Chapter IV

MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP – THE DOMESTIC CIRCLE AND CONJUGAL BOND

Family is the first association or the sheltered tree in which a child takes birth, grows and develops before stepping out into the outer world. The filial bonds, therefore, often have a lasting influence. Moreover, the child’s parents are decided for ever at the time of the procreative process. It is the part of the given order of nature an “objective fact of nature, a natural phenomenon, a concrete or substantive part of nature. And this fact of nature cannot be terminated”.

Sociologists, psychologists and educationists attach great significance to the parent-child relationship, because according to them the patterning of emotion takes place particularly during childhood. Leland H. Stott, a pioneer in the field of Development Psychology, rates this relationship very high: Psychological research suggests that the prevailing quality of the experience the child has with his parents, particularly the mother during early childhood is of paramount importance.

Childhood is the formative period of one’s life. Family gives proper shape to the personality of the child. It is the first association where he learns how to speak, how to walk and how to act, which the parents set out to teach him in order to make him an acceptable member of society. The quality of prevailing interaction is influenced by two sets of factors: first, the particular personal make up to each parent (predominant traits, attitude, expectations, frustrations); and second, the child’s unique patterns of temperamental tendencies.

The third force to which psychologist also attach importance is childhood experiences, environment and interactions in shaping the neurotic drives of an individual. They stress the present structure of the psyche and refute the Freudian theory that adult reactions are a repetition of infantile experiences. In the Neurotic Personality of Our Time, Karen Harney makes it clear that childhood experiences determine condition for neurosis but they cannot be considered the only cause of later troubles. Once the child starts feeling “basic anxiety”, he seeks for certain defensive strategies to deal with the conditions arising out of his fears and inadequacy. Later, this particular system develops under the influence of external factors, such as familial atmosphere, social and cultural exigencies.
Childhood experiences are lasting and they effect the development of a wholesome personality. If the childhood experiences are healthy they contribute to the development of personality in a positive way. A healthy parent-child relationship provides the children an opportunity to grow mentally and emotionally and prepares them to make their own decisions and face their consequences. In the light of the foregoing discussion we shall now study the parent-child relationship in Kamala Markandaya’s novels and try to confirm how far childhood interaction equips them with or deprives them of the ability to relate harmoniously and reduce dissonance in their adult relationship.

Kamala Markandaya favours greater freedom, trust and understanding between the parents and children. The filial ties, therefore, are no insufferable bondage for her characters.

*Nectar in a Sieve* deals with human relationships in their verigated aspects. In the novel, the novelist has tried to show how the healthy and congenial parent-child relationship affects the personality of the child. If filial ties are strong, the child is confident and secure. The children are the soul of their parents. Parents always try to do the best for their children. Healthy atmosphere provided by the parents enables the children to grow mentally and prepares them to make their own decisions and face their consequences. However, the hard facts of human existence, as depicted in the novel highlight the impact of money on filial ties. In Nectar in a Sieve, good financial and powerful status of Rukmani’s father gives her moral support and a sense of security. Strong financial status gives Rukmani a hope for the bright future. She feels proud to be the daughter of the village headman. Rukmani is the youngest of the four daughters. Her mother is always worried about the marriage of her fourth daughter because of dowry. She is worried because earlier three marriages have squeezed them dry. However Rukmani, ignorant of this worry feels happy as she is confident of her father’s powerful status.

When she chirps like a bird at the strong back of her father, she is informed by her brother that her father is no longer of consequence since the power now vests in the collector and the persons he appoints. This news is shocking to her and frightens her badly.

Sociological research points out that “positive concern for each other’s happiness is mutual in filial bonds. However this is also a fact that daughters feel more concerned towards their parents. Rukmani gives her consent regarding her
marriage as she does not want to annoy her parents. She considers their feelings as well as limitations. At the age of twelve she behaves like a mature girl. She accepts their decision without a word of protest. She remembers her wedding day when her mother in the ‘doorway, no tears in her eyes but her face floated with their, weight”.

When Rukmani’s expectations of grand marriage remain a dream, she does not complain. She accepts her fate ungrudgingly. She appreciates the positive contribution of her parents towards her upbringing. She is proud of her father.

Rukmani’s love for her mother does not diminish and the birth of her daughter does not restrain the filial bondage between the two. Though she gets busy with her child and finds the journey to her parent’s house tiring, yet she does not forget to visit her parents, though at longer intervals: “Since there was not much to be done in my own home; and my mother knowing that did not reproach me for the long intervals between my visits”.

Rukmani evades this change. Her marriage to a man of lower family status than hers was arranged because her father could not afford a big dowry. With the changing times, the Zamindari system having been abolished, her father lost his position of a headman - a position that once carried much power and prestige. She is still clinging to her old values.

The peaceful life of village has been filled with noise. There is shouting and disturbance and crowds everywhere. It seems the birds have forgotten to sing or they cannot listen their songs because of the noise from the tannery. In place of quiet the village is full of noise. The young generation is becoming rude, selfish and cunning. The human values of sharing each other’s problems are disappearing. The tannery is spreading and flourishing fast. It is swallowing up others’ land.

The attitude of the people is changing and narrowing. They are becoming selfish and self-centered and forgetting their traits of selflessness and concerns for others’. The tannery, as Ramesh K. Srivastava observes, “symbolising industrialisation and its associated evils, invades the village with clatter and din, depriving it of its children’s playground, and raising the bazar prices high”.

The children of the new generation are breaking from their traditional ways of life. Despite Rukmani’s refusal, her elder sons Arjun and Thambi join work in the tannery instead of joining their father in farming. They are rebellious and rebel against social injustice. They do not endure life as their parents do in the name of fate. Thereafter they go to Ceylon to work in tea-plantation when they could not bear
the injustice in the tannery. Rukmani’s marriage was arranged by her parents so was Ira’s, but Rukmani’s son Murugan does not feel any need of taking permission from his parents. He marries without the sanction of elderly people of the village and later deserts his wife for another woman.

Children expect love and care from their parents even when they grow up and can look after themselves. This expectation is reciprocal. Parents too remain worried about their children throughout their life. Rukmani’s mother feels unhappy when, for many a year after Ira’s birth, Rukmani does not give birth to a child. Her mother, inspite of her own failing health, tries her best to help Rukmani. This caring attitude impresses Rukmani profoundly. Many years later she vividly remembers and reproduces the words spoken by her mother: When Ira was nearing six, my mother was afflicted with consumption, and was soon so feeble that she could not rise from bed, yet in the midst of her pain, she could still think of me and one day she beckoned me near and placed in my hand a lingam symbol of fertility. ‘Wear it’ she said. ‘You will bear many sons. I see them, and what the dying see will come to pass ... be assured, this is no illusion.

Rukmani and Nathan belong to that traditional society where the birth of a daughter is looked down upon. Rukmani though liberal in her views, is not free from such shackles. She gets shocked when she finds a girl to be her first born. She tells: “I turned away and, despite myself, the tears came, tears of weakness and disappointment, for what woman wants a girl for her first born”.

Rukmani and Nathan are affectionate parents who create trust and confidence in the heart of the children. Ira accepts her parents’ choice but the impending danger of separation from her parents makes her sad. Once she asks: ... how frequently I would be able to visit her, and although I knew such trips would have to be very rare since her future home lay some ten villages away, I assured her not a year would pass without my going to see her two or three times.

Fillial ties go on throughout life. Parental obligation is not over simply by marrying away their daughter. The prime concern of parents is to see their children happy and blessed with all the good things of life. Ira is brought up affectionately and with great care by her parents. As luck would have it, she is abandoned by her husband because of her being barren. But her parents give her shelter and never by word or deed make her feel an unwanted burden.
Financial implications also determine the nature and quality of interaction between the parents and children. The relationship between Ira and her parents in *Nectar in a Sieve* suggests that children are obedient, meek, and submissive as long as the parents are responsive to their needs. Generally, the attitude of the children unbelievably changes when they have to look after their parents. They tend to become defiant. Ira revolts like a volcano when hunger overpowers her. She starts defying her parents which is shocking to Nathan & Rukmani:

“Where do you go at this hour?”
“It is better not to speak.”
“I will have an answer”
“I can give you none.”

Nathan’s brows drew together: she had never before spoken to him in this manner....

“I will not have you parading at night”
“To night and tomorrow and, every night, so long as there is need. I will not hunger any more”.

However, this bewildering change is a temporary phase. The bond of love between Ira and her parents remains intact. Nathan remains disposed towards her. Ira’s problems shatter her but a deep understanding and kindness on his part assuage her emotional trauma.

For Erich Fromm, the most important role of a father is parental love and guidance. According to Mahatma Gandhi, the best teacher is father and the best school is home. Nathan is an ideal father to his sons. Arjun and Thambi work in the tannery but on holidays they help their father in the field. Nathan teaches them various agricultural activities in the field. He values and enjoys their company and his superiority to them in regard to his knowledge makes him feel good: One day in each week when the tannery stopped work Arjun and Thambi would help father on the land and this gave Nathan a great pleasure. He liked to see his sons beside him, to teach them the way of the earth: how to sow; to transplant, to reap, to know the wholesome from the rotten, the unwelcome reed from the paddy; and how to irrigate or drain the terraces. In all these matters he had no master and I think it helped him to know he could impart knowledge to his sons, more skilled though they were in other things, and able to read and write better than any in the town.
Emotional bonds in the filial relationship grow and develop through many stages. A time comes when the parents lose their hold upon the thoughts and acts of their own children, especially in the adulthood. The children tend to become independent in their thoughts and acts. This happens with Nathan’s sons also. Arujun and Thambi handover their wages to Rukmani, their mother to spend as she likes. However, a strike in the tannery makes Rukmani and Nathan realise that both the sons have grown up, though neither of them has touched twenty.

Generation gap also affects the parent-child relationship. Nathan as a wise father realises that the best course is not to interfere and let them make their own choice and take own decisions.

Sometimes much remains unseen, unknown, even in intimate bonds. Even in intimate relationship none can take the guarantee of knowing each other’s secrets. Rukmani’s sons, though obedient and loyal, keep certain secrets from their parents.

Parents, though critical they may be at home towards their children but they try to shield them if others point out any blemishes on their part. Nathan also defends his sons when the villagers accuse them of inciting others: “Enough”? he shouted “More than enough has been said. Our children must act as they chose to, not for our benefit. Is it not enough that they suffer?”

In *Nectar in a Sieve* Nathan and Rukmani lament for their sons when they decide to go to Ceylon as labourers in tea plantation. Though Nathan reconciles with the situation, Rukmani finds herself unable to bear the pangs of separation.

Nathan is a practical man. He knows that he does not have any right to ask his sons to stay with them as he cannot offer them any bright future. He knows very well that nothing can be gained when everyone is poor. So both Nathan and his wife bid farewell to their sons. Later, they calmly bear even the murder of their third son, Raja. Being practical, they know that it would be futile to ask for justice. Rukmani assures the tannery people that they would not claim anything from them. “You should not care, It does not matter”.

In *A Handful of Rice* Ravi and his brothers leave their parents because the meagre resources of tenant farmer father are not sufficient to fulfil their basic needs. Their parents are aware of their limitations and therefore understand and calmly accept the disintegration of family ties.

That parents are important is realised when they are not there. Ravi and his brother are agog till the day of actual departure. Once separated, Ravi feels himself
a loser in the bargain. When the excitement has ebbed away he feels utterly helpless without his parents. When he analyses the whole thing dispassionately he finds: “somewhere between that bright beginning I aid now the vital fluid had drained away, leaving a sludge that sometimes made it difficult for him to shift his feet in the morning”.

When the children grow up, the differences of opinion on certain issues begin to surface. Ravi’s parents resort to resignation in the face of misery and squalor. This attitude sickens Ravi who, like any other youngman, believes, “that life could be sweet, that it was meant to be sweet, that if it was not it should be made so”. Ravi left his parents and village far away, but in the hour of need he banks upon his father. When he finds himself unable to handle the situation, he decides to write to his father.

Parents forgive their children even when they find that their children are growing arrogance in their behaviour. They stick to their duty, their moral obligation to help their children in their hour of need. Ravi leaves his village and his parents, even then his father writes to him that “as requested, he would gladly see about negotiating the marriage, and that he would be arriving in due time”.

The nature of filial ties changes with the passage of time. Quite often their emotional quality vanishes and a utilitarian attitude develops. Sometimes the emotional bonds degenerate into a mere sense of duty. As a child everybody craves the physical proximity of one’s parents. Fondling and caressing provide a sense of security. In adulthood Ravi finds the touch with his father unappealing. He listens to his father out of a sense of duty.

Graham A, Allan points out that the quality of relationship depends upon the frequency of contact between the individuals. Sometimes long intervals rob the emotional bonds of the quality of ease, familiarity and confidence.

