CHAPTER - V

THE BLOOMING AND THE CRUMBLING OF MAN – WOMAN RELATIONSHIP

The forth coming chapter deals with the blend between the East and the West, the entry of the ‘other man’ or the ‘other woman’ and the complementary and contradictory roles played by man and woman. It has been divided into the following subheadings:

1. The East - West Encounter
2. Emergence of the ‘Other Man’ and the ‘Other Woman’

1. The East - West Encounter

*Oh, East is East and West is West,*

*and never the twain shall meet.*

- Rudyard Kipling

(The Ballad of East and West)

I

Many Indian novelists in English have dealt with the subject of the East-West encounter. The East is depicted with its credulity and superstitious beliefs, whereas the West is shown with its vainglory and sense of superiority. Part of the influence of the West on the East was due
to the British rule in India for a long period. Some of the Indian English novels not only picturise the conflict between the East and West, but also depict a pleasing and harmonious relationship between the two. Many prominent Indian writers in English have dealt with this subject quite frankly.

Some of the writers who stand apart in this endeavour are Kamala Markandaya, Raja Rao and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. The novels of East-West encounter are Kamala Markandaya’s "Some Inner Fury" (1955), "Possession" (1963), and "The Nowhere Man" (1972), Raja Rao’s "The Serpent and the Rope" (1960), Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s, "Esmond in India" (1981) and others. These novels highlight the blend and rejection between the two races and cultures.

The 'East-West encounter' needs a detailed and in-depth scrutiny to understand the reasons of such conflicts. The polarity and antagonism which had existed between the two races had gradually been vanishing and each race learnt to accept the other with all its fault and follies.

Nevertheless, historically, philosophically, sociologically and even temperamentally, the East signifies a sort of orientation that cares eventually more for the inner and the unseen, the categorical and the absolute. These values are associated with,
or may be interpreted as, passivity, stagnation rootedness and a kind of conservatism that seems antithetical to progress and material attainments. The West likewise signifies a sceptical, hardheaded, if not cynical, attitude towards the problems of the world.¹

Though there is a difference in their life-style and religion, interaction between the two cultures still exists. Usually it blends together in the beginning but later on it does not end on a harmonious note as it gives rise to a conflicting nature. In spite of this, some points of difference between the East and West continue to dominate the field of literature.

The influence of the West on the East was felt in earlier times through the trade links of the West with India. It was followed by the imposition of English as an official language and the medium of education in India. This helped Indians to learn more from the West. Though the Indians were exposed to the western culture, they did not submit themselves completely to it.

The Indians, who received education through English medium, were brought face to face with the western arts, culture and literature. They tried to imbibe the finer qualities of the West in Indian art and literature. At the same time, they could not do away with the Indian artistic and cultural values, which were deeply entrenched into their sub-conscious mind. This pluralism is felt in some of the Indian English writers. English language became the medium of communication between the two groups, engaged in understanding each other better.

The Indian novelists had rich material to use in their writings. The dichotomy, existing between the two cultures, when brought close together in the world of fiction, reveals a wonderful world of omission and commission, and also of acceptance and rejection. Whether the white falls in love with the brown or the reverse, the end result is the same. They get on well for sometime and later on the cultural pulls from either side become so strong that home-sickness, nostalgia, psychic depression or a patent inability to accommodate each other’s political views destroy their relationship and drag the marriages to the rocks. The point to be noted here is that most of the marriages and friendships involving the East and the West are broken finally. This goes to prove Rudyard Kipling right because he predicted, “... and never the twain shall meet”.
The East-West encounter forms an important part in the novels like “Some Inner Fury”, “Possession” and “The Nowhere Man”, written by Kamala Markandaya. In spite of a number of obstacles, the relationship of men and women of the two races is established. There is also a portrayal of the circumstances hampering the continuation of such relationships. In “Some Inner Fury”, Kamala Markandaya explores the inter-racial relationship between Mira and Richard, an Englishman. Each understand the other well and in spite of the cultural differences, there is genuine love between the two. However, the political upheaval in India during the forties separates them.

Mira belongs to a rich, sophisticated South Indian family, which enjoys good relations with the British. Richard Marlowe is a young army officer who meets Mira’s brother Kitsamy (Kit), on the ship when the latter is returning from England after completion of his education.

Kit brings Richard home who compliments Mira on the very day of his arrival. He tells Kit that he is lucky to have a sister like Mira, “a sister in a million”. Mira is so dumb-founded that she forgets to thank the stranger for his compliments. In the beginning, Richard remains an

intruding stranger to Mira. Later on she gets transformed from a shy, submissive girl into a confident, bold woman in his company.

Mira's outings with Kit and Richard become quite frequent. Her mother's warning to Kit to be careful—"Remember this is not England"—appears to be a needless anxiety to Mira. Sometimes when Kit is reluctant to go out, he asks Mira to take Richard for a walk, as she could be a good guide to him. Mira's mother does not like it, but allows her to accompany him only after she warns her to be careful with him. The mother is worried that if they are seen together by some relatives, it would lead to gossips. Kit too is aware of the fact that he was responsible for the growing friendship between the two. Even then he never bothers to restrain Mira but on the contrary encourages their togetherness. Both Mira and Richard often go for a walk or for swimming, which brings them closer to each other day by day.

Richard had come to India only for a fortnight, but yet he overstays. Now, it was time for him to leave. When Richard and Mira are left to themselves, Richard kisses her lightly and asks, "Did I dislike him less?" A gentle kiss arouses in Mira a strong passion for Richard and thoughts about him haunt her all the while, even long after he has left.

3. Ibid., p.25.
4. Ibid., p.40.
When *Mira* goes to meet *Kit* and *Premala*, her sister-in-law, the latter tells her that *Richard* had left the previous night while expressing his deep regrets for not having met her. He hoped to meet her again and was looking forward to it. These words are pleasing to *Mira* amidst the dark clouds of separation. *Richard* being an A.D.C. to Governor has to go on tour to some troubled areas, but is required to return home due to an attack of malaria. He has been away for several months and therefore his meeting with *Mira*, after a long time is a pleasant experience. *Mira* is happy in his arms, unable to speak anything due to tears of joy in her eyes, "splashing and spilling down my face – uncontrollable, unwanted, unbecoming tears which are one of women’s plagues".\(^5\) There is a complete metamorphosis in the life of *Mira* in the later part of the novel. In the beginning she is a shy and an innocent girl, but later on she turns into a bold and care-free woman. Her whole being is centred on the man she loves.

While passing the *Bazaar* after returning from a six weeks holiday, *Mira* and *Richard* notice banners abusing the British. The words written on the banners showed the contempt which the Indians had for the British and such hatred could only be expressed by a country that had been enslaved so long. It seems like an eye-opener to *Richard* when reality dawns on him. He says to *Mira*, "It is a terrible thing, to feel unwanted. To

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5. Ibid, p.182.
be hated". Though Mira assures that it is not for him, Richard too knows that no one can be singled out in this way.

Due to the political upheaval Mira and Richard cannot fulfil their desire for marriage. The political situation, prevailing in the country, separates both the lovers and the rancour of 'your people' and 'my people' begins to pierce their hearts. Mira feels quite confused as she has to choose between Richard and India.

\[\text{But that stark illuminated moment\textemdash} \text{of madness? of sanity?\textemdash} \text{went, and I knew I would go, even as I knew Richard must stay. For us there was no other way, the forces that pulled us apart were too strong.}\]

Mira's sister-in-law, Premala, is burnt inside a school building and her brother Kit is killed due to ensuing violence during India's freedom struggle. The charge of Kit's murder is made on Govind, Mira's foster-brother. The false testimony of Hickey, the missionary, makes the Indians develop hatred towards the British. The judge accepts the evidence of Hickey, who also happens to be a co-worker of Premala at school. During the trial Mira realises the Indian futility in fighting for justice against the mighty power of the British rulers. She is confused as to whether she should join the nationalist procession or stay back with her lover. She

6. Ibid., p.213.
realises that their love cannot be fulfilled during such turmoil. She is filled with remorse and decides to leave Richard forever. He sides with the British rulers of India, while Mira remains with her country. They are forced to surrender their interests to the political situation prevailing in India at the time. Therefore, Mira and Richard have to go their separate ways, as the political crisis does not allow harmonious relationship between them. K. Meera Bai says,

\begin{quote}
The clash here is not between two individuals but between two ideologies. When the cosmic forces are in clash, it does not matter whether a world is born or a star is dead. She is a star that is extinguished in the great revolution.\textsuperscript{8}
\end{quote}

Thus, the political agitation and cultural disparity play a disastrous role in their lives. Mira has to sacrifice for the most part for the sake of her country. It is the racial prejudice that separates both Mira and Richard and leaves them helpless. She ruminates,

\begin{quote}
The decision is undoubtedly prompted by considerations of the national cause – the greatest of all causes for which a man or woman can
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\textsuperscript{8} K. Meera Bai, Women’s Voices: The Novels of Indian Women Writers, Prestige Books: New Delhi, 1996, p.76.
ungrudgingly sacrifice all that he or she holds
dearest to the heart.9

In this novel there is one more episode of the East-West encounter. Mira’s brother Kit has an affair with Sylvia an English girl, while in England. Mira learns about this when she goes to get a blotting paper from Kit’s room and discovers Sylvia’s photograph there, depicting a young woman with tender mouth and shoulder-length silky hair. Mira feels as if she has intruded into Sylvia’s privacy.

*I felt, almost, as if I had come upon her unawares, there was something about her, defenceless, she looked as people sometimes do when they think they are alone; and I wanted to cover her quickly, the feeling was so strong.*10

After Kit’s marriage with Premala, it appears that he was trying hard to forget Sylvia as he leaves for his new place of posting. When Mira visits Kit’s room, she is shocked to see the terrible disorder and squalor in the room. The room is littered with cigarette butts and Sylvia’s photo savagely torn to pieces and thrown into the waste-paper basket. Smoking cigarettes and tearing the photograph is an indication that Kit loves Sylvia

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very much, but their love did not fructify. His frustration is nothing but only an expression of sadness he feels for the loss of his love.

"Kamala Markandaya is particularly sensitive to the clash of East and West and the tension born of this clash".11 In "Some Inner Fury" Richard and Mira are separated due to the rise in political agitation which result "in racial animosities and social disparities".12 The Novel "Some Inner Fury" is written against the backdrop of political agitation during the Quit India Movement of 1942. The East-West conflict is dramatised on two levels. First, it is the political turmoil in the country and second, the racial disparity that erupted as a consequence, leading to an inevitable tragic end. Thus human relationship was also destroyed due to the 'Inner Fury' of a nation. Richard and Mira are separated due to insurmountable barriers.

