CHAPTER IV
THE SUPRA MAN

The Archetypal Wisemen

They alone live who live
For others
The rest are more dead
Than alive

Swamy Vivekananda

The moral/physical downfall of the tragic men/women, aggravated and expedited by the infra men/women, is arrested by the supra humanity. These supra men, or the moral teachers motivate and mediate the redemptive ascent of the tragic men/women, reversing their downfall, retrieving their lost moral consciousness, and relocating them as "one of us". Conrad's Marlow identifies these supra men, "You may be such a thunderingly exalted creature as to be altogether deaf and blind to anything but heavenly, sights and sounds. Then the earth for you is only a standing place – and whether to be like this is your loss or gain I won't pretend to say" (HOD:207). Mu.Va's Aravali characterises these supra humanity or moral teachers as, "some people are too careful to commit a crime so that they won't be pricked by the thorn of guilt" (NOM:520). Conrad's "thunderingly exalted creature" can be equated to Mu.Va's "too careful people" and they are also akin to the archetypal wise old men. Examples can be had for this category in their fiction. Conrad's Marlow both in Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim, The Language Teacher in Under Western Eyes, Tom Lingard in Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands and The Rescue and Aravali both in Alli and Nencil Oru Mul, Meykantar in Manikutai, Murugaiah in Vathamalar
Kamalakkannar in Karittunțu and Čelvanāyakam in Malarvili come under this category. These characters run counter to the infra type in facilitating the tragic protagonists to resolve their moral dilemma.

The Supra men of Conrad and Mu.Va. are identical with Aristotle's "ideal man" envisaged in his Ethics:

- He does not expose himself needlessly to danger.... But he is willing, in great crises, to give even his life — knowing that under certain conditions it is not worth while to live. He is of a disposition to do men service, though he is ashamed to have a service done to him....
- He does not take part in public displays....He is open in his dislikes and preferences; he talks and acts frankly... he is never fired with admiration, since there is nothing great in his eyes. He cannot live in complaisance with others, except it be a friend.... He never feels malice, and always forgets and passes over injuries.... He is not fond of talking.... It is no concern of his that he should be praised, or that others should be blamed. He does not speak evil of others, even of his enemies.... His carriage is sedate, his voice deep, his speech measured, he is not given to hurry, for he is concerned about only a few things; he is not prone to vehemence.... He bears the accidents of life with dignity and grace, making the best of his circumstances, like a skilful general who marshals his limited forces with all the strategy of war.... He is his own best friend, and takes delight in privacy and is afraid of solitude (IV,3).

The moral teachers of both the authors are modernised versions of the Aristotelian ideal man as well as the archetypal wise old man, endowed with a missionary zeal, transformed into the 'Supra Men' by the Conradian
and Mu.Vavian creative craft. They are men of extensive experience, known for their simplicity, generosity and highly accommodative nature. Since they are wise old men of varied experience, nothing is elusive to their penetrating eyes. In fact, they are quite capable of penetrating into normally impenetrable regions of the human psyche. There is always a divine grace on their face; they inspire confidence and no one tries to hide anything from them. They act as the representatives of human conscience and if at all they are overenthusiastic about one thing, it is their everlasting desire to preserve the moral order of the universe. They also serve as the mouth pieces of their creators.

The majority of the moral teachers of both the authors are devoid of any family background. In the Conradian world all three of them absolutely do not have any family connections. In the Mu.Vavian world, both Meykantar and Aravali are widowers. Celvanayakam and Kamalakkannar have their wives for name sake only. Both of them are also childless. As a matter of fact, in the fictional world of both Conrad and Mu.Va. all the pretty women are childless. And finally Murugaiah is the only man who has a family and leads a happy life with his wife and children.

Both Conrad and Mu.Va. equip their moral teachers with necessary moral weapons to deal with the extraordinary situations and moral crises in the lives of their respective tragic heroes/heroines. In the Conradian world, both Marlow and Tom Lingard are sea-men equipped with the never violating tendency of Merchant mariner's codes, the ever ready attitude to save sinking ships at the risk of their personal lives, crew and vessel and to undertake any dangerous voyage even to the darkest holes of the universe to preserve the moral order of the universe. And the Language Teacher, as any language is
governed by strict rules, is a thoroughbred European gentleman, highly disciplined and known for his devotion to moral principles. Similarly, in the Mu.Vavian world all the moral teachers follow certain moral books like Tirukkural, Tiruvarūtpa, Tāyumāṉavar Songs, Cilapathikāram, Maṇimēkalai, Peṇṇin Perumai and are also strongly inspired by the lives of great people like Swamy Vivēkānanda, Mahatma Gandhi, Rāmalinka Swāmikal, Rāmatīrttar, Paramahamsar, Tiru.Vi.Kalyāṇa Sundaranār, Madame Curie and many such people.

In both Conrad and Mu.Va, the moral teachers perform the same priestly function. They are almost like priests in bringing the tragic heroes and heroines to the altar of confession and making them redeem their lost moral selves. In fact, the criminal heroes and heroines look up to them for their moral recovery. The relationship between these wise old men and the protagonists resemble that of father and children -- Marlow-Jim; Lingard - Almayer, Willems; The Language Teacher - Razumov; Aṟavaḷi - Vaṭivu, Alli, Somasundaram, Inpavalli; Murugaiah - Arulappaṉ; Meykantār - Meyyappaṉ.

Both in Conrad and Mu.Va., while the moral teachers perform their moral duties in bringing the suffering tragic men and women into the altar of confession, the infra humanity is also brought in contact with them. In Heart of Darkness, the company's Chief Accountant, the Manager, his fat uncle and the Brick-Maker and in Lord Jim the German skipper, the Chief Engineer, Cornelius and Brown are all brought in contact with Marlow. In Under Western Eyes the Language Teacher encounters Peter Ivonovitch and Madame de-Š. Similarly, in the Mu.Vavian world, Somasundaram and Cuppurattinam's Aunt in Alli are brought in contact with Aṟavaḷi. Meykantār
is aware of the evil deeds of Kesavarāyan and he is, in fact, harmed by Kesavarāyan. Since the infra humanity lacks in redemptive potentials and considers the moral teachers as their enemies, they are never brought into the altar of confession and are left, invariably, to their fate. In the Conradian world the 'wisemen' perform moral as well as narrative duties. Since the narrative duty is performed by them, they associate the infra humanity with fitting images, whereas, in the Mu.Vavian world, they perform only moral duties and so they do not have any opportunity to describe the infra humanity in such details.

Marlow, Conrad's prototype for the Supra man appears in Youth, Chance, Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim and in a number of stories too. He upholds the moral, intellectual, spiritual and humanistic principles, both as a narrator and as a moral teacher. Marlow is also the main agent through whom Conrad incorporates three of the oldest and predominantly, affirmative elements in story telling: "the narrator as a remembering eye witness; the narrator as the voice of his author's opinions; and the narrator as a friendly personal presence" (Ian Watt 1980: 211). The change from the third person summery, filled from the gossip of a sea port to a full and direct presentation is mainly made through Marlow.

Marlow has a personality, character, attitude, tone and with all these still his voice is ever so authentic and even actively participates in the action of the novels. Being himself a civilized European, devoted to duty, fidelity and prudence as a navigator, he fulfills his task always, most meticulously. His love for conscious order and light makes him detest disorder and darkness. Though he looks cynical at times, generally he is a romantic
with his imagination, anxiety and immense concern with the 'self'. There is plenty of irony in his renderings but he succeeds in telling inscrutable stories. Though he laughs once or twice, there is little humour in his reportage. As he grows with years, so also there is a new aspect in each succeeding story, from Youth to Chance. But the basic qualities and commitments of Marlow remain faithfully the same in all the stories.

Marlow is very often criticised as a dummy with no individuality. But, as a matter of fact, he is an active participant in the drama of human life and asserts his individuality almost in all the novels he appears. Mainly, he carries the narrative forward, analyses it with utmost clarity and probity, portrays the characters and situations and appraises their importance to the readers. Another charge on Marlow is that he has his own likes and dislikes, opinions and prejudices. Such emotions are absolutely necessary to fulfil his moral functions. In this respect, Edward Crankshaw argues that "Marlow was invented so that Conrad could moralize... freely without ruining his illusion ... which was dependent on his, the author's aloofness and impersonality" (1976:73).

