can get stifling and marriage should never get stifling!” (2) P.32

Thus, as per the American general norms about married life, Sybil and her husband believe in free-sex.

Andre’s Sex-relations with Sybil began when, one late evening after dinner, Sybil invited him to her place, and took her to the bedroom. He noticed many beautiful paintings hanging on the walls, painted by Nathan. Andre described his first experience of sex with Sybil, thus:-

“She was kissing me and biting my lips. Squeezing my bum and playing with my ears. We were naked by the time we reached the bed. Her skirt was at the bottom of the stairwell, her stockings hung on the railing on top.” (3)P.34

They slept together for the night. Andre had a dream about Nathan suddenly appearing in the bed-room where Sybil and Andre were sleeping. Andre felt guilty. Nathan was upset, not by Sybil, but by Andre. He woke up and thought that he was not cheating his wife or husband; it was they who should feel guilty.

It became a routine for Andre and Sybil to meet often and enjoy sex. On the other hand Nathan’s Phone-calls were pouring in, while they were together. The next day Sybil told Andre
to visit him in his apartment to pass the night. Andre became thoughtful conflict stated in his mind and he thought:-

“Work, sex with husband, work sex with wife was not a good routine.” (4) P.36

When Sybil came to Andre’s apartment he found her a perfect woman and wife. Phone call was constantly ringing from Nathan. Andre asked Sybil while in bed,

“Sybil, if you are so in love with Nathan, then why is we here?” (5) P.37

Sybil replied,

“I was attracted to you the moment I saw you. I am not using you.” (6) P.37

A little later she told him,

“Andre, you’re the only gay other than Nathan, I have slept with in a year.” (7) P.38

She may be quite honest, but her emphasis on words ‘in a year’ creates doubts about her past sex-indulgences, beyond one year. And that is ‘Free-sex’ as practiced in America.

Sybil does not feel guilty because she says,

“Nathan’s sleeping with God knows who?” (8) P.39.

After enjoying sex for Sybil’s full satisfaction, she also had sex upon Andre actively. Andre felt that he was fisted by a woman. After that she urged Andre:-

“You must never tell him” (9) P.41

Andre thought about her whether she was a psychotic woman. For the next few nights they did not meet. In the mean time Andre had disjointed dreams. Andre thought that dreams were merely distorted mirrors. They were like chaos in his life in the day time, and the same Chaos was reflected at night in his dreams. Andre tried to analyze his relations with Nathan and Sybil:-
“I wasn’t with them because I was bored, since I barely had free time to begin with. May be I was with them for no reason at all. May be life was random, and the first step to understanding it was to accept its senseless sheers” (10) P.43

After a few days gap Andre and Sybil began to meet again, the same routine – working during day time, and enjoying sex at night.

The change came in the life of Andre and Sybil when Nathan returned to New York from Tokyo. The next day Nathan called Andre in his Chamber, and emotionally told him that he missed him. Andre reciprocated. Nathan complained that Andre did not pick up his phone call many times. Immediately thereafter they indulged in hugging and kissing each other. Than Nathan let Andre have sex upon him on the Nathan’s desk Nathan told Andre that he would pass that night at his place with Sybil. Andre went to see a movie the evening with office secretary Martha. With this a fourth Character is introduced in the theme of the story.

Next day, Nathan fixed to pass night with Andre at his place. Andre began to think about his life thoughtfully:-

“My whole short twenty-four-year old life flashed past me in a second. I had grown up in near-penurious circumstances, and my father had worked his ass off to make sure I got a decent education. I had worked my own ass off to live up to his expectations. I’d won scholarships through school and college. I’d given every ounce of myself to my academic life so that I could make a big. Yet, now that I was practically skating on the border of success, life seemed unreal and nothing seemed to matter.” (11) P.49

That day, just after office work Nathan met Andre at his apartment and enjoyed gay-sex. Andre enjoyed sex more with Nathan then with Sybil. Thus Andre is no doubt bi-sexual, but he is more inclined towards homosexuality. Narrating the experience of Nathan doing sex upon hi, Andre says,

“Sex with him was like being reunited with something larger than life. His stomach on my back and the weight of his entire body on mine made me feel a sense of inner gravity.” (12) P.49
That night Nathan and Andre had sex four times. But in between Sybil’s phone calls continuously disturbed Andre. The next day Nathan came to Andre’s Chamber and wanted to fix that night with him. But Andre had Sybil in mind for the night, so he proposed the next night, to which Nathan told him that next night he had fixed with Sybil. Thus, the third night with fixed with Nathan. Andre noted his arrangement thus:-

“I opened my miniplanner, which fit into my shirt pocket, and wrote ‘S’ under today. Then under the next day I wrote ‘M’ and under the one after I wrote ‘N’.”

