CHAPTER THREE

BHAKTI YOGA AS A PATH OF SELF-REALIZATION:

EAST OF EDEN AND THE CAT AND SHAKESPEARE

This chapter seeks to examine the possibility of attaining Self-Realization through the Bhakti Yoga. It discusses how the protagonists Adam Trask of East of Eden and Ramakrishna Pai of The Cat and Shakespeare attain Self-Realization in the light of the Indian philosophical system through their devotion to the institution of marriage.

*Bhakti Yoga* is a method of attaining release through love and loyalty to God. According to Swami Vivekananda, "Bhakti is a series or succession of mental efforts at religious realization beginning with ordinary worship and ending in a supreme intensity of love for Ishvara" (Complete Works 36). At the preparatory stage, all men are "conscious or unconscious materialists." At the next stage, a Bhakta has to choose an ideal and be loyal to it to the end of his days. As Chaitanya says, "so many opinions are so many ways (of worship)", and they all have a right to exist (qtd. in Brodov 253).

Adam Trask and Ramakrishna Pai, as Bhaktas, choose the ideal of marriage and live through it as a means of attaining Self-
Realization. Ideal partners in married life are devoted to each other and their unblemished devotion (Bhakti) to the life-long bond serves as a means of realizing the ultimate purpose of their existence.

The concept of Ardhanareshwara accords a pre-eminent position to woman who is regarded as Sakti in Hindu theology. Hence, an ideal woman is holy, worshipful and worthy of devotion.

When a woman becomes the life-partner of a man, she tends to become one with his spouse not only physically but also spiritually. She creates their progeny in the image of both and thereby does the creator’s job. The woman sacrifices herself in every possible way for the sustenance of human existence on earth. She deserves to be praised and worshipped as a creator. The husband is transformed into a Bhakta in the event of his being matched with an ideal partner. Physical union alone cannot bring about peace and harmony in their married life. When the wife falls short of his spiritual aspirations, his marital life breaks down and his soul is in search of a soul-mate to help him carry on a meaningful life. Bhakti towards one’s Sakti (wife) and Bhakti towards the Unknowable Sakti (the God Unknown) are complementary at one stage. Adam, despite his wife Cathy’s treachery and guile, presents a shining example of the precept that
devotion to one's matrimonial sanctity is devotion to the springhead of spirituality.

Adam Trask is the protagonist of the novel *East of Eden*. When Adam was a small baby, his mother died and his stepmother brought him up along with his half-brother Charles Trask. Even as a young boy, Charles, who is one year junior to Adam, was tough and could defeat any boy of his age. Adam was afraid of Charles even at the age of sixteen. A few days before his enlistment in the army, Charles hit Adam hard and as a result, Adam was bed-ridden for a few days. Their father Private Cyrus Trask is an ex-service man. In order to make a man of Adam, Cyrus compels him to join the army.

At the *Brahmacharya* stage, Adam is obedient and as patient as Job. Uncomplainingly he bears with the beatings of Charles. His father’s sermon-like message, “a soldier is the most holy of all humans because he is most tested - most tested of all” never convinces Adam (EE 19). As a dutiful and conscientious son, Adam does not want to express his hatred towards the army. To prepare Adam psychologically to join the army, Cyrus takes him out often and speaks highly of the service of a soldier.

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1 Steinbeck, John. *East of Eden*. Melbourne: William Heinemann Ltd, 1958. Subsequent references to this source will be provided in the body of the text with an abbreviation of the title followed by page number(s).
As Adam is a pacifist by nature, he neither intends to punish his half-brother nor disobey his father for forcibly sending him to the army. He believes that it is his Dharma to eschew violence and obey his father. He seems to be in tune with the Gandhian principle that non-violence or ahimsa is not a cowardly action.

Even after joining the army, Adam does not like fighting that results in the loss of precious human lives and is “far from learning to love it” and feels an alarming revulsion for violence of any kind (EE 28). During his ten years’ soldiering, if he killed an enemy it was an accident of the ricochet. He feels it is inimical to hurt anyone or anything, whatever be the purpose. However, there has not been any hint of cowardice in his army record. In fact, he is commended thrice and then decorated for gallantry. He knows that his duty as a conscientious soldier should never be jeopardized. Soldiery is his Karma and he does it to his satisfaction despite his aversion to the heroes of war.

After five years, Adam is discharged from the army but he does not want to go home because “Home was not a pleasant place in his mind” (EE 39). He re-enlists at Kansas City. When his second five years in the army expires, he plans to return home and writes to his brother Charles. But his retirement from the army brings him innumerable hardships and he greatly suffers without money. From his wanderings he has learnt to beg for food. Truth dawns on him.
that when people are very poor, they still have the impulse to share their mite with others. This is similar to the lesson that the Joads have learnt in The Grapes of Wrath. He develops a love for the poor, which "he could not have conceived if he had not been poor himself" (EE 47). Because of circumstances, Adam has become an expert tramp and has learnt to use humility in practical life to lessen his sufferings. He was judged a vagrant and had been jailed twice. Now he is mature enough to take his sufferings "with a minimum of pain" (EE 48). His life in the army and his experiences after being discharged have exposed the reality of life to him. Unlike most young men his age, he does not show so keen an interest in the first two objects of life - Artha and Kama.

Even at the Brahmacharya stage, Adam has the experiences similar to those of a Vanaprastha and Sanyasin. Ever since his childhood, he has been leading a kind of detached life. His father Cyrus has left a windfall of ninety three thousand dollars in the bank and ten thousand dollars in good securities by his will, to be shared equally by Adam and Charles. Adam, as a contented man, asserts that he and Charles "can always live on the farm" (EE 55) and will not starve. The biblical Adam succumbs to satanic temptations whereas the Adam of East of Eden remains as firm as a rock and is skeptical about the source of his father's income. He is quite ready to give back the money in case his father had earned
his fortune by dishonest means. Even as a Brahmacari, Adam is true not only to himself but also to the principles of Dharma. This is in perfect consonance with the Indian social and moral custom.

Devotion or Bhakti is also a path of Self-Realization in Indian religious tradition. One's Mata, Pita and Guru (mother, father and teacher respectively) are treated on a par with God. Therefore, devotion to a person or a cause too comes under Bhakti Yoga (path of devotion) leading to self-knowledge. Because of his devotion to his father, Adam joins the army, though inwardly he dislikes army life. But his devotion is not blind and that is why he is concerned about the source of his father's money. Honesty, virtue, perseverance, humility and patience are the hallmarks of Adam's life and character at the Brahmacarya stage. When Charles casually mentions his visits to the brothel to avoid his "lonesome" (EE 60) life, Adam gives no response and remains quiet with an air of coolness. He eschews inflated Kama, the impulse of which, he knows, only causes the vice of lust, one of the seven deadly sins.

Charles's intention of living all his life on the ranch stands in sharp contrast to that of Adam. Adam, at thirty seven, wants to build a house with modern facilities and to buy more lands to fulfill the first object of life, Artha.

An incident that takes place one day becomes a turning point in Adam's life. He happens to see a young woman with "a caked
face with cracked lips and eyes peering out of swollen, blackened lids” lying in an unconscious state on his parch. Her “forehead was laid open, oozing blood back into the matted hair” (EE 94). When he wants to take her in, not out of carnal compulsion but out of compassion, Charles objects stating that Adam is “taking an awful chance” (EE 95) and warns that they will have to suffer for their mistake. Without knowing her antecedents, Adam allows her to stay with him. Charles’s prediction comes true within a year.

Adam’s innate goodness fails to foresee the consequences and that is why Charles’s warning goes unheeded. A new vista of happiness hitherto unfelt physically and emotionally, touches the depth of his heart, for he “couldn’t remember ever having been so happy” (EE 100). Love for Cathy blooms from the deepest recesses of his heart. That he is happy in the company of Cathy paves the way for his Gruhasthya stage. The goodness in him expects only goodness in everybody.

