CHAPTER II

THE TRAGIC MAN
Chapter - II
The Tragic Man
Professional and Domestic Transgressors

In giving Victor Haldin up, it was myself,
at one, whom I have betrayed most basely.

Razumov

Have you brought medicine? Rather you pierce a hot
spear into my wounds, so that I may be cleansed of my sin.

Chandran

Conrad’s tragic men who "breathe dead hippo, so to
speak, and not contaminated" and Mu.Va’s "some people learn to walk rightly
only after being pricked" are analysed in detail in this Chapter. They are the
complex category of humanity containing both the criminal and redemptive
potentials within. Their tragic man/woman’s criminal potential is revealed
when he/she exercises his/her ontological freedom in an extreme situation
and their redemptive potential is revealed when he/she develops a spiritual
communion with his/her victim, after a prolonged suffering. Their tragic
man/woman, though succumb to the devil within, is concomitantly disturbed
by his/her moral consciousness. He/she is of a broad nature comprising of
the other two varieties – the Infra and the Supra. Kurtz in Heart of Darkness,
Almayer in Almayer’s Folly, Willems in An Outcast of the Islands, Jim in
Lord Jim, Nostromo in Nostromo, Mr. Verloc in The Secret Agent,
Razumov in Under Western Eyes, Heyst in Victory and Anayar in Kayamai.
Chandran in Akalvilakku, Tāṉappan in Vāṭāmalar, Cuppurattiṇam in Alli, Vāṭivu in Nēncil Oru Mul and Nirmalā Devi in Karittunțu are some of the tragic men/women.

All the Conradian protagonists are professionals, who are legally and morally bound to the secular ethics, like the Merchant Mariner's code. But in extremity it becomes inevitable for them to violate their professional ethics. In contrast, the tragic men/women of Mu.Va. involve themselves in domestic crimes. In an orthodox Hindu society, sex is sanctified only in marriage. Pre-marital sex is considered to be a sin and extra-marital sex, a transgression. But all the tragic men/women violate this sexual code and are caught in the web of crime, like their conradian counterparts.

In the Conradian world, once the crime is committed, the punishment starts instantly and there is no question of evading or justifying it. Whereas, in the Mu.Vavian world, the process of punishment takes its own time. It is not sudden like that of the Conradian world. The tragic men/women of Mu.Va. keep their crimes a secret for quite sometime. They continue to live their normal life with the thorn of guilt but without being much afflicted by their conscience, even for years. For instance, in the case of Vāṭivu, there is a gap of twenty years between her crime and confession. But once they encounter their victims or witness the consequences of their betrayal, the stored up guilt erupts like a volcano and they find it impossible to contain it any longer. The resultant vision is moral discovery.
Kurtz in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness and Ānavar in MuJa’s Kayamai can be considered as the prototypes of their tragic category of mankind. Both Kurtz and Ānavar are devil incarnates and represent human ‘blackness’. Kurtz is the embodiment of “darkness” and Ānavar that of ‘kayamai’ (treachery). Though both these men of ‘darkness’ and Kayamai are educated, they are symbolic of the untamed and untamable animalistic impulses within man. Kurtz is a representative of European Imperialism, whereas, Ānavar is that of Indian Bureaucracy. What Kurtz does in Africa to the blacks is paralleled to what Ānavar does in his office to his subordinates. Both are imposters because Kurtz with his altruistic make up turns into an atavistic man-hunter in Africa; and Ānavar with his ash-smereed forehead tramples upon his subordinates in his office. Both are betrayers: Kurtz betrays his Intended for the savage woman in the African wilderness and Ānavar betrays his wife for Vacikaram and Saralamba. Both are beasts in human shape. Kurtz goes to the extent of exterminating the innocent natives for the gratification of his various lusts and succeeds in making them accept him as their god and even asks for human sacrifices taking the highest seat among the devils of the land. Similarly, Ānavar threatens and transfers his subordinates who stand in his way by any means and even goes to the extent of murdering people to fulfil his various lusts. After his unspeakable atrocities in the African wilderness when Kurtz is rescued, he takes refuge in the "cabin" of the boat. Similarly after the murder of Vacikaram Ānavar takes refuge in his lonely "house". Both Kurtz and Ānavar are related to the title of the respective novels they appear in. With their self-assertive tendency and without any
control over their animalistic impulses, they go beyond good and evil to lead a life of their own — Kurtz with a heart of impenetrable "darkness" and Ānaāvar with a heart as hard as 'stone' — an amoral life. In other words, both Kurtz and Ānaāvar are the embodiments of the amoral energy within man and they have reached a zone which is beyond the reach of the conventional good and evil. In spite of their amoral life, both Kurtz and Ānaāvar attain moral discovery in their death and become "one of us".

Kurtz is an educated European who comes to the African wilderness both as an employee of a trading company and as an emissary of light. After being there for some time, he gives himself over to "unspeakable rites", and descends into beastiality. As Stephen A. Reid says, "Kurtz has made himself a prisoner of the natives" (1966 :33). What would have happened? How has the emissary of light disintegrated himself to a man of darkness? How "a very remarkable man", "a universal genius", "a prodigy" has changed himself into "a hollow man", "a devil god", "a perverted genius", "a living Lucifer", and "a spiritual nihilist"?

Kurtz, who enters the African wilderness with an altruistic purpose is completely cut off from human civilization. He is left alone for more than one year without the supply of medicine, food, trading goods and other contacts whatsoever. As the Russian youth says, "He was shamefully abandoned" (HOD: 222). Moreover, there is no one to monitor his activities, no police, no court of law and absolutely no legal agencies to remind him of the moral principles of life. Under such excruciating circumstances in the wilderness, a heart of compassion is transformed into a heart of darkness; a
man of principles is turned into a principal destroyer of mankind; a man who came to protect savage customs, has become its devil god and asks for human sacrifices; a man who came to teach the benevolence of western civilization to the natives has humbled them to crawl before him. As Ruthven rightly points out, "Kurtz has some how entered a realm of experience which is beyond the conventional scope of good and evil" (1968 : 43).

Kurtz's unprincipled avarice for more and more rivets makes him a ruthless man. He forms a private army of over a thousand natives and at regular intervals raids the interior villages quite mercilessly and everytime returns with a large quantity of rivets. He becomes a complete slave to "rivets" in the African wilderness. The more he acquires them the more beastly and ruthless he becomes. His unquenchable thirst for rivets alienates him completely from his moral self. For a few rivets he readies himself to shoot the Russian youth who has saved him from his mortal illness. Killing people has almost become his sport because, "there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased" (HOD : 218).

Kurtz's moral degradation is such that even after being rescued from the murderous attack of the natives, he crawls to the ritual fire "on all fours" to participate in the human sacrifice. He is helpless when the wilderness calls him to its pitiless breast:
The heavy, mute spell of the wilderness — that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions. This alone, I was convinced, had driven him out to the edge of the forest, to the bush, towards the gleam of fires, the throb of drums, the drone of weird incantations; this alone had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations (HOD: 234).

As Reid points out, "Kurtz's unspeakable rites and secrets concern human sacrifice and Kurtz's consuming portion of the sacrificial victim" (1964:45). Kurtz, who is prevented from being 'utterly lost', pronounces the final judgement of his experience on this earth, "Live rightly, die, die," (HOD: 238) and with Sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror, of an intense and hopeless despair he cries twice, "The horror! The horror!" (HOD: 239). The final stare of Kurtz is wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough all the hearts that beat in the darkness. Kurtz attains his moral discovery just before his death with an atrocious suffering which is moral than physical and making every one of us confess some inner truth, about ourselves hidden so far in our unconscious realms.

Kurtz's counterpart Anavar in Kayamai is a head clerk in a government office. He is a forty four year old man with brown complexion and a dark thick moustache. Though he is a graduate, the sophistication of his education is seen neither in his face nor in his behaviour. A stranger who looks at his well-built body with its gruff voice and rude look may estimate him to be an uneducated brute. But his ash-smeared forehead with kumkum at the centre serves as a screen hiding his "Kayamai".
Anavar with his ash-smeared forehead and kumkum at the centre, ash powder lines all over his body, visiting higher officials with ash powder and kumkum packets, taking their family members to various temples during auspicious days, sending files to the higher authorities purposely with small divine books, visiting political leaders during their birth days with fruits and garlands, instructing his subordinates to be devoted to their work, participating in various meetings and delivering speeches on the importance of moral principles are all his altruistic pretenses to hide his "kayamai". When Mengmoji joins his office as a clerk, he sermonises:

you must be efficient in your work. Otherwise, you'll be transferred to punishment areas. Don't move with men; there is another woman clerk and learn the work from her. Don't give room for any scandal.

Discipline is of paramount importance. If I find any indiscipline on your part, the next day I'll dismiss you from service (K: 131).

In fact, this sermon is rather a threat than an advice. Ironically, he has nothing to do with any of these virtues in his own life.

Anavar's style of functioning in the office is parallel to Kurtz's exploitation of the African natives in the wilderness. He keeps his subordinates under constant fear and uses abusive and threatening terms like "idiot", "nonsense", "fool", "rascal". "I'll dismiss you", "I'll destroy you", "Do you know my influence with the higher authorities," "how dare you to cross me" and so on. He derives inhuman pleasure in ill-treating, terrorising and humiliating them. He misbehaves with Mengmoji in his room and in the evening asks her to step into his car. She rightly calls him "Kayavan" (K:190). He
threatens Nallayyan, another clerk in the office, that he would "chappel" him (K:217). Of course, Anavar has already "assaulted a clerk" (K:217). He has also transferred another clerk, Sahayan, to satisfy his concubine, Vacikaram. A man appointed by the government to uphold the official code of conduct has become its principal destroyer. A man who asks others to be devoted to their work and maintain discipline comes to the office only to gratify his various lusts. A father of four children approaches a daughter-like Menmöli in the office with sexual lust. As professor Deva Sangeetham says, "he is a mixture of cruelty and brutality" (1975 : 79).