Ravi is conscious of his negligence towards his father and he feels himself selfish and guilty: On a lesser level, what about all those promises to keep in touch he had dutifully made and never kept—until now when he needed help? What must his father think of him?

Children look to obtain emotional, moral and financial support from their parents and their not getting it leads to disappointment and frustration. Ravi feels frustrated as his father is a simpleton confined to the village all his life. He ignores his father and his problems. Ram is a lonely man in his fight against the odds of life,
also aware of this changed attitude of his son. He has fathered three sons, yet he has nobody to help him. He is therefore in a hurry to see Ravi’s wedding through and return to his village. He is uneasy because he has mortgaged a corner of his land to equip himself for this expedition on his son’s behalf. He is more than a little anxious to return to it, “being in much the same predicament as Apu in having no sons”.

Children take for granted the support and help of their parents and in return they never care for their duties towards them. They can be indifferent towards their parents but they cannot stand their indifference towards them. Ravi does not feel obliged to Ram for the care and help he shows to him. On the other hand, he congratulates himself on having the wisdom of not tearing away completely and finally from his parents. At the same time he knows that this breach is inevitable, it is postponed temporarily.

Financial status of the parents also contributes to the weakening and strengthening of parent-child relationship. Ravi is well aware of the weak financial position of his father and this is the reason that he is neglected by Ravi at the time of his marriage ceremony. As his father is not able to help financially, he does not value his contribution to his marriage. On the other hand he attaches great importance to Apu and Jayamma as they bear the expenditure of the marriage ceremony. During different ceremonies his father is overlooked and relegated to the background while Apu and Varma occupy important place which hurts his father: Foremost among the men were Apu and Varma, as befitted members of the more prominent family. His father stood several paces behind because, thought Ravi, he had contributed little to this affair: a poor man relegated to the fringes not from any exercised intentional unkindness but from a natural fall into the appropriate slot.

Ravi’s father faces this situation with calm as parents feel happy in the happiness of their children. He does not grudge for not being noticed. He is perfectly happy to see his son so honoured: If Ram was aware of this he showed no resentment. He beamed and was joyous, his face filled with pride that all this should be in honour of his son, this grand lavish affair.

The material aspect is avital factor in the preservation or severence of filial relationships. As Apu is the only earning member in the house his married daughter Thangam, her useless unemployed husband Puttanna and their two children, lotus-eater Varma and the cripple Kumaran survive on Apu’s hospitality. No doubt, Nalini
and her mother rightfully live with him. They live with Apu just because he provides them food and failing which the family would have disintegrated.

Another thing that is significant in human relations is that parents should spend some time with their children if they want to have a healthy relationship with them. They should know their does and don'ts. In *A Handful of Rice* there is no close rapport between Apu and his daughters, because Apu is a busy worker with no time to pamper his daughters. He can always be seen behind the piles of clothes to be stitched and his daughters also do not grudge his preoccupation. This results in the communication gap between them. He cannot be called an affectionate father. Nevertheless when he falls sick Nalini feels how she has always been deprived of the loving indulgences of a doting father. She respects Apu but hardly loves him. It is painful to Nalini to see her father lying so sick in bed. Her eyes are filled with tears: tears more out of respect than from love for her father. Apu had not been an easy man to love. He was middle aged when his daughters were born, a remote preoccupied figure who seldom played with or indulged them as Ravi did his child.

Apu is not happy being blessed with daughters only. He is dissatisfied having no male progeny. According to him not having a son is a real handicap because traditionally a son is the father’s prop. Rukmani and Nathan also in *A Nectar in a Sieve* wanted a son to work with them in fields. Apu expresses his disappointment over this need of having a son. Ironically, he is also aware of the sorrow and anguish he and his brothers have caused their parents: He (Apu) brooded and went on bitterly: “A man needs sons ... I have none, only daughters”. Ravi almost ceased to listen ... He had heard it all before or something very like it. “A man needs sons”, his father had said. Well he had had them and much good they had done him for in the end they had all quit, leaving him to scratch around alone on his barren acre bewailing the sorrows they had brought him.

It is true that children love their parents and feel attached as long as they fulfil their requirements. When the sense of security starts diminishing, the bonds become weak. Ravi has a first hand experience of this unpleasant facet of human ties. While listening to Apu’s tales of woe, he thinks, “Sons or daughters it came to the same thing”, thought Ravi “so long as all you had to offer them was empty hands and an appeal to their filial piety”.

The novel *A Handful of Rice* rejects the belief that parents love their children under all circumstances and vice versa. It brings out the point that poverty and
penury make a monster of us all. In *A Handful of Rice*, Markandaya shows the
travails and tribulation of the protagonist Ravi against the social injustices and
economic inequality in a changing society. In its treatment of the theme this novel
seems to be a continuation of the *Nectar in a Sieve* in human struggle for survival.

Ravi, a village boy, leaves his village for city in order to get a respectable job
and a better living. But he undergoes bitter experiences which teach him that the
semi-educated man without background and money has no prospects. Disillusioned
and desperate, he joins Damodar, an underworld don, and indulges in stealing and
burglaries. However, his contact and later on marriage with Nalini changed his
perspective to live a decent and better life. This also soon withers away. Misfortune
after misfortune surround him until he is burdened with debt and wanders for want of
food. He joins the mab frenzy looting the rice. As he is about to commit theft his
conscience pricks and he feels physically and morally weary. This brings a change in
him and he ends without stealing even a handful of rice.

It is not always the children who ignore and desert their parents, even parents
ignore them, though parents feel hurt after seeing their inability to do something for
their children. Ravi spends his time, sitting on the road side, when Nalini is in labour.
To get rid of the boredom and tension of the moment, he starts talking to the
stranger sitting nearby. The man shares his woes with him saying that having
children no more please him. With nine children to take care of he has really become
sick of them all : I tell you brother, I want to put my hands round their necks and
squeeze until I know I'll never again have to think about feeding them, no, never
again hear them whimper. Yes, you wait till you get like that. Just wait that's all.

After Apu's death when Ravi has to take care of the entire household and his
business goes down the hill, he grows impatient. This irritation is clearly understood
by his children. They shrink away from him and prefer to be within their mother. Ravi
wants to take refuge in his children but they are scared of his waywardness: They
did not always allow him such refuge, preferring to go to their mother, whose love
was constant and serene where his was volatile, subject to disconcerting spurts and
quirks.

Children feel neglected when their parents do not pay heed to them. They not
only feel insulted but insecure. Ravi's struggle to overcome poverty allows him no
time for his children. Raju, his son longs for his love and attention but in vain. One
day he falls sick and Ravi, being engrossed in his work finds no time to see his ailing
son. Nalini also cannot make him see that Raju is not having an ordinary fever. It is something serious with him.

Finally inspite of their poor condition they manage to call a doctor but it is too late. After suffering for two days and three nights, Raju dies in Ravi’s arms.

Ravi, annoyed by his poverty vows to do better for his children but the grim poverty does not loosen its claws as a result of which his pledge becomes meaningless. Lastly he is placed in such a condition by his fate where he can do nothing for his dying son except pray for an early release from the heart rending convulsions. He cannot bear the cries of his dying son. Utter poverty puts him in such a condition that he prays for the death of his suffering son: Then at last Ravi prayed, not for himself but for his child to die ... Ravi held his son in his arms, tightly, crooning to him to take the terror away until it was over.

The mother-child bond is important in almost all of Kamala Markandaya’s novels. Mothers are often depicted as self-sacrificing and protective towards their children. Ravi’s mother, though sad at heart does not show her emotion to him. She decides not to come in their way of happiness. Ravi also cherishes deep regard for her even during his criminal days. He tells Jayamma, “If I could lie to you I would lie to my own mother”.

In the Indian cultural tradition, mother is portrayed more considerate than father. The mother has hidden power to remain silent, to suffer and to protect her children.

Father tries to correct his child by scolding, by beating or at times by showing love while mother gives comfort to a child so that he can also share his woes and worries. In A Handful of Rice Ravi and Nalini are there on the beach with their son Raju, who tugs at the loin cloth of the pattani seller, the tray tilts, scattering a handful of pattani. Ravi loses his control and starts beating Raju mercilessly. He does not leave him though he knows that he is a child. Nalini cannot bear this sight. That’s why she comes to his rescue but Ravi does not spare him and he continues hitting the child. Nalini, full of rage, walks ahead with Raju in her lap “usually he walked ahead carrying Raju and Nalini trailed behind ... Now Nalini went in front, her head held high and stiff”. Mother and daughter relationship is also captivating in Kamala’s novels. Mothers are protective towards their daughters, that is why they put restrictions on their movements especially during the adolescent years. In A Handful of Rice Nalini’s mother keeps a protective watch on her. She does not want Nalini
remains alone in the company of Ravi. Ravi at times feels irritated at the strict vigil of Jayamma “Nevertheless it irked him unbearably to see him assiduously, Jayamma glued herself to her daughter, whenever he was present and unoccupied”.

Ravi, in his heart of hearts is happy at the strict vigilance on Nalini, as he had his sisters in the village and he was well familiar with the watch that was kept on him. In *Nectar in a Sieve* Rukmani takes care of Ira when she is deserted for being barren. In *A Handful of Rice* Jayamma does not show any resentment towards her daughter and her children. She feels bitter when Puttana steals Apu's money. She is conscious of her daughter’s ill luck, “But for money, Jayamma would have been kinder to Thangam. Her daughter had suffered a good many years-ever since her ill starred marriage to that good-for-nothing husband”.

*A Handful of Rice* gives stress on the importance of kind bonds. Breaking away from these is like breaking away from one’s roots. Ravi admits to Damodar that without his father’s identity he could not have been able to marry Nalini. Mother-child bond is largely based on a spirit of sacrifice.

In *Some Inner Fury* the primary ties between parents and children are characterised by loving concern and deep understanding. In *some Inner Fury* however the changing political scenario affects the life of Mira, the central character. Her attitude and outlook change to western pattern driving her to embrace western culture and western ways of living. Her sympathies and leanings are more with the western outlook than with the eastern one. She feels encumbered by the restrictions imposed upon her by her mother and takes pride in her individuality; And though I left my home... I discovered at least the gateway to the freedom of the mind, and gazed and entranced upon that vista of endless extensions of which the spirit is capable.

She falls in love with Richard Marlow an English man. Both are keen lovers and love each other more than anything else. There is no rift, no conflict at personal level and they are ready to marry each other crossing the racial barriers. But the storm of "your people" and "my people" sweeps over her, and she springs back, as complete and instant in her reconciliation to the parting as in her surrender to the parting.

Similarly, Mira’s brother Kitsamy has been completely westernized. He does not like Indian ceremonies and customs. He does not participate in Hindu rituals. Uma Parameswaran rightly comments "his house was furnished entirely in the
English style with Wilton carpets, wing chairs, cocktail cabinets and English bone-china. He has lost his moorings completely from the Indian culture and civilisation, so he dies a violent death. It is however Mira who is made aware of her Indian identity with the changing political scene in India. And now there was a change - so subtle so secret, I could not tell how it had come about, I was only aware that it had... . I know now that the silence of the sheets enfolded me too.

The interaction between the parents and children is friendly. However, only the earlier part of the novel deals with this type of relationship, as after his marriage Kit leads his own independent life. He being a civil servant enjoys his rank in the presidency town. Mira too, goes away from the parental influence when she develops her relationship with Richard. Govind also, after completing his college studies, gets busy with his own activities. Thus the children become independent and autonomous and the parent-child interaction loses its charm for the novelist.

Kit’s relationship with his parents is healthy. They feel proud of him and when he returns from abroad, he is given warm welcome by his parents. Kit’s father is extremely happy when he sees his son back to India, as all fathers are at the prospects of their sons bright future back home. He takes pleasure in listening to the stories of Kit's experiences abroad. He belongs to that category wherein the father is willing to do anything for the pleasure of their children. Out of joy, he does not mind Richard's stay in his family. He says to Richard “of course, of course... we shall be delighted. No trouble, no trouble at all”.

He feels so excited at the arrival of his son that he himself drives him home. Mira recalls : “My father, who hated driving climbed in and took the wheel”. Kit’s mother is also excited at the arrival of her son. She is pleased to see him after a long time and feels happy to note his improved health. On another occasion she comments “He is a handsome lad. I had almost forgotten”.

A mother knows very well how much the absence of their children mean to her. After a long interval of separation she meets her son and this separation has doubled her love for Kitsamy. She celebrates his home coming in her own peculiar, motherly way. She prepares his favourite dishes and takes out best cutlery. “The tall Kashmir tumblers with gold rim are arranged upon the long narrow tables”.