Marlow, in whatever novel he appears, is pictured as mature and quiet, with a probing, ironic, at times sarcastic, generous, friendly and uneffusive bearing. He is endowed with acute sensibilities, moral responsibilities and is always absorbed in human problems. Though he talks so much, mainly in retrospective monologue, it is as a listener he really shines. As for his personal appearance, though we do not get much from the author, he is a sea-man, entirely reliable, totally acceptable and absolutely humane. He questions and discusses everyone but no one discusses him. His readiness
to appear whenever and wherever he is required, whether it is the African forest, or the official inquiry at Singapore, Stein's house in Java, the settlement in Patusan or Brown's death bed in Bangkok, makes him a first-rate narrator and moral teacher. As Ian Watt says, "... through Marlow Conrad discovered a new kind of relation to his audience, and one which enabled him to be more fully himself" (1980: 212).

Marlow, with his free use of symbols and images creates a real atmosphere of hell in Heart of Darkness. His own appointment is to replace a man who was killed in an argument over two "black hens". The two women who surround Kurtz are "black". The knitters are working on "black-wool". Marlow's first contact of the natives is with "black men" whose loins are bound in "black rags". The European traders are described with "black moustaches". The background of Kurtz's mysterious painting is "almost black-sombre". The river is "black" too. There are shining patches on the "black-creak". Even the natives's confidence is a "black display". Even thoughts are "black". The men themselves are no more than grains of sand in a "black-Sahara".

Marlow, with a Buddha like posture provides the spiritual aspect to the journey. Symbolically, the pose of Lord Buddha reveals that Marlow is going to maintain a kind of detachment and impersonality in reporting his experiences. It also means that his journey has a moral purpose. Phrases like "brooding gloom", "the gloom brooding over the upper reaches into the mystery of an unknown earth", "a brooding gloom in the sunshine", "a lurid glare under the stars," clearly indicate that the journey into the Congo
forest is going to be a bewildering one twinged with tragedy. Though Marlow tells in the beginning that he is going to provide only a "specific and concretely realized point of view" (F.R. Leavis 1958: 183), it ends up as a voyage of his own self discovery. His journey develops in him a "remote kinship with the wild and passionate uproar" (HOD: 186).

Marlow, who plays the part in the book which Conrad played in the actual journey, gives an account of the exploitation of the Congolese natives and the degradation of Kurtz, the hollowman. In fact, the story is primarily concerned with the effect of the country and of Kurtz on Marlow. This is clear enough from Marlow's own words:

It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me — and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough, too — and pitiful — not extraordinary in any way — not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light (HOD: 141).

The farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of Marlow's experience is the heart of darkness, the darkness of Africa and the darkness of Marlow's thoughts. Robert F. Haugh sees Marlow as "a brother to Kurtz... impelled by the powerful attraction of the man - or demon - to something in himself" (1957: 39).

The intensity and bewildering nature of Marlow's spiritual journey into the heart of darkness is heightened when the company's secretary, full of desolation and sympathy, makes him sign some documents. In the other room two women knit black wool feverishly. As Marlow says, "no t
many of those she looked at ever saw her again – not half by a long way" (HOD: 147). The house is also "as still as a house in a city of the dead" (HOD: 147). The doctor asks Marlow: "ever any madness in your family?" (HOD: 147). When he comes out of the house, he begins to feel slightly uneasy and there is something ominous in the atmosphere. It is as though he has been led into some conspiracy. Evidently, then, Marlow is caught quite irretrievably in a moral problem of his life.

On his way to the heart of darkness through the god-forsaken wilderness, he passes through various trading places with strange names and comes across negroes working in a railway construction connected together with a chain. Marlow is very much upset with these horrible sights and his sense of human solidarity and the concern for human dignity are revealed when he makes the following comment:

They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea. All their meagre breasts panted together, the violently dilated nostrils quivered, the eyes stared stonily up-hill. They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with complete, death-like indifference of unhappy savages (HOD: 154).

The humane heart of Marlow weeps when he finds a few negroes under a shade withdrawn to die. He is startled to find a white thread round their neck which symbolizes the mockery of European civilization. Their physical condition is such that they are not even able to stand on their legs.
Marlow is almost outraged when he interacts with the company’s Chief Accountant, the Manager, his fat uncle with the Eldorado Explorers, the Brick-Maker and the foreman—a boiler-maker in the Central Station. The Chief Accountant looks like a "hairdresser’s dummy" (HOD: 158). Even the smile of the manager is "unconscious" (HOD:163) which cannot be termed as the smile of a human being. His uncle resembles a "butcher in a poor neighbourhood" (HOD:181). The Brick-Maker looks like a Papier-mâché Mephistopheles” having nothing inside "but a little loose dirt" (HOD:171). All of them, uniformly, suffer from unprincipled lust and avarice for rivets. Without an exception, the entire lot is unscrupulous, selfish, greedy, callous and always involved in some insidious plot. Marlow rightly finds an air of intrigue in the Central Station.

In the Inner Station, Marlow’s interaction with the Russian youth reveals that Kurtz has become an atavistic man-hunter, has a private army of thousand strong native men, raids the interior villages at regular intervals for rivets and has gone to the extent of exterminating a large number of the natives. Kurtz has also succeeded in making them accept him as their god and even demands human sacrifices taking the highest seat among the devils of the land. From the account of the Russian it becomes clear that Kurtz lacked "restraint" and has been degraded to the level of an animal in the gratification of his various lusts. Again when the Russian discloses to Marlow that Kutz "hated all this and somehow he couldn't get away" (HOD:219), Marlow rightly thinks that:

The knowledge came to him at last—only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him, a terrible
vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude — and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core... (HOD: 221).

Now Marlow has to perform two difficult duties both as a narrator and as a moral teacher — to rescue the ailing Kurtz from that wretched place without any harm done to his pilgrims by the savages and to convince the reader that he is justified in his moral duty in extending moral support to Kurtz. That is why he ignores the contemptible hypocrisy of the Manager when he describes Kurtz's methods as "unsound" because "the time was not ripe or vigorous for action" and "Mr. Kurtz has done more harm than good to the company" (HOD: 227) and turns mentally to Kurtz for relief. In other words, Marlow aligns himself with Kurtz by refusing to discuss the matter in the Manager's terms. Rather, he declares to the Russian that "I am Mr. Kurtz's friend — in a way" and that "Mr. Kurtz's reputation is safe with me" (HOD: 228 - 29).

The bliss of Kurtz's rescue is shattered when Marlow is awakened that night by the sound of native drums and frenzied yells. When he casually glances into Kurtz's cabin, to his shock and utter dismay, it is empty. Marlow is completely unnerved and the moral shock he received is, "as if something altogether monstrous, intolerable to thought and odious to the soul, has been thrust upon me unexpectedly" (HOD: 231). He quietly goes ashore to bring Kurtz back again but he finds him crawling "on all-fours" towards the ritual fire. Marlow understands that it was:
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).

Marlow is quite aware that the wilderness and the darkness have an invincible power over man's moral being and warns Kurtz that unless he comes back with him he will be "utterly lost." Kurtz allows himself to be supported quietly back to the steam-boat. Even though he has succeeded in bringing back Kurtz, Marlow feels that Kurtz,

Had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the Man! He had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was alone, and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air (HOD : 234).

Marlow is morally outraged at Kurtz's participation in human sacrifices.

If Marlow believes, beyond doubt, that Kurtz has kicked the very earth to pieces, then, what makes him say that "Kurtz is a remarkable man?" It is because as Marlow himself says:

He struggled with himself, too. I saw it, — I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself (HOD : 235).

Kurtz asks Marlow to close the cabin shutter because he cannot bear to look at the wilderness and there follows a silence which is finally broken by the
cry of Kurtz at the invincible wilderness. "Oh, but I will wring your heart yet" (HOD: 238). His is an impenetrable darkness. Marlow sees,

On that ivory face of Kurtz the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror -- of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision -- he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath --

"The horror! The horror!" (HOD: 239).

Marlow blows the candle out and leaves the cabin. Suddenly the Manager's boy announces "Mistah Kurtz -- he dead" (HOD:240). Marlow went no more near the remarkable man who had pronounced a judgement upon the adventures of his soul on this earth. Kurtz's final stare was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, sharp enough to pierce all the hearts that beat in the darkness. He had summed up -- he had judged -- "the horror!"

He was undoubtedly a remarkable man and Marlow concludes:

That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last, and even beyond, when a long time after I heard once more, not his own voice, but the echo of his magnificent eloquence thrown to me from a soul as translucently pure as a cliff of crystal (HOD: 241-242).

In Lord Jim also Marlow fulfils his duty, both as a narrator and moral teacher. Throughout the novel, not even once, he expresses any affection to Jim directly. In spite of that he acts both as a narrator and guardian of Jim. Since the object of the official inquiry was not the fundamental why
but the superficial how of the affair, Marlow conducts his own inquiry through Jim, through his friend Stein, through the firm in Bangkok and through his own reflection upon Jim’s conduct and its bearing upon his own view of men and life. The inquiry is part psychological, part moral and the leap which Jim took from his ship into the deserters’s boat is a moral leap into darkness. And Marlow’s duty seems to bring back Jim from that darkness into the community of men to make him "one of us". The sequence of various revelations, at one stage, leads Marlow into a moral crisis that it would surely be a worse betrayal of human solidarity for him to abandon Jim than it was for Jim to have deserted the Patna.