(13) P.51

The next day’s night he fixed with Martha for walking around Central part and then dinner. Andre began to think seriously about his life. Fixing alternate nights with Sybil and Nathan, and he narrated:-

“I shuddered at the thought of the musical chairs I would have to play to keep both relationships on track” (14) P.51

Sybil met Andre at his apartment in the evening and complained why he did not pick up her phone-calls the previous night. She also wanted to know whether Andre was alone in his bed. Andre avoided the question telling her that they did not have that kind of relations which permitted her to ask personal questions. After that Andre and Sybil had sex and then went to sleep quietly.

The next day, Nathan called Andre in his chamber for a short while and began to touch his face, lips and other parts of his body. Andre was aroused and suggested to go to his place for sometimes to enjoy sex. Nathan told Marth that they were going to attend a ‘meeting’, and will be back within an hour. Andre’s room still smelled with Sybil’s body. Who was there on the bed a few hours back? But Nathan did not notice. They had sex to their full satisfaction, by changing position by turns, and returned to the office. Andre remembered that the evening was reserved with Martha for dinner etc.

In the evening Andre met Martha. The writer elaborates about Martha’s life. Her past experience etc. while loitering, she told Andre about various things that happened to her in New
York, where she had been living for the last fifteen years. She pointed to an office building on fifty-Ninth Street, where she used to work. She pointed to another building where she lived with a businessman, who was thirty years older to her, and she was seventeen at that time. But the relationship broke off, and he dumped Martha, and got a Korean girl to live with him.

Thereafter, Martha went to his brother’s apartment and lived there for six months. But it was another shocking experience for her. She come to know that her brother visited ‘strip clubs’ and for that he borrowed money from his friends, He was deep in debt, and his telephone bills were pending for nine thousand dollars. Then, they went to the Indian restaurant ‘Karma’ to have dinner. While eating the delicious food Andre began to think philosophically, that one eats the food and only he can experience the taste of it. Its taste can be conveyed in words but the other person cannot experience it. The same is with Pani. If someone steps on someone’s toe and it hurts. But it cannot be experienced by another person. Thus, there was so much one couldn’t share with anyone.

After dinner Martha talked about the office party on next Thursday in the Park Plaza Hotel. She asked Andre with whom he would be attending the party. Martha told Andre that in the party there would be plenty of food and booze, and a dance floor and a live band. Andre thought that Nathan would bring Sybil, and he could ask Martha to be his partner, to which Martha agreed Andre went home to sleep, but he could not sleep properly. He passed the night restlessly, thinking and missing Nathan. He thought about his predicament:-

“I wasn’t going to solve the mind-body problem that had haunted intellectuals for generations” (15) P.62

Andre’s relations with Nathan and Sybil reach to the Crisis, with Nathan and Sybil both want to pass night with Andre. The irony was that the marriage based upon ‘free’ and ‘open’ relationship between Nathan and Sybil began to show signs of cracks. Nathan and Sybil were scarcely together at nights, with both demanding to be absent for the night. Andre is sometimes amused and sometimes dread about the result of the conflict between husband and wife.

One day, Andre happened to be in Nathan chamber and found Sybil and he was fighting on the phone. Nathan was shouting:-
“I thought we’d been very clear on this, we knew that it would never be mutually convenient. We both know that we can’t always coordinate our absences from each other in a way that always suits the other (16) P.63

The extra-marital relations described in this novel are true depiction of the American way of married life in general. The married-life in America and elsewhere in European countries is on the rocks, because either the husband is gay and avoids his wife or wife is lesbian, or both indulge in extra-marital relationship.

Andre was interested in lesbian relationships and he wanted to know how they enjoy sex by way of ‘fisting’. He searched on the internet and came to know about a ‘Gay and Lesbian Center’ on thirteenth street. He immediately contacted on phone and got the details, and fixed Saturday afternoon with one Richard Murphy. He noted in his miniplanner, Saturday, R.M. short form of Richard Murphy.

The result of Nathan-Sybil fight was that Nathan fixed that night with Andre, and Andre fixed the night of the next day with Sybil.

That day, as soon as the meeting about the project on ‘new risk management system’ was over, Nathan and Andre were out of office building after 6 o’clock. Nathan told Andre about Sybil.