Kit, hungry of motherly love feels surprised and says “Darling ma”, He exclaimed my giving his mother the old favourite diminutive, “what a lovely display” and he put his arms affectionately about her. Mother’s heart overwhelms with love.
She feels elated hearing such remarks from her lovable son. She smiles and says, “It is nothing and her eyes, like velvet : repeated : “For you beloved, it is nothing”.

Kit’s father is also equally indulgent towards his son. He makes every conscious effort to comfort his son and his friend. He waits for them at the lunch. When they turn up late for the lunch he does not show his resentment rather says “Not at all my dear boy not at all”.

All parents consider it their sacred duty to get their children married. Kitsamy’s mother is also worried about his marriage. All parents want to see their children settle down. Kit’s mother is no exception to this fact. She also wants to see Kitsamy well settled down, while Kitsamy is not prepared for his marriage. Actually, he does not want to marry a girl, whom he does not know. In the beginning he feels shy to express his views but after constant pressure from his mother his patience breaks and he cries “I cannot! How can I marry a girl I have not even seen? Sleep with her, call her my wife? I can not”. At this his mother does not feel bad. She rather tries to make him understand : “the girl shall come here, to our house. I do not ask you to marry a stranger. “And if I donot?“ “There is no compulsion ...”

Parents not only shower their love but they also get their hold on their children. Parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children, so they are supposed to keep vigil on them at different turns that take place in their lives. In Some Inner Fury Mira’s mother also keeps her watch on Mira and deals with her tenderly. She does not allow her to go with Kitsamy and Richard for swimming. Mira goes to seek her mother’s permission. She does not agree to it as this was against the norms of decency for a girl to go out for swimming with stranger. In her opinion “Modesty graces a woman... It is not right for a young woman to go among young men”. Mira’s mother is aware of the working of their children. She is well acquainted with the fact of Mira’s thought of independence as she steps on the path of maturity. Very delicately and in an indirect manner she points out this thing to Mira : “You seem to have changed since Kitsamy came”. And though she said Kit, she meant Richard”.

Mira’s mother is so protective towards her that she does not even send her to stay with Kit and she proves to be right in her foresight. Mira comes under the influence of Roshan Merchant, who shows her the path of freedom of the mind. Mira’s mother is worried about her and wants to call her back but Mira comes across Richard by the turn of fate and completely forgets to return to her parents. It is
Richard who reminds her to go to them and seek the permission of her mother. When Mira feels hesitant to speak on such a serious matter as to tie the nuptial knot, Richard pursues her to go there. Mira’s mother again tackles her quite intelligently. She abruptly does not say ‘no’ rather puts forward her resentment with sugar coated words. She tells her that she was too young to marry and should wait till she is twenty one. Her mother would not stand in her way if Richard was to go before her coming of age. She knows that youngsters do whatever is denied. She knows that Mira is deeply in love with Richard and the answer ‘no’ can bring her to the point of revolt. She also knows that only time can wrench them apart. She just guides her but does not force her to retreat as she herself is torn by the conflict between the happiness of her daughter and the criticism of the society.

Mira’s mother cares for Govind also, though he is her adopted son. She loves him like her own son, and deals impartially with both Kit and Govind. She does not make him feel that he is her adopted son or an orphan. Govind never feels that they are only Kit’s parents. He always says “My mother and my father’ when Premala inquires from him the welfare of the parents, she that his father is as vigorous as ever ... More talkative. And my mother is a little quieter, and my father lives rather more in the clouds than he used to or perhaps he is allowed to more often now. Everything is much the same, you see, even though we are no longer there.

Not that Mira’s mother is sensitive towards Govind, he too is sympathetic. He very well knows the vacuum in her heart because of the preparation of her children. He also knows that she has taken to painting just in fill the gap caused by the separation. Mira’s father is also affectionate towards Govind. He does not regard Govind as a liability. He is worried about his career and his future. When Govind approaches him to seek permission to go for the job, he also advises him to wait for at least six months to earn his degree. He agrees with his father and prefers to wait.

Mira’s mother is tender and lovable towards Premala also. When she comes to know Premala’s hot exchange of words with Kit over her wish to feed the orphans, she gets worried and realises how traumatic it is for the young girl to go there, to feed them and to see them so agitated. She goes directly to Premala and puts her arms around her. Even Premala is quite sensitive about the expectations and duties inherent in filial ties. She is also quite considerate towards Kit’s parents. She shows greater concern about their tastes and likings than what is shown by their own son Kit. Thus we see that filial ties in Some Inner Fury have been portrayed from a
different perspective than in *Nectar in a Sieve* or in *A Handful of Rice*. The ties, though, presented in this novel are gratifying. However satisfying these relations are, they change under the impact of circumstantial factors. The children move away from their parents for different reasons. Their jobs, ambitions aims and emotional involvements force them to drift away though not apart. The parents portrayed in this novel are protective, self sacrificing and guide their children to exercise their choice, to make their own decisions.

*A Silence of Desire* stresses the need of protective parental presence for the physical and mental well-being of children. *Silence of Desire* highlights the change that comes in the attitude and feelings of Sarojini and Dandekar. Sarojini undergoes spiritual conflict when her more modernistic husband Dandekar proposes her to go to hospital - a symbol of new scientific spirit of the age — for the treatment of her tumour. Sarojini is sick with an unnatural growth in her womb. She wants to get it cured by faith healing. She goes to a swamy as she places all her faith in the swamy and believes that his superhuman powers and spiritual superiority could cure her of physical ailment: “His touch on her head she believes will dissolve the tumor in her womb”.

Sarojini has deep faith in traditional values of life. She is the perfect embodiment of a traditional Hindu wife in her concern for the family as well too religious devotion. She worships Tulasi and God regularly and gives them too much reverence. She is unaware that her blind faith is causing so much tension and disharmony in her domestic life.

Dandekar wants her to see the limitations of her belief in faith-healing and reach newer level of consciousness. He cannot achieve it easily. He has to stop her from going to the swami, for the bond between the swami and Sarojini is not physical. He has to make her see reason in order to regain her health. Sarojini will not accept it until swami is there. The swamy finally leaves the town as Chari, of Dandekar's boss sets up investigation upon him. The swami also directs Sarojini to go to hospital. Lastly, Sarojini also accepts, like Rukmani in *Nectar in a sieve*, the scientific spirit of the age which is "not in conflict with the basic human values as it merely attempts to make the human beings more happy here and now".

Dandekar's attitude towards her softens and changes from a dominating husband who was suspecting her fidelity to equal companionship. He gives respect
to her feelings and considers his wife as a part of his life, without whom life has no meaning.

This novel highlights the fact that disharmony in husband-wife relationship affects the parent-child bond. The children are first hand recipients of the evil effects of dissonance in husband-wife relationship. Sarojini and Dandekar are lovable and affectionate parents who take care of their children in the best possible manner. Dandekar inspite of his paltry some of money that he receives as income considers it his moral duty to bring fee present or the other for his daughters. Naturally all his daughters too want for him with unabated excitement. When they hear the footsteps of Dandekar, “They came running in pelting down the stairs zig zagged upto the terrace, skirts and pigtails flying”. Dandekar too enjoys giving them their presents. He asks Ramabai: “Does madam like it.?” “Oh yes, she smiled at him, “you see it goes so well with my skirt”.

All these pleasures, all these little joys diminish when the conjugal harmony between Dandekar and Sarojini comes under cloud. Dandekar, contrary to his usual practice becomes so indifferent that for nearly three months he fails to bring presents for his daughters on the day of his salary. Naturally this hurts not only the parents but also the children. This is hurting for the parents. He himself is aware of the fact, “it would do no harm to give them an occasional treat”. Sarojini does not comment but she feels sorry for the girls. Very calmly she reminds him about the gifts : “I was wondering if you could get the girls something this month ... I know they miss it”.

Both Dandekar and Sarojini are careful about their daughters. They do not want their daughters to be affected because of their personal confrontations. “Like conspirators in tacit accord, they efficiently set about shielding their children”. Dandekar is perplexed because of the secret outgoings of his wife. This is mind boggling for him, so he wants to confront her with the piece of evidence he has got. He however, cannot do so because “he did care when he thought of his children and the powerful urge to honesty is killed”. Sarojini too tries to avoid this situation. She gives lame excuses to her daughters as she does not want to disturb them telling them about their ill-health. She worked strenously and slept as little as she could to make up the time spent away from home. For the sake of girls she conceals this fact from Dandekar as according to her it is likely to prove quite traumatic for her young daughters girls. She therefore, tells Dandekar, “It is not something you tell a girl of
her age. My mother told me when I was twelve. I don’t want her to be frightened as I was”.

Kamala Markandaya tries to bring to our attention the absolute necessity of the protective and all benevolent presence of a mother. Sarojini’s absence is something which keeps the daughters in doubt and confusion and this leads to a piquant situation in the Dandekar household. The elder daughter Ramabai, emboldened by the behaviour of her mother, takes the liberty to go out in mixed company. Obviously this disturbs Dandekar so much so that he becomes anxious to know the boy his daughter goes with to the milk bar.

Dandekar is shocked to notice the change in the voice of his daughter. Though he tries to be quit normal in his demeanour, he is upset by the coldness of the remark coming from the mouth of a hither to docile girl. He looks at his daughter and notices: “her face was rebellious and her mouth was sour” Dandekar by his brief encounter has already offended his daughter. He tries to pacific her but she simply wails “I want my mother”.

Dandekar has always been protective and careful towards his children. He cannot see his children in pain and discomfort. Once, when he becomes sure of getting Sarojini back from the influence of the Swamy, first of all he comes home to take care of his children : Reaching home in time gave him more time with his children, and he tried, as best he could, to make up for the absences of their mother. That he had not done so before was a standing reproach to him, especially when he looked into the dark eyes of his son, disturbed and questioning from a conflict his child’s mind had sensed, which apparently a tenderness of year was no bar to sensing although an understanding of it might be.

Both Sarojini and Dandekar give first preference to their children. They conceal their moods, their tensions from them.

Sarojini is perfectly dedicated not only to her husband but also to her children. She is an excellent cook and efficient manager of his household but her visits to Swami crumble the well-maintained structure of the family. Her children are ignored and her husband also finds very difficult to bring up his children in an unhealthy atmosphere. Later Dandekar gets back his “peace of mind” on the departure of the Swamy. Sarojini is successfully operated upon for her tumour. Dandekar is now perfectly relieved. He wends his way suddenly towards the Swamy’s place where he
meets the dwarf, who snubs him for engineering the removal of the saint, a spiritual
and moral prop to the needy and the hapless.

The ending of the novel clearly shows that Dandekar is concerned with the
survival of his children, his family and with its joys and sorrows. He is no more
careless about his family and children. The couple emerges from the crisis shining
like gold tested in fire, more caring and loving towards their children. Sarojini and
Dandekar, under all circumstances, try to be protective and careful towards their
children. However the children feel neglected and confused when they have vague
apprehensions of something wrong with their parents. The moods and activities of
the parents cannot escape the notice of their children, however young they are.
The anxiety of the parents disturbs the development of the children. They do not like
to see their mother unhappy or miserable.

In *Two Virgins*, Appa is a social revolutionary who is an advocate of ‘individual
rights’ and gives his children the full freedom to choose their own life. He believes in
free association between men and women as a mark of civilisation and provide
liberty and good education to his daughters, Saroja and Lalitha, for their all round
development, but Lalitha turns her freedom into licence displaying no regard for her
elders. She misuses the liberty granted to her by the parents and meets the tragic
end.

In this novel we see that for want of proper sex education children are
sometimes lost in labyrinth and fail to distinguish between right and wrong.
Sometimes they mistake liberty and fall prey to the wrong doers. The novel lays bare
the sentiments and feelings of teenagers and their basic experiences. It also
emphasises the fact that adolescents may go astray if proper guidance is not given
to them or parents don't understand their feelings, ambitions and aspirations.
Lalitha’s parents give her freedom without holding the rein in their hands. She runs
from village like an unbridled mare and meets awful consequences. Lalitha fits into
the definition of the liberated heroine whom Diana Irilling notes in her article ‘The
Liberated Heroine’ : She the liberated heroine is a fictional creation whose first
concern is the exploration and realisation of female selfhood; this investigation of
self undertakes to be independent of the traditional dictates of society as these
pertain to female behaviour and the relation of sexes ...

Lalitha falls into the temptation of sex because she is too conscious of the
freedom conferred by the new social dispensation. She goes to the city in pursuit of
stardom and is spoilt by the film director, Gupta. Parents serve as sheltered grove for their children where they seek comfort, mental peace and abundant affection. If children try to break away from their roots, deluded by coloured visions, they are more prone to fall victim to undesirable circumstances. Saroja’s internal monologue, after a futile search for Lalitha in the city, throws light on the latter’s tragedy: At home here were fields to rest your eyes on, colours, that changed with seasons ... you knew each grove you knew every pathway. No one could ever be lost ... you always knew where you were. The city took it all away from you ... you were no longer you ... you drifted, amoeba like, through the baffling streets, wondering where you were, what business you had.