The marriage between Kit and Sylvia could not take place because of the cultural disparities. So, Kit is forced to marry an Indian girl, Premala. The past, which is haunting Kit, makes his married life in India more miserable. Premala can not adjust with Kit’s strange westernised ways of life and this incompatibility makes them miserable. Premala, who is a meek woman, suffocates because of the sophisticated life of her husband who cannot understand her. Thus both Kit and Premala are

12. Ibid., p.23.
incompatible. Premala being childless herself adopts an orphan child in whose company she finds solace. In order to forget her disappointment with life she involves herself in social work in a village school run by Hickey. In this way the East and the West could not meet due to political and cultural differences.

Another novel by Kamala Markandaya, "The Nowhere Man" documents the racial prejudices that were being practised in England. Srinivas went to England with his wife Vasantha, to escape arrest for his underground activities against the British rule in India. There he first meets Mrs. Pickering while walking in the street. Though tripping and stumbling now and then, he does not take notice of the cause of it, until an exasperated voice speaks out to him - "Excuse me, but your shoe laces are undone". Srinivas notices the trailing laces threaded only in the last two holes and feels thankful to the woman. This incident becomes a starting point of a strong and deep relationship between both Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering.

Srinivas suddenly recognises her on the next encounter. He is on the verge of uttering glad cries to spurt out his inner emotions, but the 'England' intervened.

In her casual talk Mrs. Pickering frankly tells him that she hates people who pry. Srinivas too makes it a point not to pry and dig into her life. Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering meet frequently and are slowly drawn towards each other. They often jog along, go for walks in the local parks and sit side by side on benches. Some people look in askance at this middle-aged pair, different in colour and looks. They come so close that they confide without digging into each other's personal affairs. They reveal about themselves on their own without trespassing into each other's privacy. Srinivas tells her that he is a widower. She too informs him that she is a divorcee and glad of it, as hers was a very miserable marriage. She regains happiness only on the day her husband leaves her. On a similar note for Srinivas, the void, created by his wife Vasantha's death, is too unbearable for him. Mrs. Pickering, finds solace in his company. Both are lonely due to the loss of their respective spouses.

As Mrs. Pickering has no home of her own, she becomes a part and parcel of Srinivas' house and of his life too. Even Srinivas cannot imagine living in the house without her presence, "to consolidate those intimations of grace and ultimate meaning which were vouchsafed him as
he grew older”.15 He has “encountered a similar unimaginable desert of existence after the death of his wife and survived and come through to the other side?”16 And now Mrs. Pickering is here to “rehabilitate the scorched and dusty creature that emerged”17 to give him strength and support in the most crucial time of his life. On her arrival to the house of Srinivas, Mrs. Pickering transforms that ‘pigsty’ into a habitable atmosphere. She cleans, washes, polishes, makes the house spick and span just as everybody else does. She sweeps, mends, weeds and repairs, as she does not want any passing remarks from the neighbours. She tells Srinivas that, “Squalor is offensive to the English”.18 Mrs. Pickering has come to the house of Srinivas to ward off his loneliness.

If Vasantha represents the East in her unyielding attitudes, Mrs. Pickering embodies the best of the West in all her compassion. The twin waters of the East and the West meet in Srinivas, almost like the holy waters of the Ganges and the Yamuna at the confluence of Prayagraj.19

The food habits of Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering differ a lot, he being a Brahmin and a vegetarian and she a Christian and a Non-vegetarian. In

15. Ibid., p.56.
16. Ibid., p.56.
17. Ibid., p.56.
18. Ibid., p.58.
spite of this, both of them pull on well under the same roof. When Mrs. Pickering cooks meat he is off to the basement, where the smell cannot penetrate. Mrs. Pickering neither knows nor can she imagine the extent of his aversion to flesh.

At the time of Christmas, his son, Laxman visits him to extend an invitation for the festival. He wants to ward off his father’s loneliness. Srinivas is left wondering that of all other times, why a man should ever be lonely only during Christmas. Moreover, he tells his son that he has Mrs. Pickering to give him company that Christmas.

Even the coming together of Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering is the result of loneliness that befell him when his son left for Plymouth to be with his wife. Laxman is too shocked to learn about Mrs. Pickering, though he is familiar with his father’s other acquaintances. His father further informs that she shares the house with him and has made the 'pigsty' (as his son had called it) into a better living home. Laxman is quite dismayed that "this dry old stick had nurtured other ideas", whereas he had thought himself to be the heir. He has not seen Mrs. Pickering and pictures her to be 'a cheap little tart' and 'a shrewd whore'. He has not imagined anybody else to consider his father attractive. When he sees Mrs. Pickering, all his fears melt away and his portrait of a
'sharp-eyed, sexy tart' turned into "a middle-aged woman whom no man could possibly want".\(^{20}\)

Mrs. Pickering slowly encompasses the desolate life of Srinivas. He has a rush of feelings towards her and waits for a green signal from her. One night, when he hears her footsteps right in front of his door, he opens it immediately.

\[
\text{He knew - as each knew the other did - it was a cover for nakedness: a provision for thin human hide, offering retreat, if retreat were needed, without undue suffering or loss of face.}^{21}\]

Mrs. Pickering, though not his legal wife, was his 'common law spouse' as Srinivas puts it. In his bouts of illness he becomes quite delirious and babbles. He holds Mrs. Pickering's hand and calls her "Dear Vasantha", but realises that it is just 'an old worn white hand.' Mrs. Pickering shows concern and kindness for him when he suffers from leprosy. She even prevents him from committing suicide. She supports and stands by him and gives him moral support when her countrymen are not in favour of him.

The relationship of Srinivas with Mrs. Pickering is due to the isolation and vacuum created by Vasantha's death which gets

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\(^{21}\) Ibid., p.69.

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exaggerated by Laxman's neglect of his father over the years. Thus, their living together is for companionship based on compassion and not on passion.

Another instance of East-West encounter in "The Nowhere Man" is between Laxman and Miss Pat, who is working in the munitions factory in Plymouth. Laxman who is also working there, falls in love with her and both get married. Vasantha is depressed for not getting the opportunity to choose the bride for her son as she thinks she would have selected a better girl for him.

When Pat meets her in-laws, she thinks them to be sweet, and "believing she was being the kind of wife any man would want, the sort that would never come between him and his parents".22 When their baby arrives, Laxman asks his parents to pay them a visit. However their visit is postponed, as Pat's parents were already staying with them and there was not enough space to accommodate his own parents.

Both Laxman and Pat remain far away from Srinivas and Vasantha. After the death of Vasantha, they do not try to ward off the loneliness of Srinivas, as they are too busy with their jobs and children. As a result of this, Srinivas befriends Mrs. Pickering in whom he finds solace.

22. Ibid., p.35.
In "The Nowhere Man", there are two pairs of relationship presenting the East-West encounters. Both men, Srinivas and Laxman come from the East and both their women come from the West. In the case of Mira and Richard the East and West did not meet due to political upheaval, but in the case of Srinivas and Laxman, not only the West met happily with the East, but also continued to co-exist. Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering met and came to stay together because their fate had so contrived. Both of them had lost their life partners and they were compelled to compromise with the situations. Vasantha’s untimely death and the distance due to Laxman compelled Srinivas to find a friend in Mrs. Pickering. The English woman accepted his friendship in order to forget her husband. Though political upheaval separated Mira and Richard, even leprosy, a dreaded disease suffered by Srinivas, could not separate him from Mrs. Pickering. Therefore, the East-West union in the case of Srinivas and Pickering is more humane than the one between Mira and Richard. One must therefore know that, between man and woman, passion is not alone the uniting force but compassion also wins a good relationship. Thus, the man-woman relationship of the latter type is more lasting than that of the one forged out of passion.

In the case of Laxman and Pat, there is a slightly different relationship springing from the East-West encounter. In their nuclear family a third member from outside, would create congestion. Pat’s parents were staying with their daughter, but Laxman could not bring his
parents to Plymouth, under the pretext that there was no extra bed room. It is to be noted here that in spite of Pat's liking for her in-laws, Laxman could not give comfort to his own father. In other words the West was going well with the East but unfortunately the East was not in tandem with itself.

Another novel of Kamala Markandaya, "Possession" also depicts the East-West encounter— that between Valmiki and Caroline. Lady Caroline Bell, the daughter of a former British resident in India, is a divorcee. She happens to visit one of the interior villages of South India and is attracted by the artistic talents of Valmiki, a goatherd. She is a proud lady with possessive instincts. Her possessiveness ends in her managing to take Valmiki away to London. Anasuya, an Indian writer, who takes Caroline to the said village, warns her thus -

This boy's a human being, even if he's a goatherd
and a simpleton. He's not a toy, to be picked up now
and discarded when something else takes your fancy.\textsuperscript{23}

Caroline is adamant and pays five thousand rupees to Valmiki's parents as compensation and takes him away. Valmiki is provided with many opportunities to pursue his art and within a few years he attains world-wide fame.

Caroline holds Valmiki as tenaciously as we are informed England did India - the extended metaphor almost marring the symbolical effects of the novel.\(^{24}\)

Ellie, a Jew refugee, has come to work as a domestic help in Caroline’s house. Valmiki develops a soft corner for her, when he learns about the disability in one of her hands which was crushed under a Nazi jack-boot. He is inspired by her looks and makes her a model for his paintings. He gets emboldened to paint her in the nude also. Soon a physical relationship develops between them resulting in her pregnancy.

Caroline drives Ellie away from there and the latter is forced to commit suicide. Valmiki learns that Caroline was responsible for driving away Ellie. He searches for her, but is unable to get her whereabouts. He is taken ill in the process. Caroline tempts him saying that Leon, an artist known to her has invited him to hold an exhibition of his paintings in Boston. Valmiki is delighted at the prospect. He, in his last bid, tries hard to find Ellie before leaving for America but Caroline says that Ellie has left the place without informing anybody.

The relationship between Valmiki and Caroline is a live in relationship without the sanctity of marriage.

Indeed they bore on them the invisible yet unmistakable sign of union, whether solemnised as a marriage or not-a union consummated to its fullness and settling down, no longer electric with sex but set in the calmer pattern of harmonious cohabitation.  

And Caroline had been “delivered from the tensions of the waiting burning years”. She has turned into a changed woman by Valmiki’s sexual relationship with her. Therefore, “Caroline was not only possessed, but had also taken in possession”. 

Annabel, an eighteen year old distant relative of Caroline has come to stay in her house. When Valmiki meets her for the first time at a party, he is drawn towards her. Caroline, who had persuaded Valmiki to learn dancing, must have regretted to find him dancing with Annabel, with his arms around her. After that, they often spend their time in each other’s company.

Valmiki’s frequent meetings with Annabel develop into a physical relationship between them. Anasuya, wants to know from Valmiki whether his relationship with Annabel was just “a body-and-bed affair”. She

26. Ibid., p.182.
27. Ibid., p.183.
28. Ibid., p.196.
learns from him that he considers Annabel as a human being and not as an instrument. He knows very well that with Caroline in the way, it would be the end of his affair.