Marlow begins his narration in the fifth chapter with an emphatic, "Oh, yes. I attended the inquiry" (LJ:26). What made him attend the inquiry? It is his faith in human solidarity that prompts him to attend the inquiry. When Marlow goes to the hospital to see someone, it so happens that he meets the Chief Engineer of Patna who is suffering from delirium and raving, brought about by a three day drinking bout. When Marlow casually mentions the Patna, the engineer remarks, " I saw her go down.... She was full of reptiles" (LJ:38). The climax of Marlow’s interview comes when the Chief Engineer reveals:

"The ship was full of them, you know, and we had to clear out on the strict Q. T.,” he whispered with extreme rapidity. "All pink. All pink – as big as mastiffs, with an eye on the top of the head and claws all round their ugly mouth. Ough! Ough!" (LJ:39).
Marlow is completely bewildered when he says:

They are all awake — millions of them. They are trampling on me!

Wait! Oh, Wait! I'll smash them in heaps like flies. Wait for me!

Help! He-e-elp!" (LJ:40).

Marlow leaves much to the reader's inference and stresses one point, that even now the Chief Engineer is not repentant and has nothing but contempt for the Patna's pilgrims. The importance of the episode is shown much later when Marlow explains Jim's reaction to that. This episode helps Marlow and, through Marlow, the readers to find out whether Jim is one among the white crew of Patna or if morally and spiritually, he stands apart.

Next Marlow takes up the Big Brierly episode. He is one of the two nautical assessors. At the age of thirty two, Marlow tells us that Brierly has reached the pinnacle of success in his profession as the captain of the crack ship of the Blue Star Line and so many prestigious medals for his exemplary service. In spite of all these achievements, Marlow understands soon that Brierly's appearance is actually as deceptive as that of Jim because he commits suicide a week after the end of the inquiry. Why? It is because the inquiry makes him feel like a fool all the time and Jim's moral courage to face the inquiry touches the unconscious realms of Brierly. Brierly's statements, "Why are we tormenting that young chap?.... Why should he eat all that dust?.... He's done for... Well, then let him creep twenty feet underground and stay there!" (LJ:49), provoke Marlow and now he begins to defend Jim and to be sympathetic to him. Through this episode Marlow intensifies the involvement of the readers with the moral issues in human life and also prepares a solid
ground to support Jim.

Now Marlow brings in the German skipper of the Patna who is already known to him. Like the Chief Engineer he has also been through a drinking bout. At the time of the official inquiry they recognize each other and the skipper makes a violent complaint to Marlow with passionate impudence:

"You Englishmen are all rogues.... That's what you English always make - make a tam' fuss - for any little thing, because I was not born in your tam' country. Take away my certificate. Take it. I don't want the certificate. A man like me don't want your verfluchte certificate. I spit on it. "He spat. "I vill an American citizen begome,"

he cried (LJ:31-32).

Marlow is simply stupefied with the total indifference, nonchallant arrogance and unrepentant attitude of the German skipper. Being a senior sea-man he has no respect for the sea-man's code. Deserting his ship with eight hundred helpless pilgrims in the middle of the sea in pitch darkness is a "little thing" for him. Whereas, Jim who is only twenty four, attends the inquiry dutifully and looks as though he has lost everything in life. Keeping in mind the callousness of the captain, Marlow rightly thinks that "the inquiry was a severe punishment to that Jim, and that his facing it - practically of his own free will - was a redeeming feature in his abominable case" (LJ: 51). Marlow succeeds in creating a kind of sympathy and respect for Jim in the minds of the readers. Indirectly he influences the readers to think that Jim is "one of
Finally, with the Malabar House episode Marlow convinces the readers that Jim is certainly "one of us". He even goes to the extent of inviting Jim to dine with him in the Malabar House, where he stays. In other words, both Jim and Marlow have already buried their differences and there would be no more questions in this world. This is an opportunity for Jim to make a clean breast. All these days, he was simply longing to find out a suitable person who would lend him a patient ear. That is why he asks Marlow, "I don't want to excuse myself; but I would like to explain — I would like somebody to understand — somebody — one person at least! You! Why not you?" (LJ:60). Since his appeal is so solemn and sincere that Marlow readily agrees.

Jim convinces Marlow that he is not a mean betrayer and was not afraid of death at the time of the crisis. After the fatal jump, his immediate reaction was to go back to the ship. Marlow invites the readers to actively participate in the predicament of Jim by putting innumerable questions:

Why this impulse? Do you see the significance? Why back to the very spot? Why not down alongside — if he meant drowning? Why back to the very spot, to see — as if his imagination had to be soothed by the assurance that all was over before death could bring relief? I defy any one of you to offer another explanation (LJ:84).
Jim also appreciates Marlow for having lent him a patient hearing:

"You are an awful good sort to listen like this," he said. "It does me
good. You don't know what it is to me. You don't.... You don't
know what it is for a fellow in my position to be believed — make a
clean breast of it to an elder man. It is so difficult — so awfully
unfair — so hard to understand" (LJ:94).

The Malabar House episode comes to an end with Marlow's emphatic
declaration: "And I believed him". In other words, a kind of human solidarity
is established between Marlow and Jim much in the nature of a parent and
child. Now it becomes Marlow's moral responsibility to rehabilitate Jim.

In fact, Marlow wants to do something concrete to keep
Jim's body and soul together and to see him loved, trusted and admired like a
hero. When Marlow hands over a recommendation letter, Jim thanks him
profusely: "It is noble of you" (LJ: 135); "You have given me
confidence" (LJ:136); and leaves him with the promise of starting his career
once again with a "clean slate" (LJ: 136). Unfortunately, wherever Jim goes,
the curse of the Patna also follows him. The mere mention of Patna is enough
to see Jim on the run with a face fit to scare little children. Though Marlow
had given many opportunities, they had been merely opportunities to earn his
bread. After a very long discussion with himself, Marlow goes to his friend
Stein who in turn puts Jim in Patusan as his trading agent where no one could
possibly have heard of the Patna.
After two years Marlow makes a visit to Patusan and he is happy to see Jim loved, trusted, admired and won for himself a high place in the day-to-day affairs and governance of Patusan. He has also found another father figure in Doramin, a brother and friend of his own age in Dain Waris, a mother as well as wife in Jewel and the most faithful servant and bodyguard in Tamb’ Itam—all due to Marlow’s timely help. But when Marlow leaves Jim he finds something in the air which indirectly foretells the approaching death of Jim:

I don’t know why, listening to him, I should have noted so distinctly the gradual darkening of the river, of the air; the irresistible slow work of the night settling silently on all the visible forms, effacing the outlines, burying the shapes deeper and deeper, like a steady fall of impalpable black dust (LJ: 224).

Marlow ends his narrative with the words: “And, suddenly I lost him...” (LJ:247). His audience break up forthwith under his abstract, pensive gaze. Each of them go away with his own impression, but there was only one man of all these listeners who was ever to hear the last word of the story. It came to him after two years in the form of a thick packet addressed in Marlow’s upright and angular handwriting. There is also a separate letter to his special audience and the tone of the letter is sometimes personal, sometimes philosophical, but generally it reveals Marlow’s love and affection for Jim, how Marlow is affected by the death of Jim and how he accepts the natural order of the universe in a resigned manner. Marlow’s letter concludes with the words: “He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic” (LJ:306).
Aravali, Mu.Va's prototype for the supra man, appears in Alli and Nencil Oru Mul. In Alli we meet a young Aravali and in Nencil Oru Mul a mature Aravali, old and retired from service. Though he is simply a B.A., L.T., a teacher, he is a well-read scholar and proficient in all moral literature in Tamil. Ramanlinka Swamikal, Teyumagavar, Ramakrishna Adikal and Ramatirrtar are his gurus. He is a source of inspiration for the younger generation and a beacon for the suffering humanity. Like Marlow, he is ever ready to go anywhere to perform his moral duties. The matured Aravali has gathered many disciples to carry out his moral duties.

In Alli, except Syamala, all other characters are brought in contact with Aravali. Alli, her father, Sivakoluntu, her brother, Somasunradaram and her friend, Inpavalli are immensely benefited by him. Cuppurattinam the protagonist of the novel and his spiteful Aunt, in fact, Aravali's mother-in-law, are also brought in contact with him. Since they are prejudiced, always found in a murderous plot and approach him with contempt and enmity, they are left to their own fate. In spite of their evil designs, he is always sympathetic to them.