“She had been chewing my head off today.” (17) P.71

Nathan was very tried when they reached Andre’s place. Andre suggested a full-body massage on Nathan. He felt quite relaxed by Andre’s massage. Then they went to bed and slept for a few hours. Then they went for dinner in a restaurant. While eating Nathan told Andre in a serious mood:-

“Sybil has been acting rather strange ever since I got back from Tokyo. She was always very demanding, but she's gotten even more so. She’s cranky a lot. It's clear to me she’s having an affair with someone.” (18) P.76
Nathan also told Andre that Sybil was also suspicious about his having an affair. He reasoned, “I’m only spending every other night with her. And she’s spending every other night with someone else.” (19) P.76

While taking dinner, Nathan’s mind was obsessed with Sybil. He told Andre:-

“Spending time at home with her has been hell. We fight about what we’ll do in the evening, what we’ll eat. I keep trying to be friendly, and she just gets more impossible.” (20) P.77

Andre wanted to ask him if open marriages worked.

The next-day evening Andre expected to meet Sybil in his apartment. Andre was thoughtful about his predicament:-

“I was sleeping with the man and was sharing ever sort of intimacy with him. Yet there was this great facade I had to maintain. At the very least. I thought, I had to stop the affair with Sybil. I didn’t love her, so why was I going on? Because she was sexy. I knew that wasn’t a sufficient explanation.”(21) P.82

The night while having sex with Sybil Andre constantly thought of Nathan and missed him. He woke up in the middle of the night and talked with Nathan that he missed him.

During the crisis time of Nathan and Sybil relationships, and Andre’s passing through the mental agony, a new character is introduced in the novel. It is Madhu, a one time friend and lover while in college. Madhu and Andre separated because she wanted to get married. After a gap of some years she rang up and asked Andre about his work and home-address.

Madhu Kapoor had her maiden Surname as Tendon. During college days she was Andre’s most serious emotional involvement. But they broke off because she was going to get married. Andre received her marriage invitation card, and he cried. That day he visited a bar, and had sex with a fat woman. He had decided never to think about Madhu anymore.

In the meantime Andre was busy in preparing the draft proposal of the project, Nathan liked it and suggested to add to it the time it would take to design and implement the system. He should also mention how many people and how much money would be needed for the project.
Nathan recommended one David Botolph to consult about making various estimates. Andre met him a lunch but found him of little help to him.

The next day Andre made presentation in a meeting where a great many persons were present, including Nathan and Andre’s boss, Yoshi Kato. Andre describes about the presentation:

“For once, I forget all about Nathan being my lover. I was aware of what I was saying, completely absorbed and focused on work.” (22) P.91

Andre’s presentation was appreciated by Nathan as well as Yoshi Kato.

There was an e-mail from Madhu informing Andre that she was going to be in New York over the week-end with her husband, Srini asking Andre where they could meet. Andre responded that Sunday morning at brunch would be fine.

Thereafter, Andre began to think about Madhu. It had been almost two years since he had seen her. Madhu is an Indian origin-American, lived in California her parents lived in Taxes. Her mother was suffering from some chronic disease, causing her father a lot of problem.

Andre met Madhu during a freshman orientation week in college. Andre had gone to the student film centre where Madhu happened to sit beside him watching the movie. She was wearing a red-sari with a white border. It was exotic and Andre praised her outfit. But Madhu was feeling out of place. She explained:

“I thought I’d go in a sari so that the freshmen from India would feel good, but they all showed up in jeans.” (23) P.92

They exchanged phone-numbers to make contact in future. Andre’s thoughts went into past life with Madhu. After their break up he had never thought about her, and had went on with his life. And, now thinking back on the relationship brought memories in Andre’s mind. He was glad that he was meeting her. He was curious to see what sort of man she had married and whether she was happy. He also thought whether they could continue their friendship as they had in college. Andre was amused to think that Madhu will be tickled to know that he was sleeping with a man. He doubted Madhu’s open-mindedness.
It was Friday, just after the office hours he went to see a movie dealing with death and old age. That reminded him of his aged father. After Andre’s mother’s death his father lived a lonely life. He had lived only for Andre. He was still working, cooking in his restaurant till eleven at night. Andre was thinking of making some quick money to help his father and convince him that he could then live a retired life in a quiet way. As his father had lived for him, he also wanted to pay him back, as a good son.

Thus, emotionally charged Andre called his dad. His father told him that his arthritis was very bad because of the cold weather. The doctor had given him some pain-killing medicines. Andre suggested his father that when the weather becomes warm he should visit New York to meet him for a few weeks, taking off from the restaurant. His father responded that he would visit in April for a week. There was an elderly divorced woman, Shirley. Who looked after Andre’s father, and did some odd jobs for him. Once a while they went for walking together. Because of Shirley Andre was assured about his father. Like a middle-class father he asked Andre about his bank, and whether the bank gives health and retirement benefits, etc.