While Charles reads Cathy’s mind and tells her frankly that she is “a devil” and very mean “under that nice skin” (EE 100), Adam looks at her as a ‘Jivatma’, a part of the ‘Paramatma’ as himself. But Charles knows that Cathy is a whore, since he happened to be her chance customer. Ignorant of these facts, Adam wants to marry Cathy in order to protect her and crave more for the purity of her soul than her body. She asks him to promise
that he will not reveal his intention to Charles until their marriage is solemnized. Cathy also needs protection and money and Adam can give her both. Being immaculately pure at heart, Adam is so ingenuous and credulous that he fails to realize Cathy's body and soul are rotten to the core.

When Charles comes to know about their marriage, he protests vehemently that Cathy is a whore. Adam is not perturbed by Charles's accusation and does not want to hear such things about her. Charles warns him further that she will destroy him. He describes Cathy aptly as a "monster" (EE 112). Cathy had been a sex-worker in the brothel run by Edwards. When she betrayed her 'whoremaster', she was beaten up and thrown out. Since the word 'loyalty' is anathema to her, she naturally turns disloyal to her innocent husband Adam. By doping Adam, she shares her bed with Charles. Her lecherous act is really monstrous and one cannot expect from her a dispensation different from this.

Adam's life "was a slow file of half sorrows and sick dissatisfactions" which disappeared and "glory came to him" after Cathy's arrival (EE 112). Adam leaves for California with Cathy and his share of his father's money and the money accrued from the sale of his share of the ranch to Charles. He proves to be devoted to his wife and regards marriage as a sacred bond. At any cost, he
does not want to injure this marital sanctity and prejudice his husbandly obligation.

Cathy is synonymous with Evil and antonymous with Adam representing Good. Even in the presence of Evil, Good never dims and loses its worth. Adam, not at all provoked by Cathy’s indifference and humiliation, does not want to deviate from the well-articulated ambience of a sacrosanct marriage. He has already chosen his devotion to his wife as a path to his self-knowledge.

After reaching Salinas Valley, Cathy seeks self-remedy for abortion and has nearly killed herself. Dr. Tilson, who examines her, finds “something inhuman about her” (EE 114) and her eyes are “as cold as glass” (EE 114). But still Adam does not find anything strange about Cathy. After buying a ranch a little away from King City, he tells Samuel Hamilton, the owner of a neighboring ranch, that he wants to grow more trees and milk cows on his ranch. Like Joseph of To A God Unknown, Adam too is a patron of fertility. He tells him further: “I want to make a garden of my land. Remember, my name is Adam. So far, I’ve no Eden” (EE 145). He wants to create an Eden with no apple trees “that would be looking for accidents” (EE 145). Adam’s desire reveals his optimism, innate goodness and immense faith in his wife. He is no less than an ideal Gruhastha. But throughout her life, Cathy proves to be a remorseless monster. Without knowing
Cathy’s mind, Adam is “going to make a garden so good, so beautiful that it will be a proper place for her to live and a fitting place for her light to shine on” (EE 146). Only a good devotee or Bhakta of God thinks that every creation is good in the world. Adam believes that “the people of the world were good and handsome” (EE 146).

But Cathy thinks otherwise and shatters his dream by revealing her intention to leave the place as early as possible. According to Hamilton, “The eyes of Cathy had no message, no communication of any kind. There was nothing recognizable behind them. They were no human eyes” (EE 152). Hamilton has, thus, uneasy thoughts about Cathy.

Cathy lives on a farm she does not like, with a man she does not love. But unaware of Cathy’s mind, Adam goes happily about planning and building his Eden. Others may be critical of Cathy but he has opened the gates of love after all to his wife, life partner and one who has come to share his being. So he refuses to look through others’ eyes. The biblical Eve is innocent whereas Cathy, the Eve of the Garden of Eden proposed by Adam Trask, is Satan-incarnate. The biblical Eve makes her companion a sinner and they live together in perennial fetters, away from Heaven beyond redemption. Adam Trask is betrayed and physically assaulted by his wife Cathy but he never does anything to blemish the marital
sanctity. Marriage is a kind of Bhakti and he willingly becomes its devotee. Cathy’s nonchalance and treachery really enhance the character of Adam and elevate him spiritually to a god-like figure.

All mothers forget their suffering immediately after delivery and are eager to see their babies to derive joy. But Cathy does not want to see her twin boy-babies and asks Hamilton to take them out of the room. Cathy’s unmotherly feelings do not dampen his warmth and affection for her.

Adam is in his usual self and as a Gruhastha, he is still faithful and generous to his wife. He follows the Dharma of a husband to his wife. Cathy gets a chance to correct herself through her marriage to Adam. But she is hell-bent to perpetuate her innate ruthlessness and immorality. She deserts Adam and her babies. When Adam expresses his concern for the babies, Cathy reacts in a voice that is dead and metallic: "The babies Throw them in one of your wells" (EE 174). Again and again, she proves to be inhuman and monstrous. He implores her not to go away, because he thinks she is not quite healthy. But Cathy does not budge from her decision: "I can do anything to you. Any woman can do anything to you. You are a fool" (EE 174). But Adam is not a fool and is infused with some divine attributes which Cathy has taken for granted in her shameless self-interest.
Even at this stage, Adam has not turned violent or regreted his decision of marrying Cathy, since he is a devoted husband. He fervently attempts to prevent her from leaving him but Cathy shoots at him with her pistol. The heavy slug strikes him in the shoulder blade. After tossing the pistol on the floor beside him, she leaves the house. Adam lies unconscious on the floor until Lee comes to his rescue. However, Adam does not want to inculpate his wife in any offence.

On being enquired by Horace Quinn, the Deputy Sheriff, Adam tells him that when he was cleaning the pistol, it went off. He claims that it was an accident. In order to save his wife, he tells a stark lie. Even in the worst of circumstances, he stands by his wife despite her extreme abhorrence for him.

As a Gruhastha, Adam wants to create a ‘Garden of Eden’ for his wife to lead a blissful life. He is blessed with the twins. But the devil in Cathy drags her away, for the evil cannot happily co-exist with the good. Adam’s basic goodness fails to see Cathy in bad light and so he does not believe that her desertion is a betrayal. Only her whereabouts and her welfare are of paramount concern with him. He upholds the matrimonial Dharma and his devotion to his marriage blinds him in his love towards Cathy.

As husbands, Adam and Pai face the same predicament. Adam and Cathy are not made for each other; nor are Pai and
Saroja. By a quirk of fate, these are mismatches. However, such mismatches are so preordained that their married life might not sail smoothly. It is in the nature of both the protagonists that in the deepest recesses of their minds, they long for freedom from the cares and shackles of this mundane life. Their not-too-successful married life in a way helps them to reorient themselves to their ultimate goal of Self-Realization. What Cathy does for Adam, Saroja does for Pai. Both the wives leave their husbands in the lurch, offering them more scope to turn ‘inward’ and meditate on the very purpose of human existence. In fact, solitariness and disappointment in their conjugal bliss enhance the value of an ideal marriage. In their search for an ideal partner out of their Bakthi to the marital relationship, they also find a path to self-knowledge. The physical deficiency in their earthly existence calls for spiritual amendment. Their faith in and devotion to the ideal relationship between husband and wife anchors their faith in the Absolute and enable them to pursue their spiritual mission of understanding themselves. As a result, they could make the spadework for the next higher stage during the period of separation.

Adam’s counterpart, Ramakrishna Pai of The Cat and Shakespeare, is at the Gruhasthya stage when the novel opens. Pai endeavors to attain Self-Realization through the Bhakti Yoga, which is the corollary of the theme of the metaphysical quest
initiated by Ramaswamy through the *Gnana* Yoga in *The Serpent and the Rope*. Working as a divisional clerk in the Revenue Board at Trivandrum, Pai has been away from his family for two years. He says that he likes "being alone" (*CAS* 8), while his wife Saroja has chosen to live with their daughter Usha and son Vithal at Pattanur.