Aravali as a teacher stresses the moral enlightenment rather than intellectual achievement. He maintains a close relationship with all his students. Since his scholarship, simplicity, magnanimity and love of humanity inspire confidence in them, they come forward to share their personal problems. Somasundaram, Alli's brother, is one of his students who approaches him to make a confession of his licentious life. Somasundaram has become physically very weak, partially lost his eye-sight, memory and the power of concentration due to his excessive involvement in masturbation and illegal sexual relationship.
with an immoral woman. In the way of an answer to some of his questions on sexual matters, Aravāli imparts sex-education to the modern youth. Aravāli answers Somasundaram’s first question, whether the same sex with one’s own wife is not harmful to one’s body:

The sexual relationship between husband and wife after marriage is something like taking butter milk. It goes on in a limited way. There is no excessive attraction in it. No problem arises out of it. But an illegal relationship with an immoral woman is something like taking arrack. It’ll never be in a limited way. There is always excessive attraction in it. There is also the constant fear of being observed and caught. The fear and the longing increase the illegal pleasure. So it cannot be stopped easily. You know the human folly: “Two in the bush is better than one in hand”. So, the mind will never be satisfied and the longing becomes an endless affair. There is another reason also. The woman who comes for illegal pleasure never cares for your body. Whereas, your wife is worried about your health and so takes immense care of your body (A:137).

Again, for the question whether the body will be spoiled if the feelings are suppressed, Aravāli answers in his characteristic way:

People with overwhelming desires who suffer without a let out very often spoil their bodies. At the same time people who have control over their bodies, who know the ways and means to reduce such desires, never spoil their bodies. Even if the bodies of such people are spoiled, it may be due to some other reason, like constipation but certainly not due to suppression of feelings. Such a talk is far
from truth. This is, in fact, a superstitious belief. This is something
like an illiterate finding fault with the pen (A:138).

Aravali's talk on marriage is quite revealing. He strongly believes
that unequal combinations ever terminate in disgust. If a strong man marries
a weak woman or a healthy woman marries a sick man their sexual life ends in
despair. Similarly, if an intellectual happens to marry an illiterate woman,
their life also becomes very unpleasant. Intellectual, spiritual, moral and
physical similarities between husband and wife are sure to make such a married
life a success. Above all, if there is real love between husband and wife, it
takes life to the highest point of happiness. Sometimes the sharpness of senses
also proves to be too dangerous. A dull man has dull feelings and, therefore,
his sexual desire is also bound to be dull. Whereas, if a man has sharp senses,
his feelings are also sharp and therefore his sexual desire will also be sharp.
Such people develop frequent sexual desires which turn irresistible and
demanding. Such people become quite vulnerable and, therefore, they must
be very careful. If mathematical wizards and creative artists are not able to
live a disciplined life, this is the reason. So, whenever young people come for
advice regarding their marriage, he simply asks them to find out which human
category he or she belongs to and choose accordingly. Any violation in this
regard would end in disgust.

One of the outstanding virtues of Aravali is his sympathetic
attitude towards everyone. Cuppurattinam wants to eliminate Aravali because
of his enmity towards him. He bribes the school peon to poison his tea. But
it is prevented by the timely intervention of a student. When the whole school
wants to hand over the peon to the police for his attempted murder, Aravali persuades his colleagues to drop the matter and simply forgives the peon. Later, when Alli tells him that the peon should have been punished, he replies spiritedly:

What have we achieved so far by punishing the criminals? Crimes are, in fact, increasing day by day. We use our energy to kill a mosquito simply because it has bitten us. We have built courts and jails and spend a lot of money for its functioning and maintenance. But we never think of eradicating the mosquito menace by cleaning the ditches, the permanent breeding ground of mosquitoes. We also never think why the poor people become tools in the hands of rich people to perpetrate crimes and the ways and means to prevent such exploitation (A:163).

At the same time, Aravali does not want Alli to develop any hatred towards her husband. He is equally sympathetic towards Cuppurattinam even though he had attempted once to molest his wife when she was alone in her mother’s house. However, he wants both Alli and Cuppurattinam to live together and so he makes an earnest plea to her:

Please don’t develop any bad thoughts in your mind against your husband. I know you have left him and also I know what type of a man Cuppurattinam is. Even then I tell you this. No one is a born criminal. Cuppurattinam may come to you one day and you may also accept him. So, don’t develop any ill-feeling in your mind. I tell you this from my own experience. Our mind must always be pure and kind even to our enemies. If we develop such an attitude,
It is beneficial both to us and our enemies. Why should we harden our mind? Where is the need to change it into a volcano? Why should we make it an unpleasant place with stones and weeds? Rather, let our mind be a paradise, a paradise with breeze, beautiful flowers and pleasant streams. The great rishis, saints and leaders have lived only such a life.... In human life, if one thing can be brought under our control, it is our mind. Let us preserve it as a fertile land where only useful, pleasant plants grow and the weeds are not given a chance to grow. In fact, this is the very secret of success in human life (A:168-69).

Aravāli is worried over the deterioration of moral standards in human life. What are the reasons for the fall of moral standards? In his view, the main reason is that undue importance is given to money. Our society has become a money-oriented society. Even in choosing a course of study, people very often think whether it would bring money and prosperity. Even teachers with higher qualifications are not respected in society for the reason that they always live in poverty. Aravāli takes Civakoluntu himself to task when he illustrates his point:

I speak only the truth — please don’t be angry with me. Take your own daughter’s marriage. Had I come to you and asked to give your daughter in marriage for a B.A., L.T. teacher, would you have given her? B.A., L.T. means five years of collegiate education. Even then would you have given? Certainly not. The teacher may be a good man. You might have read in books that the teaching profession is a
noble one. Even then, you wouldn't have given! Whereas, you came forward to give your daughter in marriage to a B.E. holder, even without bothering to go into his antecedents. What is the reason? Both the degrees put together cannot bring as much money as the single B.E. degree in course of time. So, there is no justification in putting the blame on others. We, too, have our share in the evils of the present day society. That is why I was so firm in my stand not to take up Cypurattinam's attempt to poison me to the police.

(A:172-73).

The real moral crisis arises when both Alli and Inpavalli fall in love with Aravali. His suffering from typhoid fever brings them closer. But neither of them express their love openly. When he is fully recovered, he expresses his desire to go to Madras immediately. He openly tells them that he would have gone long back but for his illness. Aravali puts in unequivocal terms that if they have fallen in love with him, he is not responsible for that. Later, when Alli hands over a letter of Inpavalli reminding him also of her previous letter, Aravali replies:

I didn't reply to that letter deliberately. That was of course the reason to leave Bangalore abruptly. It is better for both men and women, however good they are , to keep a distance as long as the physical struggle continues. I noticed Inpavalli showing me undue affection when I was there. As a mark of gratitude and human dignity, I kept quiet, without wounding her feelings. As far as possible, don't take this much liberty with any man in the future. We men, too, must behave only like that. By such an attitude, we
may lose human experience and knowledge, but it saves us 
permanently from unnecessary disappointment and grief. It is enough 
if we make use of the knowledge and experience we already have 
(A:281).

Aravali's moral duty in the novel becomes complete when 
he answers Alli's question whether he found any defect in the character of 
Inpavalli. In fact, Aravali says that she reminds him of Manimegalai in 
Cilapathikaram. She is born only to serve humanity and if many women 
sacrifice their lives like Inpavalli, the world of women will be transformed 
and the world of men will also be enlightened. Whatever is applicable to her, 
he says, is also applicable to him. He feels that many men like him have to 
live a strict bachelor's life to reform the world. Finally he says:

The experience we have got in our respective married lives is more 
than enough to guide others and lead a happier life in the remaining 
period of our life. Physical struggles may come and go, then and 
there. It is a natural process. As we take bath everyday to keep our 
body clean so also our mind should be kept clean with noble 
thoughts (A:282).

The mature Aravali appears in Nencil Oru Mul only at the 
end of the novel when the moral crisis is at its peak. But the spirit and moral 
flavour of Aravali is kept pervading right from the beginning by his devoted 
disciples. It is Parvati who introduces Aravali to the readers with her 
characteristic vivacity:
I don't think there is any one with such a complete knowledge of human life and immense intellectual capacity as Aravālī. We already know so many professors. We have listened to great orators and read eminent writers. We have also listened to the speeches of great national leaders and read their biographies. But I have never come across such knowledge and clarity in anyone other than Aravālī (NOM:96).