Andre’s telephonic talk with his father allows the reader to peep into American father-son relationships. Americans, like other human beings elsewhere in the world are not devoid of love and feelings.

After his talk with his father on phone Andre was lost in his past memory with his father. He remembered that there was a time when he slept with his father, played with his moustache every day. Now days, he seldom remembers him and hardly missed him. In a philosophical mood he began to think that one day his old father would die. Nathan, he and everyone would die. Next forty years of his life would be just drudging only to slowly wither away and pass out.

The next day, Andre had an appointment with Sybil to visit the furniture store at two, and they would return together at Andre’s place to pass a few hours together. But Nathan also wanted to meet him at four o’clock. Then evening was fixed with Martha for dinner, cooked by her. Clearly the relations with Sybil and Nathan were heading towards the climax.

In the afternoon Sybil met Andre in a cheerful mood, nicely dressed. In half an hour they finished the purchasing of the desk, designed by Sybil. Then they returned to Andre’s apartment in a Cab. Sybil was in wild mood. She actively started sex like an animal with Andre. The sex-
indulgence scene is described quite in detail, indicating how wild a sex-starved wife would become due to the tense husband-wife relationship. Andre described:

“Sybil is an animal, I thought to myself. Suddenly sex seemed base.” (24) P.107

Nathan-Sybil relations continued to deepen for the conflict. When Andre met Nathan he told him that Sybil had a minor outburst the previous night. Andre thought that it must be the evening after his meeting with Sybil a furniture shop and then having sex her two times. Nathan told Andre:

“I don’t know what’s bothering her. She’s getting very difficult to handle.” (25) P.108

When Andre met Sybil she looked totally dissatisfied with Nathan. She was terribly upset. She told Andre,

“Nathan has escaped from me. There is a part of him that I could never grip. I’ve reached the same situation with you; there is a part of you that I can’t reach.” (26) P.115

Andre felt that she was right, there was a part of me that was only for Nathan, and he was glad there was a part of Nathan only for him. Sybil told Andre that she was miserable, and began to cry. Andre tried to placate her emotions of misery. Then she asked to have sex with her. Thus, Sybil and Nathan’s gain in pleasure with having sex with Andre meant a great loss in their conjugal relations. Andre’s meetings with Sybil and Nathan continued secretly and separately, and their conflict deepened.

The novel also depicts one more aspect of Andre’s personality. He was gay by his natural tendency. Ever since he was a student at school or college, he met gay men. Even in the present situation when he is having sexual relations with Nathan and Sybil, and lately with Madhu and Martha, he is inclined to drift towards the ‘Gay and Lesbian Center’ to one Richard Murphy.

A great event in the novel is the Company’s party at park plaza, where all the employees would attend along with their partners. For a long time Nathan was worried about this party. He would have to take Sybil with him and Andre will also be there. He fears Sybil may not get the
Nathan’s relations with him. On the other hand, Sybil and Andre are afraid whether their relationship would remain hidden or revealed. Andre assured Nathan about the party:-

“She’ll never know Nathan. I’ll avoid you. I’ll talk to Yoshi and Martha.” (27) P.97

On the other hand Sybil is worried that her relations with Andre will be revealed to Nathan she told Andre:-

“The maroon suit I wore when we first met. I’m afraid Nathan will know as soon as he sees us.” (28) P.118

Andre decided to date with Martha for attending the office party. Martha was not exactly beautiful but nice-looking. Andre had casual relationship with her like going for dinner etc.

Once, Martha invited Andre at her place to dinner, cooked by her. Andre was also interested to learn cooking. Martha was cooking Indian food which she learnt to serve her boyfriend who liked Indian food. Andre also thought of learning cooking for Nathan.

Martha, Nathan and Andre took a cab to the Park Plaza together to attend office party. Sybil was supposed to meet Nathan there. Nathan was in lobby, while Andre and Martha went to the ballroom. Martha linked her arm in Andre’s after having a brief chat with Yoshi. Andre brought a glass of Martini for Yoshi and red-wine for Martha. When Nathan and Sybil entered Andre felt embarrassed. It would be testing time that the three of them meeting eye to eye together.

Andre greeted Sybil formally. He noticed Yoshi was looking at Sybil without blinking. It was plain that Yoshi wanted her. Martha also noticed that Yoshi was looking at Sybil, his eyes ablaze, while Sybil was laughing and glowing but not looking him back in the eye. Martha looked at one, then the other, and then at Nathan, as if to ask ‘What’s going on’.