While Saroja who stays with her parents does not meet the tragedy, her natural desires are curbed by the strong impact of the codes of traditional society, represented and always reminded by the conservative aunt Alamelu. So far as Amma is concerned, she respects the norms and values of her traditional society and gives an indirect warning to her younger daughter Saroja: “Your sister wandered too far ... she was lured outside the code of our community and is playing the penalty, that is all”.

Saroja, however, works under the influence of her aunt Alamelu who has an unflinching faith in old world values. Saroja, therefore, remains a virgin due to social mores taught by her Aunt. She’s certainly not so ‘natural’ as Lalitha in her attitudes to life, on the contrary, Lalitha is “a natural dancer, a natural actress, a natural woman” or even “a natural harlot” But Saroja is not completely devoid of ‘natural’ desires of passion in her, and her response to Devraj and later to Chingleput is definitely woman like. She remains a ‘virgin’ for the simple reason that she is in the hard grip of fear and her aunt Alamelu.

The daughter is not always the only child. Therefore, apart from her parents, she also interacts with her brothers and sisters. We need not dispute the natural love and attachment that exist between sisters: Nalini and Thangam in A Handful of Rice. Lalitha and Saroja in Two Virgins. Lalitha and Saroja, who have different outlooks on life, never let their visions interfere with their affection for each other. Sisters having dissimilar or contrary views can empathise with one another. They can still express oneness and fight against a common foe. Lalitha leaves a note urging Saroja to go away from the claustrophobic and suffocating atmosphere of the home into the open free world. Saroja may not entirely agree with these ideas but she does not want her
sister to go down. The first time Lalitha leaves home, she concocts stories to account for her absence and Saroja suffers insomnia when Lalitha goes to the doctor to have an abortion. What these two sisters are to one another is well expressed by this passage: “She (Saroja) fell, she was on her knees in the morass but lunged at her sister and held her, they were welded by mud and flesh into one”.

She is so sympathetic to her sister’s sufferings that she is willing to antagonise even her husband, Ravi. She takes offence at Ravi’s complaint that Thangam was trespassing upon their “love nest”. Or again, when he blames Thangam for Apu’s stolen money. She points out that the person to be chastised is Thangam’s rogue husband. She appears stronger of the two sisters but she still takes asylum in Thangam’s squalid house when she has bitter fight with Ravi.

The importance of the brother is so embedded in an Indian woman's psyche that his physical presence is not a requisite for her appreciation of all that he stands for. The brothers in Markandaya’s Two Virgins are hardly present in the novel but Saroja and Lalitha hold them in awe and respect, because they ostensibly know everything, can use their minds, argue well and are philosophic about life. Also, they have a paternal attitude towards Lalitha and Saroja and indulge them with gifts off and on.

Brother-sister bond is strong enough. Therefore, it is not surprising that Mira, who openly admits her love for her brothers, Kit and Govind, should be distressed at the end of the novel. Having lost Kit. Mira does not want to and cannot afford to lose her other brother, Govind, albeit adopted. So she chooses him and her people over Richard, the man she loves.

The closeness between Mira and her brothers is basic to the understanding of the novel. They are able to confide in each other, are anxious about each other’s well being. When they go to the village to save Premala, she unknowingly “hung both arms around Govind, pinioning him, holding him tightly, tightly against (her) breast. “She could feel the red-black frenzy of his maddened heart”. Unconsciously, she has saved him. She cannot forget the pain she experience when Kit dies with his head on her lap. She is the defendant’s principal witness and when the mob’s frenzy takes over the court, she gives up Richard for Govinda and his people. Evidently, the relationship between sisters is important, but more important is the brother-sister relationship and its influence on a woman’s identity and self definition. The Indian woman knows that a man’s protection is a prerequisite to her survival in a
patriarchal society. Apart from her father, husband and son, she looks to her brother for support. This makes her feel secure enough to deal with the totally male dominated world. And like the mother who is protected by the son, she needs the protection of the brother to whom she has been a surrogate mother. The Afro-American woman often substitutes herself as a mother to her brother and she too desires his assistance to face the world in her case the racist outside world. But unlike the Indian woman, she does not consider him a patriarch (for, as we have seen, she has grown up with ambivalent feelings towards men and has not always been exposed to strong father figure) but a comrade, a friend who will help her confront the problems in society.

Industrialization is a historical process which represents a typical level of social development, wherein the social system is based on residence rather than kinship. The industrial society is not based on kinship but on residence and the residents belong to various diverse groups. Independent living and working of individuals who have no emotional ties fosters a spirit of competition and mutual exploitation. Industrialization has further aided rural-urban migration, secularization, and breaking down of the rigidity of caste lines. Industrial society not only marks a technological advancement upon rural society, but also signifies a socially more complex, more rational and more universalistic setting. The unique agrarian socio-economic structure of India experienced a decisive transformation as a result of the impact of industrialization. Each village lives almost an independent, atomistic, self-sufficient social and economic existence. The village represents a closed society based on economic autarchy and social life governed by caste and community rules. These villages have experienced a steady transformation due to growth of industries. One such transformation, we find in *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya.

Kamala Markandaya is widely acclaimed Indian English novelist. She is a prolific writer and has explored the issues regarding human relationships in terms of the part played by the social, economic and political forces. Markandaya has shown superbly in her work, *Nectar in a Sieve* how familial relations undergo change with the advancement of the tannery in the village. Industrialization which is the first step towards metropolitan life, changes the face of familial ties. I have tried to explore through my paper that in the novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, familial ties which were closely knitting during hardships and adversities change and disintegrate with the advancement of industry in the shape of tannery.
If viewed in totality rather than in parts, Kimala Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve* is a tale of withering relation and shattering hopes. Dorothy Canfield Fisher called it “Unique in poetic beauty in classically restrained and controlled tragedy”.

The whole novel consists of Nathan and Rukmani striving to meet the basic necessities of life: food, clothes and shelter. From the beginning till end their whole life is consumed to satisfy the bare necessities of life, which results in their utter failure to bind their family in one rope. Nathan is a tenant farmer faced to till the land which belongs to another yet with so much love for it that he cannot survive without it. He is simple yet skilled farmer with a good knowledge of land but the vagaries of weathering him to disaster. There are other sufferings too both physics and psychical which Nathan and Rukmani face.

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Kamal Markandaya is mainly preoccupied with the suffering of peasants in Colonial India. She views the problem of human relationships in this novel, in the context of economic forces. *Nectar in a Sieve* is a deeply meeting tale of hunger told in the first person by Rukmani, the protagonist of the piece. Her family consists of her husband, Nathan, a poor tenant farmer and seven children, Ira, Arjun, Tambi, Murgan, Raja Selvain and Kuti. Though poor, they are content and happy with whatever they have. But the intrusion of industry spoils the sweet harmony of the peasant family and destroys the joy and placid rhythms of their simple lives. A.V. Krishana Rao comments.

“With her impeccable representation realism and evocate description of the Indian arcadia, Markandaya achieves a perfect poise between rural reality and the discipline of urbanity of art.

The quiet and idyllic life of the peasant family is first and foremost affected by unwelcome-advent of industrialism, A group of townsmen arrive and build a tannery on the maidan near the village. The encroachment of industry causes the decay of natural beauty, creates havoc in the village economy and brings in social degradation too. The tannery is the symbol of modernity and Rukmaniopposes its advent right from the beginning because she think; that the tannery is a serpent in her Garden of Eden which “begins to rear its ugly head, devouring green open spaces, polluting the clean, wholesome atmosphere and tempting simple, gullible peasants into greed, ambition and immortality”. The tannery not only spoils the natural beauty of the countryside and fills it with din and noise but also becomes a
source of inflation. The village traders make a virtue of the tannery crowd and increase the prices.

As the novel opens, the dwindling financial position of Rukmani’s father forces him to marry her to a tenant farmer. The glaring disparity between the financial and social status of a village headman and a tenant farmer is obvious to Rukmani even at the tender age of twelve. Rukmani’s three elder sisters were married in a befitting manner, but as luck would have it the headman is no longer of any consequence and hence Rukmahi without beauty and without dowry is given away to Nathan - a tenant farmer. Everybody takes pity on her. She herself feels humiliated and has apprehensions about her future happiness…. And when the religious ceremonies had been completed we, left, my husband and I How well I remember the day, and the sudden sickness that overcame me when the moment for departure came! My mother in the doorway, no tears in her eyes but her face bloated with their weight. My father standing a little in front of her, waiting to see us safely on our way and I was sick. Such a disgrace form me”.

Soon, she becomes mother of a baby girl Ira, Ira feeds well milk, butter and rice, Arjun too gets good share being the first boy in the family. But for those who come after get less and less. Four more sons she bears in as many years- Thambi, Murugan, Raja and Selvam.

The work to build tannery starts in the village. Everyday for two months theline of bullock carts come in laden with bricks and stones and cement, sheets of tin and corrugated iron, coils of rope and hemp. The kilns in the neighbour villages kept busy firing the bricks, but their output was insufficient, and the carts had to go further a field, returning dusty and brisk-filled. Day and night women twisted rope, since they could sell as much as they made, and traders waxed prosperous selling their goods to workmen. They earned good profit from townspeople. Then one day building completes. The red-faced white man comes with a foreman and takes charge of everything. His men settle there with their families! in the huts. The smell of brews and liquors hang permanently in the air. This air fill rukmani with disgust, she shows her anger but Kunthi, a fellow village woman says to her : “Are you not glad that our village is no longer a clump of huts but a small town? Soon there will be shops and tea stalls, and even a bioscope, such as I have been to before I was married. You will see”.
Financial implications determine the nature and quality of interaction between the parents and children. The relationship between Ira and her parents changes unbelievably. With the sons gone and starvation engulfing them all around, Ira takes to prostitution to ward off hunger. To Nathan's utter dismay she goes out of the house despite his efforts to check her. The tannery is also largely responsible for the moral degradation of Ira as she sells herself to the townsmen in order to save her brother, Kuti, Hunger has converted her into a revolting volcano, the fury of which astounds both Nathan and Rukmani.

"Where do you go at this hour ?"
"It is better not to speak"
"I will have no answer"
"I can give your name"
"I will not have you parading at night"
"Tonight and tomorrow and every night, so long as there is need. I will not hunger anymore." (171)

The setting up of a tannery is the encroachment of the not home concept over that of the home. It is in the idyllic life of the village with its huts, trees and green fields that Rukmani and Nathan feel quite at home but with the tannery come bullock carts laden with bricks, stones and cement, as do other noisy activities. The tannery represents a world of immorality, greed and corruption invading another which is moral, happy and pure. The evil effects of the tannery are apparent. Money loses its value when a lot of it is pumped into the village from outside. It buys less and less. The sweet, calm beauty of the village is replaced by noise and crowds. At one time it used to have kingfishers and paddy birds and flamingoes but now the fields are covered by crows, kites and other scavenging birds. When the tannery claims the life of Raja, its comparison with crows and kites becomes complete. If at all the tannery can be a boon, it could be for people like Kunthi- a trollop - who knew the art of exploitation "with her good looks and provocative body".

The tannery contributes to the disintegration of Rukmani’s family a good deal. It costs Rukmani and Nathan their two eldest sons and when the family is on the verge of starvation, her two sons, Arjun and Thambi join the tannery in spite of strong opposition. They create some trouble in the tannery and are sacked. They cannot remain idle in the face of economic hardships. They leave for Ceylon to work as labourers in a Tea plantation. Rukmani cries bitterly and feels shattered at the
thought of being separated from her sons. They leave their village, each carrying a bundle with food in it. Rukmani knew that she would never see them again. Natahn tried to stop them but they were allured by the glitter of industrialization.

"It is working in the tea plantation of Ceylon"
"You may not have the knowledge for such work"
"They will teach us-they have said so"
"Who will pay for the journey- is it not one of many hundreds of miles?"
"They will arrange everything and everything will be paid for".

The next blow for Rukmani and Nathan was the death of their son Raja. People from tannery brought dead body of Raja and laid him on the ground. He had been caught stealing calfskin from the tannery. The tannery becomes the cause of the death of Raja. The tannery becomes the bier for Raja. After three days two officials from the tannery come to see Rukhmani and Nathan for compensation. But she refuses to have money by saying that there can be no compensation for death. The tannery men go away glad because the matter settled amicably.

