CHAPTER II

"Love Means Sacrifice": Towards Marriage
Rama Sarma's *Towards Marriage* is a fine domestic comedy, written with a clear moral purpose. Based on the theme of marriage, the play seeks to bridge the gulf between tradition and modernity by achieving a harmonious fusion of the Eastern and the Western values of life. It upholds the traditional view that marriage is a sacred, inviolable bond and a spiritual union, accommodating, at the same time, the modern outlook that marital harmony depends upon the mutual love and understanding between husband and wife. The play is a powerful plea for recognition of marriage more as companionship between a man and a woman than as an outlet for the fulfilment of their sexual instincts. Its ultimate purpose is to convey the idea that true "love means sacrifice".

*Towards Marriage* is obviously a thesis play written under the influence of Bernard Shaw. It belongs to the tradition of "Drama of Ideas" founded by Ibsen, the Norwegian colossus. The "Preface" of the play contains the quintessence of the play in a Shavian manner. Rama Sarma says:

...
Early marriages have almost disappeared in India but arranged marriages are still a common feature. In the first stage of youth, husband and wife are so much attracted towards each other physically that they seem to be quite happy. For the first few months or sometimes years the physical part of life is so very dominating that they hardly notice any differences, intellectual, or temperamental, existing between them. But gradually they become disillusioned.¹ (125)

In the West this disillusionment often leads to divorce. Though cases of divorce in India are not so common, it does not mean that all marriages are successful. Since marriage is an inviolable bond to Indians, many husbands and wives lead a mechanical, marital life without real affection or understanding between them.

Therefore, Rama Sarma is of the firm view that

In order to introduce greater understanding and harmony in married life the choice of parents should be left entirely to the parties concerned.² (125)
This shows how modern, Rama Sarma is as a playwright in his outlook on marriage. He is also of the view that in order to lead a happy marital life husbands and wives have to make an effort to understand each other sympathetically and not critically. After all, no one is perfect and it is too much to expect men and women to be gods and goddesses.

Rama Sarma is very realistic in saying that temperamental differences are bound to exist in marital life since couples belong to different cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, temperamental differences can be adjusted if the husband and wife are good-natured and well-intentioned. Rama Sarma says:

As long as men and women are intelligent and willing enough to accept marriage with certain limitations, they are bound to get on well.

Once we approach the play with this background knowledge provided in the "preface", we can certainly hope to gain a clear understanding and full appreciation of it.

The play, Towards Marriage, opens on the "bridal night" of Prakash and Lalita, a newly married couple. They
are at the height of their joy as “everything about them indicates new vivacity”. Since it is an arranged marriage they are meeting and talking to each other for the first time on the occasion of the ‘bridal night,’ one month after the traditional marriage. Naturally, they are very eager to know each other. Particularly, Prakash is impatient. He says to Lalita:

It's only now that we are really married, for we had to wait for a month for this auspicious moment.5

They are eager to know about the past life of each other, particularly Lalita becomes very curious to know all about her new husband. Also, she seems to be suspicious of his relationship with women during his college days. This is made clear in their conversation:

Lalita: Tell me all about yourself... how you behaved at the university.

Prakash: I had a wonderful time. Debates, discussions and all such activities.

Lalita: What about women?

Prakash: Women! Don’t be silly.

Lalita: (Teasing him) I don't believe you.
Prakash: Somehow I was not interested in any of the women at the university. In fact you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.

Lalita: That's flattering.

Prakash: Of course not. (He stands before her) you know there is something in your beauty which is essentially romantic. You remind me of the portraits of great painters. Every feature of yours is perfect. Your slender waist.... (128-129)

The conversation between Prakash and Lalita reveals that they are temperamentally 'poles apart.' Lalita is suspicious by nature, jealous by temperament and pragmatic in her approach to life. But, Prakash, on the other hand, is liberal by nature, aesthetic by temperament and romantic in his approach to life.

Prakash is not interested in any profession. He wants to become a famous poet. That seems to be his goal of life. He has all the makings of a poet. He says:

I have an imagination of a poet and the soul of an artist. So, I dream of you as a perfect woman.