Parvati says that she is very much indebted to Aravālī because only on his recommendation that her father had sent her to college. Aravālī's influence on Parvati is to be seen in her dress, talk, outlook, attitude and view of life. Her present simplicity is one of the influences of Aravālī. She herself answers to the question whether it has done her any good:

Formerly, my mind had never been at rest. Whenever I saw a woman with a new saree, my mind would simply become restless. I would long for such a saree, as to when, where and how I could get such a one, how could I get money, whether father would give me or not. Even after going to the cloth store, my mind would simply waver and I was never able to select a saree. Even if I selected, seldom I came out with satisfaction. The same condition prevailed at the time of wearing it.... But now my mind is completely under my control. If I go to the cloth store nowadays, I finish everything in no time.

Don't you think this is a great benefit?" (NOM:104-5).

But the depth of Aravālī's intellectual and philosophical influence on Parvati is to be seen when she answers the question of Kintra, her class-mate whether the great people are also subject to animal instincts:
Of course, however good the land may be, the weeds will grow. It should be removed periodically. It is because the seeds of weeds are mixed with the land. Whenever it rains, they grow naturally. Similarly, in the minds of men, the animal instincts are mixed too. Whenever and wherever there is opportunity, it raises its head. However educated one may be, one is not completely free from this instinct. It is mixed in our flesh and veins. It is because the human body has its own evolution. For millions and millions of years, generation after generation, this instinct continues in the human body. Therefore, whenever they raise their heads, it is our duty to weed them out carefully. This process of action and counter-action continues as long as we live (NOM: 103).

Besides Pārvatai, Arvāli has a number of young admirers. Kannalagan, Tirumalai and Anparaci are some of them and they are all of the same opinion that he is remarkably a great man, a granary of human wisdom with an exceptional clarity of thought. If these youngsters are morally sound, intellectually superior, spiritually strong and live a disciplined life, the credit goes to Arvāli. Anparaci explains to Vaṭivu how much they are devoted to him:

Though he loves things that are past, he is a man of rational thinking. He does not want anyone to believe anything blindly.... He explains religious truths in a scientific way and we understand them easily. As far as our life on this earth is concerned, he says, we must live a disciplined, decent, honest and a morally sound life without bothering about hell and heaven, and pass all stages of life to finally die a natural death with utmost satisfaction. He is an ardent lover of
Tiruvalluvar, Swamy Vivēkānanda and Rāmatīrttar and, very often compares their ideas, with foreign intellectuals.... Love of children, gardening, involvement in arts and mystic communion with god are very essential for better human life. It is absolutely impossible to find superstitious beliefs in his speech (NOM : 339-40).

When the moral conflict is at its peak, Vaṭivu, the protagonist of the novel, wants to see Aravāli and to her surprise Aravāli himself appears before her with a marriage proposal between her son and Anparaaci. Since both are his disciples and deeply in love with each other, he feels that it is his moral duty to see them married. But Vaṭivu’s silence surprises him. He asks Vaṭivu to tell him frankly whether she has any objection to that girl or she has already selected someone for her son. Vaṭivu’s answer is only her tears. Aravāli’s excellent conduct certificate to Anparaaci does not have any effect on Vaṭivu. The more he talks about the girl, the more guilty Vaṭivu feels. Aravāli himself is moved over her anguish and uncontrollable tears. He asks her frankly to come out with the real cause so that her son may be convinced. Now Vaṭivu, without any other alternative, confesses her crime: "I am a criminal. They are like brother and sister" (NOM : 432).

Though it is a shock to Aravāli, he continues his moral duty by consoling Vaṭivu that she has not done anything abhorrent. Infact, she has become a noble woman by confessing her crime. So, with the soothing words of Aravāli, Vaṭivu feels that she is spiritually regenerated. She also feels that her mind has become light and free from the thorn that had been pricking all these years. Subsequently, in response to Aravāli’s advice, she changes her living place into a humble one and opens an orphanage. Aravāli’s moral duty
becomes complete when Vatitu decides to dedicate the remaining part of her life for the cause of society.

I

The other supra men also, like their prototypes, both in Conrad and Mu.Va., perform moral duties. It is Conrad's primary conviction that truth alone is the justification of any fiction. It is to maintain, preserve and uphold that truth, he hands over the narration as well as the moral duty to the Language Teacher. In the "Author's Note" to Under Western Eyes, Conrad justifies the role of the Language Teacher amidst a lot of criticism:

What I was concerned with mainly was the aspect, the character, and the fate of the individuals as they appeared to the Western Eyes of the old teacher of languages. He himself has been much criticised; but I will not at this late hour undertake to justify his existence. He was useful to me and therefore I think that he must be useful to the reader both in the way of comment and by the part he plays in the development of the story. In my desire to produce the effect of actuality it seemed to me indispensable to have an eye-witness of the transactions in Geneva. I needed also a sympathetic friend for Miss Haldin, who otherwise would have been too much alone and unsupported to be perfectly credible. She could have had no one to whom she would give a glimpse of her idealistic faith, of her great heart, and of her simple emotions (UWE: viii-ix).

As any language is governed by strict rules, the Language Teacher is
also very strict as far as moral principles of life are concerned. He admits to his own inadequacies as far as high gifts of imagination and expression are concerned. Since he had been a teacher of languages for many years, he lacked the faculties of imagination and insight of an ordinary person. He also says humorously, that to a teacher of languages there comes a time when the world is but a place of many words and man appears a mere talking animal not much more wonderful than a parrot. Whatever account the language teacher gives, he says:

It is based on a document; all I have brought to it is my knowledge of the Russian language, which is sufficient for what is attempted here. The document of course, is something in the nature of a journal, diary, yet not exactly that in its actual form. For instance, most of it was written up from day to day, though all the entries are dated. Some of these entries cover months of time and extend over dozens of pages. All the earlier part is a retrospect, in a narrative form, relating to an event which took place about a year before (UWE: 3-4).

As Frederick R. Karl points out, "the teacher himself is a Marlow-like character who remains more or less static during the course of the novel, but is useful as a chorus, as a confident to Miss Haldin, and most of all for providing the practical mechanics of the narrative" (1959:6). The Language Teacher begins his narration after giving a detailed account of Russian Autocracy and the consequences of violating any of the repressive rules of it. It is within such a political atmosphere that Haldin commits a political murder and takes refuge in Razumov's room, but Razumov betrays him to the police. The police exploit the helplessness of Razumov and ultimately he lands in
Geneva as a spy of the Russian Autocracy to watch and report the activities of the Chateau Borel Revolutionary Group. Once the scene is shifted to Geneva, the Language Teacher comes to the aid of the readers by introducing new characters, especially Mrs. Haldin and her daughter Nathalie Haldin. It is he who helped them to settle down in Geneva and Miss Haldin to undergo a course of reading the best of English authors. It is, again, the Language Teacher who informs of the assassination of Mr. de P -- to them without understanding the intensity of it. Subsequently, when Miss Haldin expresses her anxiety about her brother's long silence, he simply consoles her that no news is always good news without knowing that it was not so in autocratic Russia. Soon, he comes to know through the newspaper from London that the assassin of Mr de P -- was Haldin himself. It was enough to give him a sleepless, nervous and nightmarish night. The next day with a heavy heart he shares the grief with the family and when Miss Haldin thinks that her brother might have been betrayed by some false friend or simply by some cowardly creature, he simply keeps quiet.

The Language Teacher, like Marlow, uses maximum ironies in portraying the infra humanity -- Peter Ivonovitch and Madame de S--. Peter Ivonovitch is described as "the noble arch priest of the Revolution" (UWE: 210), "Europe's greatest feminist" (UWE: 205). On another occasion the Language Teacher remarks on the uncommon effect of Ivonovitch's dark glasses:

He suggested a monk or a prophet, a robust figure of some desert-dweller—something Asiatic; and the dark glasses in conjunction with this costume made him more mysterious than ever in the subdued
light (UWE: 329).

He is also referred to as an "enormous blind teacher" (UWE: 329) with his dark glasses. Madame de S—is referred to as an "ancient painted mummy", a "galvanized corpse" and her smile suggests to Razumov a "grinning skull" (UWE: 215). The Language Teacher has to protect Miss Haldin from their evil designs.

