Chapter 1
Androgyny

The need to love and be loved in an ambience of secure intimacy is an indispensable urge of the human being and thus man-woman relationship forms the foundation of human existence. But in the present changing socio-cultural scenario, where a distinct individuality is the cherished dream of both the male and the female, even trivial issues seem to upset the indissolubility of this bond. It is therefore very necessary to redefine our orientation towards this fundamental relation which is the basis for achieving fulfilment and wholeness in life.

The mythologies and religions of the east and the west testify to the concept of the bisexuality not only of man, but of God himself. Primordial divinity is therefore conceived to be essentially androgynous combining in him both the male (Andro) and the female (Gyne), and man is believed to be created in God’s own image. The earliest creations were thus androgynous, possessing a kind of spiritual and psychological wholeness and balance achieved through the joining of the masculine and the feminine, which is regarded to be complementary. The myth enunciated by Aristophanes and mentioned by Plato in The Symposium, illustrates that these androgynous creatures lost their primordial state of bliss, their harmonious existence, as a result of their disobedience to God. They were divided into two- the male and the female, and thus emerged the concept of viewing the male and the female as two, different and distinctive but complementary entities.

The early creations according to The Bible, were also androgynous as they were created in the image of God comprising of the male and the female. Certain
apocryphal versions of Genesis testify to the androgyny of Adam and Eve as they “were made back to back, joined at the shoulder” (Weil 46) and their separate existence is only a subsequent development - the result of their division executed by God, who divided them into two. The later well-known story of creation emphasizes this concept of androgyny, much more subtly, but from a different perspective - considering Adam androgynous and Eve, his helpmate as created out of Adam’s rib. Rabbi Simeon Ben - Yohae, the Jewish philosopher confirming the androgyny of Adam in The Zohar remarks “The word Adam embraces the upper and the lower in virtue of its three letters, aleph, dubeth and mim. When these letters descended below in their complete form the name Adam was found to comprise the male and the female” (qtd. in Kiberd 3).

Primordial divinity in the east, in Hinduism, the religion of the ancient Indians is also believed to be essentially bisexual, and the division into the male and the female is considered to be only a later adaptation. The Divine is defined in The Upanishads as that in which the opposites exist. According to The Puranas, “Rudra (Shiva) appeared first like a rising sun and he was androgynous. The Immensity seeing this hermaphrodite said unto him, “divide yourself”. Thus with the left side of God was created a Goddess who became his companion” (qtd, in Shivapadasundaram 69). The Upanishads hold the view that the universe was created by the creator Brahma, in a moment of sheer delight and joy, but later he felt isolated and lonely and longed for company, and so “He became as large as a woman and man in close embrace, and caused that Self to fall into parts, from that arose husband and wife” (qtd. in Yati 52).
These myths not only prove the concept of androgyny, but also confirm the fact that man will be able to achieve inner harmony and happiness only with the subsequent union with the woman thereby aiding in restoring the earlier androgynous bliss. Karl Weil, a sociologist is of the opinion that the feeling of incompleteness as a result of the initial detachment and division paved the way for the birth of desire and love, and is thus sending each of the newly created beings in search of his or her other half. The goal of the human race therefore should be as Alain Danielou, emphatically remarks, “an attempt to achieve wholeness and fulfilment by the progressive integration of the sexes until androgyny is achieved. When the universe is reabsorbed, the two opposing principles will be reunited and the hermaphrodite will be restored first of all in the creatures and then in God himself”(18). Marie Delcourt, another sociologist is of the opinion that Adam will also regain his pristine androgyny and with it the perfection of Eden. The Indian writer Manu too admits that the state of absolute bliss can be attained only through the union of the male and the female. He observes, “To create a world outside Himself, the God divides himself and the two poles diverged. The state of absolute bliss disappears and is only recreated by the union of opposites by love”(Kurunkar 32).

The psychologist C.G. Jung and his school, probably influenced by the Platonic myth of androgyny, state that every individual is bisexual having a masculine ‘animus’ and a feminine ‘anima’. They also maintain that an individual can achieve maturity only by locating and merging with the opposite. Hence “man seeks to come to terms with the ‘anima’ latent within him and the female lover without, just as the
woman seeks out her ‘animus’ and her lover as well.” (qtd. in Kiberd 45). The Chinese recognition of the ‘Yin’ and ‘Yang’ in every individual also adheres to this concept of the bisexuality of man.

The dichotomization of the entire universe based on the principle of polarity, the basic law of nature has led to the evolution of opposing but complementary concepts like heaven and earth, sun and moon, day and night and also man and woman. The intermingling of these dualistic but complementary aspects of the universe for the healthy co-existence of life forms the fundamental principle of existence. Rumi in one of his poems rightly observes:

[ ... ] Because of that fore-ordainment,

Every part of the world is paired with its mate.