(129)
But, Lalita, being a practical woman, is not for his becoming a poet. She is interested in his taking up some profession or other so that he can make a lot of money. The following conversation makes this clear:

Lalita: Tell me which profession you intend to take up?

Prakash: No profession.....

Lalita: What! No profession! Come, Come .... be serious.

Prakash: I want to be a poet.....

Lalita: O, I see (Teasing him) you want to be a poet and I the wife of a poet... How wonderful!? ... Mr. Poet, you will write some love poems and dedicate them to me. Won't you?

Prakash: Of course, if you want to ....

Lalita: (Still teasing him) But poets are wild and crazy. You may run after women.

Prakash: (Smiling) I am a votary of beauty and I admire beautiful women only from an aesthetic point of view.

Lalita: (Smiling) Yes, purely from a thirst for the sublime and the beautiful.
Prakash: Stop teasing me. (Seriously) I am sure I will one day write poetry which will make me famous (131)

The exchange of ideas between the husband and wife reveals that they are not suited to each other. The highly imaginative and idealistic husband and grossly realistic and materialistic wife do not make a good match. They cannot be expected to lead a happy, and harmonious marital life. All the same, they have to pull on willy-nilly since they consider marriage 'a sacred and inviolable bond.'

Small wonder, therefore, if Prakash and Lalita fall out and quarrel with each other within six months of their marriage. They are already fed up with their marital life so much so that they have lost interest in each other. They begin to blame each other:

Prakash: You have grown up to be an impudent, self-wild, arrogant woman.

Lalita: (Rising from her seat) I can't stand this any longer. You always criticise my parents. You are an intellectual snob, an egotist (pausing a moment) a beast.... (134)
They now realize that they should not have been married to each other, Prakash says to Lalita:

If I were to marry today I would never choose a woman of your type. (135)

Lalita retorts saying:

I wish my father had married me to a more understanding type of man (135-136)

She feels that Prakash is cold and that nothing interests him except his poetry.

No doubt, Prakash makes an attempt to adjust with his wife and requests her not to misunderstand him. He tells her:

As you are my wife it is my duty to make you happy I can give you every material comfort but I cannot give you my heart (135)

But, his kind words fall flat on his wife's ears. She is bent upon deserting him and going back to her parents. She says:

I am really fed up with you. I want to go back to my parents. There I will be free and happy. Nothing amuses me here, and your cold austere personality repels. (135)
Prakash appeals to her aesthetic sense with a view to making her stick to him as a husband:

Lalita, I am sorry for you. I can't possibly give up my poetic career for your sake. But don't you really feel thrilled when you see a rainbow in the sky? Don't you feel like singing when the soft wind blows and when bring moonlight encircles the whole universe? (135)

But, Lalita refuses to be carried away by his aesthetic appeal. She coolly responds:

I am an ordinary, simple girl. (with a gesture of contempt) what do I care for moons... and rainbows? A pleasant husband and a peaceful home is all that I want. (135)

Prakash, who was drawn towards her mainly because of her beauty, is no longer interested in her. The initial emphoria is subdued. Prakash frankly admits:

But I can never love a woman unless she has something in her that draws my admiration. Mere beauty will not suffice. (135)
But, a stage comes when he feels that it is better to part with his wife than to put up with her rude and crude behaviour. So, he tells her:

You must change your ways. It's no use being silky, naughty and petulant. If you continue like this you will have to go back to your parents. (136)

Lalita, who refuses to change her ways, finally decides to leave her husband and go back to her parents. She says to her husband:

I had better leave you to your imagination since you do not consider me worthy to share it with you. (137)

With these words she leaves the house with a naughty disdain and bangs the door behind.