Captain Tom Lingard is the very incarnation of generosity and an ardent lover of womanhood. He is known both among his friends and foes as "Raja Laut—the King of the Sea", "Tuan Tom" and "Red-Eyed Tom". He appears in the first three novels—Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands and The Rescue. In The Rescue he is the dominating character from the beginning to the end. In An Outcast of the Islands, he acts as the nemesis-figure. In Almayer's Folly, though he is only in the background, his personality and the treasure of gold and diamonds he discovered in one of the islands up the river dominate the events. Captain Lingard is a born sea-man who knows every inch of the various seas and almost every island. It is the discovery of one such river that makes him rich and prosperous. As a matter of fact, he has been successful all along and as he says, "never dropped anything in my life" (R:100). Lingard's courage, frankness, volubility, honesty and immense generosity have won him innumerable friends in the trading and sea-faring world. He is a master, a lover and a servant of the sea. The sea took him young and gave him his fierce aspect, his loud voice, fearless eyes, guiltless heart, and universal love of creation. Tom Lingard grew rich on the sea, by the sea and loved it with the ardent affection of a lover and took liberties with it as a pet child might do with its parents.
Tom Lingard is quite unselfish and always ready to preserve the seaman’s code. Whenever, wherever and whoever was in danger, Lingard would appear there whatever might be the risk to his personal safety, his brig and his crew. When Lingard brings Willems to Sambir, Almayer becomes furious and in a choking voice reminds him of his previous generous actions and how such generosity backfired and caused innumerable problems to his personal life, the vessel and the crew and sometimes the loss of lives of his beloved crew:

Yes! It has always been so. Always. As far back as I can remember.

Don’t you recollect? What about that half-starved dog you brought on board in Bangkok in your arms… It went mad next day and bit the serang. You don’t mean to say you have forgotten? The best serang you ever had! …. He died in his fits. Now, didn’t you? Two wives and ever so many children the man left…. And when you went out of your way and risked your ship to rescue some Chinamen from a water-logged junk in Formosa Straits, that was also a clever bit of business. Wasn’t it? Those damned Chinamen rose on you before forty-eight hours. They were cut-throats, those poor fishermen. You knew they were cut-throats before you made up your mind to run down on a lee shore in a gale of wind to save them. A mad trick

(OI : 137).

Tom Lingard is loved and respected both by good and bad people. The one-eyed evil-minded Babalatchi admits:” Among the whites, who are devils, you are a man” (OI "187). Aissa, a true representative of Malayan tropical savages, while appealing to Lingard on behalf of Willems, says:
Wait! .... Stay. I have heard. Men often spoke by the fires ... men of my people. And they said of you -- the first on the sea -- they said that to men's cries you were deaf in battle, but after ... No! even while you fought, your ears were open to the voice of children and women. They said ... that. Now I, a woman, I ... " (OI:202).

The people of Hassim and Immada love and believe in Lingard more than their own god:

But what appealed to him most was the silent, the complete, unquestioning, and apparently uncurious, trust of these people. They came away from death straight into his arms as it were, and remained in them passive as though there had been no such thing as doubt or hope or desire. This amazing unconcern seemed to put him under a heavy load of obligation (R : 88).

Women and children are special objects of love and affection for Lingard. Mrs. Almayer was rescued from pirates when she was a little girl. He adopted and educated her. When she became a woman, he gave her in marriage to Almayer making him his business partner. On another occasion when little Nina held his moustaches in her little fingers with an affectionate goodwill, it brought unaccustomed tears into his little red-eyes. His joy found no bounds when the little child said waving her little hand: " You have been away fighting with many men. Ali says so. You are a mighty fighter. Ali says so. On the great sea far away, away, away" (OI:161). Subsequently he takes the child to Macassar and with the care of Mr & Mrs.Vinck, gives her decent education.
Though his entire plan is upset and Willems betrays him for the love of Aissa, Lingard does not show her any contempt and declares: "You are a woman, whose heart, I believe, is great enough to fill a man's breast; but still you are a woman, and to you, I, Rajah Laut, have nothing to say" (Ol: 202). Again, when Willems deserts his wife, Lingard appeals to him not to abandon that woman: "I won't have that poor woman tormented. I will see to it that you are not separated for long. Trust me!" (Ol: 42).

Dutifully, he brings Willems's wife and son to Sambir in his own brig after making all arrangements with his friend Craig in Palembang to give him a fresh start as a manager or a partner.

Such morally-prone wise old characters we find in the Mu.Vavian fictional world also. Meykantār is one such wise old moral teacher who appears in the novel Maṅkuṭicai. It is he who gives a moral flavour and meaning to the entire novel and brings back the much disappointed and disillusioned man, Meyyappan, into the divine world of peace and grace. He is treated with immense respect by everyone around him. Throughout the novel, not even once does he speak. It is because he does not believe in speech as a medium. He expresses his mind by gestures and signs and sometimes writes on a piece of paper. He is quite a scholar in many fields. He is an expert in the Indian system of Philosophy. He is well-versed in the Bible and also the moral literature in Tamil. He knows music. Above all, he is a scientist of immense capability. Even Professor Narendar, a doctorate in science, admires his knowledge in science and seeks clarifications from him. He is proficient in the English language also. He has clarity of thought in religious matters and finds truth in everything. He treats both the breeze and the storm, the good
and the evil, with equanimity.

Murugaiah is the youngest of the Mu. Vavian moral teachers. Unlike Meykantār and Aṟavāḷi, he has his own family. His domestic life is a model to the world — how a husband and wife should live after marriage. They think, speak and act together. Like Aṟavāḷi, he is a school-teacher endowed with extraordinary human wisdom. Tirukkural is the breath of his life. Tiruvalluvar and Tolstoy are his gurus. He is extremely generous, believes in human tolerance and ahimsa. He is not even in the habit of taking tea or coffee. When asked what made him avoid such common domestic drinks, he answers with his characteristic humility:

A body should be preserved carefully. It is enough if the body gets as much food as it requires to do the normal work. Other items are unnecessary. If we limit our necessities, life will be pleasant, worries can be reduced (VM:121).

The influence of Murugaiah is also seen in his wife, Cuṭarvilī. She is equally simple, very polite in her talk and quite affectionate to everyone. When she is asked to wear at least a silk saree and a minimum of gold jewels, she replies:

I've been told that there are millions and millions of people without gold or diamond jewels. Health of the body can be maintained very well without such ornaments. Luxury always ends in despair. Simple life always brings happiness. It is enough if we preserve the natural beauty of the body (VM:125).
It is the love of Murugaiah that has completely conquered her heart and they talk in one voice.

Both Kamalakkannar and Celvanāyakam are great intellectuals. The former is a renowned Professor of Psychology and the latter a widely respected district Collector. Both their wives are childless and beautiful and betayers carrying a criminal within them. Both the Professor and the Collector are humble, sympathetic, immensely generous and are always ready to help the ailing humanity. Both of them are influenced by western thoughts. They are extremely kind towards women, in fact, strive to bring them out of their superstitious beliefs and traditional domestic fold; let them know what happens around them and advocate equal rights to them in every field. Kamalakkannar propagates the ideas of Tirukkural to the world and Celvanāyakam, with equal vigour, the exaltation of women through Peṇnin Perumai.

II

The moral and narrative responsibilities of the Language Teacher increases several fold once Razumov arrives in Geneva. He participates actively in the development of the events after that. During the first meeting between Razumov and Miss Haldin, he brings out the innocence of Miss Haldin and the indifference of Razumov. He thinks rightly that Razumov has something to hide. It seems to him that Razumov is not at all willing to meet either Miss Haldin or himself. He also understands beyond doubt that Razumov has nothing but contempt for him. He also notices that there is a hidden and inexplicable sneer in each of his reluctant answers and all the time he is retorted
by Razumov with extreme contempt. He bears all the insults keeping in mind his moral responsibilities.

Even though the Language Teacher uses all his cleverness, he is not able to get a clear 'Yes' or 'No' in the matter of Haldin. Finally he asks Razmov with a kind of determination whether Haldin is a, "hero to you, or ..." (UWE: 191). Even now Razumov answers with a tinge of irony in his tone. When Razumov is about to leave the place, he tells him that Miss Haldin is of the opinion that her brother had been betrayed to the police in some way. To his surprise, Razumov sat down suddenly and both of them looked at each other without winking for a considerable time. The Language Teacher understands beyond any doubt that Razumov has played a role in the betrayal of Haldin to the police. He has also succeeded in making Razumov think rightly that it is no longer possible to continue his shameful existence. Finally he puts forward his impression of Razumov after that very long meeting:

The way he had behaved to me could not be put down to mere boorishness. There was something else under his scorn and impatience. Perhaps, I thought, with sudden approach to hidden truth, it was the same thing which had kept him over a week, nearly ten days, indeed, from coming near Miss Haldin. But what it was I could not tell (UWE: 197).