Valmiki knows that the fame, which he acquires, is due to Caroline and he is indebted to her. Yet he is in a dilemma about his relationship to her. Finally he leaves her and goes to live with Annabel. "... he was frozen with misery, unable to bring himself to hurt Caroline, and in the mood where a man begins seriously to think of a painless solution like having two wives".29

Caroline is not the one to admit defeat. She invites Valmiki and Annabel for a drink. It is there she discloses to Annabel that Valmiki was obsessed by Ellie who became pregnant with his child. She ends by telling that Ellie was left to commit suicide under that circumstance. Valmiki is too bewildered, frozen and dumb to say anything against it. Annabel finds it all unbelievable. She wants to verify the truth from Valmiki. He tells her—

The child was mine. Valmiki spoke thickly. But she never said — I didn’t know she would—was going to kill herself.30

29. Ibid., p.198.
30. Ibid., p.206.
To Annabel it is too unbearable when the truth is revealed to her. She says to Valmiki –

You ran away, she said again with a kind of cold vengeance. You got her into trouble and you got out quick before the whiff of suicide could offend your nostrils and curl up those holy eastern sentiments of yours about the sanctity of life. Well, so much for them. So much for decency..... I'm only glad I'm getting out before my stink sends you scuttling.31

Caroline, gripped by jealousy, succeeds in bringing about a rift in the relationship between Valmiki and Annabel. Valmiki falls in love with Ellie first and later on with Annabel but Caroline succeeds in driving both of them out of his life. Valmiki feels stifled in the material comforts provided by Caroline because she had possessed and tied him down in such a way that it was very difficult for him to come out of her stranglehold. K. Meera Bai describes her thus,

The role she plays in the novel is that of an aggressor, a proprietress and possessor trying to tame and mould her new-found fancy, Valmiki, an Indian artist.32

31. Ibid., p.207.
Valmiki is not only her possession but also her obsession and she cannot tolerate any one else to exercise a right on him.

Valmiki returns to India along with Anasuya but Caroline follows him with a wish to take him back. In spite of this he prefers to stay back in the wilderness. "A waste" says Caroline again, with cold bitterness. "All of it. Wasted beauty, wasted work, a wasted man". Valmiki gets wild with anger and blurts that it was nothing but blasphemy, as nothing could be called a waste when a man does his work to glorify God.

The relationship between Caroline and Valmiki is that of an exploiter and the exploited. Caroline tries to posses Valmiki physically, culturally and spiritually. He too fits well into the needs of his mentor. But, later on he feels stifled and suffocated.

He was her discovery and therefore her "Possession".

She exploited his youth for her physical satisfaction
presuming she had bought him body and soul.

This is the reason why the East and the West could not go on well with each other.

The novel, "The Serpent and the Rope" by Raja Rao is a magnum opus and has the blending and disintegration of the East and the West. He is recognised as one of the writers of great calibre. Though the output of his literary work is meagre he has stood apart for his genius as a literary figure. "The Serpent and the Rope" represents the East-West encounter on cultural levels. Basically it is a story of breakup between two individuals, who represent two different cultures. Ramaswamy or Rama the hero is a Brahmin youth from the South, belonging to a rich Zamindar family and traces his lineage to the legendary Upanishadic sage Yagnavalkya. The entire Brahmanical lore is flowing within him, along with the knowledge of history, in which subject he is doing research in Paris, in the University of Sorbonne. There he happens to meet Madeleine Roussellin, a French lady, who is teaching history in one of the University colleges. He falls in love with her and gets married. She too is keenly interested in philosophy and religion just like Rama. A son is born to them who does not survive long, giving a rude shock to Madeleine.

After his stay in Europe for a year, Rama returns to India to see his father who is on his death bed. This home-coming brings a lot many changes in Rama. He has to go to the ancient holy city of Benares, along with his stepmother and his baby brother, to perform the obsequies of his father. During this journey Rama deeply imbibes his ancient culture and acquires a new awareness of his roots in India. He goes to Allahabad from Benares. Here he happens to meet Pratap Singh, betrothed to Savithri,
the Cambridge educated daughter of the Raja of Surajpur, who has come down for the vacations. Rama is introduced to her and gets fascinated by her.

Soon after that Rama returns to France to complete his thesis. Savithri on her way back to Cambridge visits his place. He too goes to Cambridge in connection with his doctoral work. This results in their getting closer to each other. The affinity comes to a stage where Rama falls passionately in love with her and she remains constantly in his thoughts. Even Savithri reciprocating his feelings, comes to him with coconut, kumkum and aarti and considers him to be her lord and master, with God as her witness. Rama gifts her toe-rings which were given by his stepmother for Madeleine. Savithri is advised by Rama to return to her home and marry Pratap Singh. When he returns to Paris, he wants to see his European wife in Indian costume, like his Little Mother who has all the sobriety in her behaviour. He sees his sister Saroja changed completely after the death of their father. The mental maturity, the clinging to the ancient cultural roots and the equanimity in the trying conditions of life, which his stepmother has resorted to after the death of her husband, provides Rama the ideal conditions required for a good wife. Deterioration sets in into their married life, when Rama tries to superimpose these qualities on his French wife who meanwhile has adopted Buddhism.
Rama being the head of the family, visits India for his sister Saroja’s wedding. Due to his illness, he is unable to go back to Madeleine, who is expecting her second child. He is advised to take three months rest in the warmer climate of Bangalore. Meanwhile, Madeleine undergoes a Caesarean operation, where her life is saved, but her child dies. This was a second blow to her, which affects her life completely. On Rama’s return to Madeleine he finds that she is a changed person. She observes fast and spends her time on prayer and meditation. It is at this point of time that Rama realises the futility of their relationship and the only recourse left was to separate. In spite of this, they continue to live together for some more time.

He goes to London for further work on his thesis but falls ill such that one of his lungs has to be removed. When he visits Madeleine again he finds that she has become a sanyasini. The gap between them becomes wider when Madeleine becomes a Buddhist because she could not overcome her personal loss.

No doubt Madeleine realises Buddhism separates her forever from her Indian husband who links India with Advaita Vedantha, which is equated with the brahmanic orthodoxy. Ramaswamy rejects Madeleine when he meets Savithri. The latter woman becomes the main cause of disintegration of the marriage of Ramaswamy and Madeleine. According to Esha Dey,
Savithri acts as a catalyst in the disintegration of the Hindu-Christian marriage that stands completely negated in the ritual wedding of Rama-Savitri. Accepted by the protagonist himself as the final determinant in this human story.35

There are many hiccups until the final stage of divorce that come in the lives of Ramaswamy and Madeleine. Why their marriage failed is a question that comes to one’s mind. It could be due to Rama’s infidelity, which Madeleine comes to know by and by. But this does not appear to be an apt answer, looking to the higher place on which the story moves. Secondly, it could be due to a clash of temperaments as Dr. M. K. Naik wonders whether it was “incompatibility de temperaments”.

The second reason appears to be more likely. Along with the incompatibility of temperaments, the unbridgeable gap between the two cultures is equally responsible for the breakdown of their marriage. At the end one can imagine Rudyard Kipling smiling to himself for his prophecy. There is an interesting dialogue in the novel itself. Madeleine asks Rama, 

What is it separated us, Rama?

India.

India? But I am a Buddhist.

That is why Buddhism left India. India is impitoyable.

But one can become a Buddhist?
Yes, and a Christian and a Muslim as well.
Then?
One can never be converted to Hinduism.
You mean one can only be born a Brahmin?
That is - an Indian.  

This time it is neither politics nor the different cultures that separate Rama and Madeleine. Their ego separates them particularly after the sudden awareness of Rama that he belongs to the sacred family of Yagnavalkya. He is too proud to accept Madeleine, even though she is converted to Buddhism. Rama wants his wife to emulate his step mother, but Madeleine refuses to oblige him. So the new found ego and effort to graft Indian culture on an unwilling Madeleine are the real causes for breaking down of their relationship.

Thus man-woman relationship disintegrates as the East finds it difficult to cope with the West. Though it blends in the initial stages it is the twists and turns of fate inclusive of the heart rending incidents in Madeleine’s life and the Buddhist’s attitude that converts her life totally. Srinivasa Iyengar says,

Madeleine, Rama’s wife, is a finely realized creation;
and her drifting away from Rama - but towards

Buddhism is seen to be both natural and, under the circumstances, inevitable.  

There is a breach of matrimonial fidelity and mental maladjustments between Rama and Madeleine. Their psychological and intellectual failure throws their marriage on the rocks and results in their divorce. Madeleine takes up spiritual practices to cure Rama's ailment and is considerate and faithful, whereas Rama carries on his extramarital affairs with Savithri and Lakshmi. Nivedita Nanda describes Ramaswamy thus,

He is captivated by Madeleine's physical lush loveliness more than by her intellectually or spirituality. Then without any sense of guilt or pricks of conscience he is faithless a husband and indulges in sexual acts with Savithri and Lakshmi. What is disgusting in this champion of Advaita Vedanta is that he, even though is married man, has illicit physical relation with Savithri whose marriage with Pratap Singh has already been finally settled. He calls himself "a holy vagabond", but he is not better than a rogue in many scenes of the narration.

"The Serpent and the Rope" is distinguished for its exploration into human relationship especially the racial and cultural mixtures. Raja Rao examines the cultural psychology underlying man-woman relationship based on the East-West relationship. The novel explores the impossibility of exchange of cultural identities that result in the failure of marriage between the Indian Rama and the French Madeleine.

In Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's novel, "Esmond in India" the union of the East and the West develops crack because of the difference in their lifestyles which leads to misunderstanding and discord in their marital lives. As a consequence of this, they drift apart. In this way, once again, Rudyard Kipling's statement, 'never the twain shall meet' comes true.

Esmond Stillwood, an English man, stays in India to work as a guide to the tourists. He also gives private tuitions to foreign ladies and Indian elites. He marries Gulab, an Indian woman, with whom he falls in love. She too defies the wishes of her family in order to marry him. Esmond wants his house to be clean and tidy. He wants Gulab to follow the Western ways of life, but she neither likes to mix with the English people nor wants to entertain them.

Esmond detests Gulab's way of living. She wears strong perfumes, keeps her hair oiled, eats oily food and sleeps most of the time. The upbringing of their son Ravi is not to his expectations, and he feels that...
she has spoilt the child by her excessive care. *Gulab* feeds *Ravi* with oily and spicy food, whereas *Esmond* wants him to be brought up in the English way, that is, to be fed on boiled food and made to be slept separately in another room. When *Gulab* does not do as per his wishes, he gets angry and behaves roughly with her. *Gulab* endures this ill-treatment as many other Indian housewives would.

*Gulab* is a true traditional Indian housewife whose very existence is an epitome of suffering and submission. Though *Gulab’s* mother wants her daughter to leave *Esmond*, she feels that her husband has the right to treat her the way he liked. In spite of this, their marriage turns cold and *Esmond* feels quite disgusted in the presence of *Gulab*, who represents Indian wifedom.