Now, Jaya, a sophisticated young woman with keen interest in poetry, enters Prakash’s life. Prakash meets her in the city club. When he reveals his name to her, she feels happy to know that he is the same poet for whom she has great admiration. She says:
I am glad to see you. I have read some of your poems. They show promise and they also reveal that you have within you the making of a poet (140)

Soon Prakash and Jaya are drawn towards each other. Though Jaya is disappointed to know that Prakash is already married she goes on evincing keen interest in Prakash. The following conversation reveals the Platonic love that seems to have already developed between them:

Prakash : So you can dance.
Jaya : Yes I can. I love dancing.
Prakash : Then why didn’t you go to night?
Jaya : Because I have better company!
Prakash : (Smiling) You seem to be having an ulterior motive. Take care lest you should be disappointed.
Jaya : No fear. I know where I stand. Prakash, you don’t seem to be happy. Is there any thing I can do for you?
Prakash : No thank you. But tell me why you are talking so much interest in me almost a stranger?
Jaya: Because you are genius. A genius does not have company. Others don't understand him.

Prakash: Jaya, you are marvellous. You have imagination and a capacity for understanding. Besides you are sympathetic.

Jaya: How kind of you to say that! I am indeed proud to be your friend. Prakash now tell me all about yourself. Probably I may be of use to you.

Prakash: Thank you very much. But I don't need your help. I can be lonely. I am used to loneliness. I can talk to myself. Excuse me ... I want to go. (145)

Prakash tries to go away, but Jaya runs after him and makes him sit. She sits beside him, holds his hand and "looks into his eyes with a deep penetrating gaze" (146). She urges him to treat her as his close friend and confide. Furthermore, she wants to help him. When Prakash wonders why she should do so, she says:
You are a creative artist. You are giving something useful and beautiful to the world. Your life is precious. Every mood of yours is significant. If you are unhappy you can't possibly have a cheerful attitude towards life and your poetry will suffer thereby (146).

Prakash is deeply touched and moved by the sentiments expressed by Jaya so much so that he says:

I never met a woman like you before. (146)

He says that he has everything except a woman who can understand him and give happiness thereby implying that she could be Jaya herself.

A few months later Prakash pays a visit to Jaya's house and gives her some of the latest poems he has written. She reads one of the poems and asks him to tell her who the woman in those poems. Prakash replies in a poetic vein:

It is she who has inspired me these verses. With her inexplicable smile she has become, almost an obsession with me. I lie awake and she presents herself before me. I try to
embrace her but only you find myself
deluded. I see and yet I do not see her: I
know and yet do not know her: she is
mysterious (150).

When she presses him to tell her who that woman exactly is,
Prakash indicates that the woman is no other than herself.
He says:

My dear! Life with you is stimulating. There
something in you that attracts me. It is
probably your intellect or perhaps your
generous disposition. But one thing is
certain. I am in love with you, too much in
love with you... (150).

Finally, Prakash and Jaya decide to marry each other
as they feel that they are “indispensable to each other’s
happiness.”. (152). But, at the same time, Prakash thinks
that as a responsible person, it is his duty to inform his wife
about his intention to marry Jaya. When Jaya says that it
will create a problem in that he may be prevented from
seeing her, he says:

But as we are members of a society we have
certain obligations to fulfil. (152)
When Jaya feels that as a poet Prakash is "above all conventions" (152). But, he does not agree with her. He says that, on the other hand, his "obligations to society are still greater". (152), as he is a poet. He says:

A poet is expected not merely to please but to instruct his readers. And unless there is something essentially great in him he can't be an example to his fellowmen. He must be exemplary on his character (152).

He tells her that he will inform his wife and see how things develop. What he means is that he would explain to his wife everything about his love affair and marry Jaya with her consent.

Prakash goes home and he feels restless and agitated. When his wife, Lalita, asks him not to bother himself about his poems and take up a decent job, Prakash brushes her idea aside and says:

Thank you for your suggestion Lalita. But you know full well that it's no use talking to me in that vein. I am cut out for a poetic career and nothing will stop me from realising my ambition (155).
Prakash frankly tells his wife that he cannot love her any longer. When she tells him that he cannot live with her when she does not love her, he says:

I live with you because I must, because it is my duty to do so. As I am married to you I am expected to give you happiness. But unfortunately there is nothing in common between us except the physical aspect of life. And the physical part of life, you know, doesn't mean much for me (156).