As a Gruhastha, Pai fulfills the first two objects of life – Artha and Kama and never shirks his responsibilities as a husband and a father. But his wife is willfully negligent of her wifely duties and is deeply immersed in materialism. For her, looking after the coconut groves, inherited through the matriarchal system and the rope-making business are more important than conjugal bliss. Her materialism stands in the way of a spiritual life. She denies her husband the requisite affection and love by living away from him at the coastal village of Pattanur, hundred and fifty miles north of Trivandrum. Pai and Saroja live as man and wife only in name. Their physical distance widens the hiatus between them. This is evident from the words of Pai: "I am a quiet man, and to speak the truth, I don't yet know what it is to mean husband" (*CAS* 7).

Pai, a pious man, has rented Kamla Bhavan, which "had ochre bands on it – almost as on a temple" (*CAS* 7). The house in

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*Kara Rama The Cat and Shakespeare* New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks 1992. Subsequent references to this source will be provided in the body of the text with an abbreviation of the title followed by page numbers.
which he resides stands as a symbol of the temple and the sea he
hears stands for eternity. He always thinks of his daughter Usha.
As a Gruhastha, his Dharma is to earn for the family, fulfilling the
first object of life, Artha. In his opinion, "A man is meant to work
for his wife, and for the children to go to school" (CAS 8). He is
concerned about Usha, who walks three miles a day to school at
Alwaye. But his wife willingly avoids a woman's duty in favor of
materialism.

Pai is unassuming and not inclined to amass wealth. Had he
become rich, as he planned in his youthful dream, his wife would
have been happy. He dropped his plans happily and is contented
with his lot. His wife's greed and her interest in materialism have
confined her to Pattanur at the expense of her married life. Pai and
Saroya do not make a perfect couple. Saroja does not appear to
strive towards perfection. Pai's soul fails to find an echo in her soul.
Their marriage has consummated only physically, not spiritually.
They have realized the immediate fruit of their physical union. This
has happened not out of the conjugal harmony one would expect in
an ideal married life. As Pai says, it is clear that in heat, he strikes.
"In heat I strike" (CAS 10). It means that in the heat of sexual
excitement, he seeks only the physical company of Saroja. The
birth of their children proves to be accidental. So the
incompatibility at the soul level between them has been an
indisputable truth: "I sometimes wonder whether I have a heart as I wonder in summer whether the rains will ever come" (CAS 10). Saroja has failed to touch the heart of her husband.

Pai often spells out his desire surging within: "I like being alone" (CAS 8). One therefore infers from his expression that he has at the back of his mind a thirst for inner harmony and spiritual transformation through solitude and meditation. Since he is born a human being, he has to go through both the predictable and unpredictable happenings in life. These happenings shape his soul and in the process, Pai is bound to go up the spiritual ladder by stages with objectives commensurate with each stage. What happens in his enactment of existence revolves on his successful prevailing over the temporal barriers with a view to achieving his avowed goal of Self-Realization—the goal of understanding the meaning and purpose of his life.

As a responsible father, Pai wants to bring Usha to Trivandrum to give her better education. Apart from his constant thoughts about her, he keeps on brooding over building a three-storied house for which he seeks the blessings of God by looking at the sacred bilva tree on the other side of the wall abutting Nair's house. The bilva tree is dear to Lord Shiva whose image or lingam is beneath that tree. He remembers the story of a wicked hunter who accidentally caused the fall of bilva leaves on the shivalingam
below, for which he was blessed with the vision of Lord Shiva. When God bestows his blessings even on a wicked hunter, a devotee like Pai cannot but be blessed by Lord Shiva. To seek the blessings of God, Pai looks from the window eastward and sees the stump of the bilva tree in the morning sun. This is how he begins his quest for the Absolute — through the Bhakti Yoga or the path of devotion — to inner harmony aided by outer matrimonial harmony.

In Hindu religious tradition, an aspirant, however pious and devoted to God he may be, cannot attain Salvation without the benign love and guidance of a spiritual Guru. According to Harshananda, “Spiritual life is impossible without the guidance of a spiritual Guru. Guru is one who dispels the darkness of ignorance and bestows the light of knowledge” (40). Pai’s neighbor, Govindan Nair, a resourceful and scholarly clerk in the Ration Office, is well-versed in Sanskrit. Nair has the gift of the gab and can talk endlessly on Vedanta and spiritual aspects of life. All his utterances are punctuated with his knowledge of Sanskrit literature. He leads a contented life, unmindful of the flux around him. He “looks up from between the [bilva] leaves” (CAS 11) and always speaks with an air of spiritualism. Nair’s constant sources of inspiration are the Sanskrit work Astavakra Samhita, which he often reads and interprets to Pai, Shakespeare, Goldsmith’s The Vicar of Wakefield, and the works of the Malayalam poet Eletchan (sic.).
As a spiritual Guru, Nair performs his Dharma well by reading *Astavakra Samhita*, a religious work in Sanskrit "from anywhere to the very end and then he said: 'I have done a good job. I have explained to the Brahmin what Brahman is' " (CAS 35). Pai has an intense desire to learn the spiritual truth, which is the chief qualification of a *sishya* or disciple. As a dedicated disciple, he reposes his full faith in his Guru and it is evident from what he says after listening to Nair's reading and interpretation of *Astavakra Samhita*: "I knew at once he was right. He was right. He is right. He will ever be right" (CAS 35). His one dictum in life is that we should follow 'the Mother Cat' to tide over the mundane affairs that confront us. His words and frequent references to the 'Mother cat' and the 'kittens' reveal his profound knowledge of Ramanuja's *Vishishtadvaita*. He says, "The kitten is being carried by the cat. We would all be kittens carried by the cat. Some, who are lucky (like your hunter), will one day know it" (CAS 11).

His words reflect the central doctrine of *Vishishtadvaita-prapatti* or absolute self-surrender, which alone can lead the devotees or *Bhaktas* to *Moksha* or Salvation. The 'cat' is the symbol of God and the 'kittens' stand for devotees. The theory of total surrender to the Absolute is based on Ramanuja's *marjaranyaya* (analogy of the cat), which illustrates total surrender of the self to the Self. The *Bhaktimarga* or Path of Devotion of Ramanuja speaks
of two ways of surrender to the Absolute. One, the Markatanyaya (analogy of the monkey) asserts that the “soul must exert itself” to get Salvation, as the baby-monkey “actively seizes its mother”, when she jumps from one tree to another. The other, the Marjaranyaya (analogy of the cat) likens “God’s grace” to the loving care of the mother cat for the kitten, which is “independent of all efforts on the part of the latter” (Rangacharya 178). At the end of each conversation, Nair refers to this philosophical premise.

Nair provokes Pai into thinking of the Absolute and of the means to reach Him. He plays the role of a guru who initiates a disciple into a certain faith. As Pai says, “it’s not the way you worship that is important but what you adore” (CAS 10). Nair’s is an elevated soul and Pai’s proximity to Nair’s house and his association with him and his spiritually oriented conversations let Pai into the mysteries of the ‘mother cat’. According to him, one has “just to look and see. Look deep and see.” The mother cat, presumably God, holds “you by the neck” (CAS 13). After his conversation with Pai, Nair jumps across the wall, which stands between Pai’s house and that of Nair’s. According to Powers, crossing the wall becomes a metaphor for coming to understand the world as Govindan Nair does, from the standpoint of Visistadavaita Vedanta. The way of the Cat is the
philosophy which Govindan Nair not only advocates but lives, and in time Ramakrishna Pai allows himself to be carried by the Mother Cat. (611)

This suggests that Pai comes round to the line of Nair’s thinking.

Many Indian critics are of the opinion that the high wall is the wall of Illusion. With Nair as his spiritual Guru, Pai can cross the wall of Illusion and go near the sacred bilva tree. His propinquity to the bilva tree, in some sense, shows that he has already begun the quest for Self-Realization.