Anavar is an adept at changing himself according to the situation and protecting his own interests. When his officer, Venkobar is transferred he becomes alert and learns from him what type of man the new officer is and plans to act accordingly. He sends his own peon to the old station of the new officer to gather information and before he joins duty he knows that the new officer, Kiritarasamy is a conservative man, highly religious, fond of visiting temples, keeps his subordinates at a distance and so on. Accordingly he changes his hair style, daubs his forehead prominently with ash powder, pretends to be a highly religious man and a true devotee of Lord Siva. The new officer forms a good opinion of Anavar and to strengthen the officer's confidence, he sends a file to him with a small book of divine songs, Kantar Sasti Kavasam. The new officer becomes a prey to his hypocrisy and Anavar exploits that weakness to take revenge on Menmöli and Nallayyan and ultimately succeeds in sending them out of service.
Ānavar approaches every woman with his characteristic arrogance and impudence. They seem to him no more than mere sexual objects. He treats his own wife in the same way and his sexual immorality provokes her to the extent of asking him:

Are you a man or a beast? How can you teach discipline when you yourself don't have it? Don't you have a family of your own? An immoral man like you need not pretend to be religious! As you cheat others, you try to cheat your own wife and children (K: 271).

It is with the same arrogance that he tries to misbehave with Menmoli in the office. In addition to his intimacy with Vacikaram, a typist in the office, he develops an illegal relationship with Saralambal, his friend Kaṅakálnikam's concubine. Since she is more experienced and artful in sexual matters, Ānavar gradually ignores Vacikaram. But at the same time he is not prepared to tolerate her intimacy with others. He burns with sexual jealousy when he encounters her in the beach with Sahayan, a clerk whom he transferred a few months back at the instigation of Vacikaram. A quarrel in the office is followed by another in the beach which ultimately ends in her murder.

Vacikaram's murder seals the fate of Ānavar and his moral supports fall one by one. There is absolutely no one to talk in his favour in the office. His bosom friend Kaṅakálnikam, a partner in all his sinful activities, becomes financially poor. He has also antagonised the local Member of Legislative Council. His wife has already left him to her parents with the children. He is completely isolated and firmly caught in the dialectic of crime
and punishment. He does not have enough courage even to enter his house. Like a man of the underground he closes all the doors and windows. The thought to switch on the light never occurs to him. The violent cry of Vacikaram at the time of strangling her settles in his mind permanently. A torn piece of the golden colour saree of his wife makes him scream violently since it resembles that of Vacikaram's at the time of her death. The increasing darkness and loneliness torment his guilty conscience. Whenever he opens his eyes, that too with great difficulty, he sees only the dead body of Vacikaram. Symbolically, Ānavar has murdered himself by murdering Vacikaram. What follows is inevitable and the court of law finds him guilty and awards life imprisonment. But Ānavar, being humiliated by the court proceedings and unable to suppress the overwhelming guilt, commits suicide in the jail as a redemptive measure. Like Kurtz, Ānavar becomes "one of us" in his death.

I

The other tragic men and women of Conrad and Mu.Va. are young, intelligent, educated, handsome and confidence inspiring personalities. They are ambitious, imaginative, sensitive and highy conscientious. Like their prototypes, they exercise their ontological freedom and are caught in a net of crime and after a prolonged suffering, they regain their lost 'self'. Almayer in Almayer's Folly is associated with the imagery of 'gold'. It is the gold treasure hidden up the river that keeps his spirits alive and ultimately brings his downfall. Almayer, as a young man with modest looks joins Hudig & Co., a reputed firm in the Malay Archipelago. Soon he comes in contact with Lingard who develops an inexplicable fancy to the young man and wants him to marry his adopted daughter. Almayer, keeping in mind the enormous wealth of Lingard agrees and the marriage is solemnised.
"The gold appears just after Almayer, for motive of gain, has ambitiously, rashly and unscrupulously consented to marry Lingard's savage adopted daughter" (1979:13). But soon Almayer realises that he has made a grievous mistake by marrying a savage woman. He bears all the humiliations, sufferings and treacheries of his wife for his daughter, Nina. He hopes for a splendid future in Europe with his daughter and nobody would think of her mixed blood in the presence of her great beauty and of his immense wealth. He himself would forget the twenty years of heart-breaking struggle in Sambir where he felt like a prisoner. But a series of accidents postpone his departure. Trade declines due to stiff competition from the Arabs and Lingard disappears for years. His hope on the British Borneo Company's arrival is also lost. His wife and her savage kinsmen are waiting for an opportunity to kill him and get the gold treasure entirely for themselves. It is under such hostile circumstances that Almayer lives in that hell of a place called Sambir. His every attempt to escape from this perdition is frustrated by unforeseen events as if some sinister forces are always working against him.

Like Almayer, Willems in An Outcast of the Islands is a confidential clerk of Hudig & Co., Macassar. He is associated with the imagery of "money". It is for money that he betrays both his company and the father-like Lingard. He marries Joanna in pursuit of his personal advancement and gain and she turns out to be the natural child of his employer, old Hudig. He is blessed with a son. He is ambitious and proud; wants to be praised, loved and also feared. He has been confided with many important transactional secrets, like the quiet deal in opium, gunpowder and smuggled firearms. His
ambition is to become Hudig's partner. He thinks that he is quite safe, solid as the hills, deep as an abyss and discreet as the grave. His doctrine is that if one wants to enjoy riches and power, one should not be afraid of scruples. It is only the foolish, the weak, and the contemptible who are worried about scruples. He preaches such a doctrine to the young people being himself a shining example of its truth.

Jim in Lord Jim is associated with the imagery of a new "sovereign". He looks as genuine as a new sovereign but there is an internal and infernal alloy in his metal which surfaces only when the sovereign is put to test. Jim is brought up to enter the Mercantile Marine. He has an excellent physique and looks very smart. He is liked by everyone and always lives in an imaginative world of dreams:

He saw himself saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line; or as a lonely castaway, barefooted and half-naked, walking on uncovered reefs in search of shell-fish to stave off starvation. He confronted savages on tropical shores, quelled mutinees on the high seas, and in a small boat upon the ocean kept up the hearts of despairing men—always an example of devotion to duty and as unflinching as a hero in a book (LJ: 5).

This romantic self of Jim is put to test three times, and he fails all the three times. During his training he is only physically involved but in "Patna" and "Patusan" incidents he is also morally involved.
A few years later he takes the temporary job of chief mate of 'Patna' and starts his voyage to cross the Indian ocean with eight hundred Mohammedan pilgrims, men and women, all bound to Mecca. The ship goes steady and Jim, in his musings, feels grateful for the high peace of the sea and the sky. Then, all at once, the accident occurs which alters the whole course of his life. His confounded imagination creates a mist between him and the reality by magnifying it, because the reality is "not half as bad, not half anguishing, appalling, and vengeful as the created terror of his imagination" (LJ: 103). When he is caught in the mist of this created terror, his first impulse is to shout but he is not able to produce even a sound. Though he is aware of his duty, he is not able to act because he feels that something holds him back and he says, "I was trapped" (LJ: 86). Whatever may be the explanation, he is left with no other alternative but to act.

Nostromo (Giovanni Batista Fidanza) in Nostromo is associated with the imagery of "silver" and it is the silver that kills him. As Jocelyn Baines says, "Nostromo is an investigation of the motives of human behaviour" (1967:90). Nostromo is respected in Sulaco for his services to the community, for his power over the populace, his resourcefulness, reliability and courage, his outstanding personality, fine presence of mind and for his extraordinary generous nature. He is admired by everyone in the novel as, "Nostromo, fellow in a thousand" (N: 12), "A man absolutely above reproach" (N: 13), "Much of a man", "A tireless task master" (N: 15), "A most useful fellow" (N: 43), "A perfectly incorruptible
fellow" (N: 127), "The indispensable man" (N: 130), "The tried and trustworthy Nostromo" (N: 130), "The illustrious Capataz de Cargadores" (N: 185), "He is not one in thousand. He is absolutely the only one" (N: 452), "A Man worth his weight in gold" (N: 530).

Nostromo is liked by one and all for his "incorruptible" nature. And he himself cares only for his well-established reputation. In Decoud's words, Nostromo, "looks upon his prestige as a sort of investment" (N: 225). Nostromo's vanity has been satiated by the adulation of the common people and the confidence of his superiors. He does not seem to make any difference between speaking and thinking. For him a good name is a treasure. The very essence of life, value and reality consisted in its reflection from the admiring eyes of men. Even the Padrona's angry words,

They have turned your head with their praises. They have been paying you with words. Your folly shall betray you into poverty, misery, starvation. The very leperos shall laugh at you—the great Capataz (N: 237),
do not have any effect on him.

Whenever there is need for a man of vigorous and proven record, Nostromo is called upon. As a matter of fact, whatever Nostromo attempted, it succeeded in his life. Naturally, therefore, when it is decided by the administration of the San Tome Mine to remove a six month collection of silver from the warehouse for political reasons, it is Nostromo who is entrusted with the task of transporting it in a lighter and hand it over to a north bound steamer. The present task is a challenge to the ability of Nostromo because a
troopship of Sotillo's men are fast approaching Sulaco and it is difficult to evade detection. Moreover, if they fail to catch the north bound steamer by some mischance, they are sure of a lonely death in the placid gulf. He is also aware of the fact that if he fails in his mission, his reputation of reliability, fidelity and incorruptibility will be severelly endangered. That is why, he proclaims that he is determined to make the transhipment of the silver, "the most famous and desperate affair of my life." (N: 256).