Even at big office party Nathan and Andre were obsessed with each other. They took the chance in the ‘Men’s Room’ and started fondling with each other’s limbs. Andre asked Nathan if he was upset with Sybil being looked at with penetrating eyes by Yoshi. Nathan replied,
“Andre, I want her to have an affair with someone like Yoshi, who will always be around, so she’ll get off my back” (29) P.125

Dinner was served. Andre noticed Yoshi was still gazing at Sybil, but he was then looking at her whole body bit by bit, instead of just staring at her face and shoulders. They all sat around a large circular table for dinner-Yoshi, Sybil, Nathan, Andre and Martha. After dinner the band came on stage. Sybil had already fixed the first round of dance with Andre. While dancing Sybil put all her weight on Andre and continued to whisper rubbish things which Andre didn’t like. Sybil wanted one more dance with Andre. They became the centre of everyone’s eyes. Yoshi looked deeply upset. A little later they all decided to dance together, Yoshi took the opportunity to dance with Sybil. Andre’s natural tendency was that he was attracted towards men. In the party, every now and then he would look at the black saxophone player, Bobby. He thought Booby was gay. During the break he want up to Bobby, and on the prefect of learning sax from him he gave him his card and insisted ‘do call’, Nathan noticed it and felt bad.

When dessert was over Andre asked Martha to leave, and asked her to accompany him at his place for hot chocolate. They both got up and took leave from everyone at the table. On the way back in the cab they discussed about Yoshi’s falling for Sybil.

When they reached Andre’s place, instead of serving chocolate Andre started kissing Martha. She also reciprocated. They went to bed. Undressed, they enjoyed sex up to their satisfaction. Although Andre had used condom as protection, it got burst inside and Andre asked her to take morning-after pill. Thus, Andre’s having unguarded sex with Martha becomes an important part of the theme in the novel, causing a lot of mental and physical agony for both.

The next day, as soon as Andre met Nathan in the office, he apologized him for having danced with Sybil. But Nathan replied in a philosophical way,

“Andre, life’s complicated, you’re both free agents. I had no right getting upset, Plus, she asked you”, (30) P.138

Then Nathan and Andre discussed Martha.

Andre told him that he had sex with her the previous night. Nathan told him that he also had sex with her a couple of times, before his marriage with Sybil.
Andre’s meetings with Sybil and Nathan continued, although there were clashes in meeting them because both of them demanded the same time. Apart from Nathan – Sybil relationship Andre’s other gay activities also continued – sometimes he visited Richard Murphy at Gay and Lesbian club, or it was sax player, Bobby. Once he went to a gay club and invited an unknown man at his place and did sex with each other b turns. In the novel, Andre and Nathan represent the common American society, where gay and lesbian activities were a normal and natural part of life.

Although another important character in the novel, Madhu is already introduced earlier, she is the sixth important character for the themes in this novel.

As decided earlier, Madhu met Andre on Sunday at 10 o’clock at Union Square. She looked the same as when Andre had last seen her. After the introduction Srin left for a little while and Madhu and Andre were alone. The first thing Madhu warned Andre was that her husband knew nothing about her sex with him, and thought that Madhu was virgin when he married her. Andre told her that he was sleeping with a man, and she was shell-shocked.

Madhu told Andre that she was a consultant, and at present she was on a project that brought her to New York several times a month for short periods. Andre thought that he can meet Madhu very often without her husband’s knowledge. Andre noticed that Madhu was not comfortable in the presence of her husband. The ease one sees between happy couples was missing. After the brief meeting Madhu and Sirin took leave of Andrew. Andre did not like Srin, and he wondered how Madhu could sleep with him after she slept with him several times.

After a gap of sometimes, Madhu met Andre again. This time she was alone. Andre met her at the railway station, and his two years old feelings revived, and he put his arm around her lovingly. They went to a restaurant. Madhu told Andre to order vegetarian food, and added that her husband was vegetarian and he insisted on veg. food. Andre just wondered that earlier Madhu used to take a blasphemous delight in eating beef.

Andre asked Madhu about her husband Srini, and their married life. Madhu told him that her marriage life was just O.K. but Srin was not exciting, and she did not love him. One of the
reasons of her disliking Srini was that he was hasty in bed. He did not care for woman’s feelings. He was reserved, closed minded man who could never be close or intimate with wife. Madhu was warm, frank and if she loved a person, she loved with all her heart. She repented that two years ago she broke with Andre and married Srini, because her parents, especially her sick father, wanted her to get married.