[ ... ] As God put desire in man and woman

To the end that the world should be preserved by their union.

So hath He implanted in every part of existence,

The desire for another part. (qtd. in Fromm 41)

This desire for company, to free oneself from “the prison of loneliness” (Fromm 15) is the most important and basic need of men of all ages and cultures. This urge to establish interpersonal relationships with one another is therefore one of the most profound emotions in man, and he strives to accomplish it right from his childhood. Eric Fromm rightly observes that this fundamental passion is the force that keeps the human race alive and failure to achieve this will only result in insanity or destruction - self destruction, or the destruction of others. Psychologists confirm that in order to prevent this situation, the psychological needs of a person
Categorizing personal relationships into primary and secondary, sociologists identify primary relationships as those relationships based on friendship, love and marriage and secondary, as all other relationships apart from the primary relationship. They emphasize the importance these relationships hold in the life of a human being, and state that only through these personal relationships, can man achieve a sense of belonging, which goes a long way in developing his personality and achieving fulfilment and individuality.

Polarization based on sexuality and mutual dependence of the sexes for the happiness and welfare of the individual that is expressed in all the myths, thus form the foundation of human history. This interdependence of the sexes to create the universe is the basis of life and hence the relationship between man and woman is acclaimed by many as one of the profoundest of all human relationships. Otto Piper rightly remarks that “there can be no human activity that is completely devoid of the man-woman relationships”(125). Bertrand Russell vehemently declares that this is one of the most important relationships that can exist between two human beings. He agrees that “It may not be the only means of realization or source of significance, but it is definitely the only relationship in which, there is a deep and illuminating mystery that keeps the world moving”(96).

The law of creation has ordained that the continuity of the human race should depend on the mutual co-operation and co-existence of the male and the female, and therefore the importance of love, sex and marriage in human life cannot be ignored.
Though this bond has been romanticized and glorified by men from time immemorial, it remains a serious issue discussed and debated endlessly, even today. The complexities of life in the post-modern, industrialized, capitalist world, the animosities created between individuals as a result of unhealthy competitions and inflated egos, have all resulted in unnecessary conflicts and complications between partners. They not only attempt to destabilize the bond, but seem to question the very necessity of this basic relationship. The primary concern of human beings today is therefore, to realize the true meaning and significance of this vital union. Any misconception or misunderstanding of the real spirit and meaning of this important relationship will be dangerously disturbing, and dreadfully disastrous.

Love, considered by many as the basis of human evolution, is the most elusive of all emotions since it evokes a wide range of feelings, but is seldom possible to define accurately. To define love is difficult and cumbersome a task as to define life which is equally ambiguous. Thus “For the ancients, love was cosmic, for Aeschylus it was a law rather than a passion, for Sophocles it was the embrace of heaven and earth, with the rain that falls down and the corn that springs up and for Plato, it was heavenly rather than earthly”(Ellis 296). Tillich Paul in his work Love, Power and Justice, observes that the New Testament uses three different words to denote love - “Eros” which means desire, not necessarily sexual though it may be, “Philia” or friendship and “Agape” which denotes the love of God for his creatures. In the Biblical sense love is not an emotion but an orientation or attitude of the total personality. Sociologist Simely Blanton enumerating the importance of love states, “loves greatest glory lies in the fact that it alone provides the strength, protection
and encouragement without which full growth is impossible” (21). Though the term love may have many connotations, it frequently refers to the passionate sexual attraction - both physical and emotional between a man and a woman. Russell points out very precisely that “love when the word is properly used does not denote any and every relation between sexes, but only the one involving considerable emotion and a relation which is psychological as well as physical” (81).

Literature through the ages has romanticized and extolled love to such immense altitudes that often people misunderstand this most variable element. To some it may be just an infatuation of a fleeting nature, while for others it is a mature, deep and long lasting experience. The concept of romantic love which came to be commonly recognized as a form of passion in the Middle Ages, portrayed the beloved as very precious, and hence difficult to possess. Great attempts were made by the lover to win his beloved by composing poetry and songs of her beauty. Commenting extensively on this type of love Russell observes, that it was a kind of devotion without desire for any intimacy or physical contact. This according to Russell is because the nobler people of the Middle Ages did not have a good opinion of “terrestrial life” (53). They felt that human instincts are the product of corruption and original sin and hence they hated the body and its lust. Pure joy was therefore possible to them only in ‘ecstatic’ (Russell 53) contemplation of a kind that seemed to be altogether free from all sexual alloy.