Razumov's subsequent sufferings and humiliations, the news that Ziemianitch has committed suicide due to unbearable remorse over the death of Haldin and Mrs. Haldin's total indifference during his meeting with her make him realise the power of human solidarity and ultimately he is led to the altar of confession.
If there is one thing that Tom Lingard could not tolerate, it is "betrayal". He would not forgive anyone who acts against "justice". If one person makes him furious and provokes his boundless generosity in the entire period of his life, it is Willems, who betrays his trade secrets to Syed Abdulla in the evil company of his enemies, Lakamba and Babalatchi, for some money to pay for old Omar to win his daughter, Aissa. Almayer's subsequent account of Willems' arrogant behaviour in the company of Arab scoundrels, the looting of firearms from the warehouse of Lingard & Co., are enough to provoke the old seaman to grind his teeth with mad rage. Almayer's earlier complaint against Lingard, "your tender heart bleeds only for what is poisonous and deadly" (OI:137) becomes true. As far as Lingard is concerned:

Willems appeared to him as a figure belonging already wholly to the past—a figure that could come in no way into his life again. He had made up his mind, and the thing was as well as done. In his weary thoughts he had closed this fatal, in explicable, and horrible episode in his life. The worst had happened. The coming days would see the retribution (OI: 193).

Willems, when he faces Lingard, to escape from his wrath puts the blame for his betrayal first on Almayer and then on Aissa. Subsequently, when he appeals to Lingard, "Captain Lingard... anything... a deserted island... anywhere... I promise" (OI:225), Lingard becomes furious and asks him to "shut up" (OI:225). In a contemptuous tone he orders Willems:
You shall stay here.... you are not fit to go amongst people. Who could suspect you, who could guess, who could imagine what's in you? I couldn't! You are my mistake. I shall hide you here. If I let you out you would go amongst unsuspecting men, and lie, and steal, and cheat for a little money or for some women. I don't care about shooting you. It would be the safest way though. But I won't. Do you expect me to forgive you. To forgive one must have been angry and become contemptuous, and there is nothing in me now — no anger, no contempt, no disappointment. To me you are not Willems, the man I befriended... you are not a human being that may be destroyed or forgiven. You are a bitter thought, a something without a body and that must be hidden... you are my shame... nothing can help you. Nobody will. You are neither white nor brown. You have no colour as you have no heart. Your accomplices have abandoned you to me because I am still somebody to be reckoned with. You are alone but for that woman there. You say you did this for her. Well, you have her (OI:225-26).

When Willems finally expresses his desire to meet him again, Lingard leaves the place with an emphatic "Never!" (OI:229).

Meykantār's moral duty begins when Meyyappan joins him as a guest. Meykantār is very much impressed with Meyyappan and his devotional bent of mind and his capacity to recite hymns of Rāmalinka
Swāmikal, Tāyumānavar and Manickavāsakar. During his stay with Meykantār and Professor Narendar, he falls ill and is looked after with parental care. In a state of delirium, Meyyappan reveals his agitated mind — how he was falsely implicated in a murder case by Kesavarāyan, his six year imprisonment, returning home after the jail term, the cold reception by his wife and his subsequent leaving home in search of peace. Meykantār notes down all the names and phrases he used in his raving and now it becomes his moral duty to prepare him as early as possible to join his wife and children.

After Meyyappan's complete recovery, Meykantār points out how agitated he was in his state of delirium and what all he revealed. Meyyyappan is quite ashamed to have made his personal life a public one. But soon he changes his attitude as Meykantār inspires his confidence. Meykantār slowly comes to Meyyappan's domestic problem. He tells Meyyappan that in domestic life problems will crop up then and there. What matters is how we approach it and not how we are going to solve it. He illustrates with his own life as an example:

I too had misunderstandings with and bitterness towards my wife.

But she cannot live three days separated from me. In my absence, she cannot even eat. She lived entirely for me. She worshipped me as God. She died in my arms. After all, what can these misunderstandings and bitter thoughts do? A good husband and wife cannot be separated by any force on earth. Death alone can do that.

(MK: 226).

Meykantār finds a vast difference between the married lives of Meyyappan and Professor Narendar and consoles and advises the former:
Don't worry. Women like Narendra's wife lived a conservative life. Whereas, women like your wife live with modern thoughts. Many women are like this in modern families.... Many modern families function like business-houses. Both husband and wife are seriously concerned with the mutual loss and gain from each other. In other words, practical advantage between husband and wife is the basis of modern families. It has become the order of the day. So, be advised that we have to live swimming against such social currents (MK:228).

Meykantār also gives some practical suggestions to Meyyappan to live with his wife, making certain sacrifices. Meyyappan rightly understands that it is his false prestige that has separated him from his wife. The moral crisis is almost solved by Meykantār when he asks Meyyappan:

I don't find any unusual defects in your wife. Mainly there are two common defects in the world: one is superstition the other is luxury. You need not hate your wife for these common defects. Just leave her to follow her own likes and dislikes. If she corrects herself in course of time, that is well and good. Otherwise, just leave it. What is the use of trying to correct an individual when the whole world is suffering from the same defect? Let her take her own time. Just leave it (MK: 229).

Meyyappan takes it in the right sense and is very happy and thankful to Meykantār to have made him realise his folly.
Meykantar also gives some useful advice to Meyyappan on how to tackle people like Kesavarayan in everyday life. First, we must realise that we are all children of God. God has created both good and evil. There is meaning in this creation. It is our duty to love our fellow human beings, however bad they may be. If we hate and treat bad people with contempt, it amounts to acting against the will of God. Man has no right to kill his fellow human beings as well as other creations of God, however bad or harmful they are. Both good and evil co-exist and are inseparable. There is variety in God's creation. Not only we, but also God, knows that poisonous snakes and other cruel animals are harmful to peaceful human existence. But God has created them to develop fighting qualities in human beings. For example,

We all like flowers. Shall we like them if they are of the same colour?

Different colours are the beauty of creation. We get sweet music only when we combine different notes. Is there any meaning in hating a particular sound or colour? What right have we got to hate them? Only the dramatist knows the importance and usefulness of his characters. Can we say that a particular character is bad so I don't like it? Who are we to say that? Similarly what right have we got to hate a man simply because he is bad? Do we know the purpose of his creation by God? (MK:455).

So, he asks Meyyappan simply to forget Kesavarayan and concentrate on his personal life. There are other agencies of God to punish people like him. As far as possible, he asks Meyyappan to develop the habit of loving the entire creation of God without any discrimination. That is the only way to keep both our body and mind healthy.
Murugaiah is not happy with his brother-in-law, Tānappan, going to court against his step-mother. Equally he is unhappy over the vulgar display of luxury during his marriage. He does not approve of his brother-in-law starting a military hotel and serving illicit liquor there to earn quick money. Now it becomes his moral duty to make his brother-in-law realise that money alone does not bring happiness in human life and we are trusted and respected in the society only when people find that we are simple, honest, unselfish and quite satisfied with simple food and a small house without luxury. However, the opportunity comes in the form of Tīru Vi. Kalyāna Sundarānar, a moral philosopher who has come to the town to deliver a speech on "Moral Values in Human Life". Murugaiah takes his brother-in-law to that meeting, of course, much against his will. But, once the meeting starts, Tānappan is mesmerised and gets involved in the speech with rapt attention. The speaker observes:

Many young boys are spoiled by bad environments. Some are deserted by their own parents. Ill-treatment during childhood, denial of food, clothes and education, frustration and a hopeless future are some of the reasons that drive them to criminal ways of life....
Where there is no water, there cannot be natural growth of plants. Similarly, where there is no love, there cannot be a natural growth of mind. If a young heart is wounded, cheated, disappointed and disillusioned, there will grow arrogance, perversion and vengeance

(VM:218).

Tānappan's unconscious realms are deeply touched for the first time in his life. Whatever is said in the meeting was applicable to his personal life, one way or other. It seemed to him as if the meeting itself was arranged exclusively
for his benefit. He wants to fill up the moral vacuum within him. As a first remedial step, he withdraws selling illicit liquor in his hotel. He decides not to contest anymore elections. He compromises with his step-mother and starts building a school for poor children. Above all, he is always found in the company of great moral books.

Kamalakkannar, a highly educated professor of Psychology, is an ardent lover of Tamil Culture and Moral Literature. His greatness as a professor is to be seen in his life long service in propagating the ideas of Tirukkural, a great Tamil moral book. He is capable of interpreting that great book both in Tamil and English with utmost clarity. He is well-known all over the country and has even made a visit to America in this connection. His deep knowledge, profound desire for the liberation of women, sympathetic and generous attitude, have brought many a sinner back to normal life. Nirmalā Devi, his wife, is a fitting example.