Madhu asked Andre about his life. He told her about his gay relations with Nathan. He also told her about his sex relation with Nathan’s wife, Sybil. He even told her about Martha and his unprotected sex with her, and even about the anonymous gay with whom he had sex. She just wondered that he had become such a slut.

Then, they left the restaurant, and went to Andre’s place. He was sure that the two nights they would be spending together. Andre thought the he really loved Madhu, and when they broke two years ago it was not due to any bitterness on their part, but because she had to obey her aged and sick father, and he could not take on the responsibility of being married at twenty one. Moreover, he owed his father money, and wanted to study further for higher degree. Thus, they both loved their fathers and had no choice. After Madhu’s marriage her father recovered, and was hale and hearty.

Then, they got into bed. They hugged, kissed, and made love to each other. Finally, they had sex, as they usually did in the past a heterosexual relationship.

The next morning Madhu left for Newark, and Andre went to work. Andre was thinking that after meeting Madhu and falling in love for her. He had started noticing Indian women in a particular manner. Brown skin and black hair became his favorite, like a piece of music. He felt all Indian women had a little bit of Madhu in them, and all men had some Nathan.

In the mean time Sybil told Andre that she had slept with Yoshi /Kato. Nathan also came to know about it. Sybil also informed Andre that Yoshi was angry with him for dancing with Sybil during the office-party, and might dismiss him. Andre began to feel that they – Nathan, Sybil and he, were living with a time-bomb. It was all a question of time when Nathan would find out about Yoshi and Sybil, and he and Sybil; and when Sybil would find out about Nathan and he, when Yoshi would find out about Sybil and Andre and he would be fired. It was as if they were all on a sinking ship, any time it could sink.
There is a brief episode of Andre’s meeting with a French tourist Justine. Andre met
Justine at a book store, she was looking for an art gallery and she was travelling to Boston the
next day. After the visit to the art gallery Andre took her to his apartment, where they pass the
night together and enjoyed sex. She was to visit New York next week again and then she would
leave for Paris. Andre told her that his father was born in France, and he was visiting him next
week. He invited her to meet his father at dinner. She agreed. Justine episode is brief and not
connected with the main theme of the novel.

The story of the novel is heading for the Climax. During a short visit to the countryside
Sybil and Nathan revealed to each other of having a lover. Moreover, both decided to invite their
‘lover’ for an open meeting of the four. But they did not even have an iota of suspicion that their
respective lovers were not two, but one i.e. the common lover Andre Bernard. Nathan told
Andre:-

“Sybil and I think it will be a lot better if we can be open about our lovers, and we
will like to all get together.” (31) P. 180

Andre had his doubt about the successful outcome of such a meeting. His heart was also
throbbing fast with the thought that it would be the end of playing hide and seek with both of
them. He told Nathan,

“So you think we’re all going to be one big happy family?” (32) P.180

But, on second thought he decided to meet them both, because keeping his role secret
was not possible, as they might one day give in and trade the names of their lovers. Then if
would be worse for him. He thought:-

“A little part of me also wanted a clean break from the duplicitous life I was
leading. It was exhausting having to be on guard and watch myself all the time.”
(33) P.181

Life had become utterly devoid of joy, when Andre met Nathan. He pleaded with him:-

“No, Nathan, I love you, Remember, Whatever happens, I love you.” (34) P.182
Andre wanted to live with Nathan at any cost. Ultimately, the Sunday came, the crucial day when Andre was to meet Sybil and Nathan in a café. Sybil and Nathan were sitting at a round table, where two vacant chairs were placed for their lovers. Andre approached then and said ‘hello’ to both of them. Nathan understood, and looked rattled; Sybil thought Andre was her lover. But he cleared her doubts and lifted the other vacant chair and pushed it away from the table. He looked at her and said

“There is nobody else joining us.” (35) P.193

It finally hit Sybil. The colour of her face visibly changed. She looked at Nathan and then at Andre, when Nathan nodded she burst out at both of them

“You fucking faggots” (36) P.193

Nathan was stony, cold and chilling. Andre felt aghast. He wanted to stop Nathan before it was too late. He didn’t care what Sybil thought. Sybil was furious with Andre, called him a cheat and asked him:-

“How could you, Andre? (36) P.193

He answered: -

“I fell in love with him before I met you”. (37) P.193

Sybil looked angry and expressed her helplessness:-

“First I fall for Nathan, and he’s inaccessible, than I fall for you, but you are in love with Nathan. This sucks.” (38) P.194

When Nathan told her that he was tired of her, she became hysterical and retorted:-

“Did you hear that? Did you hear that? My faggot of a husband telling me he’s tired of me.” (39) P.195