Romantic love which was considered divine and sacred during the Middle Ages underwent a conceptual change from the Renaissance period onwards and it ceased to be altogether platonic, but remained poetic. It imparted magical powers
to the lovers and carried them to giddy heights of fancy where they longed to remain
uninterrupted. The romantic literature thus instituted a cult of romance that
dominates the mind of the young, who are carried away by its magical connotations.
They fail to realize the realities of life, and are swept off their feet by commercial
catch phrases that highlight the beauty or intelligence of the opposite sex, leading
them to hasty conclusions and impulsive decisions. The intensity of infatuation for
one another is misunderstood for true intense love. They fail to realize as Eric
Fromm observes that “There is hardly any activity, any enterprise which is started
with such tremendous hopes and expectations and which fails so regularly as
love”(11).

Most people fall in love, and even enter into marriage under the influence of
preconceived notions of romantic love. They imagine their partners to be possessed
of more than mortal perfection and believe that their relationship will be one long
dream of bliss. Illusion which is the standard code of romantic or infantile love
seems to be shattered, when confronted with the realities of life. The initial intensity
and intimacy lose its miraculous character once they become well acquainted with
each other. Antagonisms are likely to develop leading to disappointment and
dejection. They fail to realize as Fromm points out that “To fall in love may be
relatively easy, since it is based primarily on sexual attraction and consideration;
but to remain in love involves the ability to build and maintain a relatively stable
relationship”(11).

The difference between mature or true love and romantic or infantile love is
not just a matter of degree, but of quality too. Mature love as distinct from romantic
cult is rooted in the needs that contribute to the intellectual and emotional growth of the partners, and therefore is rooted in reality. A binding love is not something suddenly born, but is a product of much thoughtful efforts involving both mutual enjoyment and suffering. It is viewed as an integration of personalities and the whole process of falling in love is stripped of its unreality and magic. In a mature relationship, the beloved is seen as he or she is, with all the faults and liabilities as well as the capabilities and drawbacks. There is companionship, emotional independence and sexual longing for each other and the whole process of falling in love and remaining in it, is seen as a dynamic one which involves adjustments and readjustment with one another. Lawrence Lerner summing up the difference between romantic and mature love remarks “While romantic love is irrational, highly idealistic, sublimating sex and seeking privacy and solitude and may or may not end in marriage, mature and true love is highly rational, individualistic, accepts sex as a fact of life, and almost often develops into marriage” (65). Russell is of the view that romantic love, “[...] should form the motive for a marriage, but it should be understood that the kind of love which will enable a marriage to remain happy, and fulfil its social purpose is not romantic but something more intimate, affectionate and realistic” (55).

Human existence thus revolves around the relationship between man and woman, husband and wife and sex remains the most important and integral binding factor. It is one of the fundamental facts of human life, an organic link that binds us to the past and future. Bhattacharya rightly observes that “even before man thought, man loved, even before man loved, man lived. Living man knew was mating, and
mating man knew was living”(2). Yet the mystery about sex remains, since it is one aspect of life that has been influenced and affected by innumerable factors and has thus undergone radical and revolutionary changes.

The widespread and universal feeling that sex is impure and sinful, has robbed the individual mind of the power of viewing uninhibitedly this most vital aspect of nature which is very necessary for life. The impact of Greek philosophy upon Christianity, dichotomizes the body and the spirit and upholds the cause of the spirit. Christian asceticism and the negation of sex has greatly contributed to the negative views on sex. The view that sex was the original sin that man committed and which caused the catastrophic descent of man from his pristine state of bliss and purity has greatly influenced the human conscience. The association of sex with sin, proved to be detrimental in evaluating the role of sex in human life and it became a social inhibition and a personal obsession.

Otto Piper stressing the unity of the body and the mind observes that the Greeks conceived man as a composite being formed of body and soul, but the Old Testament underscores this integral unity. Piper considers “the physical and mental activities as the different forms under which the selfhood of the ego expresses itself and they condition each other mutually”(19). But St Paul seeing the licentious relationships of the people of his time holds sex as a function of the body, and therefore views the sexual act as harmful to the body. It affects the whole being and this constitutes the fundamental difference between sexual sin and other sins. Sex thus began to be considered as bad, profane and dirty. By projecting sex as an evil companion of love, the human mind became an abode of “hallucinating horrors and
nervous disabilities” (Bhattacharya 32).

The ancient people of the world lived in a more open state where sex was regarded a natural phenomenon and hence no taboo was attached to it. The cult of fertility that pervaded in nearly all the cultures of the world conceived the earth as female and sun as male, and the relation between them was consummated by the rain. Thus the act of copulation achieved a symbolic meaning and was considered a religious act worthy of veneration. Sex to the ancients was thus not a strange, indecent or reprehensible issue. Edward Carpenter stresses the importance of sex in life remarks that “sexual love is needed, not only for physical creation, but also for spiritual creation” (72). Block declares vehemently that “love and sexual embrace have not only an end in procreation but they constitute an end in themselves and are necessary for the development and inner growth of the individual” (qtd. in Holbrock 179). Abram Kardiner also conforms this opinion when he states that sex and sexual relation between man and woman have distinct aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual ends apart from the physical reproductive function alone. Bhattacharia stressing the importance of sex in love and in human life observes that “love and sex like light and fire are inseparable. We cannot understand love in all its glory without appreciating the vital role that sex plays in the anatomy of love” (33).