Mr. Verloc in The Secret Agent is associated with the imagery of "dynamite" and it blasts his future to pieces. Mr. Verloc is torn between his 'idealized self' and 'anarchic self'. It is at this incongruity that Mr. Vladimir, his boss, wonders when he hears that he is married:

That be damned for a yarn.... Married! and you a professed anarchist, too! What is this confounded nonsense? But I suppose it's merely a manner of speaking. Anarchists don't marry. It's well-known. They can't. It would be apostasy (SA: 36).

Contrary to this, Mr. Verloc is thoroughly domesticated and carries on his business of a seller of shady wares, exercises his vocation as a protector of society and cultivates his domestic virtues. His other business is 'political' which he does not disclose to his family – that is his hidden self to which he gradually succumbs.

Winnie marries Mr. Verloc for the sake of her brother, poor Stevie. A sense of security follows after the marriage in her mother and she hopes that Stevie's future is safe in the hands of Verloc. Mr. Verloc takes care of and provides not only for his wife but also for her brother. Verloc's mother-
in-law thinking that her presence in the Brett Street house may ultimately annoy Mr. Verloc and finally lead to his turning against her mentally deficient son, wisely retires to an almshouse. In other words, she puts the full parental responsibility of Stevie on the head of Mr. Verloc so that Stevie's moral claims would be strengthened. This moral bond takes the colour of a relationship between a father and a son. Since Winnie does not have a child, she thinks that the relationship between her husband and brother would deepen.

Suddenly his anarchic self intrudes into his domestic affairs in the form of the newly appointed chief of the Embassy, Mr. Vladimir. Mr. Verloc is charged that in spite of enjoying all the benefits he has done nothing for the last three years and so he is told strictly, "no work, no pay" (SA:26). Since there is a threat to his regular income, he has to perpetrate a dynamite outrage upon the Greenwich Observatory to startle the World Conference in Paris to check political crimes. Mr. Verloc, faced with the crisis of his life, feels, like Razumov, lonely in the world:

Verloc felt the latent unfriendliness of out of doors with a force approaching to positive bodily anguish. There is no occupation that fails a man more completely than that of a secret agent of police. It's like your horse suddenly falling dead under you in the midst of an uninhabited and thirsty plain. The comparison occurred to Mr. Verloc because he had sat astride various army horses in his time, and now the sensation of an incipient fall. The prospect was as black as the window pane against which was leaning his forehead. And
suddenly the face of Mr. Vladimir, clean shaved and witty, appeared
enfolded in the glow of its rosy complexion like a sort of pink seal
impressed on the fatal darkness (SA : 56-57).

Mr. Verloc could not sleep and this fact makes him mute and hopelessly inert
in his fear of darkness. Even a continental tour for ten days does not bring in
him much change and he returns home with "a mind evidently unrefreshed
by the wonders of foreign travel and a countenance unlighted by the joys of
home coming" (SA : 182).

Kyrýlo Sydorovitch Razumov in Under Western Eyes is
associated with the imagery of the "Silver Medal". He is a handsome young
man, seriously involved in the process of winning the silver medal of the
prize Essay and thereby becoming one of the celebrities of Russia. But his
placid life is affected when he encounters Victor Victorovitch Haldin, the
assassin of Mr. de P – the Assistant Commissioner of Police. Haldin has already
taken asylum in his room in his absence. He calls Razumov "brother" and
reminds him of the human bond between them. Infact, Haldin takes Razumov
for granted and asks him to arrange for his escape with the cart-driver,
Ziemianitch. Haldin's presence inspires Razumov with unalloyed fear. In
reality, Razumov is bitterly opposed to violence in any form and everything
it stands for. He sees very clearly that his very plan of future security is in
jeopardy. Razumov is caught in the crisis of his life. Every minute his fear
multiplies. Now he has to take a decision keeping in mind the security of his
future. He has so far sided neither with autocracy nor the revolution. But
now he has to make an inevitable choice between them:
Razumov saw himself shut up in a fortress, worried, badgered, perhaps ill-used. He saw himself deported by an administrative order, his life broken, ruined, and robbed of all hope. He saw himself — at best — leading a miserable existence under police supervision, in some small, far-away provincial town, without friends to assist his necessities or even to take any step to alleviate his lot — as others had. Others had fathers, mothers, brothers, relations, connexions to move heaven and earth on their behalf — he had no one. The very officials that sentenced him some morning would forget his existence before sunset. He saw his youth pass away from him in misery and half starvation — his strength give way, his mind become an abject thing. He saw himself creeping, broken down and shabby, about the streets — dying unattended in some filthy hole of a room, or on the sordid bed of a Government hospital (UWE: 21).

In short, Razumov feels that the safety of his very existence is undermined because of the intrusion of Haldin into his placid life.

Razumov fails in his attempt since Ziemianitch is lying dead drunk and could not be awakened. He thinks that he is done for between the drunkenness of the peasant incapable of action and the enthusiast incapable of perceiving the reason of things. His rational mind warns him that keeping Haldin in his room is something like harbouring a deadly disease that will convert the earth into hell. As Christopher Cooper points out, "Razumov's lack of real experience, that is, his ignorance of the world, coupled to the fact
at he has had little opportunity for establishing personal relationships, and
as simply of getting to know about people, leads to formulate a naive
judgement in this particular situation" (1970 : 83). Hence, he sets aside Haldin's
indignation, his talk of bondage and of God's justice. Razumov asks himself at
the heat of his self-discussion:

Do I want his death? No! I would save him if I could - but no one
can do that - he is the withered member which must be cut off
(UWE : 36).

As Saveson observes, Razumov becomes, "demoniacally clever" (1974 : 83). A
demonic change in his attitude leads to a dramatic decision.

Heyst in Victory is associated with the imagery of "coal". He is a romantic but avoids commitment by isolation. Conrad himself in his
'Author's Note' to Victory says that Heyst is, "the man of universal detachment". He is like "a bird that never had a nest" (V:32). He has a taste for solitude and lives as an outcast in the Samburan Island. His contact with Morrison and Lena brings him out from his solitude into the world of action. As his father has said, "all actions are harmful", his affair both with Morrison and Lena lands him in trouble.

Chandran in Akalvilakkul is associated with the imagery of "moon". As there is a black spot in the moon so also there is a scar in his
psyche. He belongs to a moderately rich family. He is very fair and tall with
sharp and attractive features. He is loved and admired by everyone from the
street-vendor to the school-inspector. He is equally good in his studies with a
fair hand writing and stands first in all the subjects. He is extraordinarily
brilliant in mathematics and scored hundred out of hundred. In spite of all these achievements, there is a blemish in his character that at times he acts rashly.

The illiterate people in Chandran's village very often use intimate domestic terms whenever they see him. The gardener asks him when he is going to get married and advises him to marry at least two or three girls as early as possible. Symbolically, Chandran is not going to be satisfied with one girl in his life. Another woman addresses him as her son-in-law and asks him to marry her daughter soon. Vēlayyan, Chandran's close friend watches and wonders listening to all these banterings and comments humourously:

"You are really lucky. You have so many wives and mothers-in-law in your village. When did you get married? How many times?" (AV: 69). This casual and jovial remark of Vēlayyan is highly ironical and in the later part of his life Chandran violates the modesty of so many young girls. People around him, especially the menials in his household, inject sexual feelings into his psyche which takes alarming proportions in the days to come.

Like Chandran, Tāṇappan in Vāṭāmalar is extraordinarily brilliant, but, unlike Chandran, he has a bitter childhood. He is harassed and humiliated by his step-mother and is not provided enough food and clothing. He is treated as an outcast in his own house. His only comfort and moral support is his class-mate and friend Kulantaivēl. It is he who takes him to his house and feeds him whenever he is denied food by his step-mother. When his father objects to even this, he is forced to run away. The inhuman treatment
the denial of education and the abusive terms used against him, harden his heart and leave a permanent scar on his psyche. His wounded psyche wants to take revenge on the society that made him an orphan and prompts him to achieve material prosperity by any means.

Cuppurattinam in Alli is a very handsome young man and an engineer by profession. He is wedded to vanity and luxury and is fond of a western style of living. He derives extraordinary pleasure in talking ill of others. If at all he praises any one highly, it is only about himself. Like Willems in An Outcast of the Islands, he is more in love with himself than anybody else. He is a man of prejudice and it is revealed when he talks about Aqavali: "He didn't have any love for his wife. All the time he had been finding fault with her one way or the other. She was a very decent lady, but he was nothing but a fool. How could anyone live with such a man!" (A:57). Ironically, it is he who finds fault with his wife and is unfaithful to her. He is very often found in possession of third rate pornographic books. Like Chandran in Akalvilakku, he is obsessed with sex and foolishly thinks that sex is everything in life. Alli, his wife, rightly observes on the character of her husband thus:

If there is a choice between a one time luxurious dinner and everyday humble food, she would prefer the former and her husband, the latter. That is why he is not able to live a normal life and is always after either Sukuna or Sulochana (A:120).

Vașivu in Nencil Oru Mul belongs to an orthodox Hindu family and she is the only daughter of her parents. During her college days, she falls in love with a fellow student called, Palarāmaq. Once their studies are over, they are separated and Vașivu never thought that it would be a permanent separation. She finds it difficult to forget him. She is not happy
ith all her achievements in life. But her uneducated servant-maid Ellamma, always successful in life and absolutely has no reason to worry. After a prolonged discussion with herself, she understands that it is due to her education that her consciousness is divided and the result of which is her inability to take decisions. Whereas, Ellamma never fell in love with anybody; she never built castles in the air; she had been realistic and never dreamed for any imaginary future; she had a heart to accept as life whatever came in her way. This preparedness and her open mind to accept anything in life without any reservation make her life happy. Vatitu's psyche, thus, is plagued by the unrequited love for Palaraman and the idealised happiness of Ellamma.