According to Pai, Saroja’s ancestral house known as ‘Kartikua House’ was built “on thuggery” and her “lineage” (CAS 9) smells of coconuts. But he has permanently distanced himself from his family business of chilly, cardamom and tamarind because his real intention is not to become rich. Riches and other temporal pleasures do not enchant a spiritually inclined person like Pai.

While Pai is striving to lead a life of contentment, unperturbed by the flux of mundane affairs, his wife Saroja is busy at Pattanur, deeply plunged in her routine of supervising boat repairing, rope-making and the coconut groves. The prerequisite for a spiritual quest is detachment. One should be totally detached from the earthly encumbrances. Knowingly or unknowingly, Pai volunteers to be away from the illusory aspects of human existence. He is married with two children and wishes to be a
dutiful father. However, his wife generates disaffection in him for the better. He is on the doorstep of Vanaprasthya stage but he needs help and guidance to take the first step in boldly and confidently. His mind appears to be a clouded sky and too many thoughts about the real meaning of existence harass him after a certain point in his domestic life. He has safely played the roles of a bachelor, a husband, a father and a conscientious government servant. But beyond all this hustle and bustle, he craves for inner peace and eternal bliss. That hidden fire in him gets lit with a spark, when Govindan Nair ignites it through his inimitable story of the mother cat and her kittens.

But for Saroja “fact is that which yields Land is a fact” (CAS 30). She is least concerned about her husband and his miserable life at Trivandrum. Saroja sharply stands in contrast to her husband regarding truth. While Pai regards what Saroja feels true as illusion, she does the other way.

At thirty three, Pai, who has been so dejected with life as a result of his wife’s indifference, has to dine at a hotel. He reveals the futility of his present lifestyle thus: “I was thirty three, and I had ever wondered that one is alive” (CAS 9). His separation from his wife is otherwise fertile for his philosophical imaginings. When he is confused about the deeper meanings of human existence, Nair comes in to shape him up philosophically.
When Pai is in a state of confusion, Nair comes to his rescue and lights the beacon of hope in him. A spiritual aspirant like Pai needs the guidance of a Guru to surmount the world of illusion. Nair ably guides his disciple in spiritual as well as material aspects of life. In the same way, Samuel Hamilton and Lee, who play the spiritual Guru for Adam, enlighten him. But for their illuminating guidance, the life of Adam and his twin sons would have been a total failure. When Adam and Pai feel swept off the ground like a vessel caught in a storm, they look for rudders and lifeboats. Nair clears Pai’s doubts and demystifies all about the myths of human existence. His mother-cat-kitten theory is an allegorical narration and feeds Pai with the requisite amount of force and co-ordinates all his intellectual powers with a view to solving the riddles of life.

Similarly, Hamilton and Lee intervene at the appropriate time in the life of Adam and lead him to the light of spiritualism. They help Adam look at life from a philosophical point of view and sharpen Adam’s curiosity about Self-Realization. Adam realizes the purpose of his earthly existence when his cloud of illusions is drained off his mind. With the able and right guidance of their Gurus, Adam and Pai begin to see things in a new perspective that sheds light on their souls.

Cathy’s desertion brings only dejection and despair to Adam and he is now in a dream-like state and not fully conscious of his
boys. His devotion to his wife eclipses his paternal love and care for his babies. Lee’s attempts to stimulate his master to awareness are of no avail. He plays the role of a mother for the twins.

At this moment, the kind-hearted Hamilton, who cannot attend to his business when others suffer, does not want “to abandon Adam to his desolation” (EE 220) He feels that “Adam might be pleasing himself with sadness” (EE 221). Adam is sad not because Cathy is absent but because he feels that he has failed to honor his commitment to his wife as a faithful husband. But now he is a father and his commitment to his children is also part of the responsibilities of a Gruhastha. Excessive affection for his wife blinds him to the other side of his Gruhastha stage.

On sound advice from the guru-like Hamilton, as to his negligence of having his children fatherless, Adam regains his good sense, which has been dormant for over a year. He thanks Hamilton “for insults” and shaking him “out of a rug” (EE 225) and agrees to christen the boys. Now, he admits before his benefactor that Cathy’s desertion is “almost a relief” and that he has no hatred for her but “only a kind of sinking in the heart”, for there “was no interval from loveliness to horror” (EE 226). He tells Hamilton that Cathy did not mean to kill him and regrets that “she did not allow me that dignity” for he could sense that there was no hatred or
passion in her. Thus Adam proves to be a man of an incorrigible innocence and a repertoire of the milk of human kindness.

Adam develops a sense of detachment after his wife failed to help him discharge his fatherly responsibilities. Father and mother are both indispensable for children. When he realizes the lapse with the help of people like Hamilton, he puts himself back on the track and goes all out to discharge his duties to his children as a true Gruhastha. Only then will he think of the next stage in life.

Adam's dream of creating the Garden of Eden in the flat land has been abandoned because he thinks that that kind of energy is gone out of him. He never wanted the garden for himself. Now he has no one to show a garden to. When Hamilton confirms that Cathy is in a brothel in Salinas, Adam refuses to believe it. His deep faith in the matrimonial bond clouds his faculty of discretion. He seems to believe that Cathy is virtuous and admits that he has never let her go.

Under these circumstances, Hamilton advises Adam to shed the deadwood in his mind. The best thing for Adam, according to Hamilton, is "to search out and find some fresh new loveliness to cancel out the old" (EE 257). He suggests that Adam can learn a lot from Lee also - "a philosopher who can cook, or a cook who can think" (EE 260). Hamilton admits proudly that Lee has taught him a great deal.
Later, Lee, Hamilton and Adam discuss the use and import of the Hebrew word *Timshel* in the fourth chapter of Genesis. They reach a consensus on one of the translations of the word as 'Thou mayest' and infer the meaning that man has a choice to choose between good and evil as he may wish.

In his spiritually colored speech, Lee tells Adam and Hamilton that "man is a very important thing – maybe more important than a star" (EE 264). He says that the human soul is "a glittering instrument...a lovely and unique thing in the universe. It is always attacked and never destroyed – because 'Thou mayest' " (EE 264). He means that the individual can make or mar his life either by upholding *Dharma* or by violating it. Through their philosophical musings Hamilton and Lee have initiated Adam into the realm of spiritual quest. Thereafter Hamilton leaves for Salinas – never to return by the Divine will. Lee fills in the vacuum left behind by Hamilton and continues to guide Adam to spiritual heights.

After attending Hamilton's funeral, Adam meets Cathy. On seeing him, her eyes are expressionless and cold. She tells him that she expected him for a long time. But Adam says: "I didn't forget you...but now I can" and adds that she has taught him "a pretty sharp lesson" (EE 278).

Cathy confesses that she made her own teacher kill himself because he pretended to be good and wanted to outrage her
modesty. She punished her parents for their “pretending goodness” (EE 280) by burning them alive in their own house. So she hates all men and loves “to rub their noses in their own nastiness” (EE 280). Her conviction is that “in the whole world there’s only evil and folly” (EE 280). Then she shows the photographs of many very important people – a senator, a ranch owner, a professor, a minister of the Gospel etc., - who frequented her whorehouse. She also tells him that the reputation of those VIPs is at her disposal.

Now for the first time Adam understands the true colors of Cathy and speaks his mind plainly: “I’m beginning to think you’re a twisted human – or no human at all” (EE 281). Cathy admits that she does not want to be human and that she is smarter than humans. She loves to avenge herself on all the men who used her for their pleasure. The list includes Edwards, the whoremaster, who beat her to a pulp, left her near the Trasks’ ranch, thinking that she was dead. When Adam reminds her that she is the mother of his sons, she retorts: “A fool always leaves the opening. I am the mother, yes – but how do you know you are the father?” (EE 282) Then she narrates how she had sex with Charles after doping Adam. Unable to believe her words, Adam calls her a ‘devil’. In her devilish rage, Cathy orders the house pimp Ralph to kick Adam. He strikes Adam under the ear and Adam crashes to the door.
This exit from the whorehouse marks Adam’s exit from the Gruhasthya stage. He is now on the threshold of the Vanaprasthya stage. All his material and familial encumbrances have no meaning for him any more. He is free from earthly ties including his tie with his twin children.