In the meantime, *Esmond* has a short affair with another Indian girl. When he is out on a picnic to Agra, he falls in love with a college girl, *Shakuntala*. She is having many romantic ideas in her head about love and marriage. Moreover, the white skin is an added attraction. But as men are, *Esmond* is not at ease with himself and soon gets attracted to another woman named *Betty*, who is an English.

When *Esmond* is away one day, their servant tries to molest *Gulab*, which infuriates her. She decides to leave *Esmond* for failure of his duty to protect her chastity.
It was his duty to see that she was safe in his house and that no stranger could cast insulting eyes on her. Esmond had failed in that duty; so now he was no more her husband. Nor she his wife: since she considered herself defiled, she could not remain in his house any longer but had to return, as was the custom, to her own people.39

Gulab feels that it is Esmond’s behaviour with her that makes the servant bold enough to dare touch her. The scant respect that Esmond shows to his wife is the reason for her humiliation by their servant, and therefore she decides to leave her husband. Thus we find that Esmond hates Gulab, his Indian wife, in course of time as she represents India, a country which no longer attracts him. The clash between the values of the East and the West, that is, the cultural disparity ruins their marriage. The marital incompatibility arises due to the differences in customs, manners, attitudes and the ways of living. It is their diverse backgrounds which come in the way of mutual agreement leading to discord.

In the selective examples taken from different novels it appears that though the East and West try to come closer to each other, there are a number of obstacles hampering the fruitful unison of the two extremes. The harmony between the two appears to be a pleasant one in the

beginning, but when reality dawns on them, they happen to realise, that it is rather difficult for the East to have a good concord with the West. There are a number of reasons which act as hindrances to the flourishing contacts between the East and the West. Firstly, the Indian society is conservative, whereas the Western society is radical. Secondly, the political destiny of the two societies is different. That is to say, one is the ruler whereas the other is the ruled. Hence during such crisis, one has to forgo even the person whom one loves dearly as found in the relationship of Richard and Mira, who have to part, in the novel "Some Inner Fury" as patriotism was more demanding. Thirdly, sometimes the East-West union is based on compassion and not on passion. It is an effort to fill in the void created in the life of less fortunate people. The relationship between Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering in "The Nowhere Man", stands as an example of such relationship. Fourthly, the relationship between Caroline and Valmiki in "Possession", is that of the exploiter and the exploited.

As regards the problem of East-West encounter surfacing in "The Serpent and the Rope", it can be said that the answer lies in the conversation between Rama and Madeleine. According to Rama, India separates them. The fear of polluting their religion when they come in contact with the non-Hindus, made the Hindus to withdraw. Moreover, the arrogance of being always right, made the Hindus to ignore the finer qualities found in other cultures and religions. Thus in the novel "Esmond in India" of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, the marriage of the East and the West
fails miserably. The husband-wife union is spoilt due to their cultural
disparity, identity crisis and lack of tolerance. It shows that the East and
the West, cannot come together easily and total integration does not
seem to be possible between them.
EMERGENCE OF 'THE OTHER MAN' AND 'THE OTHER WOMAN'

'The other man' or 'the other woman' is described as a man or a woman who intrudes and upsets the conjugal relationship between a husband and a wife. This third person develops an illegitimate relationship either with the wife or the husband. Such a man or woman, who enters the life of either the husband or the wife and spoils the harmonious conjugal relationship, is generally termed as 'the other man' or 'the other woman'. These persons are sometimes from within the family, or they may be just acquaintances or neighbours. Sometimes the relationship is marred by some alien elements also. If the cordial relationship between the husband and wife gets spoiled, as a result of the intruder, then he or she could be termed as the 'other man' or the 'other woman', respectively.

Involvement of husband or wife with another woman or man is the greatest tragedy and disgrace that the institution of marriage can suffer. The 'other man' or the 'other woman' can be anyone under a given circumstance. Sometimes he or she could be the best friend or a colleague or just a faceless name, or even some casual flings. Each partner, faced with such crisis, becomes a victim of anger, hatred, jealousy, humiliation and his or her ego gets bruised. A kind of depression sets in their lives, because the victimised partner thinks that the other is a cheat, an unfaithful and a brute.
After all what are the reasons for the emergence of the ‘other man’ and the ‘other woman’ in the lives of husband and wife. The problem of the ‘other woman’ stems mainly from the marital discord arising out of the female’s frigidity, over-possessiveness, nagging, or even as a result of plain boredom. In case of the ‘other man’ it could be due to husband’s neglect and ill treatment of his wife.

Mutual trust and understanding between married partners can save their marriage. Each partner should take care of the other’s sentiments. It is better to make a clean breast of oneself to gain confidence of the other partner. Secretiveness or reservation on the part of partners always invites trouble in married life.

In many of the Indian novels in English, one finds illustrations of dissonance between husband and wife. In the novel “Nectar in a Sieve” by Kamala Markandaya, Nathan and Rukmani, the tenant farmers are uprooted from the land due to industrialisation and establishment of tannery. In spite of a pleasant relationship between Nathan and Rukmani, in Kamala Markandaya’s “Nectar in a Sieve”, both of them seem to be secretive regarding each other’s affairs. Nathan tries to conceal from Rukmani his clandestine affairs with Kunthi. He becomes a victim of the evil charms of Kunthi and sires her two sons. Nathan keeps this a secret from his wife, lest it might break her innocent heart. In spite of their mutual faith, their marriage stands on the foundation of
concealment and deceit. Nathan is afraid that Kunthi might disclose their secret to his wife. Kunthi takes advantage of his weakness and blackmails him into stealing and giving her some of the rice kept hidden by Rukmani underground, at the time of famine.

Rukmani learns about the illicit relationship between Nathan and Kunthi. She is pained, disillusioned and in agony, but is a mute sufferer. The presence of the ‘other woman’ in the life of Nathan is a great shock to Rukmani. She finds it difficult to accept the frank confession of her husband about his affairs with Kunthi. She is unable to believe it at first and later on disillusionment, anger, reproach and pain set in. Rukmani takes the sin of her husband into her strides and starts preparing herself for the worst eventualities that life would force to the family.

In Anita Desai’s “Fire on the Mountain”, the relationship between Mr. Kaul and his wife Nanda suffers due to an extramarital relationship of the former. Their friendly relationship vitiates due to lack of mutual loyalty. Mr. Kaul, the Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University, wants his wife to be a mere show piece, wearing new silk sarees everyday and entertaining his guests. She is found "always in silk, at the head of the long rosewood table in the dining-room, entertaining his guests".\(^{40}\) Nanda Kaul too leads a life of pretence, performing her role as a dutiful wife,

trapped by the stifling social conventions, where she performs her household chores as a mere slave from which there was no escape.

Nanda Kaul who has suffered a long courtship with society’s conventions that trapped her in negative situations of compromise, must die in her positive struggle for escape from the stranglehold of the net of destructive responsibility cast by tradition, cast by a social and religious culture dominated by patriarchal value-system, a culture which has permitted woman to be and to remain essentially what is euphemistically called 'feminine', where the feminine refers to acceptance of roles which makes woman just a household slave, a social ornament or a sexual convenience.41

Mr. Kaul does not love his wife. He only obliges her by way of creating a post for her friend, Ila Das, in the Home Science College. His love for his wife is just pretence to keep her quiet. Though wronged, Nanda remains a mute spectator of his extramarital affairs. It is surprising to note that though Mr. Kaul carries on a life-long affair with Miss David, the mathematics teacher, he is hesitant to marry her because of her religion. He is not only a pretender but a criminal too. Nanda is aware of

her husband's infidelity for quite some time, but does not say or do anything against it. After the death of Mr. Kaul she goes away to Carignano, in Kasauli, to lead a life of no intrusion on her privacy.

A life built on lie, on escape, is not the solution to one's tragedy. Therefore, the glass house of safety, carefully erected around her, is bound to break with an intruder like Raka.42

Both Mr. Kaul and Nanda do not have a warm relationship. He neglects his wife and carries on an affair with Miss David, a Christian, who he does not marry. Thus we find that the marriage of Mr. Kaul and Nanda stands on the foundation of deceit, hidden behind a mask of pretended goodness. Nanda escapes to Carignano, in Kasauli to be away from the hectic domestic routine. She goes in quest of privacy with the hope of leading a peaceful life as she was denied love by her over-busy husband and children. But again there is the intrusion of her great grand-daughter Raka. Here too she faces the existential dilemma leading to the disintegration of her personality.

Therefore in the two novels, "Nectar in a Sieve" and "Fire on the Mountain", Rukmani and Nanda are traditional Indian house wives, who never complain against the infidelity of their husbands. Such meekness

makes men to do what they like in life. If the reverse happens, these husbands will not be able to tolerate it at all. Had Nanda Kaul an understanding husband she would not have sought solace in isolation from the maddening crowd.

In "Silence of Desire" (1960) by Kamala Markandaya, the relationship between Dandekar and Sarojini is disrupted by the entry of the third man in the form of the Swamiji. The Swamiji is a faith-healer, whom Sarojini visits to get the tumour in her uterus healed. The harmonious conjugal relationship of Dandekar and Sarojini is disrupted for a while. The life of the couple goes on smoothly until Dandekar finds out about his wife's visits to the Swami. Once when Dandekar happens to open their trunk to look for a history book, he finds another book, while flicking through the leaves of which, a man’s photograph falls out. Dandekar is too shocked by his find and his heart begins to thump loudly. He gazes at the photograph and wonders whose it is, for he nearly knows most of his wife’s relations. Maybe a friend – he muses and dismisses the thoughts that recurs in his mind - "A married woman did not have men friends who were not known to the husband, the family".43 He tries to console his agitating mind, thinking that it might be one of the girl’s idols, some teacher or a film actor. However the marriage is saved in the nick of time, when the husband learns about the real cause of his wife’s visit to the Swami.

Once, Dandekar finds his wife quite engrossed, praying in front of the portrait of the same man. The portrait is garlanded with a lamp lit before it. He wants to catch his wife red-handed. If he had not come across the photograph he would not have suspected his wife at all. Dandekar is suspicious of his wife’s movements, and one day he follows her to the place where he finds her sitting, among a group of women, near the Swamiji. He later observes that the man whispers something into her ears. This is enough to provoke him, and he accuses his wife of infidelity. She cannot any longer brook his malafide accusations and so she discloses her problem to him, “I go to be healed. So do the others whom you saw. I have a growth in my womb.”44 In spite of this, Dandekar does not trust her at this stage.

Sarojini’s attitude towards her husband changes gradually. She no more offers him sizzling hot meals but instead only serves curds and rice. He takes a day’s leave to follow his wife, to know more details about that man. When he inquires whether she enjoys her outings, she says that she had gone out to buy vegetables and fruits. At this, he gets furious and gives vent to his anger.