With the recommendation of Professor Mangaiar karaci, Vatitu lands in the household of Vijaya, a rich widow in the town, as her personal assistant. Vijaya achieves what Vatitu's parents failed for years together in finding, a life partner to her. The man is called Acor, a widower, who is as old as Vatitu's own father. Her parents leave everything to her and finally it is Vijaya's inspiring personality and her assurance of that man's good character, share of property, fixed deposit of a decent amount in her name, and above all, the confession of Vijaya's own personal life that settle the matter and Vatitu nods her head like a poor lamb in the altar of sacrifice without knowing what is in store.

The effect of the marriage is such that, people, instead of congratulating, simply console her. The physical appearance of her so-called
husband completely shatters her every nerve and kills the very desire to live. Everyone thinks that it is a marriage between two unequal and unacceptable forces. Vaṭivu’s recollection of her husband’s presence at Vijaya’s house sometime back, his piercing indecent look at her, his subsequent asking for a secretary like her and the contempt and humiliation she experienced at that time add to her mental agony. She reveals the state of her mind thus:

Not only my tongue babbled, but my mind too. I was able to hear the heavy, anguished breath of my father. Had a doctor declared that I would die of consumption in a month or two, my anguish wouldn’t have been much. My mind had never experienced such a grief in my life (NOM: 142).

Vaṭivu simply laughs at the folly and futility of her life. She consoles herself that there is no point in blaming anyone. But poor Vaṭivu is yet to understand that there are many more disappointments, sufferings and humiliations in store for her.

Nirmalā Devi in Karittuntu is a modern woman of Calcutta, educated in one of the colleges that strictly followed a western style of education and life. She is ambitious and believes that the feminine virtue
consists not in any sound moral principles but simply in her body, dress, ornaments and beauty. She never considers fidelity a virtue, rather it appears as a burden to her style of living. She is arrogant and uncompromising, like Cuppurattinam in Alli, completely wedded to vanity and luxury. Her life’s ambition is to achieve greatness in society by any means and lead a luxurious life. When she is on the look out for a suitable life partner to fulfil her longings, she gets the friendship of Mohan, a leading artist in the city through her friend Mādhuri. Mohan’s youth, handsomeness, popularity, the elite society around him and his decent income attract her very much. Her selfish, satanic mind, knowing fully well that Mādhuri is deeply in love with Mohan, eliminates her from the scene. Ultimately, she succeeds in marrying Mohan much against the will of her parents and settles down in one of the posh areas of Calcutta.

Since the foundation of her marriage is based on betrayal, treachery, unprincipled and unscrupulous ambition, the bliss of their married life does not last long. Both husband and wife are very particular about their own comforts and never develop the thought of a family. Her husband loves his art but never cares for material prosperity. But Nirmalā Devi is concerned only with the material aspect of his art. She realises soon that the very purpose for which she married Mohan is defeated. They prove themselves to be incompatible and unacceptable to each other. Both of them are awaiting an opportunity to be separated from an unholy alliance.
II

The moral crisis in the life of Almayer arises when he makes an unholy alliance with Lakamba and Dain Maroola to hunt out the much accursed treasure of gold. He wants to share it only with Dain, for, he is young, resourceful, inspiring and dependable. But Dain, however, puts forward two conditions that first Lakamba should be made a partner and then all the three should co-operate in a profitable but illegal gun powder business. Almayer's unprincipled avarice for gold and the uncontrollable urge to escape from that wretched place compel him to agree and act accordingly.

Ironically, this last scheme of Almayer involves him in a situation from which he wants to escape. Even though Dain Maroola is friendly with him, inspires confidence and looks dependable, he forgets the fact that basically he is a Malay, and a pirate, who involves himself in illegal trades and maintains equally good relationship with the Malays and the Arabs as well. Again, ironically, Mrs. Almayer, in fact, wanted to marry a strong man like Dain whom she calls a "great Raja—a Son of Heaven" (AF: 57). Ultimately his reason fails and his ambition blinds his eyes and he is ready to commit the very mistake he made twenty years ago by marrying a witch of a woman. Symbolically, like his unholy marriage, the present unholy alliance with betrayers is going to bring many more miseries to Almayer. His alliance with Lakamba is almost like an alliance with the devil itself. Above all, the alliance brings the one-eyed devil Babalatchi to the compound of Almayer which is ominous and augurs total annihilation of Almayer.
Willems, being in love with himself is unable to think that the moral significance of any act of his could interfere with the very nature of things, could dim the light of the sun, could destroy the perfume of the flowers; the submission of his wife, the smile of his child, the awe-struck respect of Leonard da Souza and all of the Da Souza family. He fails to understand that the jealous Mr. Vinck, the cashier of Hudig & Co., is waiting to expose his fraud. Ultimately, it is exposed and Willems is humiliated by Hudig for stealing his money. Even his wife treats him as a "man from nowhere; a vagabond!" (OI: 32). It is Tom Lingard who comes to the rescue of Willems and takes him to Sambir. On the way, Lingard tells him some of his important trade secrets. Lingard wants him to be with Almayer and leaves with the promise of returning soon but is away for months together. When Willems is on the verge of frustration he comes across a savage girl, Aissa, the daughter of blind Omar and falls in love with her. Symbolically, he has fallen a prey to the charms of evil forces. He also falls a prey to the cunning Lakamba, wicked Babalatchi and betrays Lingard by revealing his trade secrets to Syed Abdulla to pay for the girl, Aissa. As Babalatchi says, "she has made roast meat of his heart" (OI: 115). Lingard’s arrival with Mrs. Willems and her child, the detailed account of what all happened in Sambir in his absence, Willems’s betrayal and his arrogant behaviour with Almayer and his murderous attack on him in the company of Lakamba’s men, looting of Lingard & Co.’s warehouse and Lingard’s angry reaction finally seal the fate of Willems.

Jim also is forced to act and he is on the edge of an abyss: "There was no going back. It was as if I had jumped into a well — into an everlasting deep hole..." (LJ: 82). Jim’s physical jump amounts to his
moral fall. The Patna did not sink but is miraculously rescued by a French gun-boat. As a result, an official inquiry follows in the Police court of an Eastern port. It is only Jim who alone faces the trial. He looks as if he has lost everything in his life. He wanders on the quays all by himself, detached from his surroundings, irresolute and silent, "like a ghost without a home to haunt" (LJ : 61). The verdict of the court reduces Jim to nothing and nowhere to turn to since his certificate has gone, career broken, no money to get away, and no chance of getting any work in the near future. Meanwhile, he establishes beyond doubt that he is not a mean betrayer like the other white officers by making a clean breast of himself to Marlow. With Marlow's recommendations he serves in so many places, but all opportunities seem to him barren because they are only good enough to earn his bread but not to regain his lost 'self'.

To prove himself that he is not a mean betrayer Jim goes to Patusan, where he finds not only a new set of conditions for his imaginative faculty to work upon but also Jewel's love for him. He achieves all that his romantic self has craved for and it seems that Jim has survived the attack of the "dark forces". He wins the confidence of the natives, rises to the status of Lord Jim and they celebrate him as their god. What satisfies his wounded psyche is the "trust" the people have in him. He is proud to say to Marlow,

If you ask them who is brave – who is true – who is just – who is it they would trust with their lives – they would say, Tuan Jim (LJ : 223 - 24).

But his inglorious past comes in search of him in the form of Brown, an abominable pirate and a blind accomplice of the dark forces.
Nostromo’s sinking of the leaking lighter after its collision with Sotillo’s troop-ship, leaving both the treasure and Decoud in a lonely place, symbolises the loss of his incorruptibility, fidelity, courage and honour of the people of Sulaco. The Doctor’s total unconcern for the treasure, the information that both Senor Hirsch and Decoud are dead makes him feel the burden of sacrilegious guilt descend upon his shoulders. He is quite aware of the part he had played himself. “First, a woman, then a man, abandoned each in their last extremity, for the sake of this accused treasure” (N : 502). The feeling that he has been exploited and betrayed hardens his heart and hereafter he is going to look after his own interests. He can no longer rely upon his reputation. It is at this point, after his created world has begun to crumble, that the Silver takes hold of him:

There is something in a treasure that fastens upon a man’s mind. He will pray and blaspheme and still persevere, and will curse the day he ever heard of it, and will let his last hour come upon him unawares, still believing that he missed it only by a foot. He will see it everytime he closes his eyes. He will never forget it till he is dead—and even then — Doctor, did you ever hear of the miserable gringos on Azuera, that cannot die? Hal Hal sailors like myself. There is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens upon your mind (N : 460).

Thus, as Jocelyn Baines says, “although he goes on to transcend even his own past achievement and saves the Occidental Province in his great ride to Cayta, his thoughts remain with the silver” (1969:92). And when he realises that, with the death of Decoud, he is the only person who knows that the silver has not been sunk in the lighter, he decides not to disclose its whereabouts but to use it to enrich himself. Thenceforth Nostromo is corrupted:
A transgression, a crime, entering a man’s existence, eats it up like a malignant growth, consumes it like a fever. Nostromo had lost his peace; the genuineness of all his qualities was destroyed. He felt it himself, and often cursed the silver of San Tome. His courage, his magnificence, his leisure, his work, everything was as before, only everything was a sham. But the treasure was real. He clung to it with a more tenacious, mental grip. But he hated the feel of the ingots. Sometimes, after putting away a couple of them in his cabin — the fruit of a secret night expedition to the great Isabel — he would look fixedly at his fingers, as if surprised they had left no stain on his skin. (N: 523-24).