He further says to her that they are different poles altogether, and so he wants to get himself separated from her soon. He also reveals that he might have ended his life in desperation if he had not met Jaya, an educated and enlightened woman who can understand him and make him happy. He ultimately tells her that he loves Jaya and intends to marry her. Lalita becomes very angry with Prakash, calls him "beast," and "ignorant fool," and leaves the room in a wild temper.

The play reaches its climax in the third Act. When Prakash is eagerly waiting for the arrival of Jaya in his
house, Lalita enters most unexpectedly as a totally changed person. She says in a sad tone to Prakash:

I have come back to stay with you (170)

Taken aback by Lalita's unexpected gesture Prakash expresses his sense of surprise:

What on earth are you talking! Only a few months ago you left me for good and now you say you have come back. Incredible! (170)

Lalita apologizes to him for what has happened and says:

I want to live here with you. (170)

But, Prakash frankly tells her:

With me! I told you I was not in love with you. I love someone else. How can I ever accept you as my wife? (170)

Nevertheless, Lalita humbly submits:

You need not treat me as your wife. You may love any one you like, but let me live in your house, if not as your wife at least as a servant. (170)
When Prakash asks her as to what has happened to her pride, arrogance and naughtiness, she sadly admits with a sense of remorse:

Nothing is left in me of my former self. Hitherto I used to be a little indifferent towards you. Within these few months I have grown old. I now understand how I plagued your life. I am ashamed of myself. (170)

When Prakash comments that it is a miracle, she says that “it is no miracle” (171), but a true transformation in her behaviour. She says:

I now realise my mistake. I accept my defeat and I am prepared to serve you. I can't stay away from you. I can live at least by your looks. (171)

Prakash reminds her of her belief that she would be better off with her parents. She responds with tears in her eyes:

Do not remind me of the past. I was an ignorant fool; I couldn’t understand you. Now I realise that a woman’s place in with her husband and not with her parents. (171)
Prakash is really happy to see her changed so much, but, at the same time, he feels that it is too late as he has already promised to marry Jaya? But, Lalita says that she wants him to be happy and that she does not want to stand in his way. She says:

You can marry Jaya; I have no objection to it. I too will stay with you but you need not treat me as your wife. Let me watch you two; that will give me happiness. It will be a great satisfaction to me if only I can live under the same roof with you. (172)

When Prakash says that it is rather awkward to have two women living with him, Lalita clarifies the situation saying:

Only one is living with you; the other is staying. That makes the situation easy enough for all of us. I promise to be friendly with Jaya. (172)

Now Prakash is deeply moved and touched by her sentiments and especially by her spirit of sacrifice. He not only feels like admiring her but also thinks that he is selfish in pursuing his own happiness. He says:
I cannot but admire you. I never thought you were capable of showing such a spirit of sacrifice. I fancied you were selfish; but now I realise that I am selfish, not you. Look at me, I wish to marry Jaya so that I may be happy, whereas you are giving up your happiness for the sake of others. If only I understood you. (172)

With these soothing words Prakash touches her hands affectionately. Jaya enters at the critical juncture, looks at the couple and becomes stunned. When she is about to go away Prakash catches her hand, and stops her. He introduces his wife to her saying that she has come back to stay with them. But Jaya wants to be left alone. She says:

I don't think I am justified in ruining her happiness. Better take her back and leave me alone. (173)

At this critical moment, Lalita goes nearer to Jaya, and requests her to marry Prakash:
Jaya, I like you very much. I don't hate you.

On the other hand, I am grateful to you for making Prakash happy. I couldn't understand him. I made his life miserable. You have given him happiness. So you deserve to be his wife. (174)

Jaya is so moved by Lalita's humility, helplessness and sacrifice that she says that she will not marry Prakash, but be only his friend. She says:

Lalita you are pure and simple. I think Prakash wants a little more of sophistication in you. He is imaginative and he wants someone like me to rouse his imagination. So I will be his friend (174)

Then, she turns to Prakash and implores him to accept Lalita as his wife and treat her kindly. She says:

Prakash I promise to be your friend all my life. I want you to accept Lalita as your wife and treat her kindly. Come down from your ethereal plane and be more of a human being. (174)
When Prakash pleads that he can love only Jaya and not Lalita, Jaya finally solves the problem with a piece of advice to Prakash. She says:

Dear, don't be silly. You may call me wife, friend or anything, but I am quite sure I can make you happy. Now listen, be content to have me as your friend and Lalita is naturally your wife. You can't have everything in life. Love means sacrifice. (175)

And with these words she leaves them with satisfaction and the comes to an end.