Sitting on the floor, Adam says, “Do you know I loved you better than anything in the world? I did. It was strong that it took quite a killing” (EE 284). Before leaving Cathy, he smiles at her “as a man might smile at a memory” (EE 284). The Tamil poet, Tiruvalluvar’s couplet 621 aptly describes Adam’s action at this juncture:

_Smile, with patient, hopeful heart, in troublous hour;
Meet and so vanquish grief; nothing hath equal power._

(Pope 87)

Adam’s stoic patience shows his maturity and the divine nature in him is surfacing.

Adam’s first hand knowledge of Cathy’s nefarious life and her profession brings about a transformation in his life. Till he meets her, he has been a devoted husband, trying to find his soul-mate in her. His belief in her was so intense that no one could disfigure it. Now he begins to share the belief of Edwards, Dr.Tilson, Hamilton and Lee that Cathy is a devil devoid of humanism in her mind. What Deborah says in _An American Dream_ seems to be true of...
Cathy: “I am evil if truth be told... It is just that evil that has power” (Mailer 43).

After meeting Cathy, Adam is “filled with a hungry gaiety” (EE 285). He is happy that he is free from an evil encumbrance, as Cathy has gone out of him. He wonders whether “there is such a creature in the world” (EE 288). This realization shows that he is well on his way to Self-Realization.

Adam’s inadvertent choice in marrying Cathy, a monster in human form, proves to be fateful. His illusion vanishes and truth dawns on him after his meeting with Cathy at the brothel run by her. Now the way is clear for him to pursue his pilgrimage with the assistance of Lee. As Adam is basically a good man, he does not hate the evil-incarnate Cathy. His Bhakti or devotion to his wife remains unstudied and unsullied. In fact, the truth about her has lightened his heavy-heartedness. Even treachery and cruelty fail to dampen his spirit. When his soul has failed to see a counterpart in Cathy’s, it naturally turns to the ever-inviting Big Soul, Paramatma. Devotion to wife is transformed into devotion to God. The former belies his hopes and so the latter unfolds as an alternative before him.

Similarly, Pai leads a miserable life at Trivandrum. The occasional perfunctory visit of his wife Saroja brings no solace to him. Shantha complements Nair and cause Pai’s illusion to be
dispelled. Nair's spiritual guidance and the conjugal bliss that Pai experiences with Shantha lead him on the path of Self-Realization.

Of all the characteristic traits of a Guru, love and charity are the most important ones. Pai's Guru, Govindan Nair admires courage. He always loves people who go in search of the paradise flower. When one does so, according to Nair, one becomes half-brother to mankind.

When Pai is afflicted with the mysterious 'British buboes', Nair nurses him tenderly because "he believes in an explicit moral principle of actively loving others" (Niranjan 93). Nair practices what Peter Jones says: "Man cannot achieve salvation without unconditional and unconditioned faith in God and in immortality. On the basis of such faith, man must pursue the practical moral policy of 'actively loving others' " (qtd. in Shiva Niranjan 93).

Hearing that Pai is ill, Saroja makes a dash to Trivandrum to fulfill an obligation outwardly. She stays with her ailing husband only for a few hours. Her visit is more of a formality than of a genuine concern for her husband. Her material interests like "boat repairs" and "carrying away coconut shells" and so on (CAS 32) subdue the love of a wife in her for her husband. She understands the practical aspect of life and at the same time she fails to understand that her material pursuits are illusory. Unlike her husband, she is "not living in a dream" (CAS 29). In fact, Saroja
lives in a world of illusions. She regards the unreal real and vice versa. The spiritual side of life seems to elude Saroja. The condition of her husband evokes no change for the better in her mind. Her visit, probably, has been motivated by her plan of leaving Usha with her husband for good.

Saroja, who is more materialistic than spiritual, sticks to her property and business and refuses to become one with him as husband and wife, more on the spiritual plane than on the physical plane. Despite his readiness to uphold the principles of Dharma as a husband and a father, he is hindered by his wife's indifference. This leads to Pai's alienation from Saroja and forces him to lie in the spiritual lap of Shantha, a Nair woman.

Saroja's very utterances prove that she does not regard Pai as her husband and the father of her son Vithal. She is "living far away" from her husband and "keeping Vithal and telling him your father is no father. Your real father is the sun. Worship him" (CAS 96). The expression 'living far away' demonstrates not only her physical separation from her husband but also her lackadaisical and callous attitude towards her husband. No wife worth her salt will tell her son 'Your father is no father'. To imprint this idea in the tender mind of the child and to "prove his paternity" (CAS 96), she offers Vithal a box of peppermints every day as soon as he makes his obeisance to the sun, his 'real father'. When Saroja has such an
attitude towards her husband, one cannot expect her to assist Pai as a soul-mate. Their wavelengths of understanding life are different and they can but run parallel to each other and never merge. She is too much in the grip of absolute materialism, and spiritual life, which gives one real happiness and solace, is a recondite subject for her. This results in her failure to honor her commitment to her husband for life through their sacred marriage.

Pai certainly cannot find his soul-mate in such a wife and therefore he is in need of a soul-mate for attaining fulfillment in life. He quenches his physical thirst, that too probably, to keep his mind free from avoidable tension but his soul is searching for a suitable mate. As Sri Aurobindo says about the Integral Yoga, the body should be free from its encumbrances before the soul sets its eyes on transformation (Feys 209). In other words, one has to do the Samanya Dharma satisfactorily while the Vishesh Dharma is its corollary. Marriage is a worldly event and part of the Samanya Dharma. There has been a vacuum in his personality and a thorn in his flesh that prevent his mind from turning to self-introspection and consequent Self-Realization. Shantha comes to fill the vacuum and now Pai's mind becomes absolutely free and prepares only to discard all the attachments. He does what he ought to do for his children as a father because they are born out of his marriage to Saroja. For a Hindu, there are two Dharmas - the Samanya
Dharma which deals with the affairs of the world and the *Vishesh Dharma* which deals with the affairs of soul. He performs the *Samanya Dharma* to his satisfaction while preparing the groundwork for the *Visesha Dharma* with the help of Shantha.

Shantha comes to the Revenue Board in connection with a land division. On seeing her innocent looks, Pai feels that “She was sure her case was right for she could not know how her face might ever be wrong” (CAS 23). When he thinks that “truth became her thought”, she becomes his mistress, for “she felt wife. She remained a wife” (CAS 23). He admits that he likes women. It does not mean that he likes all sorts of women. In his opinion, “Woman is Shantha.” She is “not just a woman, she is woman” (CAS 22). Shantha is identified as an ideal woman. He cannot say this of his legally wedded wife Saroja, because he lives with her as a shackled cohabitant, rather than a wedded spouse.

Shantha establishes not merely physical compatibility with him but an empathetic connection with his soul. This enables Pai to realize gradually the nature and purpose of human existence in general, and that of his own existence in particular. With her sterling devotion, Shantha worships Pai as her husband. Having failed to find his own self in his wife Saroja, he attempts to find it in Shantha.
Pai’s soul is tormented between the roles of father and devotee seeking Moksha. He has been thinking of the bilva tree, the mother cat and building a three storied house for his daughter Usha. He wants to perform his Samanya Dharma well as a Gruhastha so that he will be able to step into the next stage of Vanaprasthya. Though Shantha is Pai’s mistress, she has been accorded the status of more than a wife. She has accepted Pai as her ‘lord’: “I am a Hindu woman and you are my lord” (CAS 82). Her words “I say, to say I love you is to say I love myself” are reminiscent of what Yagnayavalkya said to his wife to which Rama refers in *The Serpent and the Rope* (TSR 171). Shantha is seven months pregnant and in Pai’s opinion “pregnant women are holy” (CAS 82). She bears Pai’s child and so he feels “she has myself in her” (CAS 82). The child in Shantha’s womb is purported to be Pai’s spiritual heir.