Soon the final nail in their coffin comes when they hear the news that the tannery owners are buying their leased land. The tannery owners want to purchase the land for their own expansion. Uprooted from the soil Rukmani and Nathan decide to go to the city to live with Murugan. Murugan, too becomes a prey of urbanization. Financial crisis drives him away from his soothing village to the city; the forest of bricks and cement. He marries in the city and settles there. But soon he deserts his wife Ammu. Both Nathan and Rukhmani reach there to live with them. They are moved to see the plight of Ammu, who has been deserted by Murugan. Ammu does not welcome them because she earns her living With difficulty. Life in the city is pathetic for her as she sweeps and cleans in a big house to feed her small siblings. She wants to get rid off the parents of Murugan as quickly as possible. Misfortunes of city life have hardened her. Rukmani and Nathan leave the place and are forced to go on charity. They take up petty jobs with the help of Pulli, an orphan. As Nathan dies of fever, Rukmani returns to her village with Puli.

Somehow the tannery eventually became the reason for their suffering and miseries. Since the day the carts had come with their loads of bricks and noisy dust had once coloured the village and substituted its cool silence with clamour. Since then it had spread like weeds in an untended garden, strangling whatever life grew in
its way. It had changed the face of the village beyond recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants in a myriad ways. A few had been raised up; other cast down and many other lost in its clutches. There were families who saw tannery with hope for their sons. One such family was of Nathan and Rukmani but rapid growth and industrialisation gave them despair and landed them into trouble. They could not face the trauma caused by tannery and their familial bonds became weak and finally they broke. Due to industrialization parents happen to look their hold upon the thoughts and acts of their own children. With industrialisation they tend to march towards autonomy and independence.

The foregoing discussion brings us to the conclusion that the tannery broke the filial ties in *Nectar in a Sieve*. The tyranny of circumstances makes them sour at time. Rapid growth of industrialization takes the children away from their parents. The children move away from their parents not because they wish it but because adversity leaves no other option for them. Rukmani and Nathan try hard not to stand between new ventures of their children despite the fact that they suffered a lot because of their zest for modern life. The family has paid a heavy cost for their new life and is finally disintegrated. Whereas the sons and daughter had led Nathan and Rukmani to unhappiness after arousing their hopes; Puli, who does not belong to them, gives them happiness after some fears. Here the process has been reversed. Much in contrast with Murugan who causes them disappointment, Puli gives them hope. It is he who leads them to Murugan's place as well as to the stone quarry and it is with him that Rukmani consoles herself after her husband's death by saying:

"Yes I have no fears now what is done is done, there can be no repining." A child who has no fingers but stumps has a lion's heart and gives her much more hope and comfort in her life than those who had aroused her legitimate expectations.

Markandaya portrays beautifully withering relations and shattering hopes in the novel. The author depicts in her novel that relations are bound to wither, and hopes are bound to shatter when our villages are on the threshold of modern era. The story has a universal touch in the sense that Nathan and Rukmani are the representatives of rural society, with all its traditions, cultures, rites and rituals which face extinction under the impact of modern ideas so clumsily embraced by the new generation.

The whole sweep of relationships, which weave our society in the form of parent-child, brother-sister, husband-wife constituting the primary group of a family
and the relationships, which an individual happens to create going beyond his family, those coming up out of one’s attraction to the opposite sex are portrayed with unerring insight by perspicacious Kamala Markandaya.

*Nectar in a Sieve* is a woeful tale of a peasant couple. Rukmani, the heroine of the novel, is married to Nathan. She is the youngest of the four daughters of a village headman. Just because of utter poverty and the stroke of fate’s cruel hand, she is destined to be the bride of a tenant farmer who was poor in everything but in love and care for his wife. She bears up all ups and downs calmly.

Both Rukmani and Nathan face calamities of life with silence. Difficulties and troubles surround them but they both face them stoically. Despite all calamities, the tender human relationship between Nathan and Rukmani make *Nectar in a Sieve* a fictional epic of Indian life. These two characters become grand tragic figure because their matrimonial bond is based on understanding and sacrifice.

The relationship between Rukmani and Nathan is almost divine. They suffer throughout their life seeking help from each other with MI confidence and remain tied to the oddities of life. Rukmani feels Nathan to be with her even after his death.

The relationship of Rukmani and Nathan is based on mutual understanding and love. Though in the beginning, she feels insecure and has doubts about her future happiness with Nathan. Rukmani “without beauty and without dowry” is given to poor peasant Nathan.

But later on Nathan proves to be rich in his love for Rukmani. Soon she for gets the shame and humiliation, she felt at the time of her wedding. The financial trouble and other hardships do not obstruct their love and contentment.

The string that ties this relationship is love and mutual understanding on the part of both. Nathan, though poor financially is not wanting in love for his wife. He is quite conscious of her anguish and disappointment when the young bride comes to his mud hut. He knew very well that she is used to better living. He makes utmost efforts to cheer up his wife.

These are not simply words but have meaning in them. He tries his best to calm down the doubtful and agitated mind of Rukmani. He makes preparation for the welcome of his new bride. He himself builds the hut when he plans to start his married life. The fact that he himself made the hut is not revealed by Nathan. It is revealed by Kali to Rukmani: “The fuss your husband made! Why, for weeks he was as brittle hut with his own hands – yes, he would not even have my husband to help”.


Mutual understanding between the two partners in life also ensures good relationship. If it is lacking, it disturbs the peace and tranquility in day to day life. Nathan is accommodating by nature and for this his wife loves and adores him. He ignores his bride's ignorance towards household chores. She learns many household jobs from Kali and Janaki but he does not snub her. He also does not belittle her for her ignorance.

Admiration or regard for each other's qualities makes a positive, reciprocal relationship. If Rukamani is cooperative and lovable towards Nathan. Nathan equally reciprocates her gesture. This reciprocity remains quite unchanged even after many years of their marriage. After the marriage of their daughter, Ira, they rejoice at the festival of Diwali and Nathan comments, "I am happy because life is good and children are good, and you are the best of all".

Trust in each other is also an important factor in husband-wife relationship. Relationship should be such in which one can seek refuge at difficult times. If at the time of difficulty one partner does not co-operate or console, this relationship may degenerate creating wide gap between the two. Kamala Markandaya tries to portray healthy relationship between husband and wife. When Rukmani becomes sad at the departure of her sons, Arjun and Thambi to Ceylon, and is tormented by the thought of being separated from her sons, Nathan comforts her by saying: “you brood too much and think only of your trials, not of the joys that are still with us. Look at our land, is it not beautiful?”

True relationship is that which bears all the jerks and does not snap just with the blow of time. It remains unperturbed under all circumstances. Kamala Markandaya presents this true relationship of husband and wife in her novel. In his days of hardship Nathan decides to sell everything and Rukmani asks him not to do so. Nathan loses his temper and becomes harsh with Rukmani who maintains her calm and believes this to be a temporary phase. She says: He was not shouting at me but at the terrible choice forced upon us; ... ‘He is worried’, I thought, smothering my sobs. ‘He is distracted and does not mean to be harsh’.

As human beings are a composite of good and bad, love and concern for each other sometimes, take a back seat and concealment and deceit come to the fore Nathan, like a weak man, falls prey to the evil charms of Kunthi and sires her two sons. Nathan is totally scared of Kunthi lest she should tell Rukmani about the affair. The fear of betrayal compels him to part with the rice that Rukmani has hidden
underground. When she comes to know about it, she starts questioning her children and only at that time Nathan confesses his guilt and says. “Kunthi took it all, I swear it ... “I am the father of her sons, she would have told you, and I was weak”. The confession on Nathan’s part is ironic surprise in Rukmani’s life. The disclosure burns her heart but she faces the predicament silently. Faithlessness on either part of the spouse is a big jolt to the husband wife relationship. Rukmani feels as if her backbone has broken, but she controls herself. When she peeps into her heart she realises that she too has not been absolutely faithful to Nathan. Inspite of her best intentions she made mistake by flouting the moral code of absolute honesty of deed and thought in matrimonial ties. In such a situation she does not lose heart and faces this trauma boldly. Nathan is Rukmani’s most precious possession so at any cost she would not like to be deprived of this possession. Finally she feels relieved and free from the pain of concealment and deceit on the part of Nathan.

Kamala Markandaya, by introducing the Kunthi episode seems to demonstrate that Rukmani and Nathan could stand together through thick and thin. It is an example of what sociologists term as ‘external stress’ introduced into a relationship. If the bond between the two is weak, their relationship snaps. If the relationship between the two is strong and healthy, it can bear the burden of destructive external forces.

Kamala Markandaya seems to propogate the traditional idea of husband-wife relationship. She seems to adhere the Indian concept of lifelong conjugal relationship where breaking of ties is not easily possible. Both Nathan and Rukmani get jerks in their relationship but they bear it and do not take recourse to divorce they understand the importance of their relationship with each other.

All successful and satisfying bonds are based on a sprit of sacrifice and self-denial. The relationship of Nathan and Rukmani is also based on sacrifice, though at this particular time dark clouds of doubts and concealment surround them. They achieve later on “interpersonal fusion” that makes them heroic and brave during the worst period of their life. At one place Rukmani says: “I lean against my husband, he is already leaning on me, together we achieve a kind of comfort”. From beginning till end they struggle together bearing and sharing each other’s pain. They lose everything, their son, their land, their money, but they do not desert each other. They become stone breakers in the last phase of their life. Their last moments of
togetherness are marked with poignancy. Withdrawing from their present gruesome realities they started brooding over the golden memories of their past life.

After glancing at the relationship of Rukmani and Nathan from every angle we find that Kamla Markandaya lets her woman have the traditional role, but makes them face the modern predicament. In this novel the home assumes the sanctity of shrine where the mother priestess celebrates a communion, uniting the members of the family circle by means of a mystical life force.

Kamala Markandaya's heroines do not adore or worship their husbands, though they respect and love them. Even a typical peasant householder like Nathan fails in his masculine role as a husband and provider. When the industrial revolution in their society shook and dispersed Nathan's family, the blinding influence of Rukmani helped them to survive the ordeal. When Rukmani fails to beget sons, she does not hesitate to approach Kenny for medical aid. When the conservative society let its tongue loose for gossips, she squarely faces their comments and shuts up their wagging tongues. Thus Kamala Markandaya ends her novel *Nectar in a Sieve* with the traditional conviction "a woman's place is with her husband". Rukmani at the end of the novel reconciles with the situation and says: “What profit to bewail that has always been and cannot change”.

*A Silence of Desire* presents the idea that mutual trust, adjustment and understanding are the backbone of husband-wife relationship. The life of the protagonists of this novel sails smoothly until distrust and concealment enters in their matrimonial life. Sarojini and Dandekar both live a smooth life during the first fifteen years of their life. No problem occurs in their conjugal life. They lead their life with perfect adjustment and mutual understanding. Dandekar feels himself to be the happiest person to have such a good wife.

The couple presented in this novel by Kamla Markandaya are well adjusted to each other but on mental level there is wide gap between the two. Sarojini's traditional religious belief is in sharp contrast with the modern attitude of Dandekar. Something lacks in their relationship that leads Sarojini to take recourse to lies. She does not share her trouble with her husband. Instead of going to doctor, she meets the swamy for her treatment. One day Dandekar comes to know about her secret meeting with the swamy. He also finds a photograph of an unknown person kept by Sarojini in her box. He tries his best to find out the truth. Later on he comes to know about his wife's ailment-growth in her womb and about faith healing. This trauma
occurs in Dandekar’s life just because of maladjustmant on mental level. As he does not have the courage to talk to Sarojini directly, he trails her. He seeks help from his boss. His boss helps him in overcoming the crisis. It takes him quite sometime to convince his wife to undergo a surgical operation. Kamala Markandaya portrays the protagonists of this novel as a traditional couple. Dandekar remains happy with his wife so long as she fulfils his desires and necessities without a note of complaint on her lips. Edwin Thumbo, however, places Sarojini’s role in the epicentere of the quake that overtakes the Dandekar household within its sway: Sarojini supplies the active centre of the Dandekar household, a point we must grasp firmly if we are to appreciate the dislocation which will soon afflict the family.

Dandekar is portrayed by Kamala Markandaya as a traditional husband who expects all his commands to be obeyed by his wife. No doubt, he also cares for his wife, but he never shows his interest in her ideas, attitudes and thoughts. The intimacy between Dandekar and Sarojini exists on the physical plane only. They do not discuss their problems between them. Intimacy on mental level lacks in their relationship.

Dandekar considers his wife inferior to himself, like a typical man for whom woman’s place is inferior to that of man. Whenever Sarojini argues with him, he feels irritated at the intelligent questioning of his wife. When he expresses his opinion about the behaviour of young girls, she makes detailed queries which disturb him. She agrees but he becomes tense: “He knew he ought to be satisfied but somehow words chilled him…. He felt slightly cramped, mentally and he now realised, physically as well”.