Thus, *Towards Marriage* deals with the theme of marriage effectively. As a Vijaya Rani rightly observes, "Rama Sarma's approach is traditional as he says that marriage is a sacred and spiritual union." It upholds the view that marriage is based on mutual understanding and love. It brings out the importance of harmony in the relationship between husband and wife in order to lead a happy marital life. Furthermore, the play philosophises the institution of marriage by holding the view that marriage is not an outlet for the fulfilment of sexual desire, but a
companionship in which the physical part of life is only secondary, and not primary.

The significance of the theme of marriage in *Towards Marriage* lies in the fact that it projects a harmonious fusion of the Eastern and the Western views of marriage. The Eastern view of marriage is embedded in the strong belief that marriage is an inviolable sacred bond between husband and wife, and not a mere contract between two individuals belonging to different sexes for the sake of convenience. The institution of marriage is so sacred that it should never be violated. The husband and the wife should strictly to each other through thick and thin throughout their lives sharing the joys and sorrows of life equally. Whatever may be the limitations and defects in husband and wife their marriage cannot be broken under any circumstances. The husband and wife must understand each other sympathetically and come to terms with each other for a harmonious marital life.

The Western view of marriage is ingrained in the view that marriage is essentially a social contract between a young man and a young woman who like to live together as long as they get on well with each other, and part with each other once they think they cannot pull on together. They get
divorced without much difficulty and willingly get married to others of their choice. The breakdown of marriage is considered as natural and the parting couple has no regrets. Individuality is more important than companionship in marriage.

The play demonstrates a fusion of the Eastern and the Western views of marriage in terms of dramatic art. Prakash and Lalita are traditionally married without understanding each other. The incompatibility of their temperaments ultimately leads to the verge of breakdown of their marriage. Prakash is drawn towards Jaya who seems to understand him and appreciate his way of life. But the divorce is avoided with the sudden change and realization on the part of Lalita. Moved by her penitence Prakash accepts her and now they can hope to lead a happy marital life.

As one who is exposed to both Eastern and Western ways of life, Rama Sarma is happily poised to suggest a new approach to the institution of marriage by taking the best from the two different traditions of marriages. He boldly makes a departure from the typical Eastern view of marriage when he says:
In order to introduce greater understanding and harmony in married life, the choice of partners should be left entirely to the parties concerned (125).

He corrects a typical Western attitude to marriage when he says:

Moreover, men and women have to make an effort to understand each other sympathetically and not critically. After all no one is prefect and it is too much to expect men to be gods and goddesses. In most cases an undue importance, especially in the West, is given to temperamental differences. Temperamental differences can be adjusted as well as exaggerated. As long as men and women are intelligent and willing enough to accept marriage with certain limitations, they are bound to get on well. (126)

Towards Marriage is a neatly structured three-act play with a good beginning, a good middle and a good ending. The play starts with the marriage of Prakash and Lalita, reaches
its climax when Prakash decides to marry Jaya, and concludes with a reconciliation between Prakash and Lalita with the latter's realization of her folly. There are no loose ends. All the incidents are interconnected and all the characters are interrelated resulting in the structural unity of the play.

The play maintains the unity of action, if not the unity of place and the unity of time. The play starts in the household of Prakash and Lalita, moves on to the city club and then to Jaya's house and finally shifts back to the household of Prakash at the end. The duration of action is about a year, but the unity of action is maintained throughout the play. All the incidents and characters centre round Prakash who is the pivot of the plot. The variegated scenes are interwoven into an organic whole. Thus, Towards Marriage comes to us as a typical well-made play.