The concluding lines of Genesis, chapter 2, verse 24, “[...] they shall be one flesh” has three connotations to Otto Piper. According to him “at the outset sexual union establishes an inner union between the two partners concerned, the union is of flesh and blood and affects the vital wills of the persons, and it establishes the fact that the union can never be dissolved” (20). The emphasis exerted by the church
in imparting the importance and significance of this union cannot be ignored. Every marriage is solemnized reiterating the need for this union, *The Bible* says “He who made them at the beginning, made them male and female. And said, for this reason, a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall be one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together let not man separate” (Genesis 2, Verse 24).

Marriage thus is a socially accepted life-long bond between a man and a woman based on love and sex. To William Perkins, “marriage is a very serious aspect of life, as it was made, and appointed by God himself” (qtd. in Gray 45). To the early Christians marriage meant a divine gift, a sacrament, that mediates divine grace. It was considered holy and hence adultery was prohibited. But later St Paul had an entirely different view of marriage and his ideas have greatly affected and altered the concept of marriage. Marriage lost its divine undertones and began to be considered as something sinful. The views of St Paul were exaggerated, over-emphasized, and celibacy was extolled with the result that, marriage came to be seen as a sinful act. These views initiated more people to resort to celibacy and nun-hood and refrain from marriage. Marriage was given an extremely low profile and as Russell remarks the tender love which it elicits, the holy and beautiful qualities it evokes are almost absolutely omitted by St Paul. Despite such antagonistic attitudes, love and marriage have always been and will always be a source of happiness and the very foundation of the human race. Stressing the importance of marriage Russell rightly remarks “Marriage is something more serious than the pleasure of two people in each others company; it is an institution which through the fact that it
provides children, forms part of the intimate texture of the society and has an importance extending far beyond the personal feelings of the husband and wife" (43).

Edward Westermarck in his book *The Future of Marriage in the Western Civilization*, considers marriage as a life-long connection between the male and the female in which the gratification of the sexual impulse, the relation between the husband and wife apart from the sexual fulfilment and procreation are the elements in every marriage. Beale in his work *Wise Wedlocks*, declares that the physical union of real lovers becomes the vehicle and the symbol of spiritual union which cannot in any other way be completely effected or expressed. It is not the mere physical closeness, but the emotional intimacy, love, tenderness and mutual understanding that makes marriage important in life. Russell goes to the extent of saying that "those who have never known the deep and intense companionship of mutual love have missed the best things that life has to give" (84). The relationship between a man and a woman should not therefore be guided by the purely physical attraction, but should be based on firmer grounds. Thus Margaret Sanger observes that the "sex communion between the husband and wife should be a true union of souls, not merely a physical function for the momentary relief of the sexual organs, for the complete act of union symbolizes and actually enhances the spiritual union" (125).

Marriage thus like every other relationships is all embracing and helps in evolving a sense of fulfilment and contentment in life. Being the most complicated of all human relationships it gives rise to a number of feelings both positive and negative "as it is the only relationship that combines sex, parenthood, companionship and house keeping into the most comprehensive package known to man" (Baber
Society has always viewed marriage with utmost importance not only for the sake of the individual but also for the survival of the society. For the majority, it is a vital, intimate and the most complete unification of the body, mind and spirit into one socially approved indivisible bond. In a good marriage the individual egos of the partners merge into one, their joys and sorrows, feeling and experiences are shared and their mutual love and loyalty continue until death. It is universally considered the most important institution aiding in the development of the individual, and in creating posterity. But it becomes the most disastrous relationship, if it is not realized in the right manner. Marital conflicts are complex and have many dimensions and ramifications rooted in economical, ethical, social, sexual, religious, psychological and cultural incompatibilities.

The modern age characterized by rapid changes in the socio-economic arena has altered human life and thinking, and therefore poses a great threat to the very foundation of this vital bond. Various factors accentuate the cause of discord and disagreement between couples leading to dangerous consequences. The constant erosion of moral and ethical values has led to the disintegration of the concept of marriage in the western society and incidentally, society is now facing the great challenge of seeking a solution to the very question of whether marriage is absolutely necessary to unite two individuals in the present changing scenario.