Pai says, “To be a wife is not to be wed. To be a wife is to worship your man. Then you are born” (CAS 32). Shantha’s devotion to Pai and her love for him lie at a sublime level. Of all the states, according to Pai, wifehood “seems the most holy” (CAS 30). To Pai, his union with Shantha seems more holy. Like his counterpart, Adam of *East of Eden*, Pai too is devoted to Shantha, who is more than a wife to him. Govindan Nair does not want to acknowledge Saroja as Pai’s wife. When he wants to hand
over a cat to Pai, the latter tells him to get Saroja's consent. But Nair retorts that Shantha's consent is enough. Pai wonders whether he will be able to build the house for Usha. He believes that Shantha will help him after selling her land, for she loves Usha without having seen her. Shantha treats Usha as her real daughter and her "house will be the right place for Usha" (CAS 31). Shantha is deemed to be the all-embracing Goddess Sakti. Pai expects his son Vithal to inherit his mother's property. If Pai has to reach the highest goal in life, his mind must be free from cares and fears. As a responsible father, it is his Dharma to think about and provide for the future of his progeny. Nair, Pai's spiritual Guru, assures Pai of all help to build the long-cherished house for Usha. Like Hamilton and Lee in *East of Eden*, Nair helps his disciple in all possible ways to feel free from his earthly encumbrances.

Pai wants to build the house before Shantha's delivery takes place, for he wants to hold the child in his house. He prays to God to help him build a house. With the monetary assistance provided by his Guru, Nair, instead of building a house, Pai buys the house, Kamla Bhavan where he resides now, for Usha.

Pai beams with satisfaction and feels happy. "I have a house. I have laid the foundation for myself - and through time" (CAS 57). For a Gruhastha like Pai, his house and his devoted wife form the foundation to reach greater heights, of course, with the
guidance of the spiritual Guru. Now all is well for Pai to strive for his salvation, which he will attain 'through time'. As a real Bhakta or devotee, Pai always refers to the bilva tree and the salvation attained by the wicked hunter with his "unknowing worship" (CAS 57). He feels that he lives "a bit of eternity" which is not enough to have a vision of the Lord. His longing for Moksha or Liberation thus finds expression in his own words: "Lord I am not even a hunter that in his nervousness lets down bilva leaves. Lord, what hope is there for me?" (CAS 57).

Pai's longing for spiritual upliftment surfaces now and the time for it is ripe, for his guide Govindan Nair lives across the wall, and the bilva tree spreads like a holy umbrella above him and gives him "a spiritual status" (CAS 58). Pai has to go a long way to attain that status. Now Pai has just been initiated into Self-Realization. Like Pai, Adam also regards marriage as a sacred bond and tries in vain to find a spiritual companion in his wife. He is guided not only by Lee but also by his moral will. By performing the Samanya Dharma, Adam sees the gates of Vishesh Dharma kept wide open. The Vanaprasthya stage has set in Pai's life.

Adam of East of Eden, like Pai, is also now on the threshold of his Vanaprasthya stage and as a responsible father, he wants to complete his Karma and be free from temporal pleasures. As a Gruhastha, Adam has no interest in material progress. Monetary
loss cannot distract him from the spiritual path. He 'could value' only 'good life' on the part of his sons, not material success which is of importance only to those who are yet to cross the first two stages of life. That is why when Cal offers fifteen thousand dollars as a present to Adam to make up for the loss in business, the latter tells him, "If you want to give a present - give me a good life. That would be something I could value" (EE 474).

On hearing the news of Cathy's suicide, "Adam's face contorted and his eyes swelled and glistened with tears" (EE 490). No other man in his place will feel sad and wail Cathy's death. Adam, whose life is congruous with the dictum of the great Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar:

To punish wrong, with kindly benefits the doers ply;

Thus shame their souls; but pass the ill unheeded by,

(Pope 43)
cannot be joyous over the death of Cathy. She shot at him, deserted him and the twin-sons, and got him beaten by her men in the whorehouse and mocked at his virtue and honesty. But Adam has no punishment for her and he has never thought of betraying or belittling her.

Cathy's death is unexpected for him. Weeping, he says that he will claim her body and bury it. Even now he wants to perform his duty as a husband. Ironically, for Cathy her husband was but a
fool. Regarding Cathy, every deed of Adam's is in tune with his noble traits.

Aron's knowledge of his mother as a whore shatters his "unreal image of an angelic mother who had died in his infancy" (Fontenrose, Introduction and Interpretation 121). He joins the army by stealth of his own accord "to escape the pervasive fear and despondency" as a result of the ugly revelation (EE 498). If Cal had not revealed the truth about Cathy and taken him to her place, Aron would not have run away from home and joined the army. At this juncture, Lee, the philosopher-cook aptly reads aloud a passage from The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius

> Everything is only for a day, both that which remembers and that which is remembered. Observe constantly that all things take place by change, and accustom thyself to consider that the nature of the universe loves nothing so much as to change things which are and to make new things like them. For everything that exists is in a manner the seed of that which will be. (EE 492)

Regarding Aron's hasty action, like Cal, Adam also feels guilty and is "more puzzled than sad" (EE 499). Unfortunately, Aron dies in harness and his death puts an end to his suffering but rudely shocks Adam and leaves him paralyzed. Adam experiences the
emptiness at the center of human existence and his efforts to acquire self-knowledge have come to fruition.

Ferrell says:

After Cathy abandoned Adam Trask to pursue her life as a whore, Adam attempted to build a life undisturbed by evil. Adam cut out himself off as well from all that was good. The Eden that Adam hoped to create was no Eden at all, but a dead stultifying life, the price for which was tragically borne by his sons Cal and Aron. (150)

He has been in the thick of his Vanaprasthya stage ever since Cathy’s desertion and now after her death.

Cal is remorseful and feels guilty of forcing Aron indirectly to join the army and thereby causing his untimely death. Lee tries to console Cal: “I thought the good are destroyed while the evil survive and prosper” (EE 523). What Lee says further reminds one of the teachings of Lord Krishna and the Indian belief in Karma. The ‘impurities’ that he refers to are our sins and the ‘fire’ is our trials and tribulations as a result of our Karma and God’s pouring “molten fire from a crucible to destroy or purify his little handiwork of mud” is our salvation or Moksha. He asks Cal to be ready “for a glorious flux” (EE 523).
Adam forgives Cal and blesses him. It is time for him to leave. Adam is terribly sick and weary, makes great efforts to part his lips and speak but fails. His final effort allows him to whisper a word, which seems to mean Timshel. According to Gray,

For him the difference between thou shalt and thou mayest works a peaceful revolution in the world of morality. Man ceases to be the slave of unintelligible forces over which he has no control; he becomes master of his destiny when he is given "the glory of the choice" between good and evil. It was Steinbeck's philosophy to the end of his life that three wills are operative in man's experience: the will of the group, the will of the individual, and the moral will which must in the end prevail over the lesser two. (20)

Adam's last word, which is a counsel in good faith, implies that he has forgiven Cal. Now it is Cal who has to turn a new leaf in life. And the choice is Cal's now. His sins have been washed away by his confession and his father's forgiveness. So Cal can start afresh with a clean slate. In Pratt's view, Adam's final awareness is presented positively, for his sudden understanding of the nature of good and evil results in his blessing the son who has 'killed' his brother, freeing Cal from the taint handed down from Cain. (31)
Parini says, “In a grand finale, which Steinbeck called ‘the most violently emotional scene’ he had ever written, Cal receives a formal blessing from his father that releases from his guilt and opens a future where moral choices become a real possibility” (438).