The play is important for its art of characterization. It presents three interesting characters – Prakash, Lalita and Jaya – who are portrayed distinctly. Prakash is presented as a man of high poetic sensibility which is revealed when he says:
In the evening we will in the garden. I will reads to you my verses and you will listen to them. The birds will come and join us. Perhaps, they may wonder who we are....

His only dream is to become a poet. He is romantic in his attitude. Naturally he wishes to lead an ideal and simple life. He has an exquisite taste for beauty.

Lalita is presented as a total contrast to Prakash. She is essentially materialistic without any taste for poetry. She is satisfied with her ability to manage the household duties. She has no appreciation of beauty or poetry. She does not show any interest in her husband's becoming a famous poet. She acts senselessly and argues arrogantly demanding more of her husband's attention without making any effort to understand him. She jumps to the conclusion that she can no longer live with him. She easily loses her temper when she says:

I am really fed up with you. I want to go back to my parents there I will be free and happy. Nothing amuses me here, and your cold, austere personality repels me. (135)
She delights in material success, glamour and pleasure and, therefore, she cannot rise to the level of her husband.

The character of Jaya serves as a foil to Lalita. She is an intellectual who is outspoken and sophisticated. She has a great admiration for poetry and that is why she is drawn towards Prakash. She is fond of Prakash mainly because of his poetic talent. She falls in love with him and wants to marry him. She says:

There is something in you that attracts me. It is probably your intellect or perhaps generous disposition. But one thing is certain. I am in love with you too much in love with you. (150)

When Jaya finds out that Prakash’s life is a failure, her sympathy towards him increases. She repeatedly says that she wants to help him out of his problem, but she actually makes his problem worse than before. As Vijaya Rani rightly observes:

Instead of making him understand his wife to establish a good relationship with her she tries to occupy her place. Their love almost comes to the verge of marriage. If
she is really an intelligent girl she would not have desired to marry a man who is already married. She does not consider the fact that marriage is a sacred one and marriage bond is an inviolable one. She wants to make any while the sunshines. She unintentionally makes use of the misunderstanding that prevails between Prakash and Lalita. If she is really interested in the welfare of Prakash she would have advised him not to leave his wife alone whatever the situations may be. But instead, she herself paves the way for the breaking up of the marital relationship by deciding to marry him.7

But Jaya's character has a redeeming feature. Once she comes to know that Lalita has realized her folly and comes back to live with her husband with a sense of repentance, Jaya feels that she is not justified in ruining her happiness. She is ready to sacrifice her love for the well-being of Prakash and Lalita. Even when Prakash pleads that he needs her so much, Jaya convinces him and says that
she can be only his friend and admirer, but not his wife. She says:

You may call me wife, friend or anything, but I am quite sure I can make you happy. Now listen, be content to have me as your friend and Lalita is naturally your wife. You can't have everything in life. Love means sacrifice. (175)

Thus, she saves Prakash's marital life by giving him a peace of sound advice. Jaya's character seems to be more interesting than the characters of Prakash and Lalita.

Though a romantic comedy, Towards Marriage is realistic and satirical in its own way. As Sundara Raman points out, the play is typically Indian and true to Indian social conditions. It is set in a South Indian city and deals with marital life of a middle class family. It is concerned with the life of a poet in a complex domestic situation. It shows how "the life of any poet in the world especially in India, becomes problematic when he is burdened with a non-poetic wife, who not only fails to understand or inspire him but even becomes a stumbling black in the path of his progress and happiness." The first part of the play presents
matrimonial discard between Prakash and Lalita in a realistic manner, though the second part showing Jaya's understanding of Prakash and her sacrifice is idealistic. As Basava Raj S. Naikar observes:

The play holds a mirror to Rama Sarma's contemporary consciousness of social realism. He shows the contract between Jaya and other snobbish ladies like Suseela who hate even to talk about poverty, let alone sympathize with it. Similarly Prakash is contrasted with other club members who are interested only in the passionate pleasures of drinking, dancing and eating without ever caring for the higher pursuits.8