In the Indian context, the co-existence of heterogeneous, pluralistic and diverse cultures is a characteristic feature of the country’s culture and heritage. Absorbing, assimilating and incorporating various traditions, India has developed a composite culture of its own, unparalleled in the world. Among the various strands
that have contributed to the cultural fabric of India, the Dravidian contribution is of
great importance and significance. The primitive cultures of the world followed a
Pantheistic system of belief mainly, because of a deficiency in understanding the
true nature of natural phenomena. They identified themselves with the creator’s
work by appreciating and acknowledging the beauty as well as the cruelty of nature.
Primitive man thus attempted to establish a harmonious relationship with nature, as
he sees everything in nature as the embodiment of God. He perceives the universe
as a wonderful work of harmony, beauty and balance and therefore for the man who
is “conscious of creation as not only the work of God, but as the form of God
himself, all beings, all life, every act takes on a sacred character and becomes a rite,
a means of communication with the celestial world” (Danielou 13). Therefore all
the elements in the universe are seen as parts that are interdependent and whose
mutual existence as integral to constitute the whole.

Hinduism, particularly Saivism, attempts to make man aware of all aspects
of life, as the innumerable manifestations of the “Shiva-Sakti” principle. Hence all
activities of life, are interconnected and interdependent, and comprise one whole.
It emphasizes the fact that “Nothing exists in the whole universe which is not part of
the Divine body, and which cannot be the way of reaching the Divine. Thus there is
neither high or low, inferior or superior, sacred or profane” (Danielou 15). Saivism
thus glorifies the universe, the importance of life, and the relatedness that human
beings should establish in the world in order to achieve fulfilment. It also aims at
accomplishing a relatedness with not only other individuals, but also with the cosmos
itself, in order to attain fulfilment in life. The image of ‘Arthanarishwara’ represents
the unified form of Shiva-Sakti principle which permeates the entire universe. It is identified as “the co-operatively inter-dependent, separately incomplete, but jointly complete, masculine and feminine functions of the Supreme Being" (Patnt 32). The union of Shiva and Sakti, the power to create and destroy symbolizes sheer sensual delight and joy. Hence the reality of the world is seen as sensual delight produced by the union of opposites. Since all aspects of life are considered as the varied, incalculable manifestations of ‘Shiva-Sakti’ principle, great emphasis is laid by Saivism on the harmonious balance between the body and the spirit. It did not differentiate the activities of life into intellectual, physical or spiritual. Instead all activities of life are seen as inter-connected and inter-dependent, constituting a unit.

Tamil tradition and literature have played a vital role in promoting the growth of Hindu philosophy. Though a unique form of Saivism evolved in Kashmir, the later Saivism flourished in the South, due to the devotional Tamil Poems of Nayanmars (Shiva Saints). The poems which are divided into eleven collections together with the Periya Puranam, constitute the foundation of Tamil Saivism. The first seven collections, known as Devaram were composed by poets Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar and these works are considered to be auspicious as the Vedas. Thiruvasagam of Manikka Vasagar and the tenth collection Thirumandiram of Thirumular occupy pride of place in Saiva Literature. The patronage of the later Pallava kings from the 6thc AD onwards and the mighty Chola emperors proved to be a great boon to the growth of Saivism in the South. Thus Balasubramoniam proudly declares that “the Tamil’s have greatly enriched Hindu philosophy by contributing to it the Sivam Sakti tatva, which is peculiar to the Saiva Siddhanta
Tamil society is considered to be one of the ancient societies of the world and its religious, ethical and moral beliefs have enriched the Indian culture in a great way. The noble principles of the Tamil’s enunciated in their ancient literatures have influenced and molded the life and character of many generations. The Sangam age, regarded by historians as the golden age of Tamil literature, spans over several centuries beginning before the dawn of the Christian era. It epitomizes exquisitely the life, beliefs and customs of the ancient Tamils. The literary works like *The Tolkappiyam, Ettu Thokai* and *Pathu Pattu* conceptualize, the ancient Tamil’s views on love, sex and marriage. They have not only laid down in a comprehensive manner the codes of literary creation which have been the guiding principle of generations of writers, but have also presented a visionary and prophetic portrayal, of the tenets of human life and relatedness. It is therefore imperative to know and understand their views on love, sex and marriage to appreciate Tamil culture, and its impact on the writers.