He also manages with the help of Captain Mitchell to put the old Georgio and his two daughters in charge of the new light house at the Great Isabel, so that he can go openly even in daylight and grow rich faster.

Mr. Verloc exploits Stevie’s innocence, instinctive loyalty and blind devotion. He seems to have grown quite fond of him of late, but it is only a pretension to work the boy’s emotion up for his nefarious act. Stevie is virtually worshipping Mr. Verloc and he would even go through fire for him. Mr. Verloc exploits the gullible nature of Stevie and decides to use him for throwing a bomb on the observatory. He trusts Stevie’s loyalty and thinks that Stevie may get arrested and be sent to some police station or provincial work house, but under no circumstance he will reveal the truth. With this hope, Mr. Verloc leads the boy to the altar, but the premature explosion results in his being shattered to pieces:
Blown to small bits; limbs, gravel, clothing, bones, splinters, -
all mixed up together. I tell you they had to fetch a shovel to
gather him up with (SA : 210).

The tragic end of Stevie being "blown to small bits" is
symbolic of Verloc being "shaken morally to pieces" (SA : 230). This crime
has affected not only the "moral bond" between Mr. Verloc and Stevie
but also the "respectable bond" between him and his wife, because marital
affection has received the greatest shock from it. Mr. Verloc who has
been driven out of his mind and who has been mad for a month or more,
is now freed from the mist, and he says, "I am not mad now" (SA : 208-09).
His immediate reaction to the crime is his confession. In his
confession he blames Mr. Vladimir for having provoked him. He admits
that he has exploited the blind devotion of Stevie, but argues that he is
cought unawares as the boy is unexpectedly and accidentally blown to
pieces. He puts the blame on fate for "the unexpected march of events"
(SA : 237) that has killed Stevie.

A similar march of events leads to the dramatic decision
of Razumov to betray Haldin which is thus justified by him:

Betray. A great word. What is betrayal? They talk of a man
betraying his country, his friends, his sweet-heart. There must
be moral bond first. All a man can betray is his conscience.
And how is my conscience engaged here; by what moral bond
of common faith, of common conviction, am I obliged to let
that fanatical idiot drag me down with him?... Have I provoked
his confidence? No! Have I by a single word, look or gesture
given him reason to suppose that I accepted his trust in me?
No! It is true that I consented to go and see his Ziemanitch —
Well, I have been to see him and I broke a stick on his back too
—the brute (UWE : 37 38).
Ultimately, he lands in the palace of Prince K, who, in turn, takes him to the house of General T, where the actual betrayal takes place.

Razumov betrays Haldin in total indifference to the law of nature and the moral order of the Universe. He thinks that he is self-sufficient and self-contained in matters of rational thinking and reasoning. He also thinks that he could justify any of his acts simply by the superiority of his intellect and reasoning. He fails to understand that man's rational faculties constitute a mere twentieth part of his whole being. Because of his pride and intellectual arrogance, he fails to recognize his victim as his fellow human being. Though Razumov is superior to his other fellow human beings in his intellectual capacities, he has no right to decide whether one is a "pestilence" or a "withered member", or whether one has a right to live or not. He gives a universal colouring to the justification of his crime, but he does not understand that there is a virtue called universal brotherhood. In the moral order of the Universe, both a pestilence and a withered member have an equal right to live. A human being, however mighty or great he may be, has no right to question or alter the moral order of the universe. To his dismay, Razumov comes to realise this shattering truth only after his criminal act.

Razumov experiences both physical and mental torture almost everyday. He feels feverish and sometimes hovers on the borders of delirium. Razumov, who wanted to win the silver medal, is not even able to hold the book in his hand. Still worse, he is exploited to take up a 'mock career' as a spy of the Russian Autocracy to watch and inform on the activities of the Chateau Borell Revolutionary Group in Geneva. As Christpher Cooper points out, "the moment Razumov turns informer, he is committed to lead the rest of his life as the tool of autocracy, and
the victim of General T-'s hypocrisy" (1970:69). Ultimately, he lands in Geneva as a spy and the new assignment inevitably leads him to further betrayals. Every night is a torture for him. Haldin's phantom almost becomes an old friend. What he actually wants to forget rushes to his memory at regular intervals. The Language Teacher, on his part, puts some piercing questions that almost touch his subconscious mind. His moral supports fall one by one. He almost accepts Haldin's ghost as a real phenomenon. Though at times he approaches it menacingly, as if he is going to strangle it, it keeps on coming. Even in Geneva, Haldin's ghost does not leave him in peace.

Heyst helps Morrison, by paying money to redeem his impounded-ship from the Portuguese authorities and thereby traps him into the net of gratitude. Both want to keep this affair in the dark and agree that nothing should be said to any one of this transaction. Morrison wants to keep the affair in the dark because it would damage his reputation as a merchant if revealed, but the affair gives a criminal complexion and dimension to his help and a calumny is spread against him that he had "squeezed" Morrison "dry like a lemon" (V:23). Though not entirely responsible for the death of Morrison, it is his intrusion into his life in the form of help which makes Morrison indebted to him to that extent of leaving his job in the archipelago for London to die there as a "victim of gratitude and his native climate" (V:22). His second intrusion as the manager of the Tropical Belt Coal Company also results in the liquidation of the company and his being charged as the swindler of shares. In the third instance too, his involvement leads to his elopement with Lena, an orchestra girl. He has to release Lena from the shackles of Zongiacomo and Schomberg as he freed Morrison from the Portuguese authorities.
The same impulse of human solidarity that drove him towards Morrison makes him pity Lena’s helplessness. Her charm enters his body and injects his very heart. Her repeated appeals for sympathy in the profound silence of the night and her lingering kiss ultimately ends in his heist of Lena from Schomberg’s hotel to Samburan Island.

Heyst gives a serious thought to his action. He analyses the mystery of his actions and how he, like Adam, has fallen a victim to "action". To his surprise and utter dismay, he discovers that "this primeval ancestor is not easily suppressed" (V: 175). His father tried to suppress it, he also tried to suppress it, but all their efforts ended in failure. So, he suffers from the pangs of his conscience. His conversation with Lena is almost a confession. For the first time, he comes to know others' view of him. He is scandalised and calumniated as the murderer of Morrison and swindler of the shares of the Tropical Belt Coal Company. He is charged with what is suspected of lying dormant within him. He is suddenly awakened to his moral consciousness. He is now worried over his moral self. He, who once, did not mind others' view of him and who once affirmed that nobody could hurt him, now says, "strange that it should hurt me .... yet it does " (V:208). Heyst who said only a little before, "moralists and I haven’t been friends for many years" (V:194), now feels the qualms of his conscience, engendering a compulsion to prove his honesty, at least, to Lena. He asks whether she believed that version of his actions. Her reply that she did not believe it gives him a sense of relief. "He was relieved..."(V:209). Still Heyst is worried over Schomberg’s version of his action:
How did he manage to hatch that petty tale? Have I a particularly vile countenance? Is black selfishness written all over my face? Or is that sort of thing so universally human that it might be said of anybody (V: 211).

In fact, it is this doubt about his own self which awakens the moral feelings in him and makes him believe that he has also the potentials of a murderer at bottom. He cannot escape the calumny caused by his action. Significantly, such a revelation comes to him while he is sitting right under his father's portrait and its taste comes upon his lips, "nauseating and corrosive like some kind of poison" (V: 218). Added to this torture is Lena's half-disbelieving the rumour, though she says that she does not want to judge him.

Right from the beginning the sexual feeling is quite dominant in the psyche of Chandran. The excessive pleasure he derives in masturbation results in his physical weakness and loss of memory. It badly affects his educational pursuits and consequently, he scores poor marks in the public examination. Since he is obsessed with sexual feelings, even the motherly affection of Pakiattammāl seems to him as sexual advancements. The same condition prevails during his college days at Madras. He misunderstands the brotherly affection of Imāvati into sexual love and when she sends her marriage invitation, he declares: "her life begins but my life ends" (AV: 159). When his friend, Velayyan tries to point out his folly, he retorts violently and asks him to "get out" (AV: 160) of his room. As professor Deva Sangeetham observes: "Impatience, hastiness and uxoriousness are the tragic flaws of Chandran" (1975 : 78).

His moral degradation becomes complete when we see him living with an
immoral woman at Ooty, whose husband is away in jail. After a few months, when his father, Vēlayyan and their teacher come over there to rescue him, he leaves her abruptly as he left the hostel without any remorse or guilt. Vēlayyan's subsequent chance meeting of an old couple in Chandran's village and their veiled comment on his character bears testimony to his further moral degradation.

Chandran's marriage never brings any change in him. In fact, his sexual atrocities take on alarming proportions. During his sister's betrothal, Vēlayyan meets Chokkan, a servant in the household of Chandran who reveals the present moral condition of his master, with utmost contempt:

He has become totally useless. There is absolutely no use of his learning. He has got a beautiful wife who is as innocent as a child. But he lives an immoral life completely deserting her. I am quite ashamed of his activities. I've seen so many people who lived such a life. Is it a life? Shame!... Today he may have money and physical strength but in course of time who will respect? (AV : 278).

When Vēlayyan asks him the specific reason for such a contempt for his master, Chokkan replies that Chandran has spoiled the life of the gardener's daughter by violating her modesty and she is separated from her husband. He also says, "if I am still in this house, it is for his father. Otherwise, I would have left it long back" (AV : 228). At the time of leaving, Vēlayyan advises Chandran:
There is a kind of shining on the tip of your nose. The edge of your ears also look thick and dark. Skin diseases should be treated immediately. You had better consult a doctor. Don’t be careless (AV: 280).

Vēlayyan politely and indirectly warns him that he is suffering from the dreaded disease, leprosy. But Chandran with his characteristic arrogance ignores his friend’s advice. Vēlayyan again encounters the same old couple who say,

He is always after young girls like a mad dog. Don’t you think a man from a decent family should behave himself?