Nirmalā Devi comes in contact with Kamalakkannar during one of his moral services at Bombay. She is already carrying a criminal within her. With a guilty conscience of her ugly past, she attends all the moral lectures delivered by Kamalakkannar. His confidence inspiring personality and the inborn love for his fellow human beings force her to follow him wherever he goes. Her admiration for him soon changes into love and ultimately it ends in marriage. Kamalakkannar practises his concept of fidelity in his own life: "so long as a woman lives with a man and if she is faithful to him, it is more than enough. Such a faithfulness is called fidelity " (KT:218). He gives his wife complete freedom since he is an ardent lover of woman's liberation. In four years of married life not even once he entered his wife's
private room, never thought of examining her personal things, never questioned her activities. In fact, he is proud of having her as his wife and appreciates the domestic services rendered by her to him.

But such a devoted wife runs away from him one day leaving a letter of confession. He is surprised to know the past history of his wife. His reaction after reading the letter,

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), makes us sympathize with her and, in fact, this is the main moral service rendered by Kamalakkannar in Karittuṇṭu.

Celvanāyakam is a great intellectual. He regularly renders moral service by participating in all literary functions and in delivering lectures on Akaṇānūru, which deals with the idealistic celebrations of the exotic life of ancient Tamils, Peṉṉin Perumai, which deals with the exaltation of women, Cilappathikāram, which deals with fidelity, Tāyumāṇavar Hymns and Tēvāram. He wants the Tamil culture and great moral books like Tirukkural to be popularised all over the world. He regularly reads great moral books amidst his tight official work. His official morality is based on honesty, straight forwardness, upright and unyielding character. Anṇāmalai, an employee of the collector office is all praise for Celvanāyakam:

He is extraordinarily efficient, very honest, strict and well-educated.

But unfortunately I don't have an opportunity to move with him

(MV:54).
Like Kamalakkannar, Celvanāyakam is very much interested in the liberation of women. His love and affection for the book Peṇṇin Perumai is a testimony to that. His deep concern for the injustice done to women in our society is revealed when he advises Muthayyan:

But I tell you one thing. Give freedom to your wife. Even if three or four families are ruined, it doesn't matter. At least Tamil Nadu may have a good future on account of this. Look at the western countries. They are advanced in every field because of that freedom the family enjoys. When a Westerner finds his wife talking to another man, he doesn't mind it, and, in fact, he enters the room only after getting his wife's permission. That's supposed to be the scale of decency there. As long as rudeness and physical strength are justified, women will only be slaves. They will be liberated only when we respect love and enlightenment (MV:132-33).

Again, his letter to Malarvilī encouraging her to join a Teacher's Training College at Madras and come out with flying colours of academic excellences tells upon his enthusiasm for women's liberation.

III

The Language Teacher, in spite of certain inherent Western weaknesses, is highly self conscious. He shares the experiences of Razumov imaginatively and succeeds in making the readers sympathize with him. He fulfils his moral duty of protecting the helpless and defenceless Russian girl from the clutches and evil designs of Peter Ivonovitch and his revolutionists. He gives a logical coherence and candid development to the narrative. The
very presence of the Language Teacher infuses a moral flavour into the narrative. There are, of course, certain digressions but that too only when he finds it difficult to portray the Russian psyche to the Western readers and for which he sincerely apologises then and there. As a narrator he maintains total detachment and like Marlow, he never shows his sympathy outwardly to the tragic hero but immensely succeeds in creating and sustaining the sympathy of the reader and thus fulfils his moral duty. Finally, he closes the narrative with the ironic comment of Sophia Antonovna: "Peter Ivonovitch is an inspired man" (UWE : 382).

Tom Lingard is the connecting factor of the three novels - Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands and The Rescue. In spite of his good intentions and immense benevolence, Almayer, Willems, Hassim and Immada die without realising their goals. Though he says to Jorgenson, "I am in debt" (R:100) and to Hassim and Immada ..." I will see you through all safe if you will only trust me - me, Tom Lingard (R:128), his infatuation to Mrs. Travers creates a mist. As a result, he is caught in a moral situation, and experiences the same raging conflict like the other tragic heroes, between the black and bright sides of his self, which results in "disaster". Willems's infatuation to Aissa and his subsequent betrayal of Lingard resembles that of Lingard's own infatuation to Mrs. Travers and his subsequent betrayal of Hassim and Immada.

There is a charge against Lingard that he himself has acted like a pirate several times, for which Lingard himself answers:
I only just discovered my mate's got the notion I am some kind of pirate. And all you yacht people think the same. It is as though you had brought a curse on me in your yacht. Nobody believes me — Good God! What have I come to! Even those two — look at them — I say look at them! By all the stars they doubt me! mel... " (R:227).

Again there is a charge that by honest means Lingard could not have amassed this much wealth, for which again Lingard answers in the form of a reply to Willems:

Did you ever see me cheat and lie and steal? Tell me that. Did you?

Hey? "(Oi:224).

Meykantār, after equipping Meyyappan with all the necessary moral weapons to face the world, in general, and his wife and Kesavarāyan, in particular, allows him to go to his place. Meyyappan is moved with the generosity of Meykantār when he offers him three hundred rupees for his travel expenses. Out of gratitude, when Meyyappan says, "I came from somewhere. Somehow I got your friendship, why do you spend this much?" (MK:464), Meykantār assures him:

Not only you. Wife, children and relations come and go in the same way. They come from somewhere, live with us sometime and when death comes, they are separated from us. This is life" (MK:464).

Murugaiah is very happy that his brother-in-law is no longer a violent man, is completely transformed and safely in the hands of great moral teachers. He takes the failure of his brother-in-law's marriage in the right sense and says:
Only Cuṣṭarbili worries very much. But I don’t. When they are not
suited to each other, what can we do? Taṅappag is certainly not bad.
Even the cook is all praise for his patience. If she is not able to live
with such a man, what can we do? (VM : 289).

In fact, Murugaiah wants to know whether there is any chance of their reunion.
But when he leans from Kulantaivēlu that they are already divorced, he puts
an end to such a thought.

Murugaiah appears again only at the funeral of his brother-in-law. He accepts his death in a resigned manner, quite characteristic of the
Mu.Vavian moral teachers. It is with his comment that the novel concludes:

Fast Life! the speed when the mind was out of control! The same
speed when the mind came under control! That speed is dead and
gone! Now it is buried! (VM: 338).

Kamalakkannar’s moral service does not stop with bringing
back Nirmalā Devi into the normal life of humanity. He has a large social
perspective and quite ardent in his desire to bring social changes. He is a
rationalist like all other Mu.Vavian moral teachers, and wants the Tamil society
to be completely freed from superstitious beliefs and the old concept of
fidelity. He also wants the entire Tamil Nadu to be modernised with Western
thoughts and its capitalism. He believes that industrialisation is the only way
to eradicate poverty from society.

Similarly Cērvanāyakam shares all the views of
Kamalakkannar. His very presence gives a moral flavour to the novel from the
beginning to the end. As a moral teacher, he is more concerned with the
society at large rather than any individual. It is his life’s ambition that women
should be liberated and given maximum freedom, irrespective of the
consequences. For him, even if a few families are destroyed, it does not matter. Ironically it is the unlimited freedom given to his wife that brings his downfall, the complete ruin of his family and his reputation in society. At the same time, his wife's shameful death is a warning to other women and humanity, in general, what would happen if such a freedom is abused.

Though Cēlvanāyakam is a great intellectual, extremely generous and an able administrator, he fails to lead a successful family life. Since he is an idealist, he is not able to comprehend the intricacies of the outside world. His boundless generosity swallows a major portion of his monthly salary. As Professor R. Mohan says, "Cēlvanāyakam fails to cut the coat according to the cloth"(1972:33). The more he talks about the liberation of women, the more his wife liberates herself from him. The more he becomes an idealist, the more his wife becomes a hedonist. Her ostentatious luxury makes a mockery of his simplicity. As Professor Sachithanandan says, "the marriage of a physically impotent man to a woman in the full bloom of health and beauty is a parody of life" (1975:26).

The supra-men, both in Conrad and Mu.Va., with their vast and varied experience, sympathetic attitude and generous nature, inspire the confidence of both the tragic as well as the infra humanity. Both are brought in contact with them. In the tragic humanity immediately after the crime, the redemptive potential takes the upper hand and when they are brought in contact with the supra humanity, they seek their help for the moral redemption. Whereas, the infra humanity, with the absence of redemptive potentials, treat the supra humanity as their enemies, with arrogance and contempt. Since the inclination for spiritual regeneration is absent in them, they are left to their own fate. The infra humanity awakens the criminal
potentials of the tragic humanity. Whereas, the supra humanity awakens the redemptive potential in them and succeeds in bringing them back to the main stream of normal human life. In other words, whatever destructive work is perpetrated by the infra humanity to the tragic humanity, it is morally repaired by the supra humanity.