The literary output of this period has been classified into Aham and Puram-Aham referring to love and marriage and Puram to all other external activities. Manickam clarifies that Aham literature refers to “a literature of human sexual love, based on the essential principles of sexual life”(34). Balasubramoniam in his work *The Status of Tamil Women in the Sangam age*, further explains that the term Akam means both, the mind and the house and considers it superior to Puram in many aspects, since it deals with the most important aspect of life as its subject matter. This systematic division into Aham and Puram is a characteristic feature of
Sangam literature and exists only in Tamil literature. The Aham poetry occupies a unique place in the history of world literature by virtue of its universal perspective and significance to human life. Tolkappiar, the ancient Tamil grammarian has devoted four chapters to the description of Akathinai whereas Purathinai is treated only in one chapter. His work *Tholkappiam* gives a graphic account of all aspects of love and has become a beacon of light for generations. *Ettuthokoi* consisting of eight separate anthologies and *Pathupattu* consisting of ten long idylls also deal with the theme of love. The Aham songs revolve around the lady love and most of them portray the warm feelings of love and the mutual ecstasy of lovers. They stressed the importance of mutual love and affection between man and woman, as they firmly believed it to be the central fact of human existence. Sensual love is considered by them to be the greatest passion facilitating the human being to achieve fulfilment. An individual’s inner peace and harmony depends on the success of his emotional life and hence, they firmly believed as Manickam observes that “the unity of the family is the bed-rock of the unity of the world. The achievement of that conjugal unity depends upon the sexual satisfaction of the sexual congress between the rightful lovers in youth. Dissatisfaction unconsciously disintegrates the family”(Manickam 16). The union of a sexually mature man and a woman, to the early Tamils is the result of destiny [Pal] and hence is viewed in a cosmic perspective. The intensity and depth of their love is profound, deep rooted and eternal and not shallow and temporary. They believed that the human being should achieve spontaneous, creative fulfilment in love through sexual relationship. This should not be misunderstood to mean that the early Tamils advocated licentiousness, for they vehemently maintained
that sex should be considered not as the end of life, but only as a means to achieve the end—the realization of the self. They conceive of sex, as pivotal to human existence and progress, because it not only enabled man to achieve individual fulfilment in life, but also made him draw closer to the creator, as they saw the embodiment of God in all the creations. To the Aham poets ‘Being’ and ‘Knowing’ represent the two aspects of the urge for love and power. They believed in the balanced development of the Being and the Knowing. Every poem seems to convey the importance of bringing the emotional and the intellectual faculties into complete harmony. They are fully conscious that any hostility between the two would cause disaster in life.

Since the initial coming together of a sexually mature man and a woman is based on ‘Pal’—destiny, some unknown voice, the lovers remain committed to one another conscious of this divine relatedness. This intuitive faithfulness is what makes love, sex and marriage genuine to the Tamils. Fidelity between the partners therefore begins not after marriage, but right from the moment the initial desire to be one emerges. Marriage is therefore seen only as a social endorsement to make their relationship a permanent, abiding union. They consider marriage only as a sacramental institution, but the sacramental part of it depends not on the ritual of marriage, but on the validity of the initial desire to marry that comes from the unknown. This immutable union is not based on physical attraction or intellectual affinities, but is based on a union of tenderness and affection of souls. The husband here is not only the “lord and the master”, but also the very breath of a woman’s life. The woman’s affection is total, not a slavish submission but willing surrender. The Aham poets make it clear that it is not subservience or subjugation, but a free and voluntary
submission without any compulsion. In the Aham poetry, the woman is often compared to a creeper which flourishes under the protective support of the bamboo fence, suggesting that the individuality of the woman needs to be nourished by the man. This should not be misunderstood to suggest any kind of subordination to the male for, the question of superiority or inferiority does not arise because they firmly maintained that both man and woman are equals in marriage.

The man in Aham poetry, after achieving fulfilment in this union, has to go out into the world to take up ‘Purposive activity’ in the company of other men. The Aham poets held the view that in order to accomplish his task he may even have to leave his country and his beloved, but he should not be disheartened and should proceed forward. Man to the Aham poets represented ‘motion’, the dynamic principle of life and therefore he must not be content to be a mere lover and a husband, but should aspire to be a hero by taking up other ‘Purposive activities’, responsibilities and social duties. They stressed the importance of the balance that should be maintained between the emotional and the purposive activity by man as an integral part of life. A balance between the two, ie, man should crave for ‘purposive activity’ only after being made new in coition. Thus the “The Aham hero, ceases to be a man if he does not have living blood relation with a woman, and he would cease to be a lover if he does not have the passionate craving for purposive activity burning in his soul”(Kamil 9).

Once his task is accomplished in the outer world, man longs for his wife and the emotional self takes over. Thus as Kamil Zevlebil observes the early Tamils stressed the need and significance of this “balance between Akam and Puram, love
and power, masculine and feminine principles, the upper and the lower consciousness of mankind”(8), and this seems to an important condition for completeness and integrity of the human personality. The early Tamils believed that life should be lived and enjoyed with a blend of material prosperity and moral integrity adhering to high moral principles and not based on immorality or cheapness. Hence they attached great importance to the values of life, and the way a human being lives in this world. They stressed the need for moral integrity, truth and faithfulness in all walks of life.