Shame! (AV: 281).

Evidently and symbolically Chandran is no longer a human being but has degenerated and fallen to the level of an animal.

Chandran’s moral supports fall one by one. His parents die broken-hearted. His wife commits suicide because of his inhuman torture. His disease reaches an advanced stage and he is completely disfigured. The people who once used to look at him admiringly, now look at him with utmost contempt. He has also squandered the entire property. Things come to such a pass that he has absolutely nowhere to turn. Chandran the brilliant student who scored centum in mathematics has become a zero in his personal life. The guilt and the unbearable remorse drive him away from human society. The thought of his atrocities and the scores of families he ruined torment his accursed soul. Now his only comfort and moral support is Tiruvarutpa, a great moral book of divine songs. He understands clearly that no force on earth could cure his body. At least he wants his soul to be cured for which he is in search of his friend, Vēlayyan, to make his confession.
Tānappan’s unrequited ambition to achieve material prosperity forces him to involve actively in the illicit arrack business. Tānappan begins to live a licentious life with the easy money and goes to the extent of living with an immoral woman. But soon he is arrested by the police and spends eighteen months in jail. On his return, he is betrayed both by the hotel owner, his business partner and the woman. Tānappan is, in fact, thankful to them to have given him an opportunity to understand the character of this world and says,

This is a bad, treacherous world, full of betrayers. Whenever we are needed, they pretend to be extremely generous, but the moment they don’t need us, they simply throw us out so mercilessly. We can be prosperous in this world only if we become crooks. Otherwise, we will be trampled upon (VM: 102).

Tānappan is brought back to his village over the sudden death of his father. When his step-mother sends a lawyer’s notice demanding a share in his father’s property, he decides to counter it through the court of law. It has become his strong conviction that, “unless one involves in criminal activities, one cannot become prosperous in this world” (VM: 105). Even when his brother-in-law, Murugaiah asks him through Kulantaivel not to go to the court of law but to settle it amicably outside the court, he retorts:

I don’t have faith in such fair means. This is a corrupt world.

There is no respect for honesty. Only those who are prepared to live in utter poverty can be firm on the righteous path. That I can’t do. I shall be cheated. One may go to a deer or a hare
with grass, but what is the use of going to a woof or a tiger
without a gun or bayonet? We will be cheated in this world so
meanly if we believe that people around us are hares and deers.
This so-called civilized world is actually a dangerous jungle
(VM:154).

Tānappan exploits the corrupt and money-minded material
society to his advantage and reaches the height of his material prosperity.
The business is extremely good in his jewellery shop, the hotel fetches a
lot of income, especially after the introduction of liquor. He obtains a
licence for two bus routes using his political influence and personal
capacity as vice-chairman of local municipality. Inspite of all these
material achievements, his personal life becomes a total failure. His wife
proves to be a characterless woman and her illegal relationship with
Vachiranātan torments him night and day. He bears it in his own way
without sharing it even with his friend. Under such mental agony and
torture, he happens to listen to a moral speech by Tiru. Vi.
Kalyanasundaranār which makes him realise for the first time, his moral
vacuum. Everything that was spoken in the meeting turns out to be
applicable to the personal life of Tānappan, one way or other. It seems
to him as if the meeting itself has been arranged exclusively for him. He
feels that he has achieved the highest point of prosperity but at the same
time his mind has gone to the lowest level of poverty. Now his first duty
is to regain his 'lost self'. Tānappan involves himself in that process wi
the same 'speed' with which he achieved his material prosperity.
A series of events mar the married life of Cuppurattinam. He wants his wife to be an object of his sexual lust. Whenever he takes his wife out, his look is always on other women (A:91). Similarly, he is physically present at home but his thoughts are invariably wandering with immoral women. He is also in the habit of coming home late in the night fully drunk. When his brother-in-law is hospitalized, instead of making a visit to the hospital, he is flirting with immoral women. On another occasion, in a cinema theatre, he leaves his wife abruptly for the company of an immoral woman (A:89). His brother-in-law's death, instead of bringing him closer to his wife and her family, alienates him completely from them. In fact, it is a golden opportunity for him to make amends with his wife, but, he throws it away with his usual arrogance and, as a result, the gulf between husband and wife widens irreparably. The fate of their married life gets a serious jolt when Alli comes to know that her husband has stolen away all her gold ornaments in her absence (A:112).

As Willems is deserted by Lingard to his fate, Cuppurattinam is also completely deserted by his wife. Alli's desertion of her husband makes him more and more vengeful. He stoops to the level of attempting murder, both on his wife and her family friend, Aravali (A:168). His moral supports fall one by one and things come to such a stage that he has nowhere to turn. Cuppurattinam the proud engineer becomes a miserable social outcast. When Alli encounters her husband at the Marina Beach, the first time after their separation, she finds neither anger nor any anxiety in his look. She also finds him in the most ordinary dress
physically weak, with sorrowful eyes and a "face absolutely without any expression" (A:182). Alli recollects how arrogant he used to be to the poor people, how contemptuously he used to look at them, as though they were worms. She has seen the cruelty of his kicking a ricksha-wallah for having demanded a few annas more (A:194). At the sametime, Alli recollects, how he had lost the entire salary on horse-racing (A:62). Later, through a woman patient who comes to Alli for treatment at Bangalore, it is revealed that Cuppurattinam is suffering from venereal disease and also has spent a jail term for the crime of attempting to encash Syamala's stolen cheque. His sinful life has come a full circle and what remains is his open confession.

Vaṭivu understands very soon that her husband is morally bankrupt and an embodiment of all vices. Drinking, gambling and womanising are his day to day activities. Out of frustration and humiliation, she leaves her husband to her parents. In the absence of her parents at Madras, Vaṭivu happens to meet her old lover, Palarāman, after an interval of several years. Her lack of moral courage to refuse his invitation and the fatal absence of his wife and children at home ends in an act of sexual transgression (NOM:197). When Vaṭivu comes to her senses, she weeps uncontrollably. Again the thought of her servant-maid, Ellammā, comes to her mind (NOM:204). Though she is poor and not educated, she lives a decent life. Whereas, Vaṭivu, though well-educated, has lost what a woman should not even dream of in her life. Now she has no right to blame her husband. They have become equal partners in the transgression of the moral code. Ultimately, Vaṭivu returns to her husband
as a tamed animal with a thorn in her heart.

The proverb, "misfortune never comes alone but with her family of sighs and sorrows" becomes true as far as Vaṭīvu's life is concerned. It is with moral shock and guilt that she receives the news from the doctor that she has conceived (NOM:241). The guilt increases many fold when her husband reveals that he had an operation long back and the doctor told him that it would be almost impossible for him to become a father (NOM:248). Ironically, her husband is progressively becoming a new man and her agony becomes unbearable when he says that actually he had started becoming a new man the day she left the house in a huff.

Vaṭīvu, to add to her misery, gives birth to a male child who resembles neither his father nor mother. Her guilty conscience finds the features of Palarāmaṇ in her son. She blames herself for the present torture. But we know that there will be neither happiness nor peace of mind as long as the thorn remains in her heart. Even the remotest reference to her crime makes her entire body shiver. The real moral conflict arises several years later when Vaṭīvu discovers to her utter dismay that her son, Kannalagaṇ is deeply in love with Anparaci, Palarāmaṇ's daughter. She decides with satanic determination not to allow the love affair to go any further. The moral conflict reaches such an alarming stage that if it is not resolved, it will affect the lives of so many innocent people. The mental torture Vaṭīvu undergoes is quite unimaginable. She asks herself, "Why is it I alone have got such a life with endless suffering?" (NOM:364).
The opportunity comes to Nirmalā in the form of an accident to her husband. He loses both his legs. Nirmalā's vanity could not bear the thought of a life with a cripple. Even the thought of visiting him in the hospital never occurs to her. Violating all human decency and solidarity, she betrays her husband so meanly by running away from him, taking away all the valuables and money available at home. Ultimately, she lands in Bombay where, with the help of a friend gets appointed in a school. She happens to listen to Professor Kamalakkannar's lectures on Tirukkural. The great moral book influences her greatly and her admiration for him turns into love and ends in marriage. She starts her second married life at Madras. The influence of Kamalakkannar and the great moral book help her to return to the normal life of mankind. She regains her lost self with the knowledge that unmitigated, selfless love is everything in human life. But quite unexpectedly she happens to encounter her former husband, Mohan in Madras.

III

Almayer overworks in getting his fleet of boats ready to hunt out the gold treasure. But his wife equally overworks to send out her daughter with Dain. Almayer fails to understand that his daughter is moving away more and more from him and entering into the world of her mother. The arrival of the Dutch officers to arrest Dain makes Mrs.Almayer and her savage kinsmen overwork to save him from them. Mrs.Almayer plays a trick with a smashed deadbody and makes Almayer
believe that it is the body of Dain. Almayer fooled by this trick, and in
order to forget his mental agony takes a large quantity of gin. When the
Dutch officers threaten his arrest if he fails to handover Dain, who has
causd the deha of two of their colleagues with the help of the gun
powder, Almayer bursts out, releasing all the accumulated bitterness in
his heart:

    Arrest! Ha! ha! ha! Arrest! Why, I have been trying to get out
    of this infernal place for twenty years, and I can't. You hear,
    man! I can't, and never shall! Never! (AF: 116).

Finally, he takes them to where the dead body is kept and shows it to the
officers:

    This is Dain.... And I have kept my word. First one hope,
    then another, and this is my last. Nothing is left now. You
    think there is one dead man here? Mistake, I'm sure you. I am
    much more dead (AF: 117).

Almayer drags himself up the stairs and falls asleep in his chair.