According to Tapasyananda, Chaitanya “advocated the conjugal form of love” to attain Moksha (303). Vivekananda also supports this view: “Wherever there is any bliss, even though in the most sensual of things, there is a spark of that Eternal Bliss which is the Lord Himself. Even in the lowest kinds of attraction there is the germ of divine love” (72). Unwittingly, Adam has chosen the evil instead of the ideal, and sacrificed his conjugal bliss and domestic joy. Cathy is not the ideal wife and so incapable of guiding her husband, a Bhakta to the ultimate destination. Where Cathy fails Hamilton and Lee take over and the onus of guiding Adam falls on their shoulders. Ideal marriage is a means of attaining Self-Realization and Adam is initially hopeful of it. When he realizes the shortcomings of his married life caused by his spouse Cathy, he stumbles for a time but is soon put on the right path by his spiritual gurus, Hamilton and Lee. He renounces the material in favour of the spiritual in the end. However, through his immaculate devotion or Bhakti to his wife, he has attained Self-Realization. Now, by blessing Cal with the word ‘Timshel’, he gives
him the freedom of choice to marry Abra and lead a blissful life. Cal appears to have got the spiritual spark from his father and he has to go in that direction.

Marriage, an aspect of the *Samanya Dharma*, binds husband and wife together for life and conjoins upon them their commitments to each other. Adam does full justice to this part of the *Samanya Dharma* and marriage to him is a kind of devotion or *Bhakti*. Since marriage is a public declaration of a couple's intent to be together for life, he is totally devoted to it. Rather he becomes an ardent disciple (devotee or *Bhakta*) of Marriage. By way of his devotion to his marital relationship, he considers it sacred. Adherence to sacred things is also a path of *Self-Realization* in the Indian philosophical system. This is what Adam preciously does in the novel *East of Eden* and successfully finds himself on the path of *Bhakti Yoga* leading to *Self-Realization*.

Adam does not deviate from the path of righteousness despite the death of his wife Cathy and monetary loss. He values only good life to be worthy of praise. By guarding the dirty secret about Cathy, he protects her image and the respect of the twins for their mother. The Cain-trait in Cal betrays both Aron and Adam Trask. Unfortunately, Adam's good intentions prove to be his guilt, when Aron dies. The end of his *Vanaprasthya* stage and the attendant fulfillment make him utter the Hebrew word 'Timshel'.
This marks not only his *Self-Realization* but also his spiritual guidance and blessing to Cal.

Pai too begins to understand Nair, Shantha and the ‘Mother Cat’ which is the culmination of his initiation into the path of *Self-Realization*.

Govindan Nair’s second son and Usha’s playmate Shridhar is seriously ill. Nair is not able to save his son. Both Nair and Pai view Shridhar’s death objectively in a detached manner. Rama of *The Serpent and the Rope*, Nair and Pai regard death as a natural ending of human existence. When Rama hears the death of his son, he is not upset. While watching the funeral preparations for Shridhar, Pai says, “The bamboos were already in the courtyard. Death had come. It spoiled the nice courtyard, with flowerbeds of roses” (*CAS* 61). Similarly, while Nair and his colleagues delight in a mock-Hamlet soliloquy scene ‘To be or not to be’, a cat brought to the ration office by John, one of the clerks, jumps on Nair’s superior Bhoothalinga Iyer’s head and he dies instantly of a heart failure. Nair takes home the cat affectionately and later it becomes Pai’s pet and he treasures it as the living symbol of the Mother Cat. In Uma Parameswaran’s opinion, the attitude of Rama, Nair and Pai towards death is, “a symbolic way of saying that life is continuous, that death is just one of the doors to the realization that one exists
forever in the Universal Self, but it is an unfortunate way of saying it” (110)

Shantha is more than a wife to Pai in the sense that the love that binds her and Pai is pure and perfect, suggesting the Advaitic idea of Purusha-Prakriti relationship. She expresses her love thus to Pai. “I am your proof. You are only seen by me. Who could know you as I know you? You made me say I am” (CAS 94). Shantha is not a substitute for Saroja but the missing other side of Saroja. She makes Saroja’s role complete and helps Pai to go ahead with his mission with single-mindedness. Shantha resolves Pai’s distractions.

Pai further exemplifies that true love is absolute, free from all changes, “love is where happening happens as non-happening. What can happen where everything is, etc., etc.,” (CAS 110). Shantha’s extra-marital love is portrayed as a kind of worship. According to Srivastava, Shantha possesses “all intensity and depth of love that is not possible between Pai and his wife Saroja, whose love is now divided among her children and the household affairs” (87). Pai feels the mind of Shantha and says in a convincing manner: “If she became my mistress it was because she felt wife, she remained a wife. My feet was there for her to worship” (CAS 23-4). Where Saroja fails Shantha takes over. The latter takes care of Pai’s body and soul and realizes her fulfillment in
surrendering herself in love to Pai. It is her way of recognizing her own self, which finds expression in the words of Pai: "For a woman love is not development. Love is recognition" (CAS 24)

Despite the fact that she is not legally wedded to Pai, she becomes his wife in the truest sense of the word, which is the most sublime and the holiest thing she is able to achieve. The intensity of their extra-marital love proves that love is not a contract and the ladylove who is totally devoted to her man is more than a wife. In the words of Pai: "To be a wife is not to be wed. To be a wife is to worship your man. Then you are born. And you give birth to what is born in being born. You annihilate time and you become a wife. Wifehood, of all states in the world, seems the most holy. It stops work. It creates. It lives on even when time dies" (CAS 30). In the words of Dayal, like Savithri of The Serpent and the Rope, Shantha stands for "Primordial Sakti" (46).

When Pai's expectations from an ideal wife are realized through Shantha, his living with her is not illegal or immoral. She renews Pai's aspirations lying dormant for some time and impels him to get his goal materialized by making his body and mind free from earthly cares.

Shantha supplements Nair's role as a Guru and strengthens the guiding anchor. In the words of Krishnakutty:
She clearly demonstrates through her words and deeds that her role complements that of Govindan Nair, the spiritual Guru. Like Nair, Shantha lives by an instinctive creed of happiness, which the restless anxious Pai learns only at the end, after a revelatory experience. (65)

Thus the unity achieved through love and self-surrender reminds one of the Advaitic truth of the unity of all things. In every respect, Shantha proves to be a worthy companion of Pai’s soul and enables him to realize his own self. Here, selfless love on the part of Shantha for Pai plays a pivotal role in achieving Self-Realization. Recognition of the self is identified with true love. Pai’s spiritual mentor Govindan Nair thus affirms this truth. “I sing of man because he is my neighbour. After all, one’s big neighbour is oneself. The neighbour’s neighbour is always the self” (CAS 84-5).

It may not be an exaggeration to say that both Govindan Nair and Shantha take credit for accelerating Pai’s spiritual journey on the path of Self-Realization. This has been proved by their utterances gilded with advaitic thoughts. According to E.J. Sharpe: “At a higher level it is necessary for the individual to find a Satguru (true teacher) who has himself attained a high rung on the spiritual ladder” (61). Nair is envisaged as the ‘Guru’ who helps Pai attain divine vision.
Govindan Nair’s dictum that “Man is happy: Because he knows he lives in a house three stories high” has gone deep into the heart and soul of Ramakrishna Pai. This has motivated him to buy the house from Murugan Mudali. Now it is incumbent on Pai to build the second and third stories to fulfill his aspiration. He appeals to God not to “forget the windows that go running along the wall toward the sea.” He further says, “I must have eleven windows on the sea. A window on the sea is a window on God” (CAS 49). All this symbolizes his fast approaching understanding of the nature and purpose of human existence.

When Pai asks Shantha where they can find a mate for the cat, that caused Bhoothalinga Iyer’s death, she replies, “She knows herself where it is to be found. She knows the self. So she is the self” (CAS 82). This reveals the fact that Shantha has the spiritual strength to distinguish between illusion and reality. Unlike Saroja, “who was always clear”, “Shantha is always mysterious [and] always says two things at the same time.” She explains in concrete terms that nothing can mean “one and one thing” only (CAS 82). Like Nair, she too shows the path of realization to Pai, who is still in the mire of confusion.