Mutual trust and confidence are the touchstone to identify good conjugal relationship. The relationship of Sarojini and Dandekar lacks on this count. They are poles apart in their respective outlook on life and thinks. Dandekar is modern and westernised while Sarojini is religious minded. Sarojini’s fear and her concealment of disease from her husband is borne out of their maladjustment on mental level. Perfect relationship of husband-wife makes them share their joys and sorrows. Companionship does not mean mere physical intimacy. It is surprising that Sarojini hides her ailment from her husband, but more surprising is the fact that Dandakar fails to notice her disease. He discerns the truth too late.

Lack of communication leads to crumbling of their relationship. Sarojini resorts to lies and she either remains quiet about her problem or evades the issue.
Dandekar is stunned to know that his wife is betraying him: “He began to sweat, floundering in depths which he felt were beyond him. Beyond him, and unfair to him”.

Any misunderstanding and doubt can create a hole in conjugal relationship and if this hole is not mended, it is bound to take cancerous growth. Once the seeds of distrust and disillusionment enter in Dandekar’s life, he breaks all norms of courtesy and decency his fury and contempt is showered in: “‘Mangoes’, he cried shaking her furiously, “so that is what you went out for. Not for anything else ... like a thrifty whore”.

Mutual understanding and taking things in proper perspective is essential to keep harmony in matrimonial relationship. It is ability to think clearly and sensibly about a situation and consider it in relation to everything else that provide oil to the two wheels of life partners go smooth and together. All men are not endowed with such perspicacity to follow human behavioural psychology. Fear and apprehension have already set in in place of replace trust and confidence blocking the way to genuine understanding between Dandekar and his wife the spouses. Owing to fear and lack of mutual confidence, Sarojini conceals her uterine tumor from her husband. The lack of understanding between the two leads Sarojini to say: But I do not expect you to understand-you with your western notions, your superior talk of ignorance and superstition ... And mine is a disease to be cured and so you would have sent me to hospital and I would have died there.

The novels of Kamala Markandaya reveal the contrast between male and female psychology. Dandekar rebukes and admonishes Sarojini for her secret meetings with the Swamy, caring little to know what was the exigency, whereas Sarojini keeps calmly to herself the knowledge of her husband’s visits to prostitutes. She thinks her illness to be the main reason behind this unexpected development and blames herself for his turn about from matrimonial sanctity. Dandekar's turning to prostitutes seems paradoxical, but embers of love still burn in his heart for Sarojini. He may not have control on the external forces coming in the way of their relationship but during temporary phase of separation, he realises that Sarojini is his life-breath, without whom life has no meaning. He goes to Chan, his boss and requests him to help in getting back his wife.

Balanced relationship between the spouse give a sense of security and satisfaction. Dandekar has taken for granted the faith and obedience of Sarojini and
when this faith is shattered, he is broke. He feels rootless when Sarojini deviates from the set pattern of domestic chores. He realises how much his life is dependent upon her. He feels absolutely helpless.

Dandekar may not be considered a high headed male chauvinist but he wants to have perfect control on the partner of his life. When Sarojini blames him for spying on her, he admits that he can not tolerate anyone encroaching upon her. His inner feelings burst out “He took both her hands held them and would not let go. “I was mad, I went mad because I loved you. Is that a crime? Is it possible to love without jealousy ?”

Kamala Markandaya presents her as an embodiment of traditional Indian wife.... good wife ... good with the children, an excellent cook, an effeciant manager of his household, a woman who still gave him pleasure after fifteen years of marriage, less from the warmth of her response than from her unfailing acquiescence to his demands

Things are all right with Dandekar as long as the wife is there in the house waiting for him. He takes her for granted and himself remains blind to her feelings or problems. His family life which runs smoothly in the beginning suffers shock in the middle because he builds up the citadel of love on a weak foundation of physical love based more on acquiescence to his demands than on spontaneous response. He forgets that a woman is more than a mother, wife or a housekeeper. Over and above her children, her husband or the house, she has a soul, but Dandekar is conscious only of her physical existence. Mutual understanding is lacking in the domestic life of Dandekar and Sarojini. Sarojini is suffering from a serious ailment; yet she does not confide in her husband. She goes against the will of her husband and continues going to the faith-healer. Finally she consents to get surgical treatment but that too after instruction from the Swamy. However, till the end she is an independent figure confronting male reality. The conjugal bliss for Dandekar and Sarojini depends almost entirely upon Sarojini. She is intelligent enough to understand that every husband wants appreciation. Therefore, she receives the gift with new change every month. She does not let the charm of novelty wither away by a repetitive gestures of receiving presents every month :

“I have got something for you...”
“Have you really?” There was real pleasure in her voice, and either genuine surprise or a very good simulation of it. It was one of her amiable qualities.

Intimacy between Dandekar and Sarojini is only physical. They seldom discuss intimate aspects of man-woman relationship between them. He usually repeats the office conversation to her except those which dealt with sex. Trust and confidence are the two wheels of matrimonial happiness. Sarojini-Dandekar bond lacks this essential pre-requisite Sarojini’s traditional religious ideas stand in sharp contrast to Dandekar’s modern westernised thinking. Her act of hiding her suffering is a testimony to unsatisfactory relationship. She hides the photographs of the Swamy in the folds of an old exercise book of her daughter. When, by chance, Dandekar finds it, he is shocked. He is torn between faith and devouring betrayal. He cannot muster the courage to ask her about the identity of this man.

Dandekar and Sarojini can easily interpret their respective ‘silences’. They now hardly discuss their plans and activities with each other, ‘yet the silent musings get conveyed. Quite distracted and tense for the last two months, Dandekar does not bring the usual month-end gifts for anybody. But when the third month is about to end, he wants to do something and debates the issue in his mind. The idea is still germinating when, with that curious communication of a many years’ marriage.

Dandekar catches a whiff of relief at Sarojini’s return. His nightmare ends. The calm routine of his life returns and the crippling sense of helplessness disappears. Sarojini still goes to Swamy but he can bear it now with a greater peace of mind: With the same equanimity he bore the absences of his wife: watched her come and go, more often than not bearing gifts, and retained his calm. What did a few gifts matter ... ? He could retrieve it all, and more, once his wife had come back to him ...

At last the crisis is resolved, Dandekar’s mental peace returns when he finds the Swamy gone. She returns home earlier than usual. Although Dandekar expects it, he is surprised and a little scared of her. Sarojini has been totally dependent upon the Swamy for her the mental and physical well being. However, his departure does not disturb her much and she quietly accepts her fate. When Dandekar enquires her what she plans to do now, she says placidly: “Nothing! what should I do? I formed a attachment, it is broken, that is all. One must accept it in good heart.

When Sarojini becomes sure that faith-healing is not the remedy of her ailment, she follows the advice of getting operated upon. She says: “I am no more
afraid of knives or doctors or what they may do”. “Perhaps my life will be as peaceful too hereafter. It was the quality he longed for above all”. This extraordinary courage, self-confidence and transformation in Sarojini brought about by Swamy stupefies Dandekar. He manages to look at Sarojini and thinks about Swamy, perhaps with a note of grateful invocation: “Am I to be indebted to this man for giving my wife back to me? ... he took her from me, he has given her back, and that is the heart of the matter”.

In *The Nowhere Man*, Markandaya interspersed the theme of change in a different context of human relation. The racial hatred sweeping over the international horizon badly affects the lives of the haters as well as of the hated. Srinivas, the protagonist leaves India for England for the British sense of Justice, fair play and tolerance and settles down there. He is comfortable in a manner possessing perfect British manners, imitating the British way of thinking and generally enjoying the material goods they offer to make life easier. He even lives down the shock of Laxman’s marrying a British girl Pat and his severance of relations from the family. His younger son Sheshu joins the Royal Air Force and Srinivas is quite proud of it.

At personal level Srinivas feels quite at home in England and lives with his typical Indian habits in an alien land. The sudden death of Sheshu and then his wife Vasantha turns him into a derelict. Lonely and dejected, he feels to go back to India. But the west redoubles its attraction even though he experiences the "unwanted feelings". He turns to Mrs. Pickering formerly a nurse (a middle aged divorcee and house guest for twenty years) for comfort and peace and enjoys once again the beauty of English rivers, winter mornings and even celebrates Christmas - an alien festival.

The violent hatred in feeling of racism which flooded England in the sixties makes this peace a short lived one. The leprosy of Srinivas makes him the first target of this hostility and he realizes it too late. Fred Flecher, a neighbour, who plays the main role in this hate campaign against Srinivas, torments him in many ways and at last burns him alive in his house. Srinivas' son, however, is determined to belong to the country in which he is born, lives and labours. Thus, to him, is handed down the legacy of the rootlessness of the Nowhere Man looking for a nowhere city.

In the novel *The Nowhere Man*, Vasantha and Srinivas lead their life comfortably without any stress. There is mutual understanding between both of them. The novel deals with the story of Srinivas and his wife Vasantha who go to
England to escape the cruelty and harassment of the British in India. In England, Srinivas starts an import-export business, and is blessed with two sons, Sheshu and Laxman, who totally identify themselves with the country of their birth, and who get conscripted in the army to fight for England during the Second world war. Seshu dies in the war, while Laxman marries an English girl practically cutting himself off from the family.

In this novel the novelist does not show any imbalance in relationship. It is quite smooth except some casual bickerings. Vasantha does not like her husband's bohemian habits of living and eggs him on to buy a house. She plans carefully for the future of her sons. Srinivas, her husband, however, things that the acquisition of property and money in England might hinder his son's return to India. In this matter he is idealistic, but Vasantha is very practical. Vasantha holds a very pro-Indian stance in matters of religion, and looks down upon Christianity as the religion for her ten year olds. Purchase of a house in south of London makes Vasantha ecstatic and she says with pride: "At last we have achieved something. A place of our own, where we can live according to our rights although in alien surroundings: and our children after us, and after them theirs".

Vasantha, a traditional Indian wife spends her life in looking after her husband and children. As a traditional Indian wife, Vasantha cares for her husband more than her life. She leaves her motherland in order to accompany her husband in England. She persuades him to buy a house not because of any rebellious attitude but because she has imbibed the British pragmatism, despite her otherwise strong Indian character. She has a plan for future in mind while purchasing the house: Vansantha selected it, basing her requirement with an eye to the future when her sons, at this point aged thirteen and fourteen would be grown up and married. Then the loving mother-in-law would allocate one upper floor to each son and wife, and the ground floor reserved for themselves, aging parents who would be past climbing the stairs.

Vasantha resembles Ambika of R.K. Narayan's The Vendor of Sweets. She maintains her Indianness, her integrity in the face of alien rule while in India, and racial prejudices while in England. Death does not diminish or efface her. She is still a living presence for Srinivas. Srinivas feels lonely and empty after her death

Vasantha was engaged to Srinivas in her childhood as per the I custom of Brahmans. Srinivas discloses: "He could not have said how he knew she was to be
his bride, but he did. When he first realized he was not quite eleven; at that age the knowledge lay simply within him". Vasantha, though younger at that time "was also conscious of the pact between the two families: Vasantha also knew, It did not inhibit her. After all, she was only seven" Vasantha has what the author states:" a devastating kind of realism" that stands her in good stead in the years to come. She builds a house for her family but she is shattered completely after losing both her sons and dies leaving Shrinivas lonely and dejected.

In his utter loneliness and helplessness, Srinivas loses all interest in life till he meets Mrs. Pickering, a poor old woman and former nurse. The two meet frequently and feel the necessity of living together. She meets Srinivas when he becomes nervous wreck after the loss of his wife and sympathises with him. Though belonging to different races, between whom a lot of antipathy exists, Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering rise above these racial barriers and come together, though in 'sinful marriage'.

Mrs. Pickering stands by him in all his trials and tribulations and cheers him up in every instance of his mental breakdown. She does not bother about the quizzical look of the neighbourhood nor the curiosity of Laxman. Laxman once visits his father and comes to know that he has been living with Mrs. Pickering for quite some time. Srinivas tells his son that both of them were companionless and lonely and hence they agreed to pass their days together as friends in the same house.

The conversation between the son and the father is worth recording here:

‘You are a dark horse’, he (Laxman) said leering.
‘Now where did you meet her, eh ? Come on now, tell all...’
‘We met in the street’, he replied truthfully, ‘quite accidentally’.
‘A Pick-up eh ?said Laxman ...
‘If you like', said Srinivas, ‘although the implication is incorrect, since what happened was mutual’.

And when Laxman leaves the house, he has a good impression of Mrs. Pickering.