Sybil looked down at both of them and then she left. When Nathan and Andre were alone, Andre said ‘sorry to him but Nathan left the place without saying a word. Thus, the sex triangle between the three ended on a tragic note.
Andre was in for another big trouble. Martha informed him that she was pregnant, and going to be his child’s mother. Andre was dumfounded. He felt as if he were in a prison where people were flashing bright lights into his eyes every minute, not letting him rest or sleep. To add to his misery, Martha insisted on having the child to be born and not to think of terminating the pregnancy. Andre was in a deep soup. He was thinking if she really had this kid, they would actually had to marry her, otherwise his son would be a bastard, going to some lousy public school with a secretary for a mother. Anyhow he told Martha that he would accompany her to doctor for the next check up.

In the meanwhile life was miserable for Nathan and Sybil. Nathan and Andre met in a pub next day. He looked haggard and old. He told Andre:-

“I had to sleep at a friend’s; Sybil wouldn’t let me in at home.” (40) P.206

Andre also narrated his tragic story that Martha was pregnant with his child and was insisting on having it. He expressed his tell of agony thus:-

“I’m cursed. I am jinxed. Things that happen to people over years have happened to me in a month. I was sleeping with my boss and his wife. I got the secretary pregnant. I’m going to be a father.” (41)P.207

Andre pleaded with Nathan about his sincere love for him:-

“Nathan, I’d still follow you to hell and back. Nothing’s changed for me.” (42)P.207

Nathan responded in a positive manner and told Andre that he was going to leave Sybil, and would like to live his life with Andre.

On the other hand, Andre tried to reason with Martha before going to consult the doctor. He told her,

“Martha, I’ve been thinking of nothing but this, this is really not the right time to have a baby. It was a mistake, Martha.” (43) P.213

But – her emphatic reply was:-
“It’s the right time for me. It was a sign from God. We even used prophylactic. It was meant to happen.” (44) P.213

Andre was a totally broken soul. Sometimes he imagined life with Nathan, Martha and the kid. Nathan would teach him how to paint. They both would teach him Math’s. He did not want the child to have Martha’s mind or even her looks. He also imagined the name of the kid, whether boy or girl, as Camille. He also imagined Martha to bring up the child in his absence. He reasoned:-

“This was New York at the beginning of the new Millennium. The kid wouldn’t be ostracized for not being the son of married parents.” (45) P.215

Andre’s mind was obsessed with the unborn kid, Camille, and Nathan. He imagined sometimes the kid growing up and asking why his mother and Andre were not married. He would also ask,

“Why are you living with Uncle Nathan.”? (46) P.215

Andre’s conflict was growing. He had horrible dreams of hell, kid Camille and Nathan, and he would awake with a loud cry. Andre was in two minds; on the one hand, he did not want the responsibility of Martha’s kid. On the other hand, as he told Nathan,

“He’s my son, Nathan – I can’t let my son die.” (47) P.218

Nathan tried to reason with him that it is only a fetus. It doesn’t even have feet and hand yet. But Andre was adamant that was his son, Camille, and even if he’s a girl, it could be called, Camille. He Imagined of a life where Camille, Nathan and he could live together, and Nathan teaching him various things. He asked Nathan,

“Nathan, can we live the rest of our lives together.” (48) P.219

After the consultation with the doctor, Andre bought books about ‘Child care’.

Once, sitting in a restaurant Andre put a bold proposal before Martha:-

“Look Martha, I’ve thought a lot about this. I think we should live together. I mean all of us. You, Camille Nathan and me” (49) P.222
But Martha out rightly rejected the idea, saying:-

“I’m not going to live with Nathan. And I’m going to live with you only, if you marry me and are truly my husband.” (50) P.222

The result of their talk was he Martha flared up and told Andre:-

“Fuck you, Andre; you think I have nothing better to do than hangs around as your fag hag? My baby and I are not going to accommodate ourselves to your life with Nathan.” (51) P.223

Andre was condemning himself that he had affected three people’s lives profoundly. He had broken a marriage, made a bay, hurt a women’s heart. His thoughts wondered towards Sybil. He remembered Sybil at brunch. Her face crushed the corners of her mouth bitter and battered at the same time. She had loved him. But I’d let her get up and leave. I’d hurt her by being close, open accessible and then suddenly let go I felt as if I’d betrayed her.

Andre asked Sybil to meet in a restaurant she was still upset with Andre. Moreover, when Andre told her that he made Martha pregnant, she was further upset. Sybil repented that she was in love with gay men. Nathan and Andre were gay and before that her friends Jansen and Rich were also gay. Sybil also told Andre that Yoshi was his friend in the present, and she was going to Hawaii. Thus, came the end of Sybil – Andrew relationship.