So that’s what you went out for. Not for anything else ... No. Oh no. Just for a little fruit like a dutiful housewife. Like a loving wife. Like a thrifty whore.45

44. Ibid., p.86.
45. Ibid., p.70.
Sarojini is quite aghast and pained to learn that after listening to the office gossip he spies on her and follows her. She too cannot control her anger and says - "You spied. What did you see? Did you see me lying naked with my lover? Did you? Did you?"\textsuperscript{46} Dandekar replies,

\begin{quote}
I went mad because I loved you. Is that a crime? Is it possible to love without jealousy? And without trust, she said with a deep smouldering anger. Is that love? Is it?\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

Dandekar, by nature, is a jealous and over possessive husband. That is why he follows his wife, to know the truth, each time she visits the Swamiji. His possessiveness towards Sarojini is to such an extent that he cannot bear the Swamiji encroaching upon his right over her.

Dandekar's efforts bear fruits and he is able to drive the Swamiji away from her mind. Sarojini changes and calmness spreads on her face. She has learnt from the Swamy to accept life as it comes. He also advises her to undergo an operation in order to remove the tumour. Sarojini, who could not get herself healed by the faith-healer, gets herself treated by the doctor. That is why Niroj Banerji, a critic has rightly remarked,

\begin{quote}
The wife represents the old, spiritual way of life, while the husband represents the new, rational way of life, and a clash between the two seems
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p.72.  
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p.87.
imminent. But with great understanding the novelists not only avoids this clash but also draws them closer to each other. The Swami proves to be a source of inexhaustible power over the couple, though Dandekar has his doubts in the initial stages.48

In Arun Joshi's, "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas", the entry of the 'other woman' in the life of Bimal (Billy) Biswas creates disharmony and friction between him and his wife, Meena.

Billy is sent away to America by his family to earn a degree in engineering. Instead of that he obtains a Ph.D. in Anthropology, a subject which is his first love. Billy studies the life and customs of the tribals with great care and interest. After he returns to India, he wants to escape from the civilised and sophisticated society.

Even at a young age of fourteen, Billy is drawn with an urge to live like a primitive man. This strong urge of the primitive call arises in him on two occasions. Once, when he emerges out of the Bhubaneshwar railway station and next when he sees a little Negro girl playing the bongo drums.

In order to get himself cured of his obsession for the primitive life, Billy decides to get married. However marriage to Meena is not quite


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successful. Though Meena tries to adjust to Billy's ways, his interest in the primitive world prevents her from doing so. In one of the parties, Meena discloses to Romi, her husband's friend, about his behaviour towards her. She tells -

_God knows what the matter is. All I know is that Billy is getting stranger and stranger with every passing day._49

During one of Billy's Anthropological excursions, he feels that there is a call from the primitive world and that he has to choose between the primitive beckoning and the civilised life which he was leading. "I could either follow this call, this vision, whatever the cost, or be condemned to total decay."50 It is this hallucination that destroys his marriage with Meena. One day Billy vanishes in the Saal forests of the Maikala Hills of Madhya Pradesh. His pull towards the primitive life makes him to leave his wife, child and aged parents. He leaves without thinking about his responsibilities and obligations. "It was as though a master mind had arranged the whole thing to give me a preview of what awaited me if I continued to defy this call".51 After a long search for Billy, he is presumed to be killed by a prowling tiger.

50. Ibid., p.188.
In the forest, *Billy* meets a tribal girl *Bilasia* and falls in love with her. *Billy* forgets his wife, child and parents and lives with her. The primitive people treat *Billy* as their king and believe him to be the reincarnation of their king, who is poisoned by his brother. *Billy* is a demi-god to the tribals. "He emerges among them as an archetype of their collective consciousness".52 After the union of *Billy* and *Bilasia*, the Chandtola peak glows again. Earlier too when the tribal king and queen lived, the peak glowed on moon-lit nights. All this leads them to believe that it is *Billy* who is their king re-born after thousands of years. *Dhunia*, one of the tribals, believes that all their evils and miseries will now come to an end. *Billy* is "like rain on parched lands, like balm on a wound".53

*Romi*, the District Collector then, finds *Billy* in the jungle after ten years of his sudden disappearance. *Billy* has been completely tribalised with just a loin cloth on him. Except for his impeccable English, he is completely like a tribal. When *Romi* meets *Billy* he feels that the latter is "closer to madness, the terrible madness of a man who after great sin and much suffering finally finds himself in the presence of his god".54

One day *Billy* comes to cure the migraine of *Romi*’s wife *Sita*. *Billy* asks *Romi* not to disclose his identity to her. However, when *Sita* learns of

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54. Ibid., p.140.
it, she reveals it to his wife Meena and also to his father Mr. Biswas. Mr. Biswas wants to get his son back, but Billy "had nothing to come back to." Therefore Mr. Biswas with the help of Mr. Rele, the Superintendent of Police, launches an extensive search for Billy. Unfortunately, the bullet of a negligent policeman kills Billy.

In "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas" the entry of the other woman, Bilasia, creates a total cleavage in the lives of Billy and Meena. Billy, in his search for an identity, disturbs the total set-up of his family life. The void that has been created in the life of Meena continues till the end. The death of Billy finally closes all doors on Meena. It is really a strange case wherein Billy was to go with Bilasia. He left his family and escaped into the forest to live with the tribals. His relations with his wife, though temporarily, get snapped. In such an event the other man or the other woman does not look so dangerous. The entry of the other person into the lives of a married couple makes their home a hell.

The novel, "The Guide" by R. K. Narayan also depicts the entry of the 'other man' Raju, in the lives of Rosie (Nalini) and Marco. Raju acts as a guide for tourists. One day Rosie and Marco come to Malgudi. Raju is attracted towards Rosie, the very moment he sees her. Her arrival has brought a change in his dress and manners.

55. Ibid., p.87.

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Rosie is a dancer but Marco does not find interest in dancing and compares it to monkey acrobatics. Marco and Rosie both have opposite temperaments. Marco is a scholarly husband, whereas his wife is emotional and ambitious. Hence the relationship between Marco and Rosie is incompatible. K.K. Sharma says,

In truth, hardly if ever, have two persons opposite in nature come to live as husband and wife. Rosie, a romantic girl with an inborn passion for dancing craves for a passionate gay and thrilling life; her husband, a connoisseur of painting and art aspires to a secluded and reserved life which might help him in carrying on his studies and researches undisturbed by the din and clatter of the world around him.56

When Raju learns about the rift in the relationship between Rosie and Marco, he tries to take advantage of it. Rosie performs her dance in front of him in a hotel room, while her husband is busy in a cave, writing a book on it. Raju praises her artistic talents and expresses his love for her. He says that he is pining for her all the time. According to Krishna Kant Singh,

The relationship between Raju and Rosie is of two equal temperaments, two equally emotional and passionate human beings.⁵⁷

When Marco comes to know about the ongoing affair between Rosie and Raju he leaves her. Though she begs forgiveness from him he does not listen to her. Rosie takes shelter in Raju’s house, but his mother does not like her entry in their house. She tries to put sense into Rosie’s head, by referring to the mythological stories of Sita and Savitri. She says that a wife’s place is beside her husband.

After a few days she began to allude to the problems of husband and wife whenever she spoke to Rosie, and filled the time with anecdotes about husbands; good husbands, mad husbands, reasonable husbands, unreasonable ones, savage ones, slightly deranged ones, moody ones, and so on and so forth; but it was always the wife, by her doggedness, perseverance, and patience, that brought him round.⁵⁸

His mother finally calls her brother to settle the matter. Even Raju's uncle humiliates Rosie by saying that a dancing girl has no place in their house. When Raju becomes adamant that Rosie would stay in their house, his mother and uncle themselves leave the house.

Rosie appears as a gold mine to Raju and he thinks of exploiting her talent and thereby mint money. Rosie, who gives her dance performances in the name of Nalini, rises to a great fame. Raju and Rosie live together as a married couple.

We were a married couple to all appearances. Rosie cooked the food, and kept the house. I seldom went out except to do a little shopping. All day long she danced and sang. I made love to her constantly and was steeped in an all-absorbing romanticism, until I woke up to the fact that she was really getting tired of it all. 59

Raju's desire for wealth increases by leaps and bound and therefore he swindles away all that she earns. Raju becomes more and more possessive of her and prevents visitors from meeting her.

Marco sends Nalini a complimentary copy of his book. When Raju receives it, he hides it in the liquor casket, so that she could not find it.

59. Ibid., p.155.
However, when Nalini detects it, she is hurt that Raju hid it from her. The relationship comes to a halt when Raju forges her signature on the document sent by her husband. When Marco complains about it to the police, Raju is arrested and sentenced to two years imprisonment. Thus Rosie alias Nalini becomes a loser by the entry of the ‘other man’ in her life.

In the novel, "The Dark Room", R. K. Narayan depicts the rebellion Savitri’s search for freedom from the shackles of marriage. Savitri is having an unhappy conjugal life with her husband, Ramani, who neglects her and her three children. "The Dark Room", depicts the life of Savitri, whose marital life gets disrupted by the other woman, Shanta Bai, a subordinate employee in her husband, Ramani’s office. Savitri is a middle-class woman who is not much educated and plays her role as a traditional wife and mother. In contrast to her, her husband is loud, assertive and exigent, who keeps on oppressing her. His masculinity is too over-bearing as William Walsh expresses-

His loudness is too loud, his self-esteem exaggerated, his lack of human engagement with his family overdone.⁶₀

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Savitri’s husband is an eccentric fellow and always finds fault with her. He shouts at her and grumbles about many things most of the times. He tells Savitri,

*Why do you torment me with this cucumber for the dozenth time? Do you think I live on it? Or he would say, if there was the slightest delay, Ah, ah! I suppose I’ll have to apply to my office for leave and wait for this salted cucumber!*  

Savitri’s explanation is always received with a rebuke. Savitri feels quite helpless even after fifteen years of her marriage. She feels that she should have asserted her right in the beginning of her married life just like the modern girls do. It is too late then to do anything. William Jones, a critic, comments on Ramani’s ways –

*Though they have married for fifteen years, his wife has received nothing from her husband except his hot and cold temper. Even his children are recipients more of his rebukes than of his fitful love.*

Savitri who was obedient to her husband, loses her patience one-day when her husband hits their son, Babu for the failure of the coloured electric lights during Navaratri festival. To rebel and express her anger,

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she resorts to the dark room and lies down on the floor showing her displeasure as well as her disagreement to her husband’s nature. Her children and the cook coax her to come out and eat, but fail in their efforts. The cook gives his male-point of view –

*It is no business of a wife’s to butt in when the father is dealing with his son. It is a bad habit. Only a battered son will grow into a sound man.*

The cook too treats his wife in the similar manner as he feels that “Women must be taught their place.” Janamma, a neighbour, comes to bring Savitri out of the dark room. She tells –

*Men are impetuous. One moment they will be all temper and the next all kindness. Men have to bear many worries and burdens, and you must overlook it if they are sometimes unreasonable.*

Savitri realises that her resentment is insignificant.

There is a drastic change in Ramani after Shanta Bai is appointed in his office. She is married at the age of twelve to a cousin of hers, but she has left him at eighteen because he was a drunkard. Ramani starts having an affair with her by going for outings with her and returning very late at night or even in the early morning hours to his house.