The war strains economy of Britain. Added to this is the negligence of Srinivas towards his business. He even turns down the proposal of assistance made by Abdul, his African friend. But he is full of care for Mrs. Pickering as he has to support himself and her. The latter suggests that the big house be converted into cheap flats and let out to poor tenants. Srinivas occupies the attic, whereas Mrs. Pickering the ground floor. The basement is rented out to an old Negro vagabond.
One day, Srinivas, on a morning walk, steps on excretion and cast aside his shoes and returns home barefooted. He catches cold and contracts a serious disease. The lack of comfort and his strict puritan habits make the case worse for him. Dr. Radcliffe diagnoses it as leprosy, that dreaded disease which turns one's body white spotted and foul smelling. This disease spreads, in due course, to his racist neighbour, Fred. Still Mrs Pickering is not afraid of it. Her attitude to Srinivas never changes even when he makes the fatal announcement that he has contracted leprosy. Mrs. Pickering even after knowing his pitiable condition volunteers to take care of him as she is moved by the pathetic condition that he is in. She chooses to exercise control over her own life and never gets enmeshed by the social forces.

Mrs. Pickering remarkably displays deep understanding of Srinivas and his problems. After the death of Vasantha, she comes to occupy Srinivas's heart and remove his loneliness. If Vasantha represents the East in her unyielding attitude, 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.

Mrs. Pickering is an English woman who stands out in her positive response to Srinivas when he is in a state of utter dejection and depression. She extends her helping hand to him and comes to his house as his caretaker. Even Laxman praises her sympathetic nature and womanly qualities after he gets over his initial shock caused by the sudden action of his father in having a woman in his house. Mrs. Pickering introduces Srinivas several aspects of British life, the subtler niceties of which have remained hidden from him despite his long stay in England. She takes care of him in his illness with a good deal of kindness, and forbids him from committing suicide after the onslaught of leprosy. She always stands by him in times of need: Mrs. Pickering... sat down beside Srinivas, while between them the cold in the cozy brown pot which was, after all, a symbol of hospitality. And Mrs. Pickering felt a yearning, which began in her arms and spread to and filled her whole being, to be hospitable, to pile all the hospitality she could find, all that had been grudged and doled out and denied, on to those denuded shoulders beside her.

Even on Srinivas's death, she firmly stands her ground and scoffs at the sentimental utterances of Mrs. Glass saying firmly “Blame myself ... why should I? I cared for him”. This speech is indicative of Mrs. Pickering's large heartedness and nobility and clearly demonstrates her human heart. Mrs. Pickering may be physically
wrinkled and haggard, but she is mentally strong and morally noble. Had she not been there, Srinivas's life would have been a living hell.

_Some Inner Fury_ is a novel with an entirely political theme dealing with India’s freedom struggle, particularly the violent forms taken by it and the separation it caused to individuals belonging to two different races. It dramatises the lives of young people lost in political confusion of the independence struggle. But down deep, it gives an insightful portrayal of human relationships, particularly the various shades of man-woman equation between Mirabai and Richard, Kit and Premala, Govind and Premala. The relationship between Mira and Richard shows that cultural and racial differences hardly matter when a positive emotional interaction takes place between two individuals. Mira and Richard's relationship attains interpersonal fusion. However, they are set apart by the political exigencies which force people to think in terms of ‘my people’ and ‘your people’.

In this novel the novelist narrates the story of Mirabai, the daughter of a rich and cultivated Hindu family. She lives at home with her parents loves her country and feels at one with it’s people. Her brother, Kit home from Oxford, and brings an English friend, Richard with whom Mirab falls in love. Later, the political upheaval caused by the Quit India Movement separates the intimate friends. Violence over powers the country, setting apart Mira and Richard.

Mira falls in love with Richard at first sight. She meets him at the railway station, where she comes alongwith a large number of her relatives to receive her brother, Kitsamy. From the very beginning, Mira's actions show an unconscious liking for Richard which can be taken at the first stage of love and which is gradually transformed into deep love. Her confused act of garlanding him at the railway station, her delight at having him in her house and her subsequent defence of Richard is embarrassing act of borrowing a dhoti and pair of chappals from one of the servants show the sprouting of love in her.

Mira’s love for Richard does not remain an occasional spark originating from her act of clumsiness and innocence. Mira, who had often gone to the clubs with her father, now goes with Richard and feels very happy. Her pleasure with life becomes obvious to Richard. Markandaya depicts the love of Mira in different colours. They go out together as man and woman with the rich glow of love on their face. A gift or a message of Richard becomes more meaningful to her. She meets Richard in the Government house and “the tapers of pleasure began to glow.” Richard’s personality
has an irresistible effect on Mira. She herself admits: “though I gazed at my brother, dark familiar, with looks of our common heritage, it was of Richard who was so different”.

The emotional interaction between Richard and Mira is positive and based on deep understanding. Mira likes to be with him all the time. As a young girl in a conservative family, she is not free to roam about, therefore, she misses the pleasures of walking alone. She does not feel alone when she is with Richard. Soon, another assurance of Richard's enduring love reaches her.

For almost one month they enjoy each other's company. Finally the day of Richard's departure arrives. Mira feels depressed but Richard's assurance comforts her. He is keen to continue the relationship: 'A poor beginning', he said, 'a happier continuation', and somehow although it was only a word-I felt absurdly glad he had not said “end”.

Mira’s contentment and pleasure reflects on her face which she is not able to conceal. She does not tell her feelings to anyone but her brother and mother know that Richard's arrival has been a turning point in her life. The company of Richard has transformed Mira from a polite, meek and submissive girl to a woman of considerable confidence. Her mother comments “you seem to have changed, since Kitsamy came”. And though she said Kit, she meant Richard”.

Mira and Richard provide each other satisfying company. Their togetherness is fulfilling for both. They provide each other real companionship. Mira is possessive about Richard that's why she avoids going to crowded places. They avoid dinning at the club as Richard is quite popular.

Human relationship tend to be strong and harmonious when both the partners keep in mind that they are fallible. Meera feels mentally relaxed and elated in Richard's company because he can just ignore the blunders of others including those of her own. She wishes this relationship to be everlasting. Once Richard teases her by saying, 'you would be bored.' she replies back with great conviction: “Bored!” ‘No, never! Not with you, it would not be possible’.

Richard also loves Mira sincerely. Mira has reached a stage when she can transcend all barriers to enjoy the moment to supreme bliss in man-woman relationship. There is a time when Mira is aflame with passion, yet Richard shows self-control and regard for good code of conduct. He never wants Mira to regret at any stage in her life, for anything that can be termed as hasty.
The love of Mira and Richard passes through difficult times. Political upheaval set them apart, but they stand firmly by each other in their hour of need. Richard proves to be an angel to Mira. He gives her shelter and moral support after Kit's death and through Govind's trial. Upto the end he helps her and takes care of her so tenderly that the meaning of love enlarged for Mira. Richard's love for Mira is not mere passion. It is stuffed with companionship, togetherness and concern for her. The understanding between the two is the base of true mutual relationship. They reach to the point where words are no longer needed for communication.

_Some Inner Fury_, thus deals with the dilemma of inter-racial romance and marriage. It brings out that compatibility or harmony in man-woman relationship does not depend upon racial similarity or cultural affinity. However, sometimes balanced and happy relationships are snapped under the powerful pressure of political exigencies. Kamala Markandaya maintains that intimate relations between Indians and Britishers were not possible as long as India and Britain had the love-hate relationship of the ruler and the ruled.

In contrast to Mira-Richard relationship which is based on love without marriage, the relationship of Premela and Kitsamy could be termed marriage without love, being no more than yoking together of two disparate individuals into a matrimonial alliance. Kitsamy refuses to marry a girl without first knowing her. The first stage in their relationship is when, in order to facilitate marriage, Premala begins to live with Kit's mother and Kitsamy comes in contact with her. The second stage begins with the marriage of Premala and Kitsamy and then the latter's efforts to modernize her. It is also here that their contrasting natures begin to surface. They are quite opposite to each other. Kit is interested in modern ways of life while Premala is a traditional Indian woman. Kitsmay asks her to put on shorts for which she has no liking. She likes to play on veena while he does not like classical music. Their nature and inclinations are poles apart, though Premala strives vigorously to adjust, emala agrees to give many more tries for adjustment but they remain poles apart. In matrimonial relationship, individual differences always exist and adjustment is needed at every point, When the couple fail to understand each other’s tastes, likings and attitudes, disagreement starts taking place which leads to maladjustment.

Premala, a conservative girl, basically Indian in spirit, tries to mould herself according to the western tastes of her husband. By virtue of both his temperament
and his position, Kit is mostly at the centre of social activities, but Premala proves a misfit in that so called civilized world. Kit’s parents maintained two sets of rooms, one furnished for the English and the other for the Indian guests. Kit, however, with his understanding and deep love of the west, furnishes his house completely in English style with nothing Indian about it. Markandaya has presented Kit as an Anglophile. On the other hand, Premala is an embodiment of traditional Indian values. To her the fashionable entertainments of the clubs and parties are profoundly alien. She hates the western pattern of life without which Kit cannot imagine his existence. Such divergent views about life lead to dissensions in their matrimonial life. Understanding between the couples which is the soul of matrimonial bliss lacks in their relationship.

In the next stage, Premala’s dampened yet sparkling love for Kit is extinguished in the absence of her husband’s reciprocal gesture before it could turn into a flame the way it has become in Mira-Richard relationship in its second stage. In any case, Premala’s love is one sided and it is because of her love that she tries so hard to please Kit. ‘With no vigour and no candour, Premala is like a dampened match-stick that faltteringely burns and lights only to be extinguished even before it’s function is over’. But the absence of her husband’s love creates frustration in Premala. Having none of her own, she adopts her child and shares with the village people the warmth of her love. For K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, “Premala is symbolic of the mother-Mother India who is compassion and sufferance, who must indeed suffer all hurts and survive all disasters”. The discordance in the matrimonial relationship creates a sense of apathy in Premala. Instead of trying to retrieve her conjugal bond and seek desired happiness and satisfaction within the precincts of husband-wife relationship, she turns her attention to the service of the community. It appears that her active interest to reform the society is more near an engagement to her psyche than looking for physical satisfaction in domestic world. If Kit had handled her nicely by accepting her as she was or if he had tried to mould her lovingly, her attention would not have diverted towards social reforms. Internal conflicts have compelled her to look outside and engage herself in loftier activity in the position of a social reformer. The change she brought about in her personality speaks of her determination and understanding.

Premala, as her name suggests, is an embodiment of love. She pours this love on the adopted child and on the entire village when she fails to express this love to her husband. The fire that consumes her could be the externalization of inner fire.
Rather than being ignobly devoured by the latter in the absence of a loving husband, she is consumed with dignity in the real fire.

The fact is that Govind and Kitsamy both prove to be killers of Premala-Kit by not showering love on her and Govind by being leader of a group of nationalists who destroyed the village school and proved to be the cause of her death. In order to check further bloodshed, Mira encircles Govind in her arms but one more death comes-that of Kitsamy: He was lying in the mud a few yards away. Kit, my brother, lying in the rain, in the mud, in darkness but for the lightning. I knelt beside him, and he was not conscious. I took his head in my lap, leaning over to shield him from the rain, and he roused a little. I saw his eyes open and they were bright; even pain, this mighty pain of impending death, could not blur them.”

In Some Inner Fury the cold love of arranged, ill-matched marriage and the warm love outside it ends up in sterility and death. Mira’s love, being short, even though intense, could neither be converted into marriage nor resulted in the birth of a child. With Premala, love is silent-a typical husband-wife relationship without exhibitionistic fireworks. Nothing concrete comes out of the love between Premala and Govind except death. Premala’s adopted child vocalizes the failure of Kitsamy’s love, challenges his manhood and invites his wrath. The relationship between Premala and Kitsamy is unequitable and hence dissatisfying for both of them. Premala’s frustration is that her husband does not treat her as a companion and discourages any attempt on her part to share his life. Both Premala and Kitsamy are aware of their temperamental and attitudinal differences and the resultant frustration. Temperamental incompatibility and personality clash are at the root of the failure of their relationship.

Lack of communication further increases the gap between them. They do not discuss their problem mutually and fail to understand their respective needs. Kit also feels pained but instead of discussing his problems with her, he approaches Mira for clarification. Being aware of their temperamental differences, Kit tries to reconcile with the situation. He knows that Premala is lonely and unoccupied most of the time. Therefore he suggests her to accompany Mira to the village. Premala agrees to Kit’s suggestions. Her visit to the village proves to be satisfying to her. The orphanage, started by Hickey, the missionary attracts Premala: “Twice each week, she would leave home at eight in the evening. And from each visit she came glowing, revived as if the parched spirit had at last found a spring at which to refresh itself”.