When Almayer comes to know through the Malay girl
Taminah what his wife has done to him, his cry of anguish,

    Oh! Nina!" "Oh! Nina! I donot believe". "Nina!" "Where are
    you, Nina" (AF:133),
echoed through entire Sambir. But Almayer's misfortune becomes
complete when his daughter, till now the apple of his eyes, asks him:

    You ask why I want to go, and I ask you why should I stay
    (AF:144).
Losing his daughter, Almayer has lost everything in life. Now it is his monkey that brings him into the world of reality. Symbolically the monkey is the last moral support of Almayer since all others have fallen. He responds only to the call of the monkey. In other words, Almayer is disgusted with the betrayal and treachery of the human world and takes refuge in the animal world. He gradually becomes more silent and any news from the outside world is of no interest to him any more:

Those few who saw Almayer during the short period of his remaining days were always impressed by the sight of that face that seemed to know nothing of what went on within; like a blank wall of a prison endorsing sin, regrets, and pain, and wasted life, in the cold indifference of mortar and stones (AF:154).

During a monthly visit of Captain Ford, who has taken up the affairs of Lingard & Co., Almayer whispers to him in a grating voice:

Let her go! Let her go. To-morrow I shall forget. I am a firm man,... firm as a rock...rock...firm...(AF:165).

The next day Almayer was found dead. Almayer breathes dead hippo but is not contaminated. He becomes 'one of us' in his death.

Willems has no valid explanation to offer Lingard. His guilty conscience puts the blame for his betrayal first on Almayer and then on Aissa. But as far as Lingard is concerned, Willems has already become a forgotten figure belonging wholly to the past – a figure that
could in no way come into his life again. When Willems makes another appeal to Lingard for mercy, for another hearing, the latter replies with an emphatic "never". When Lingard moves away from him, Willems feels as if his life itself is going away from him. "He shouted again – and this time he did not even hear himself. No use. He would never return" (OI: 230).

On Lingard's departure, solitude and silence close round Willems. The time seems to roll on in profound darkness. All is night within him. All is gone from his sight. He is restless, sombre, tangled, chilled, horrible and venomous like a nestful of snakes. Willems turns his eyes to the river like a captive who looks fixedly at the door of his cell. He has no chance of getting away from that wretched place. Then the only way out is death:

Yes, death ... he saw death looking at him from everywhere;

from the bushes, from the clouds – he heard her speaking to him in the murmur of the river, filling the space, touching his heart, his brain with a cold hand. He could see and think of nothing else. He saw it – the sure death – everywhere

(OI: 267).
Willems is the victim of his strange principles, of his continence, of his blind belief in himself, of his solemn veneration for the voice of his boundless ignorance. He is quite aware that his life is to end miserably in the wilderness and be forgotten or else remembered with hate or contempt:

He sat in the darkness of his own making reflecting bitterly that there was no peace for him. He heard voices now...

Illusion! Misery! Torment! Who would come? Who could speak to him? What business had he to hear voices?... yet he heard them faintly, from the river. Faintly, as if should far off over there, come the words 'we come back soon'... Delirium and mockery? Who would come back? Nobody ever comes back! Fever comes back. He had it on him this morning.

That was it... (Ol: 276).

But it is his wife, Joanna and his son, Louis who are brought by the river. What has she come for? Willems rightly thinks that probably she has come to see his end.

Willems wants to escape through the boat his wife had come. He now cares for nothing. He has forgotten Aissa, his wife, Lingard, Hudig and everybody in the rapid vision of his hopeful future. As Dowden points out, "Willems, who has wandered through the mental and spiritual darkness of doubt, guilt and degradation, comes to the end of his journey" (1970:23), the moment Aissa appears on the scene. When she looks at Willems's wife and son, she understands how badly she has been betrayed by the whiteman. She settles her account, when she hears
the dead Omar's goading voice in her ear, "Kill! Kill!" (OI : 289), with a fatal shot. At last, Willems the outcast becomes 'one of us' in his death.

Jim fails to understand the real motive of Brown and Cornelius – the former wants to play havoc on the entire population of Patusan and the latter to take revenge on Jim for having superseded him as Stein's trading agent. When Brown asks for a clear "passage" or "fight", Jim prefers the former, for, he does not want any of the villagers unnecessarily killed. Ironically, Jim chooses Cornelius as his emissary to inform Brown of safe passage from Patusan. Cornelius utilizes the opportunity to destroy Jim completely by giving invaluable information to Brown and his men a different escape route after making the ambush from the rear against Dain Waris and his unarmed soldiers. Jim's fatal mistake causes the death of Dain Waris and a number of his trusted men. Fate once again turns against Jim and he falls a prey to the weakness within him.

Jim is once again caught in the dialectic of crime and punishment. Unfortunately there is no one to help him now. However, he decides in such a way that "the dark forces should not rob him twice of his peace." (LJ : 301). He neither listens to the girl he loved nor his body guard who asks him either to fight or escape. But Jim is going to prove his power in another way and conquer the fatal destiny itself. He submits himself to Doramin to be shot dead. As he fell, he "sent right and left at all those faces a proud and unflinching glance" (LJ : 306). Jim the outcast, returns to the community of men and becomes "one of us' in his death.
Nostromo makes frequent midnight missions to remove the hidden silver ingots. During one such mission, Georgio mistaking him for Ramirez, who is hell-bent to take away his younger daughter, Giselle from him, shoots Nostromo down: "Like a thief he came, and like a thief he fell. The child had to be protected." (N : 554). Nostromo accepts fully the mistaken punishment given by old Viola: "I myself could have done no better" (N : 588). The wounded Nostromo refusing any medical aid from the doctor, sends the doctor himself to bring Mrs. Gould for his confession. Mrs. Gould stands like a priest by the side of his bed:

It was thus that, cloaked and monastically hooded over her evening costume, the woman, full of endurance and compassion, stood by the side of the bed on which the splendid Capataz de Cargadores lay stretched out motionless on his back (N : 558).

Nostromo tells Mrs. Gould: "The Silver has killed me." (N:559). When he tries to tell Mrs. Gould where the silver is hidden, she replies: "No, Capataz, no one misses it now. Let it be lost for ever" (N:560). After hearing these words, Nostromo closed his eyes, uttered no word and made no movement. His remorse is such that he does not accept any attempt to save his life, for, "his confession is mostly an inward one accompanied by Dostoevskian self-laceration" (Heimer 1967 : 576). The Capataz de Cargadores dies: "Without a word or moan after an hour of immobility, broken by short shudders tesifying to the most atrocious sufferings" (N : 563). Not only the people of Sulaco, but the readers also accept him as "one of us".
Mr. Verloc's theory of fatalism does not work with his wife Winnie, for, he wants to live with her as before. When he is struggling with himself whether to make a private confession to his wife or not, his wife herself comes to know the secret from his closed door talk with Inspector Heat. Since everything has gone beyond his control, now Mr. Verloc is left with no other alternative but to confess to his wife. But his talk with his wife proves abortive inspite of listing the reasons one by one to her as he did to the Assistant Commissioner. His ultimate assertion, "What's done cannot be undone" (SA: 240), fails before his unresponsive wife. Her prolonged silence to his gestures makes him blame her also for his act:

What do you take me for -- a murderer, or what? .... And when it comes to that, it's as much as your doing as mine. That's so.... Don't you make any mistake about it: If you will have it that I killed the boy, then you've killed him as much as I (SA: 257 - 58).

And now it is her turn and the suppressed domestic self comes up to the surface to destroy the anarchic self, to which her beloved Stevie has become a victim. The homeless soul of Stevie seems to take shelter in her breast and she with a knife approaches him and stabs him to death. As death purifies everything, Mr. Verloc becomes "one of us" in his death.

Razumov who first denied the brotherhood with Haldin, now understands that there is a brotherhood between them. The phantom of Haldin makes him realise that solitary and fearful existence
is more horrible than poverty and death. When Haldin says first that his soul will not perish, Razumov takes it as a desperate idea of a high sounding revolutionary. Again, when he says that the destroyers of souls shall be haunted, Razumov thinks that 'the fellow is mad'. But now his rational mind recognizes that a human soul will not perish because man's soul lives on and it is more spiritual than political. He realises that by betraying Haldin he has betrayed himself so meanly. Moral strength now lies not in justifying but in openly acknowledging his crime. In other words, Razumov is ready to confess his crime for which he is in search of a noble human soul which he finds in his victim's sister, Miss Haldin. Razumov finds a divine quality in every aspect of his saviour, Miss Haldin: "... But on your lips, in your voice, it sounds ... and indeed in you everything is divine..." (UWE: 352).

The information that Ziemanitch committed suicide by hanging himself out of remorse for betraying Haldin shatters the very nerve of Razumov and leaves him with an uncontrollable sense of agony. The death of Ziemanitch awakens the hidden subconscious realms in Razumov. It acts as a double-edged weapon. It reminds him of his shameful existence on the one hand and the power and depth of human solidarity on the other. Finally Razumov's meeting with Mrs. Haldin deprives him of his moral resistance completely. The old woman's prolonged silence during the meeting simply shatters his last hope of hiding the secret any longer. Ultimately, he confesses to Miss Haldin. His private confession is followed by his public confession to the revolutionists.
The punishment of the revolutionists makes him a hopeless cripple for life, but more significantly, he lives to become "one of us".

Heyst is neither complete in detachment nor in attachment and that is why like Jim, he is caught always in the dialectics of his psyche. His possession of Lena is not complete. He saved her from Zangiacomo, but he is not able to love her as she loves him. He has to protect her from the evil trio – Jones, Ricardo and Pedro, the messengers of the external world and the accomplices of the dark forces. He is aware that some evil is going to befall her, but he is not able to prevent it and he is aware also of this impotence in him. He is like a child in his inability to protect her. He says:

All this is too unreal altogether. It isn't to be borne! I can't protect you! I have n't the power.... A movement of childish petulance! Indeed, I feel very much like a child in my ignorance, in my powerlessness, in my want of resource, in everything except in the dreadful consciousness of some evil hanging over your head – yours! (V:347).