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64. Ibid., p.51.
65. Ibid., p.60.
"The Dark Room", narrates a story reflecting Ramani's infidelity which is unbearable to Savitri. Ramani is a domineering husband, whereas Savitri is a devoted and submissive wife. His cruelty clashes with Savitri's wifely devotion and submissiveness. The entry of Shanta Bai in the life of Ramani creates havoc and chaos in his married life and threatens to disrupt it. The entry of the third person in his marital life depicts the typical new woman who is emerging in the modern times. Savitri often thinks of asking her husband about the scandal brewing between Shanta Bai and him, but restrains herself hoping that it could be a lie. But gradually the rumours become thick and loud and Savitri's placid temperament gets agitated. She no longer wants to be the meek sufferer and a mute observer. One day when Ramani inquires whether she has already dined, she vehemently replies “Yes” and adds, “You want me to sit up and wait for you, do you?"66 This is her first shot of revolt against her husband. When Ramani tries to pacify her by holding her hands she shakes them off violently and says –

You men will never grant that. For you we are playthings when you feel like hugging, and slaves at other times. Don’t think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose.67

Savitri also tells him that either he should treat her kindly or take the other woman into his life. Ramani does not bother about her threat

67. Ibid., p.110.
and says that she could do as she wanted. This is enough to kindle her anger. Her husband’s infidelity is intolerable to her. *Savitri* realises that both husband and wife have to be devoted to each other for marital happiness. When she finds that it is contrary to her expectations, she rebels against the traditional values expected from wifehood. So long *Savitri* had tolerated the insults and maltreatment from her husband but his infidelity was intolerable. She after silently suffering all the years rebels in an unexpected way. Her self respect and ego is hurt. She too tries to assert her identity and individuality. There is a clash of opposite nature between *Ramani* and *Savitri*, - the clash of cruelty, brutality and infidelity, with that of devotion, simplicity and fidelity.

When *Ramani* finds *Savitri* waking up their children, he starts touching her which infuriates her. She demands that he stay away from her.

*You are dirty, you are impure. Even if I burn my skin*

*I can’t cleanse myself of the impurity of your touch.*

*Ramani* is a contemptuous domineering husband and gets wild with anger telling her to get lost. *Savitri*, who bore the tantrums of her husband ungrudgingly through all the years of her married life, also wants

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68. Ibid., p.112.
her individuality and identity. She feels belittled by his cruel behaviour and neglect towards her. She retorts –

Do you think I am going to stay here? We are responsible for our position: we accept food, shelter, and comforts that you give, and are what we are. Do you think that I will stay in your house, breathe the air of your property, drink the water here, and eat food you buy with your money? No, I'll starve and die in the open, under the sky, a roof for which we need be obliged to no man.69

When she wants to take their children along with her, he does not allow her to do so emphasising that they are his children. Hence, she leaves the house alone. She feels like going to the 'other woman' and gashing up her face so that her husband would no longer find her interesting and attractive.

This time Savitri's weapon is not the usual dark room for sulking. She leaves the house for good without carrying anything. She understands that it is the economic dependence on their husbands that make women subordinates. She feels that a woman loses her dignity and self-respect just because she is dependent on man. Her helpless dependency makes her a servile creature bearing torture silently. She

69. Ibid., pp.112-113.
feels very pathetic regarding the condition of a woman. She spurts out angrily at her husband thus,

*The prostitute changes her men, but a married woman doesn’t; that’s all, but both earn their food and shelter in the same manner. 70*

The awareness of her individuality makes her walk out of the house as a sign of protest. She tries to end her life in the river, but for *Mani* - a locksmith - who saves her life just on time. He procures a job for her in the temple. She works there for a few days, but cannot continue for long as the thought and love for her children, brings her back home. She is left with no other alternative. *Savitri’s* return to her home cannot be called her submission. It is the nostalgia for her children that make her realise the futility of her attempt to escape the male dominations. She does not love her husband any more because of his illicit relationship with *Shantabai*. But it becomes impossible for her to live without her children and therefore she has to compromise between her self respect and her love for children. This is what draws her back to her marital home to live under the same roof with her husband. *Savitri’s* return to her home, after her strong revolt and assertion of individuality, portrays defeat in her attempt trying to stray away from the traditional role of a wife thrusted upon the woman by the society. Her return to the protective shelter of her home depicts that the battle was lost. *Ramani* emerges as the final winner.

70. Ibid., p.120.
whereas Savitri becomes a loser. Her return to the home and the children may further promote her husband to intimidate her into tolerating his extramarital affairs with no remorse for causing any marital discord.

"The Dark Room" deals with the triangular relationship between Ramani, Savitri and Shanta Bai. M.K. Naik feels that none of these three characters are fit enough to be sympathised. He says,

> It is difficult to sympathize with any of the three characters here. Savitri is too spineless to become tragic figure, her husband is a cad and Shantabai, the other woman, remains a shadowy figure. The upshot is not a powerful drama of emotional crisis but a little storm in a small domestic tea-cup, more than slightly cracked.\(^1\)

The 'other man' and the 'other woman' issues are as old as the institution of marriage. Human lust is not the only reason for this social evil, but in some social circles an extra woman is considered a status symbol of the gentry. Now such disbelief is fast losing ground. Adherence to mutual trust is the solution to such petty issues.

Symbolically speaking a husband and a wife are supposed to be the two horses of the chariot of life. They both must function properly. If one horse pulls in one direction and the other in another, the result is contradictory. Therefore, both the husband and the wife should play complementary roles in the marital harmony.

In order to complement the role, each has to bring out the best in him or her. Unselfishness, endurance, and compassion are some of the important qualities, which pay rich dividends in such a relationship. Marriages, in fact are a healthy amalgam of affection, respect, tiffs, quarrels, patch-ups, joys and sorrows. If there is a steadfast bond between the husband and wife, along with loyalty and fidelity to each other, then such marriages can withstand even the severest tempest of life and survive through all disasters.
Having briefly introduced what contributes towards the complementary roles in a man-woman relationship, in this part of the thesis, a few instances have been taken from different novels to substantiate the same.

In Kamala Markandaya’s “Nectar in a Sieve”, there exists an ideal and fulfilling relationship between Nathan and Rukmani, who are unsophisticated peasants in spite of various trying situations. This novel depicts that their peaceful lives are disturbed due to industrialisation, social evils and natural calamities. However, their tender human relationship, understanding and sacrifice act as a balm in the times of such difficulties.

Rukmani is an epitome of compassion and sacrifice and Nathan finds love, peace and comfort in her. She is a devoted wife to him. “She is the centrifugal force providing sap to the other aspects of the body of the novel and helping it to stand erect.” 72 Rukmani, on her first visit to her husband’s house after her marriage, is shocked to see the thatched mud hut which would be their marital abode. Nathan reads the mind of his new bride and assures her that he too would build a house like that of her

father's; *Nathan* makes sincere efforts to make her happy. He knows that
she was used to better living so he tries to cheer her up by saying that
they would see better times. His concern for her makes *Rukmani* elated
with joy and makes her realise that she has a loving and caring husband.
*Nathan* tells her –

> Perhaps you are frightened at living here alone - but
> in a few years we can move – may be even buy a
> house such as your father’s. You would like that?

When *Rukmani* learns from *Kunthi* that the house was built by her
husband himself for her, she becomes proud of him. She tells him gladly,
"Should I not be proud that you have built this house with your own
hands?" His concern for her is enough to boost her drooping spirits.

The relationship between *Nathan* and *Rukmani* is quite
complementary from the beginning and there is a mutual understanding
between the two. *Rukmani* is all praise for her husband.

> What patience indeed my husband must have had,
> to put up with me uncomplainingly during those
> early days of our married lives! Not one cross word

impression, 1990, p. 4.
74. Ibid., p. 6.
or impatient look, and praise for whatever small success I achieved.75

There is reciprocity between Nathan and Rukmani as they seem to be happy with each other. Nathan is proud of his wife and considers her the best of all the women in the village. Even after several years of marriage, he has the same regard for her and his opinion of her remains unchanged. After the wedding of their daughter Ira on a Diwali day, while they are enjoying the warmth of a bonfire Nathan hoists Rukmani in his arms and utters with joy - “I am happy because life is good and the children are good, and you are the best of all”.76

However, difficult times present themselves in their peaceful lives. Rukmani finds it very difficult to reconcile with the Industrial Revolution that sweeps the village with the upcoming tannery. It is difficult to manage the economic burden with six mouths to feed. She sells vegetables in the nearby village. It is Rukmani’s disillusionment of life that makes Nathan tell her - “Bend like the grass that you do not break”.77

To add to their woes a storm blows and causes complete damage to their fields and house. Moreover, there is the added expense of their

75. Ibid., p.8.
76. Ibid., p.57.
77. Ibid., p.28.
daughter Ira's wedding. The stock of stored food dwindles. After five years Ira's husband brings her back home and says that she is barren. *Rukmani* feels that the dreadful story is being repeated, when she too had not conceived for long after her first child. She takes treatment from Dr. *Kennington* and later on gives birth to five sons, one after the other. The same thing was happening to her daughter now.

In addition to it, the rains also fail and paddy shrivels. Being a tenant farmer, *Nathan* has to pay some money and rice to the owner. They sell their belongings in order to pay money for the piece of land. The land is more important to be retained—"... than that the land should be taken from us; we can do without these, but if the land is gone our livelihood is gone, and we must thenceforth wander like jackals".78 *Rukmani* is believed to be, "The absorber who imbibes within her everything that comes her way - joy, happiness, hardship, poverty, loss, pain, suffering - nectar as well as poison".79

*Nathan* develops illicit relationship with the bewitching *Kunthi*. In fact he sires two of her children. In lieu of keeping this secret to herself she demands rice from *Nathan*. He has to steal rice from his own home to make her quiet. Similarly, when *Rukmani* has no children for long, after the birth of their first daughter, she goes to Dr. *Kenny*. The relationship

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78. Ibid., p.74.
79. Arundhati Chatterjee, "Rukmani, The Mother Figure in Nectar in a Sieve" in *Studies in Indian Fiction in English*, (Ed.) G. S. Balarama Gupta, JIWE Publications: Gulbarga, 1987, p.85.
between Rukmani and Dr. Kenny is that of a doctor and a patient. Kunthi is aware about her frequent visits to the doctor. The wicked woman conspires and blackmails the innocent Rukmani, as she did earlier with Nathan.

To Rukmani, her husband is a friend as well as a guide. The miseries they face are dispelled by their unflinching devotion, faith, love and concern for each other. The novelist Kamala Markandaya depicts how man has to struggle to make both ends meet. K. V. Surendran says that,

*Rukmani’s spiritual stamina, heroic impulse, dove-like simplicity, love of her children, tolerance and respect for traditional values make her an outstanding character.*

Their mutual adjustment towards the miseries of life saves their marriage from disruption and makes the Nathan-Rukmani relationship a complementary one.