Love and marriage are classified into “Kalavu”(Clandestine love or pre nuptual love leading to marriage) and “Karpu”(Sincere married love). “Kalavu” says Manickam “[...] is a means to an end. It is considered a means only when it ends in “Karpu”(married state), but “Karpu” need not always be preceded by “Kalavu”(59). They did not find anything wrong in “Kalavu” since it would inevitably end in marriage with or without the consent of the parents. It clearly reiterates that “Kalavu” is only the means and “Karpu” should be the natural end towards which young lovers should strive to reach. Manickam, clearly states that there is no single word to denote the sexual passion in love and so they made use of two words – ‘Kaāthal’ and ‘Kamam’. ‘Kāadal’ simply means kindness between all sorts of relations, including husband and wife relationship. It is the mental attachment between the being that loves and the object of love. It relates to the mind irrespective of physical contact. But today the word has only one connotation - the ardent love and passion between lovers or between husband or wife. Similarly, the word “Kamam” in the Sangam age referred to normal physical passion. The great grammarian Tholkappiyer refers to this bodily
union as “Kamakkuttam”, meaning the natural and normal physical union between lovers. Thiruvalluvar in his work *Thirukural* considered the Bible of the Tamils, assigns the third part of his work “Kamathupal” (love and sex) in this context of the word. But the word “Kamam” too has now acquired a derogatory meaning and now refers to excessive sexual vigor and lust.

The literature of the ancient Tamils, thus gives great importance to human love, laying emphasis on the importance of sex in life. By portraying sex in a realistic manner, they gave expression to the belief that “Mental affection without bodily relation is Platonic or spiritual; bodily relation with no mutuality is brutish. Love is a compound of these two distinct elements - physical and mental” (Manickam 314). They fully realized that the perfect sexual enjoyment between the husband and the wife was the keynote or the index, to the blend of many fine qualities in life. Sex was considered by the ancient Indians to be the center of life and was thus regarded as a normal natural activity to be indulged in. They considered it as a supreme power and held the view that “To worship this power, to understand and love and bring homage to it is the birth right of the developed; nay if possible of the developing men as well” (Bhattacharya X11).

The cult of fertility which conceived the earth as female and sun as male, was worshipped and the sexual act assumed a religious symbolism worthy of veneration. Havelock Ellis, emphasizing the importance of sex in life states that, “although, India is the home of religious asceticism and orthodoxy, sexual love has been sanctified and divinified to a great extent than in any other part of the world” (137). This vehement adoration and worship of sex is only a demonstration of the
immense sense of gratitude which the ancients had towards this profound mystery of life. The copulating act gained a symbolic significance and was associated with the spirit of fertility. Hence there was no clouds of obscenity attached to it and was indulged in with an open mind, free of any taboos. The adoration and worship of sex had culminated in the cult of the Phalliic worship which is symbolized by the worship of the Linga. This ancient principle is the essence of Saiva theology and it evolved out of the two basic principles – the cult of the pillar and the phallic worship. The cult of the pillar is primarily based on the belief in “the existence of one God and it is symbolized by a vertical pillar, the substratum (Adhara) supporting the universe (Adeya)” (Patnt, 97).

The cult of Phallic worship is based on an entirely different concept symbolizing the principle of fertility. According to the Shiva Purana treatise “The Linga represents a state of copulation – a whole which constitutes two aspects, the male and the female, this is the ‘Nada’ and ‘Bindu’ the twin causality out of which the world is effected. The ‘Nada’ represents ‘Shiva’ whereas ‘Bindu’ stands for “Sakti” (Patnt 46). Therefore for creation, the mutual causality of the dual principle is absolutely necessary. Phallic worship was thus a kind of humble submission to the forces of a higher order to bring homage to the great power of life, which should be accepted as natural and not seen as something sinful and dirty.

The Vedas never attempted to treat copulation under any shade of secrecy nor was it regarded unholy. Its approach was one of sanctified homage and reverence to life. Sex was thus viewed only as a joyous repetition of a divine process which is necessary for life. Sri Aurobindo elaborating Indian culture and the importance it
places on sex remarks “The claims of sex satisfaction were not ignored, it was
given just importance. The Soul’s need of labor and hectic action was not stilled, it
was urged to its fullest action and scope” (qtd. in Ellis 56). But in due course, as a
result of the influence of many factors sex began to be associated with sin and evil.
The religious act began to be viewed as some thing profane and dirty and this in due
course led to repression of all other unhealthy attitudes to sex.

Marriage, one of the most important aspects of human life is not only
essential for the development of the individual but is also necessary for the survival
of the human race. The religious texts consider marriage as meant for the fulfilment
of social obligations and individual desire. The social element stresses the
importance of family, its duties and its obligations while the physical principle lays
emphasis on achieving complete individual fulfilment. Love may or may not precede
marriage, but it should inevitably succeed marriage and form one of the basic
components of marital bliss. Great emphasis is laid on mutual love and understanding
and interdependence. The wife is considered as equal, ‘Sahadharmacharini’, or
‘Sahadharmini’ to the husband. The concept of chastity and fidelity especially on
the part of the woman is stressed in marriage.