A close study of Towards Marriage reveals its social satire. Rama Sarma satirises the traditional marriage system in India. The marriage is conducted by a Brahmin who goes on chanting "mantras" in Sanskrit which he hardly understands when Prakash is left with his bride alone after the marriage, he heaves a sigh of relief and expresses his
sense of disgust with the whole process of marriage ceremony. He says:

At last we are left alone. O! what a fuss .... (smiling). It funny that old brahmin chanting verses which probably he himself did not understand! Then those women with their jokes – not one of them had any sympathy for us. I am glad they have left us at least now. (128)

The play shows how old people who insist on strict observance of marriage rituals become a kind of nuisance to the newly married couple. This is revealed when Prakash says:

I wish we didn't have old people trotting about the house. They are a nuisance. (129)

The play also satirises the lapses in arranged marriages which hardly give an opportunity to young men and women to understand each other. Thus, is driven home to us when Prakash expresses his unhappiness over his arranged marriage with Lalita:
It is a pity that we were ever drawn together into this indissoluble bond of marriage. I think it is a defect of our marriage system that men and women of totally different tastes and temperaments are joined together in wedlock (136).

Towards Marriage seems to be an extension of Rama Sarma's first novel The Stream. The characters, Prakash and Lalita, may be said to be a replica of the characters, Gopalam and Suguna in The Stream. Gopalan marries Suguna captivated by her beauty, but in a few months their marital happiness deteriorates owing to their temperamental differences. Like Prakash Gopalam is poetic and always dwells in his world of poetry, speaking about Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley to his wife. Like Lalita, Suguna never appreciates the poetic aspirations of her husband. Like Prakash, Gopalam also fails to come down to her level. This leads to the breakdown of their relationship.

A close study of Towards Marriage reveals many similarities with other plays like John Osborne's Look Back in Anger and Shiv K. Kumar's Last Wedding Anniversary. The three principal characters in Towards Marriage -
Prakash, Lalita and Jaya are placed in almost a similar position like the three principal characters in Look Back in Anger – Jimmy Porter, Alison and Helena respectively. Like Jimmy Porter, Alison, Prakash and Lalita are separated temporarily as they are not able to lead a happy marital life. Just as Helena enters Jimmy Porter’s life Jaya enters Prakash’s life. Jaya’s decision to leave Prakash and thus making way for Lalita is almost like Helena making her exit from Jimmy’s house, on the arrival of Alison. But, at the sametime, as M.N.Sundara Raman rightly points out, “though the element of surprise in equally dramatic in both will be equally effectively on the stages, the situation in the ending of Towards Marriage does not have so much to convey as that of Look Back in Anger.”

Rama Sarma’s Towards Marriage offers a comparison with Shiv. K. Kumar’s Last Wedding Anniversary, regarding the incompatibility and domestic discard due to temperamental differences between the husband and wife and also the extra-marital relationships of the husband. Both the plays deal with the theme of incompatibility of temperaments in the upper-middle class couple. In The Last Wedding Anniversary, Lalita a sensitive editor of a popular magazine, marries Rupa, a “shrewish, ambitious socialite.”
Their second anniversary owing to disharmony in their marital relationship. In the words of Sundara Raman, "though the immediate cause of the problem in the appearance of Lalita's first love Neela, the root-cause is a basic class of personalities which are headstrong to abide together." Though the treatment of theme and the denouncement are different, the placement of the characters in a triangle in both the plays is similar.

Towards Marriage is obviously a play with a message. As Vijaya Rani points out, "the playwright attempts to convey a message that the solution to the problem of the breakdown in marriage system lies not in dissolving the inviolable bond, but in the husband and wife making an effort to understand each other sympathetically and not critically. He goes on to say that men and women are bound to get on well in their marital relationship as long as they realise that no man or woman can be god or goddess." Thus, Towards Marriage conveys the message that the temperamental differences between husband and wife need not ruin their domestic happiness, provided they adopt a give and take attitude. The message is, however, dramatically integrated into the play in terms of its theme, structure and language.
REFERENCES:


2. Ibid., p.125.

3. Ibid., p.120.

4. Ibid., p.126.


All the references to the play are from this edition and the page numbers are given parenthetically at the end of each passage.


7. Ibid., p.132.