Andre lost all charms in life. He was friendless. He talked to his one old friend to join him for gay company. Sometimes he met Nathan, who was heart-broken after the separation with Sybil. He told Andre:-

“I did love her. She was my wife. I’ll miss her, and then I felt betrayed.” (52) P.243

They slept together without the warmth of the former days – Andre met Martha and told her,

“I care about the baby and what happens to you and me and us. We can’t be together, but I want the baby to have us both (53) P.244
There was Madhu’s call, to inform Andre that her father died due to a car accident. She was crying uncontrollably. Andre assured her that he loved her, and if her husband Srini was not accompanying her to Texas for the last rites of her father, he would accompany her. Madhu’s mother was hysterical, and the neighbors gave her sleeping pills.

When Andre met Madhu at the arranged place, she buried her face in his shoulder and cried. Madhu told him that she was leaving her husband because he was unsupportive in the time of crisis. She said,

“One marries for companionship if nothing else. If he can’t stick with me through this, I’m not putting up with anything more.” (54) P.248

Madhu and Andre reached the hospital got the dead body of Madhu’s father. Then, they were to go through some Hindu rites at the electric crematorium. A Hindu priest from the temple went with them to the crematorium. He muttered some chants with Andre couldn’t understand. Then he asked Andre to step forward, thinking him to be Madhu’s husband. The priest told him that in the absence of a son, the son-in-law should do the rites. Andre looked at Madhu, who nodded. Thus, Andre performed the last rites of Madhu’s dead father. Madhu thanked him and told him not to tell her mother about their relationship. Andre thought philosophically:

“I had become her father’s son-in-law in death. I had been Madhu’s husband for a day.” (55) P.249

Then he took leave from Madhu. He took a flight for New York and this was the end of Madhu-Andre relations in the novel.

After returning to New York, Andre called Nathan and fixed with him to visit him at his place. On the way he went to see Martha, for a short while, He told her that Camille was his child and he would take all responsibility. Then, he told Martha that he had to leave. He took leave from Martha and went towards Nathan. He thought that meeting Martha was inevitable, which he did not like. It was like walking around with huge block of lead hanging down from his shoulders. Then he opened his mini planner and wrote ‘N’ (Nathan) under all the days for ten full pages. Each page held six days. Two whole months for ‘N’ But as his cab was hearing down fifth
Avenue he tore out the two month’s worth of ‘N’ that he had written a few moments ago, He thought:-

“Now there was nothing except Camille’s birth someday in the future.” (56) P.253

The novel ends on a note of uncertainty, aimlessness, frustration for Andre and all the characters involved with him.

After reading the novel one note that the novelist has depicted the American way of life as lived at the beginning of twenty-first century. How they live and what they eat. Generally they eat at a restaurant. Cooking and dinning at home is seldom mentioned.

Particularly the sex-relationship is the main theme of the novel. They boast of ‘Open’ marriages and ‘free’ marriages. Any kind of the bondage of sincerity is considered to be stifling. Husband and wife are free to move, make friends and even indulge in casual sex-relations. But such ‘Open’ marriage based on matter-of-fact relations, and not on emotions, sincerity and love, lead to misery and even tragedy in their lives. Nathan and Sybil are the glaring examples of it.

Another important theme is the sex-perversion in the lives of many Americans. Homosexuality and lesbian relationships is a common factor in the lives of many of the Americans. Almost all the characters at Kenji Japan Bank are homo-sexual and indulge in free sex-relations – Nathan, Andre, and Yoshi are all ‘Homoes’. Sybil tells Andre that her two boyfriends, before her marriage with Nathan, were both homo-sexual. Lesbian way of enjoying sex and orgasm is shown by way of ‘fisting’. Andre practiced ‘fisting’ on Sybil and Madhu successfully. This mental perversion leads almost all the characters to tragic results.

The protagonist of the novel, Andre is the worst sufferer. He indulged in gay relationship with many men, even with an unknown man; as a result he could not have lasting emotional relations with any of the women – Madhu, Sybil, Martha, Justine, etc.

The novelist dealt with half a dozen characters in this novel, and presented their psycho-analysis due to their indulgence in ‘free-sex’ and homo-sexual relations. Andre is standing at the
cross-roads of life, at the end of the novel, drifting aimlessly. Sybil and Nathan separated, but both are unhappy. Madhu, Martha and even Yoshi are unhappy in their life.

The novel ends on a tragic note, giving the American society a warning that the way of their living is going to result in disaster.
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