Shantha reminds Pai of the bilva tree: “there is the tree and the light that makes it the tree” (CAS 83). Where Saroja fails, Nair and Shantha take over to help Pai complete their spiritual task.
Pai aspires to attain enlightenment not only through Nair but also through Shantha: “If I touch you, Shantha, there is no light in that” (CAS 83). He means that Shantha has the spiritual strength of dispelling his avidya or ignorance. Savithri’s role as a spiritual guide in *The Serpent and the Rope* is very limited, because Ramaswamy is an intellectual. But, in the case of Pai, despite his Brahminic background, he is an average man. He understands from Nair that “Life is a riddle that can be solved with a riddle” and that one can “solve one problem through another problem” (CAS 35). The efforts of Nair alone will not be enough to clear the doubts of Pai and push him across the ‘wall’. It is Shantha who can guide him through his pilgrimage, for Shantha says: “I can see you have never been across the wall. For there you could touch me and see yourself touch me” (CAS 83). Shantha’s devotion to Pai strengthens that of Pai towards her. Thus, Shantha facilitates Pai to move from the Gruhasthya stage to the Vanaprasthya stage and again on to the final stage of Self-Realization.

The cat that Govindan Nair has presented to Pai has disappeared for a few days and then one day, it appears on the wall. Like the “feline ways”, Pai says, “Mysterious. are man’s ways too” (CAS 98). He is still not spiritually mature enough to understand fully what Nair says or does, for Nair “still comes and says many things I just begin to understand” (CAS 98). This marks
the culmination of Pai's initiation into the quest for the Absolute. The words and deeds of Nair seem to be inscrutable not only for Pai but also for Shantha. In Sankaran's opinion, "Nair operates on a plane of reality which will not be comprehensible to any one who lacks spiritual perception" (190). Shantha gives a word-picture of Nair: he is "a strange man. He seems wanting to devour the whole world with fire. Then he sits down and talks to you as if he were sending a child to sleep. Who is he?" (CAS 99).

In Narayan's words,

Govindan Nair is the ideal combination of contemplation and action. For him, even commonplace incidents mirror deep philosophical truths. [He] has a playful attitude to life, without attachment or aversion for anything whatsoever. Ramakrishna Pai, his disciple, also becomes aware of the value of this attitude: 'Life is so precious. I ask you why does not one play?' 'I play now building my house of two storeys' (CAS 102), he says at the end of the novel. (87)

Pai's dream of building a house three stories high remains unfulfilled. He says, "A third story was what I wanted to build, so that I could see up to the end of the sea" (CAS 99). The third story represents Moksha or liberation from mundane life. The day one
finishes building the third story one will die, that is, one attains salvation.

Very often, the mention of the house is followed by a reference to a temple or the sacred bilva tree. This imparts an air of sanctity to the house. The symbol surrounding the word ‘house’ lends itself to many interpretations derived from diverse theological systems within Hinduism. Sankaran says, “the house could be the abode of the Guru and the three storeys could signify the three states of being: walking, dreaming and deep sleep. The final state turiya where atman and Brahman merge could denote the day the third storey is finished” (197). Hence Nair’s statement “the day that it is finished you will die” (CAS 99) indicates the death of the illusory ego. Raja Rao shares this view. “The first floor represents the geographical reality, the second floor is the allegorical reality, and the third is the absolute reality. Or, one is a walking state, the other is a dream state, the third is a deep sleep state which like the sky covers everything” (qtd. in Paniker 64).

Pai’s ambition, according to Shantha, should be confined to open terrace of the second story from where he can see “the Arath” and “vaguely perceive the Maharaja dipping the sword into the sea” (CAS 99). This will facilitate him to “count the tiers of the temple spire” (CAS 99). Shantha in her own way shows the path to Pai. According to Sankaran “In Hindu theology, the long struggle of
an individual to shed the limitations of the human perception to find release has been described as *Sadhana* or the path of spiritual discipline*"* (15). As a *Sadhaka* (spiritual quester), Pai progresses along the path of spiritual salvation and gradually achieves a clearer vision of truth.

Besides Nair and Shantha, the Mother Cat too brings illumination. After delivering the kittens, the cat carries each one from one spot to the other, lifting by the scruff of the neck. The kittens neither meow nor do they paw the air. The mother cat takes them one by one down the wall. The total self-surrender of the kittens enables the mother cat to carry them across the wall. For the first time, Pai goes across the wall and finds "a garden all rosy and gentle" (*CAS* 100). He sees "old men with beards so long as their knees, and they talked to no one" (*CAS* 100). He finds many happy young men, women and children singing and dancing in consonance with *prakriti* (primal nature). Because of their mysterious and soul-exciting experience, Pai walks behind the cat, climbing a series of stone steps. In Sankaran's words, "This then is the non-dual world where all polarities are reconciled. Here, all illusions of duality, or the nature of physical properties attached to a specific object disappears (the tune of the trees)" (201). It is inevitable, that once this knowledge is granted to Pai, Grace should descend on him. As Pai remarks "I looked in and saw everything"
According to Paniker, "Shantha is not only Prakriti, she is the worldly counterpart of Govindan Nair. The latter achieves Self-Realization through detached involvement in action. He is a jnani, while Shantha is a bhakta, she has only intuition. The Shantha-Saroja contrast is basic to the theme and structure of the novel" (71).

Throughout his life, Pai has been longing for the holy vision. By total surrender to the Mother Cat, he now stands totally exposed to Self-Realization. As Powers interprets:

Many levels of reality are articulated in the Mandukya Upanishad on which Shankara centered his doctrine of absolute monism or Advaita Vedanta. Pai now reaches the fourth level, that of unitary consciousness by following the Mother Cat, a metaphor for surrender to the Divine. He has completed his initiation, become capable of bliss and goodness, his life forever changed.

Pai declares: "This time I would not be defeated. I must win, I said" (CAS 101). His victory is signaled by "a very lovely music" (CAS 101). When the Mother Cat goes in, Pai stands there "white as marble" (CAS 101). He narrates his experience thus: "I looked in and saw everything.... I saw nose (not the nose) and eyes seeing eyes.... I saw truth not as fact but as ignition." He has reached a
state in which he has killed death and says that he remains ever having killed himself. Now only Pai understands what "Govindan Nair meant" (CAS 101). He agrees with Shantha that the open terrace "is what one calls the third floor. A house always opens into openness" (CAS 103). Now his relationship with Saroja has become an illusion, for Pai never intends to see even Vithal, his son. Narayan feels that "There is no redemption for Saroja who is 'busy inspecting the rope making' and cannot comprehend any but the system of logic" (90). Pai realizes that "Marriage is not a fact, it is a state." (CAS 103). Despite her extramarital status, Shantha never grumbles but still wants to marry Pai. The "music of marriage" that Pai hears, ultimately marks the fulfillment of his Self-Realization.

Both protagonists Adam and Pai expect from their wives what normally a husband would, but the outcome falls short of their expectations. As husbands, they are responsible until they are totally disgusted with their wives. Cathy and Saroja are not co-operative and in a sense, they are mad after material pleasures. Cathy wants power and unbridled sexual pleasure while Saroja wants abundant wealth and enviable status.

The wives are devoid of any spiritual spark in them and their dearth of spirituality pushes their husbands outside the world of materialism and also their wedlock. Cathy and Saroja are good
riddance for their spiritually inclined husbands. Adam chooses to attain \textit{Self-Realization} with the guidance of Hamilton and Lee, whereas Pai does the same with the help of Govindan Nair and Shantha. Till Shantha joins Pai, his \textit{Bhakti} to marriage is rather misplaced. His physical union with Shantha, which leads to the meeting of their souls, makes him reveal his genuine \textit{Bhakti} to marriage and the life-partner. So, Shantha compensates for the loss caused by Saroja to Pai. Shantha's affection and love for Pai is genuine and in her presence, the image of the institution of marriage is enhanced. At the same time, Pai is also relieved of the bodily cares and this relief is a must to make preparations for \textit{Self-Realization}. In the end, Pai and Adam are undoubtedly successful.