Another novel of significance is, Kamala Markandaya’s “A Silence of Desire”, which depicts the husband-wife characters in their complementary roles to begin with. Mr. Dandekar and Sarojini make an ideal couple. They understand well each other’s problems and have deep empathy for each others’ shortcomings. As is rightly said life does not run

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like a straight line. It takes its own precipitous path. One’s own mistakes and myopic vision makes one unable to understand the real cause of other’s behaviour, which makes human happiness short lived.

The conjugal bliss between Dandekar and Sarojini is shattered when he finds the photograph of an unknown man hidden in her book, which Sarojini worships. His peace of mind is disturbed and it gives rise to suspicion, as to the identity of the man. To clear his doubts he follows her one day only to learn that his wife was suffering from a growth in the womb and that she has been visiting a faith healer.

Sarojini’s natural shyness prevents her from telling about her physical problem to her husband. She wants to get that abnormality cured through faith healing, before it comes to the knowledge of her husband. Therefore she visits the Swami without letting her husband know of it. Usha Pathania in her book “Human Bonds and Bondages” has beautifully brought out the mental agony of Sarojini in the following lines.

The relationship between husband and wife thrives when it is a partnership between equals. Once the superiority-inferiority equation enters into it, the rot sets in. Fear and apprehension replace trust and confidence blocking the way to genuine understanding between the spouses. Sarojini avoids telling Dandekar about the growth in her uterus.
simply because of the psychological block that exists
between the two. When Sarojini can no longer tell
lies she reveals the reasons for her secret visits to
the Swamy.81

The bitterness in their relationship disappears when Dandekar
comes to know of the fact. He is no longer obsessed by mistrust or
suspicion. He speaks from the depth of his heart that as they have been
married for too long she meant everything to him. He repents for being
harsh to her and admires her patience and endurance.

The entry of the Swamiji in the harmonious lives of Dandekar and
Sarojini affects the calmness of their relationship. Later on the emotional
turmoil which disrupts their lives, itself helps them in understanding each
other better. Dandekar realises that the companionship of his wife was
necessary to lead a happy life. Usha Pathania adds to it –

The peace and happiness of the Dandekar family is
restored. The unhappy interlude is over and the good
old days return with the encouraging change that
Sarojini and Dandekar have now achieved

81. Usha Pathania, Human Bonds and Bondages: The Fiction of Anita Desai and Kamala

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The clash between Dandekar and Sarojini is rather a clash between traditionalism and modernism and between reason and faith.

Kamala Markandaya’s novel, "A Handful of Rice", begins with Ravishankar (Ravi) breaking the window bars of the house of Apu, who is a tailor. Ravi is inebriated and wants to hide himself from the police. The inmates of the house offer him food to eat and allow him to sleep there itself. In the morning he finds himself bound by a cycle chain by the lady of the house. When he tries to move himself, she hits him repeatedly. Ravi suffers in “Pain and bewilderment combined; he lowered his head into his arms, so that the woman should neither see him bleed nor weep". The woman later tends his bleeding wound.

The next day Ravi goes to Apu’s house to repair the window bars. He is dazed to see Apu’s beautiful daughter, Nalini. Ravi begins to run errands for Apu and never refuses any task given to him. Since then, Ravi becomes very close to the family. Ravi finds in Nalini –

Something utterly feminine, the distilled essence of all that was sweet and desirable in a woman. He stole another look: indeed he could hardly take his eyes from her, and was struck anew by the beauty of

82. Ibid., p.95.
her profile, framed in the soft muslin folds of the sari she had drawn over her head. What a lovely face, he thought, what a lovely woman. If, by some extreme, improbable chance she were to become his wife, what would he not do for her, what could he not achieve?

Apu wants Ravi to be his son-in-law, as he is a good man and a willing worker. Moreover he desires someone to whom he can easily hand over the reins of his profession as well as the household affairs. Even Ravi's father, Ram, likes Nalini for she has all the requisite qualities of a good wife. After their marriage they have a pleasant relationship.

One day Ravi meets his old friend Damodar and under his influence comes home drunk. Nalini makes him promise that he would never repeat such a thing. Ravi, for the sake of his wife Nalini, tries to give up the unwanted company of Damodar. There was openness in the relationship between Ravi and Nalini. Even when there are points of disagreement between them, Nalini avoids them wisely.

He could see she didn't agree with him, but she didn't pursue the subject. She was unlike other

84. Ibid., p.42.
Though in "A Handful of Rice", Nalini and Ravi play complementary roles as married partners, the wife still suffers ill treatment at the hands of her husband. Ravi is frustrated due to his economic conditions. Nalini bears poverty and sufferings without any qualms and hopes for a better future. When Ravi is not in favour of her, she leaves the house and goes to stay with her sister, Thangam. When Ravi returns he is shocked to see that his wife has left him.

Gone off, not a word, leaving him with his troubles.

Forgetting the duties she owed him, the duties of a wife to her husband.86

Nalini is a devoted wife, so the moment he calls her back, she returns. She rebels against her husband only to bring him back to a respectable life in the society.

In "Azadi" by Chaman Nahal, the relationship between Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant of Sialkot, and his wife, Prabha Rani is a pleasant one. They are the principal tenants of Bibi Amar Vati. Prabha Rani is an illiterate woman but has great adoration for her husband as she believes him to be 'the most learned man in the whole neighbourhood'. According

85. Ibid., p.91.
86. Ibid., p.221.
to her, he is ‘an avatar of Vishnu’ and therefore she takes due care of his health. *Prabha Rani* is a peasant woman whom he takes as a wife, when she is just thirteen. They are forced to migrate to India from Sialkot in Pakistan, at the time of the Partition. Despite *Lala Kanshi Ram*, being the master of the house, only his wife would have solutions to any problems they might face.

*He was the lord and the master, but in disasters it was she who took charge and steered the ship. He was too restless, he demanded too quick an answer to a problem and wore himself out too fast. She was a woman of the soil who believed in rhythms, in things happening in their own order.*

When they want to settle down happily, they are pushed out of their cosy nest in the name of freedom.

When *Lala Kanshi Ram’s* shop is looted, *Prabha Rani* tries to comfort her husband though with acute fear in her heart. She is so bold that, “She who was so strong and determined and was the absolute centre of their domestic life.”

When they are packing to leave for the refugee camp, *Lala Kanshi Ram* thinks thus:

... if he were asked to take just one article out of this house, just one memento of the blessings of his life here, or one marvel for the future to come - he

88. Ibid., p.138.
would take only Prabha. Yes, Prabha alone, and maybe leave Arun behind too.\textsuperscript{89}

The husband-wife relationship between \textit{Lala Kanshi Ram} and \textit{Prabha Rani} shows a strong bond of love between them. Till the end of the novel, they are found as two inseparable souls, very much concerned about each other's welfare and providing strength to each other at every critical juncture.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p.145.
MAN-WOMAN - THEIR CONTRADICTORY ROLES

There are various factors responsible for the contradictory roles in man-woman relationship. Infidelity, adultery and other human weaknesses like anger, jealousy, suspicion, hatred and misunderstanding create conflicting situations in the relationship between the husband and the wife. Sometimes, the lack of understanding by the husband and disagreement in disposition leads to emotional starvation and neglect precipitating the breakdown of marriages.

Man often works hard to make both ends meet. When he returns home exhausted, he expects his wife to make him feel comfortable. But, instead, if she starts discussing about her hardships at home, it would add fuel to the fire. Similar is the case with the woman working in the office. Not only that she tends to her job or profession, she also has to work at home and make herself available to her husband's needs. Due to the fast growth of nuclear families, the lady of the house is over-burdened with the task of running the house almost single-handedly. In the joint-family system, the work-load is shared by all the members of the house; hence the burden is not quite felt. Thus the over-worked husband and the over-burdened wife face a situation, where there is stress and strain. The consequence of this is that they fight and stop talking to each other and thereby ignore their urgent domestic needs. External elements also
contribute to worsen the situation. The conflicting role of the couple spoils the man-woman relationship.

Many a divorce can be averted by understanding and tolerance of each other. Habits such as unselfishness, forbearance and compassion pay rich dividend in marital relationship and provide the chance to bring out the best in the partners. Such tension-ridden relationship between a man and a woman which disturbs the peace at home, can be termed as contradictory relationship.

II

Instances from novels are taken to substantiate the human failures and foibles that play conflicting roles in man-woman relationship. The novels of Anita Desai are replete with the characters of husband and wife who are prone to intensify small mistakes. In the husband-wife relationship the alienation is due to lack of communication and temperamental incompatibility. Desai explores into the women's psyche and deals with the feelings and emotions of the women who are the neglected class of the society. She tries to reflect the hard facts of life that is very true and needs retrospection. Usha Pathania finds that due to the psychological trauma there is an imbalance which does not allow harmonious relationship. She says,
Anita Desai’s works have a psychological bearing and project the difficulties faced by her characters in shedding their fears and insecurities, which result in the disruption of their familial ties. Their psychological turmoil creates psychic imbalances which in their turn, handicap them in establishing harmonious and gratifying interpersonal relationships.90

The contradictory man-woman relationship is a recurring theme in Anita Desai’s novels. The woman characters are hypersensitive and psychic. They are bound with the fragile matrimonial ties to their overworking husbands. This is one of the causes for the incompatible relationship between husband and wife. Thus all the couples like Nanda and Mr. Kaul, Tara and Rakesh, Maya and Gautama, fail miserably in their matrimonial relationship due to their contradictory nature. The women in Anita Desai’s novels are –

The bored, lonely wife in the urban complex; the unbearably restrictive family and society attitudes towards women (incidentally, Desai’s women are more convincing than her men): the wish to revert back to childhood and the suicidal or murderous

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inclinations of an ultrasensitive mind – such is the material for her novels.⁹¹

Anita Desai’s novels show concern about human relationship. Though a woman is the nucleus of the family and plays pivotal role in its functioning, she undergoes a step-motherly treatment in the male dominated family. Desai tries to focus her women characters struggling with their identity crisis in a male dominated society. Her novels deal with incompatible couples, especially very sensitive wives with ill-matched husbands.

In Anita Desai’s novel “Fire on the Mountain”, the relationship between Mr. Kaul and his wife Nanda is not a happy one. Their conjugal relationship gets affected as Mr. Kaul, the Vice Chancellor of Punjab University, carries on his affairs with Miss David, a mathematics teacher. In spite of the knowledge of her husband’s infidelity, Nanda carries on her relationship with him without exposing that she knows it. She performs her duty as a faithful wife and is a good hostess to the guests of her husband. She feels that –

Her bond with her husband did not involve her “self”.

It was full on the surface but empty at the core.⁹²

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But soon Nanda gets tired of playing the role of a painted doll. All her efforts to put her household on the right track go a waste. However, she is relieved of her problem, upon the death of her husband. Such contradiction between a husband and wife not only ruins the lives of those involved, but also those of their children and dependants.