I man-woman relationship temperamental differences occur and it is really difficult to bridge all those differences. By keeping quiet or by turning away from enigmatic issues, the spouses cannot maintain the semblance of an emotional union. Such is the case with Kit and Premala. They both reach at a point where the doors of adjustment and reconciliation close altogether. The relationship becomes unhinged. It gets dried up from within. They grow indifferent to each other and choose their own way of life. Premala seeks refuge in village which virtually becomes her home. Kit just tolerates it and does not come in her way. Mira is well aware of these increasing differences between the two: “So it had come to this that they agreed to go their separate ways, tacitly acknowledging thus, the imperfect articulation of their marriage”.

Later, Premala’s interest in village school increases so much that she loses interest in Kit. She forgets the promise made to Kit to accompany him to the dinner at the government house. When she does not turn up Kit feels hurt and disappointed and at last he goes with Mira. On Govind’s asking about Premala’s whereabouts, Kit gets angry and says, “It is none of your concern. She is my wife”.

Meenakshi Mukherjee holds Kit largely responsible for this imperfect relationship. Analysing Kit’s personality from a different perspective, she finds him entirely a product of the west according to her he is not only loyal to the western culture but is self centered, self indulgent, extrovert, to the extent of being unmindful of the inconvenience or hurt he may be causing to others.

The Kit-Premala affair is ill fated. Premala tries her best to come up to the level of her husband. However Kit’s qualities like tolerance and tenderness save the relationship from termination. But their bond lacks mutual understanding. Despite their efforts, they fail to maintain harmony in their matrimonial ties. Both of them are convinced that their tastes and interests are dissimilar. They choose different ways to get out of their cramped existence. It is not that Kit is a cruel husband. He shows great consideration to Premala. He accepts the orphan which she brings from the village. Although displeased, Kit still grants Premala her wish because gentleness is his way of life.

The principle of homeostasis does not work in Premala’s case. Kit like any other Indian man believes that she will modify herself accordingly, but neither does she adapt herself to the new situations, nor has she the power to convert Kitsamy. She is therefore shattered physically and emotionally. Prof. Iyengar describes her as
“the sweetest and the most heroic character of the novel”. In the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee, “She is idealised even to the extent of being unreal”. Apparently she appears to be docile but later she proves to be stubborn. Mira makes an insightful and convincing estimate of her personality: In all things Premala had shown herself to be docile and obliging: but, as is sometimes the case with such people, these qualities were due not to timidity but to the graces of nature. No longer pliant, refusing to bow to the elders, she said, with reproof in her voice ...

She finds the outlet for her unbalanced relationship in her visit to the village, where both she and the child were accepted. She finds the meaning of her life in looking after the child and the village school. In sum, Kit and Premala pass stifling matrimonial alliance.

Kamala Markandaya’s western women do not seem to fare better than their Indian counterparts. While Clinton in Pleasure City loses himself in the pursuit of building the dam, Helen forgets herself exploring primitive India. Torn between instinctive and individual needs and the demands of her partner, she establishes unisexual values at the expense of personal fulfillment and happiness. There is a cord of dissonance prevailing between the English couple the conservative-Clinton and his non-conformist wife-Hellen. Tully misses his wife but does not assert his power over her. Corinna comes and stays with him for a short while and packs off when the alien desert of her husband’s professional site wearies her, quite unlike Tully’s grandmother who braved the alien deserts her husband occupied, just out of a sense of duty because she believed that one's place is by the husband's side. Tully wonders: “What did a man feel like, tied to a dutiful woman ?” Tully respects the self in Corinna and her identity. He does not mind his wife going her way. Still Corinna does not seem to be happy. Western women, like Hellen Clinton and Mrs.Tully who experience a kind of dissonance in married life, end up as frustrated souls. But Indian women involved in wrecks however, “come out safe, if not whole”, probably because their new awakening is strengthened by their traditional values as well. Success in marriage does not depend upon woman's failure at autonomy but on mutual love and care, in the novels of Kamala Markandaya.

A Handful of Rice is a continuation of Kamala Markandaya’s first novel Nectar in a Sieve. Here the protagonists are pitted against the cruel forces of economic crisis. The novelist has tried to bring out the point that moral virtues are valued and regarded by those who feel related and wanted by someone. Ravi, the hero flees
from his village because of extreme poverty in his father’s house with a thatched roof that always needed mending and a half empty cooking pot that had not been able to feed or contain its children”.

In the city, the under-world of Damodar allures him and promises to give him food and shelter. However, after meeting Nalini he realises that real happiness lies in the state of being related. This feeling brings out the best in Ravi, whereas the knowledge of being an orphan drives Damodar mad, angry and greedy.

The ennobling power of human relationship is indeed the main motif in the novel. Ravi’s negative qualities like blackmarketing and hoarding come to an end after establishing harmonious ties with Apu and Nalini. Nalini, the smart and graceful daughter of, a tailor Apu impresses Ravi at first sight. Before marriage, she is a very lively, fun loving and bright-eyed girl. Sitting through movies, her enraptured paramour Ravi, courts her as any romantic urban youth would do. He held her in high esteem as is clear from his following statement: “take a girl like that, and half a man's trouble would be over”. For her, she is ready to improve her habits. He wants to court her with the consent of friends and relationships. Find something special about Nalini and then want to develop his knowledge: this girl with bright eyes and thick and shiny hair, which could transform the life of a man. He wanted to meet her appropriately, and not like a laborious chiller, by his father; to talk to you on equal terms, to know you, like other young people, girls, in the thoughtful circle and in well-maintained relationships between friends and family.

Nalini’s love opens Ravi’s eyes and pulls him away from the I crooked ways of life. In the beginning the state of being unrelated makes him criminal but Nalini’s love transforms him. The healthy relationship of a man with a virtuous and charming woman has a positive influence. Nalini’s love inspires him to abandon the perverse ways of life. She makes him understand that life that lives is nothing but empty. But all this is temporary, and after their brief court, marriage changes it beyond recognition. Poverty not only crushes Ravi, brutally crushes Nalini. It is thus transformed into the image of a sad woman who has to endure the tyranny of man without a word of protest. He staunchly supports his abuse. It is weak and malleable. Ravi pays her frustration on her, but she remains a model of the Indian woman of the old world. He slaps her, nibbles her with bitter words, commits incest with her mother and makes life miserable for the family. Nalini observes the crisis in a stoic silence. She does not try to correct her husband, she shows considerable strength to
continue doing chores just one day after giving birth to twins: Nalini never complained. He had seen her trying to catch her breath or secretly rub the oil in the bruised marks on her abdomen, or arch her so she could be raised against the cold granite wheel, but she had never heard her moan. Neither ill of her pregnancy nor of him.

Nalini never burdens her husband with unnecessary demands and conditions. She remains satisfied with what she gets and assures Ravi that she is happy with him. She gives moral encouragement to him and stands by him through thick and thin. She always prays for his success and progress in life. Whenever feeling dejected by poverty.

Like Rukmani and Sarojini, Nalini also conforms to the concept of the "Pativarta".

He feels that a woman's place is at her husband's feet. Like a traditional Hindu woman, the word "divorce" is foreign to her. He never hits her. In his struggle for life, passively accept adversity, as the narrator points out: "She was used to obedience and could not see the point in beating her head against a stone wall".

Nalini does not succumb to immense pressure, violence and stoic silence, even when he is expelled from home on charges of infidelity. His life finally seems to be a lesson of moral victory when Ravi himself remembers him at his family's house and joins him in silence. Incarnating unconsciously the virtue of silence, Nalini presents himself as a typical Hindu woman who sacrifices everything, her voice and her volitions, her pride and her privileges to male authority. Looking at what is suffering, she perfectly embodies the status of a woman in an Orthodox Hindu family.

A man's healthy relationship with a virtuous and charming woman exerts a positive and healthy influence. Nalini enables him to conquer his impulsive and rash behaviour. In his squabble with her mother, Nalini takes his side. This action on Nalini's part acts as a healthy feedback in the improvement of Ravi's behaviour and conduct. He feels encouraged because "for the first time, in as long as he could remember, a decent girl was on his side". He stole a glance at her ... Take a girl like that, and half a man's troubles would be would be over". Relationship, attachment and the feeling of belongingness can convert a person from devil to angel. Ravi loves Nalini sincerely and for her he is ready to do anything. Her very name makes his heart throb. She is:... the girl who could make a man feel like a man even outside
a jungle of his choosing, the girl for whom he was ready to repudiate all in life that 
was unworthy ... his dubious activities on the fringe of law in the dubious company of 
Damodar”

As the novelist observes: “There was one other deterrent: the silent promise 
to Nalini, long before she became his wife and at spasmodic intervals thereafter to 
give up his old life and be worthy of her”. The charm of Nalini lies in the purity of her 
being. Ravi wants to protect this quality by converting himself into a decent man. He 
is ready to improve himself to any extent to possess Nalini as his partner.

Ravi likes submissive this quality of Nalini as it satisfies his ego. Once, when 
they can not agree on a particular issue, Nalini withdraws: “He could see she did not 
agree with him, but she did not pursue the subject. She was unlike other women in 
that, he thought, and so much the better for it”.

Mental equilibrium also play an important role in a balanced man-woman 
relationship. Sometimes tensions and external forces overpower the harmony in 
matriornial relationship. Normal and harmonious relationship depends upon the 
internal as well as external forces. The individual temperaments, the capacity to 
adjust and modify according to the circumstances go a long way in overpowering the 
external stresses. But sometimes overwhelming critical situations crush the tender 
feelings and genuine concerns.

Bitterness and sour feelings replace the tender and genuine feelings between 
the couple. In A Handful of Rice, Apu’s death proves to be a turning point in the 
Nalini-Ravi affair. Responsibilities of that big house fall on Ravi. In the meanwhile 
business deteriorates making him harsh and brutal towards Nalini. She has her own 
problems regarding the child she is carrying and the lost money. She cannot respond 
to him lovingly. He wants her to share his worries. But Nalini keeps silent, her 
inability to comfort him infuriates Ravi. He begins “to slap her then, sharply, blow 
after blow across her face”.Later, however, he repents for his cruel behaviour and 
finds it difficult to face Nalini.

Internal stresses besides financial and emotional crisis in the family, make 
Ravi and Nalini lose their grip over the external circumstances. The communication 
between two is snapped. Nalini feels external circumstances. The communication 
between the two is snapped. Nalini feels extremely upset.

The economic pressures make Ravi repeat such ugly incidents quite 
frequently. In depression he visits the ale house, and feels inclined to hit Nalini,
though he loves her. He fails to understand the reason behind this emotional
ambivalence. “All he could remember was the feel of her body, flinching under his
blows ... I love her, he thought, but I beat her. Is it her ? Is it me? What is wrong?”
Nothing is wrong with Ravi and Nalini. Since Apu’s death things have not been going
on well, “but now the downwards incline had become a steep slope down which they
were slipping with increasing momentum”.

Ravi’s inability to cope with the circumstances makes him bitter towards
Nalini. He turns her out of the house suspecting her of adultery. Once his moral
support goes away, he degenerates into a brute and commits incest with Jayamma.

But their happiness does not last long. When both Ravi and Nalini are busy
adjusting and rehabilitating themselves emotionally, their son Raju gets meningitis.
They can afford good medical aid for him and when they manage to call the doctor it
is too late. Consequently he dies. Nalini, unable to bear the shock, goes into stony
silence. The tragic events affect Ravi’s memory and Nalini gets alienated from him.
Out of sheer hopelessness in life Ravi returns to the underworld. Once Nalini’s
thoughts gave him the courage to struggle and live better but alienation from Nalini
shatters him. “No more blocks and restraints. No more loyalties and responsibilities
for he had none”. Unrelated, he goes with the mob to loot the granary. This novel
depicts the man-woman relationship that goes under the stress of economic crisis.
There is limit to human endurance. When circumstances go really out of control,
tenderness in temperament, regard for values and ideals disappear. Hunger added
with emotional crisis can drive anyone to madness. Rational appraisal of each
other’s thoughts and deeds becomes impossible. Nalini and Ravi love each other
and are ready to do anything for the sake of each other but economic crisis,
unemployment, rising prices, increasing family responsibilities weave the web of a
shattered and disintegrated family.

It will be quite knotty to form an opinion or size up the logical genus, the
incisive pen of Kamala Markandaya would offer for an ideal marital tie-up.
Successful marital relationships do not have physical assumptions; they are made
successful everyday in the course of the life's partnership. Liberal society of the west
has failed to bring in the element of steadiness in marital relationship and, to that
measure, Kamala Markandaya is right to vindicate cultural constructs of the east that
provide a foundation of unswerving faith in that the woman’s place is beside her
husband.