The concept of chastity (Karpu) considered to be the symbol of purity and
loyalty to the husband was glorified and held as an important virtue that a woman
should possess before and after marriage. A woman who loses her chastity is branded
and condemned to eternal damnation, as nobody would be ready to marry her. Such
a woman is believed to have lost everything in life. Terrible fate awaited a woman
who breaks this code of conduct even by mistake like Ahalya, who was converted
into a stone for having offered herself unknowingly to Indra, who took the form of her husband. Sita, the loving and obedient wife of Rama, represents the Indian ‘Pathivritha’ concept, epitomizing the ideal wife. An embodiment of patience and love she symbolizes the perfect wife which every Indian woman strives to achieve. But Sita herself was not spared and she had to enter the fire to prove her chastity. These characters are the representative models for Indian woman to emulate and understand the importance of Karpu.

The importance placed on fidelity in love, is another important aspect of Indian marriages. A married woman is bound to tolerate and live with her husband, however inhuman, brutal and inefficient he may be. The old Tamil saying “Kallanalum Kanavan, Pullanalum Purushan” (Be he a stone or grass, a husband is a husband) illustrates the respect even an inefficient husband was given. Cillapathiharam the epic by Illango epitomizes the concept of Pathiviratha, the ideal chaste wife patiently waiting, without any motive for revenge towards Kovalan who had gone after another woman. Kannagi who represents the symbol of the suffering wife is also shown as a model for woman to emulate.

Marriage is not only regarded as a social necessity but is also considered a religious sacrament that unites two individuals eternally. “Vivah” (marriage) according to religious scriptures is one of the major “Samsaras” (sacrament) that binds a couple not only in life but in life thereafter also. They stressed the importance of marriage and family life as prerequisite for an individual to attain moksha. Each individual according to the Hindu doctrine had to pass through four stages (Ashrams) (a) Brahmacharya, (period of training and education), (b) Grahasta
(period of householder), (c) Vanaprastha (period of retreat) and (d) Sanyasa (period of renunciation and detachment) in order to seek Moksha. Marriage is thus recognized as the most intimate, vital and complete unification of the body, mind and spirit into one socially accepted and approved institution. Indians firmly believe that a happy marriage is based on genuine love, deep respect, gratitude and a sense of duty towards others. It does not concern the couple alone, but it affects the whole society and posterity.

The concepts related to love, sex and marriage have undergone radical changes as a result of the influence of innumerable cultural, religious, economic and ethical factors. Liberalization, Feminism and the revolutionary theories enunciated in the present age have greatly influenced the modern mind and have redefined everything in life including morality. Western society has freed its people from inhibitions and tensions related to love and sex, and allows immense freedom in sexual matters as evidenced by dating, pre-marital sex and experimental love relationships. Yet as Otto Piper laments “the resultant happiness is not as great and sweet as was expected”(53). Man-woman relationship, one of the profoundest of all relationships for achieving a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment should necessarily be based on genuine love and mutual affection and understanding rather than on romantic love, which the modern people unknowingly advocate as a prerequisite for a happy marriage. Differentiating between romantic love and mature love, Lantz points out that “Romantic love endows the loved object with innumerable qualities which may appear to be present as long as the loved one is unattainable, but which are shattered once married”(239) and therefore insists on a true and mature love as the basis for
In the Indian context birth, marriage and death are the three great events in the life of an individual as they mark the beginning, middle and the end of human existence. Of the three great emphasis is placed on marriage and hence it is considered to be more or less an absolute necessity for human happiness and welfare. The bond between the partners in this relationship is life-long and is based on mutual love and is strengthened by various factors like mutual understanding, loyalty and chastity. These accompanied by deep-rooted value oriented family systems have enabled the institution of marriage in India to stand firmly despite discords and discrepancies threatening to disrupt and undermine this important bond. Indians are conscious of the fact that the “blissful state of marriage cannot be achieved in one single leap, or within a few days, but is a result of years of intertwined memory and affection based not only on love which lays the foundation, but also on patience and gentle consideration and self control which must work unremittingly to perfect the structure and make them realize that the great need that holds them together is going to be stronger and more indefeasible as years go” (Carpenter 113). They seem to proudly establish the fact as Russell believes that a happy marriage is “a companionship which has lasted for many years and through many deeply felt events, has a richness and content which cannot belong to the first days of love, however delightful they may be”(93). It can thus be concluded that no other aspect of human interaction demands such great effort than an understanding of the relationship between man-and woman in marriage, if this relationship is to be seen as a purposeful and meaningful association.
Works Cited.


*The Gideons International Bible*.