His inability to love and save her from the external danger takes a ghastly shape when she sacrifices her life for him by taking upon herself the shot aimed at Heyst. She dies with the satisfaction that she has saved his life – it is her victory. But her victory turns out to be Heyst's failure because he feels that his life is gone with her death. At the time of crisis, when he is expected to "act" he remains only a "spectator" and that is his guilt:
A great shame descended upon Heyst –

the shame of guilt, absurd and maddening (V: 392).

After making a confession to Davidson, "... Woe to the men whose hearts have not learnt while young to hope, to love, and to put its trust in life!", he wants to be alone with the dead body of Lena only to burn himself with her: "He is – ashes... he and the girl together... he couldn't stand his thoughts before her dead body – and fire purifies everything" (V: 410). Thus, Heyst becomes "one of us" in his death.

Chandran succeeds in finding out his friend Vēlayyan. Vēlayyan’s love and concern and his old, unchanged affection and hospitality increase the inner sufferings of Chandran. The more he is loved, the more he hates himself. When Vēlayyan asks him to sit on a chair in his house, his remorse finds no bounds:

I am unfit to sit on a chair. People may come and look at me. I don't want your status to be affected by me. Let me stay in a corner in the garden. Come, show me the way (AV: 383).

When they reach the garden, Chandran breaks down:

Oh! this place is also clean. Am I to stay here? No, please show me a place like a cattle-yard. Don't you have any such place at least somewhere in a corner? (AV: 382).

His subsequent mental as well as physical sufferings make Vēlayyan shed tears. He is unable to comfort the suffering psyche of Chandran. He recollects each of his immoral deeds and weeps uncontrollably beating his head with both his hands:
How lavishly I spent money. How many poor families I ruined. Oh! Vēlu! What is the remedy to my sins? What am I to do Vēlu? The very thought makes my whole body shiver (AV : 390).

He dashes his head against the wall and blood oozes out of the wound.

When Vēlayyan brings medicine, again he breaks down:

Have you brought medicine? Rather, you pierce a hot spear into my wounds so that I may be cleansed of my sins (AV : 391).

When the thought of his wife comes to him, his entire body shakes violently and with uncontrollable remorse, he weeps:

Oh God! How much I tortured her? She put a right question, yes, she asked me whether I was educated? I deserve it. I deserve more than that. Am I an educated man? No, I was only a fool. Of course, I was only that (AV : 391).

The thought of his mother also torments him: "Had she been alive, I wouldn't have gone this bad" (AV : 393).

His weak, sinful and decayed body is not able to bear all the remorse. It exposes its inability in the way of high fever and delirium. Chandran is well aware that he is going to be alive only for a few minutes. But the moral discovery, the return to his lost self and the community of men, make him immensely happy and thus tells Vēlayyan:
When you were an earthen lamp, I was a brasslamp. For sometime it flitted. Everyone liked my handsomeness and appreciated my intelligence. But, for what use? Day by day the oil was exhausted, the wick spoiled and the whole lamp became dark. You are now a bright lamp burning with brilliance and tranquillity (AV: 403).

At last, Chandran the social outcast becomes "one of us" in his death.

Tānappān realises for the first time that individual morality is much more important than the social conscience. It is quite foolish to blame the society for all our misdeeds. As a first remedial step, he stops selling illicit liquor in his hotel. He divorces his wife and decides not to contest any more elections. He is often seen in the company of great moral books and spends most of his time for different social services. He is building a school in his town for the welfare of the poor children. He has compromised with his step-mother and regularly sends money to her. He has become very fond of young children. Whenever he goes to his friend's house, he takes a present to the girl, Narumalar. He believes that only children are capable of developing love in our mind. The mind is purified and enlightened in the company of children because:

They are like the pure rain-water, unadulterated by the impurities of the world. The grown up people like you and I are like the rain drops fallen on dirty ditches. Good minds are spoiled by bad environments, undesirable habits, superstitious beliefs and meaningless ceremonies. Narumalar's is an unadulterated mind, like a rain drop fallen on a flower.
least let our impurities be washed away from our mind in the
company of a child (VM : 296).

Tānappan, the tragic man rises to the level of a supra
man. But quite unexpectedly his divorced wife, his alter ego returns to
him. Tānappan treats her with utmost human dignity but is not prepared
to live with her. He feels that his mind has developed a lot and he has
gone up several steps higher and so it is very difficult for him to come
down again. But, there is absolutely no change in his wife and she proves
it by poisoning him to death. But Tānappan, even before his death has
become "one of us".

Cuppurattinam has lost everything and his possessions
are only disease and frustration. After completing the jail term at Bombay,
he returns to Madras where, he works as a mechanic in a workshop. He
undergoes an operation but dies within a week. He leaves behind him a
diary and the observations in it stand as a testimony that he has suffered
enough for his sinful life. The spiritual regeneration that he attained
through suffering, isolation and humiliation gives him the moral strength
to leave a message for the suffering humanity, especially the sexual
offenders:

There is no limit for ambition not only in amassing wealth but
also in sexual desires. Everything should be within limits. If
it is exceeded, the meaning of life shall be lost. What follows
is misery, loss of reputation, endless disease, shameful existence
and at last a lonely death. The human mind is sometimes very
dangerous. It runs after variety. It is not satisfied with what
it has in hand but wanders seeking the new areas of pleasure.

The result is frustration! Neither peace nor comfort! (A : 328).

Vāṭivu wants to see Āravāli when the moral conflict is at its peak. To her surprise Āravāli himself appears before her with the marriage proposal between her son and Apparací. Since Vāṭivu is stubborn and tears are her only answer, Āravāli thinks that it is not a matter to be settled immediately and tells her that he would come after two weeks. Even after two weeks when Āravāli finds no change in her attitude, he asks her to come out with the real cause so that her son may be convinced. Now Vāṭivu is left with no other choice but to confess. With unbearable and uncontrollable mental agony Vāṭivu confesses: "I am a criminal. They are like brother and sister" (NOM : 432).

Āravāli appreciates Vāṭivu's honesty and consoles her that she has not done anything abhorrent. It is very difficult to live without getting involved in moral situations. There are people who never care for moral principles of life. But Vāṭivu for a sexual transgression, has suffered several years and has a noble heart to confess her crime. Vāṭivu with her confession has become a noble woman. So, with the soothing words of Āravāli, Vāṭivu feels that she is spiritually regenerated. She also feels that her mind has become light and free and all the accumulated bitterness of life has been washed away. Vāṭivu’s spiritual regeneration
becomes complete when she changes her living place into a humble surrounding, opens an orphanage and dedicates her life for the cause of society. Vaṭīvu becomes "one of us" with her confession and through her social services.

When Nirmalā Devi encounters her former husband Mohan, the suppressed guilt of her past erupts like a long silent volcano. The sight of her husband at the height of poverty, almost living on alms, touches her subconscious realms. She finds no other way but to run away to hide her guilt. Nirmalā Devi the worst betrayer, is brought back to normal human life by Kamalakkannar. His sympathetic words after reading his wife's letter of confession,

Had she informed me personally, I would have gone with her
and shown the mountains, rivers and the streams myself for
her utmost comfort (KT : 250)

persuade us to accept her as "one of us".

The tragic men and women of Conrad and Mu.Va. who posses both criminal as well as redemptive potentials are awakened to their criminal potentials under critical situations and thus they are caught in the web of crime. Almayer's criminal potential is revealed when he makes an unholy alliance with evil forces both to hunt out the gold and to escape from that wretched hell-hole of a place called Sambir. Willems is left with no other alternative but to betray Lingard for his survival. Kurtz becomes a victim of loneliness in the African wilderness. It is his divided consciousness that makes Jim jump into the deserters's boat. Mr.
Verloc is forced to act to save gaurd his income. Razumov betrays Haldin when his personal security is threatened. Nostromo decides to steal the silver only when he is convinced that he is betrayed by the English. Heyst's action from a state of inaction traps him in crime. Similarly, in the Mu.Vavian world Vaṭīvu involoves herself in sexual transgression with her old lover under unavoidable circumstances. Nirmalā Devi betrays her husband when he becomes a hopeless cripple. Tānappaṇi becomes a criminal when he is meanly betrayed. Corruption and sexual immorality in the society play a vital role in making Anavar, Chandran and Cuppurattinam criminals. However, arrogance and overwhelming sexual urge are dominant in their psyche.

The tragic men and women of both the authors are affected by their respective crimes. Though there are reasons for their crimes, invariably all the crimes are executed unconsciously without any ulterior motive in a moral mist. Once the moral mist is cleared they realise what they have done is a crime and the intensity and enormity of their crimes make them suffer. Razumov who is working night and day to win the silver medal of the Prize Essay is not able to hold the book the very next day after the betrayal of Haldin and ever since experiences "a ditch-water stagnation". Vaṭīvu who leaves her husband in extreme contempt for his immoral life, returns to him the very next day like a tamed animal after her crime and even remote references to her crime send her body into shivers. Almost all the tragic men and women experience this suffering. When they are at the height of their suffering
their redemptive potential takes the upper hand. They begin to develop a spiritual communion with their victims. In other words, they realise that they are as much affected as their victims. The resultant vision is moral discovery. They become "one of us" after their confession and invariably all of them are unmindful of the consequences of their confession. However, in both the authors, the fate of the tragic men and women are aggravated by the infra humanity, the criminalising and corrupting catalytic forces.
CHAPTER - III

THE INFRA MAN