Another character in the same novel is Tara, the daughter of Asha and granddaughter of Nanda, who suffers the cruelty of her husband Rakesh, a diplomat. This is a new breed of aristocrats of Independent India, who try to imitate the British hierarchy along with all its vices. Though highly educated, Rakesh ill-treats his wife. He has a drinking habit and to top it all, has a number of love affairs. The irony of fate is that Asha is fond of Rakesh and therefore she instructs Tara to adjust herself and give her husband another chance to improve. Thus, the mother plays a complementary role in bringing about an adjustment between the husband and the wife. Her views regarding Rakesh are good. Asha advises Tara - “to rouse herself and make another try at being a successful diplomat’s wife”.\textsuperscript{93} Asha feels that Geneva, the International Court of Justice, where Rakesh is posted is the right place to compromise and adjust.

Here is a strange situation prevailing. Asha admits that her son-in-law boozes and is also a womaniser. Yet she believes that such things are

common among the men in high posts. *Tara* should therefore overlook all that and attempt to be a good wife. However, *Tara* is in no mood to pardon the loose behaviour of her husband. She wonders whether her mother would have accepted if her father behaved similarly. It is well known that a wife can tolerate every antic of her husband, but not his womanising. This habit spoils the man-woman relationship.

There is yet another couple in Anita Desai’s "Fire on the Mountain", whose relationship gets strained, due to unknown reasons. The pastor of Kasauli church and his wife *Mavis* live at Carignano. The pastor plants three apricot trees, with the hope that one day his wife would prepare apricot jam which he cherishes very much. His desire remains unfulfilled, due to the incompatible husband-wife relationship. The pastor always lives in the fear that his wife would do him to death any time. He refuses to take the tea, prepared by his wife. He would pour it to the potted geraniums only to watch them droop and die. He would keep his one eye open to observe his wife, who, he believes, is waiting for an opportunity to thrust the kitchen knife into him. This constant fear of being killed results in the loss of his eyes. He acquires peace only when his wife dies due to an accidental fall from the cliff.

Anita Desai’s "Cry, the Peacock" also depicts the man-woman relationships which are contradictory to each other. The female protagonist, *Maya* suffers from the hypersensitive fantasy, that spoils the
harmonious relationship between herself and her husband, Gautama. In spite of having a loving husband in Gautama, she feels that he does not understand her emotional needs. To make matters worse, the death of her pet dog, Toto, is enough to create an emotional upheaval in her life. Maya being childless is naturally attached to Toto and its death affects her greatly. The indifference which Gautama shows over the death of her pet dog further worsens her condition. Though he arranges its burial, he has no attachment to Toto. Both Maya and Gautama suffer from their temperamental differences.

Maya is lonely and hence feels isolated, alienated and frustrated. She has nothing to keep herself busy and her husband is too occupied to give company to his young wife. She does not have anything to do to fill up the long lonely hours of life. Thus she feels neglected by her husband. She thinks –

_Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me, to either the soft, willing body or the lonely, wanting mind that waited near his bed._

And when he sees her grief at the loss of her pet dog, he says –

_You need a cup of tea, he said. Yes, I cried, yes, it is his hardness – no, no, not hardness, but the distance_

he coldly keeps from me. His coldness, his coldness, and incessant talk of cups of tea and philosophy in order not to hear me talk and, talking, reveal myself. It is that – my loneliness in this house.95

The death of her dog, Toto makes Maya suffer an emotional vacuum as her husband never takes the incident very seriously. Basavaraj Naikar says that –

This incident brings out the contrast between Maya, who is highly sensitive and imaginative and of a neurotic sensibility and Gautama, who is unimaginative and pragmatic and unsentimental – a contrast accentuated by communication gap on account of his being wrapped up in his professional preoccupations.96

Both Maya and Gautama suffer from temperamental incompatibility that creates an agonised and unbridgeable chasm between them. Her sorrowful mental state is aggravated as she sees the semblance of her husband with that of her father.

Although they are husband and wife, they live like total strangers to each other. Mutual trust and readiness to share the joys and sorrows of

95. Ibid., p.9.
life, are absent from their lives. *Maya* is gripped by an appalling feeling of loneliness, which *Gautama* cannot comprehend. The wide chasm of mutual misunderstanding between them is the root cause of their contradictory relationship. *Gautama* tries to teach *Maya*, from the Bhagavad Gita, the adverse impact of attachment.

> Thinking of sense objects, man becomes attached thereto. From attachment arises longing and from longing anger is born. From anger arises delusion; from delusion, loss of memory is caused. From loss of memory the discriminative faculty is ruined and from the ruin of discrimination, he perishes.\(^97\)

Another reason for the contradictory roles played by *Gautama* and *Maya* is the lack of proper communication between them. The excessive love showered by *Maya*'s father on her, makes her to expect the same from her husband. *Gautama*, who is too busy and preoccupied, overlooks her needs. He is aware of her loneliness and frustration and hence wants her to practise detachment, so that she would not become a victim of neurotic disorder. He blames her father for having made her a spoilt child by his excessive pampers. It is *Maya*'s father-fixation that plays havoc in her relationship with *Gautama*.

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\(^{97}\) Anita Desai, *Cry, the Peacock*, Orient Paperbacks: New Delhi, Rpt. 1990, p.112.
Maya is childless, even after four years of her married life. This frustrates her and she becomes a psychic patient. Temperamental incompatibility makes her feel unhappy, unfulfilled, lonely and alienated from her husband. Both Maya and Gautama suffer from temperamental crisis that makes their relationship inconsistent. Maya's fear psychosis acts as a big hindrance in carrying on a smooth relationship with her husband. To add to this, she is haunted by a constant fear of death because of the prophecy of the albino astrologer, who foretells the death of either of them after four years of marriage.

K. Meera Bai says that the women characters in Anita Desai's novels are usually of the type who refuse to give up their individuality. As a result of this they end up in frustration.

Her characters are distinguished by the qualities of introspection, introversion and a refusal to surrender their individual selves. What one observes is a chain reaction of one leading to the other, with the emerging picture of a battered and bruised individual writhing in pain and anguish.98

The women in Anita Desai's novels are women with feelings, longing for a little attention, desiring for love and affection from their husbands.

Had there been a mutual understanding and sympathetic attention by

their husbands, than Maya would not turn to be a slayer or Monisha a self-killer. As Usha Bande says,

*These rebel-victims are not the outcome of an eccentric vision of the author but they are indicative of the emergence of this disquieting stance which modern literate stands to project.*

In Kamala Markandaya's novel "Some Inner Fury", Kitsamy and Premala are wedded couple. Their relationship is however not a pleasant one. Kitsamy, an Indian, has adopted the western ways, as he has stayed in England for a considerable time. Premala, finds it very difficult to follow the western way of life and to adjust to her husband's behaviour. Kitsamy is westernised to the core whereas his wife is gentle, traditional and submissive in her habits. Hence their relationship is not a smooth one but rather contradictory and insipid. Though they have ample time to understand each other before tying their nuptial knot, they fail to study each other well. Their different upbringing and differing views hinder their marital adjustment. According to Usha Pathania the incompatibility between Kit and Premala is because -

*Kit expects his wife to be modern and westernised but he treats her as an Indian husband might. Kit*

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lacks the considerateness which a truly westernised Indian may be expected to show.\textsuperscript{100}

Though \textit{Premala} tries desperately and sincerely to adjust herself to Kit's ways, it proves futile as they lack common interests. \textit{Premala} knows very well that for an enduring and lasting relationship between a man and a woman, the woman has to be not only a wife but also a companion to her husband. Therefore she joins him in all his outings and does all that he says ungrudgingly.

\textit{Kit} believes that his wife would change when given a thorough exposure to the world and would slowly match his expectations. \textit{Premala}, also tries to modify herself but is unable to really do so. Thus she also contributes in making their marriage grow sour and dull. \textit{Premala} utterly fails to change herself or to change Kitsamy's lifestyle resulting in an emotional death.

Westernisation and traditionalism in the characters of \textit{Kit} and \textit{Premala} respectively make them slowly drift away from each other. Therefore Usha Pathania writes,

\begin{quote}
\textit{In human relationships the temperamental gulf cannot be bridged easily. It is more so in the case of matrimonial ties. By keeping quiet or by turning}
\end{quote}

away from troubling issues the spouses cannot maintain the semblance of an emotional union.

Something like this has been happening in the case of Premala and Kit.¹⁰¹

Premala who has ample time at her disposal starts going to the missionary school in the village and one day comes back with a small girl, whom she later intends to adopt. Kit is quite bewildered over her decision. He tells her - "But really, you know, people will think I've slept with the serving maid and this is my bastard and you're just being nice about it".¹⁰²

Premala meets with a tragic death due to asphyxiation when some henchmen burn down the school building. A short while after her death, Kit too gets killed when someone aims a knife at him. The school was everything to Premala where she found solace from her monotonous life at home. But the school itself brought about her death. Both Kit and Premala's death was due to the political upheaval in the country, during the freedom struggle. According to Usha Pathania the incompatibility between Kit and Premala is because, "Kit expects his wife to be modern and westernised but he treats her as an Indian husband might. Kit lacks

¹⁰¹. Ibid., p.81.
the considerateness which a truly westernised Indian may be expected to show".103

In "The Nowhere Man", by Kamala Markandaya, the relationship between Dr. Radcliffe and his wife Marjorie has changed considerably after many years of marriage. It is not in the same line as it used to be earlier, when they were newly married. Dr. Radcliffe who comes home late, is received with annoyance by his wife. The tone of endearment no longer exists and the suppressed emotions burst out as, "Darling you're late, you're horrible, you've deflated my lovely soufflé".104

After sometime, the inquisition of Marjorie becomes so unkind that the husband finds it difficult to answer. Dr. Radcliffe responds to his wife's searching questions in such a way that the natural flow of conversation dries up which has been earlier like the "lucid springs that bubbled and ran free".105

Earlier she used to hear about his cases, his dilemmas and perplexities, but suddenly she ceases to listen to him and succeeds in submerging his concerns and allowing her own to surface. She demands bigger and better house and garden, and better neighbourhood and car, in order to keep up their status in the society. She complains to her

105. Ibid., p.7.
friends that her husband John has no mind of his own and therefore the burden to run the house, to answer the telephone calls and to make decision on all matters is her responsibility. Her peace of mind is lost by the telephone calls from the patients, when they are in bed. Marjorie can hardly tolerate those appalling patients who disturb her peace.

Dr. Radcliffe is a devoted doctor who attends to his patients at all times irrespective of whether it is day or night. His wife is his second concern and this attitude of his turns their marriage sour. Any amount of Marjorie’s displeasure does not deter Dr. Radcliffe to discard his patients and his profession. It implies that when a woman marries a man, she should also marry his profession. There is a point in this argument also that howsoever busy a husband remains, he must spare some time for his wife and children. The profession of a doctor is such that it might take away even that privilege of a wife. The doctor, true to his profession, has to go out when a call of duty is received. That is why husband and wife should strike a golden mien that there should not arise contradiction between one’s family and profession.