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**Marriage and Self in the Select Works of
Henry James and Jayakanthan**

S. Ganesan, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate

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Institution of Marriage and Some Creative Writers

The institution of marriage and ceremonies related to it have been commented upon and criticized by several women writers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – Simone de Beauvoir's *The Mandarins* and *Les Belles Image*, Nayantra Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* and *The Day in the Shadow*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* are a few examples.

These novelists, who handle 'Marriage' as a recurring motif, have emphasized the importance of personal choice and freedom of will in shaping an individual's decision and approach towards Marriage. Freedom for equality, the need for individuality and the insistence on the retention of individual identity are also stressed by such novelists. Their primary aim seems to re-define and oppose the patriarchal version of Marriage. Their general claim has been that intellectual and sexual freedom (for women) is necessary and essential; lacking this freedom may result in the failure of marriages. Simone De Beauvoir's comments are worth considering here:

Marriage has always been a very different thing for man and for woman. The two sexes are necessary for each other, but this necessity has never brought about a condition of reciprocity between them.
(Beauvoir 1960: 300)

It is also very interesting to see that men writers also have handled the motif – Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, George Meredith's *The Amazing Marriage*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* in English fiction and the works of Jayakanthan in Tamil fiction are a few examples to suggest here.

The Focus of This Paper

In this paper, five novels by Henry James (1842-1916) and Jayakanthan (1934 -) are chosen and analysed to examine the treatment of marriage, love, and family life, focusing from the perspective of their women characters. Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Golden Bowl*, *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Europeans* and Jayakanthan's *Vaazhkai Azhaikiratu* (Life Beckons) *Gangai Engey Pogirale?* (Where Does Ganga Go?) *Oru Natikai Natakam Parkiral*, (An Actress witnessing a Play) *Cuntarakandam* (Life of Sita) and *Katru Veliviniley* (The Windy Moor) are chosen for the present study.

Henry James and Love Between Man and Woman



Henry James

Henry James belongs to the liberal Protestant tradition shared by such writers like John Milton, William Blake, Emerson, Hawthorne and Henry James, Sr. James believes in the implication of the ethical attitude and shares Emerson's view of the importance of self-reliance and of the Socratic prerequisite of self-knowledge. James cherishes the value of individual human integrity and sees the development of each individual's potential as the greatest good. James is aware that traditions, conventions and manners are necessary for the smooth functioning of a civilized society. In many of his works, the theme of Love, Marriage and Marital Life are important focal points of depiction. Most of James' stories are, of course, stories about love between man and woman.

He is likewise an apostle of love, for love and freedom go hand in hand; many of his stories consequently are love stories...How can it be said that James is opposed to the "drop out"... in every case, it is merely material advantage that he renounced; it is James' way of cautioning against putting faith in the perishable, in those goods that fade and ultimately fail to satisfy.
(Owers 1970:6)

Portrayal of Social Conditions – Reasons for Unhappy Marriages

James' works promise to comment meaningfully upon the social conditions of his day. He deals with the clashes between European and American cultures, and deals with how conflict originates within the individual consciousness as the result of shifting social ideals and domestic themes like marriage, family life, etc.

In all his works, short stories and novels, marriage is a prominent plot. In fact, to unveil the labyrinth of James' world, it is indispensable to go deeper into his projection of Marriage in his works. James' main contention for the failure of marriage and marital life is the lack of mutual understanding. He suggests that the conflict between husband and wife, and between people in all the relationships lie in what one has withheld from others. Lack of mutual love, trust and understanding are the root causes for the failure of marriage in James' world.

Leon Edel, one of the most famous biographers of Henry James comments that the works of Henry James are based on "... the theme of unhappy and uncompleted marriages – marriages avoided, abortive marriages, misalliances and marriages cursed" (Edel 1950: 25).

Henry James' social concerns are greatly reflected through his works such as *The Princess Casamassima*, *The Ivory Tower* and *In the Cage*. Sexual scenes are pictured in a more subdued manner as in *The Ambassadors*.

James is frequently commented upon and criticized as a homosexual.

Jayakanthan's Delicate Handling of Women

It is also widely recognized and accepted by many critics and feminists that Jayakanthan has very deeply portrayed the self and consciousness of women through his creations as in the case of Kalyani in *Oru Nadigai Naadagam Paarkiraale* (An Artist Witnessing a Play) and Ganga in *Gangai Engey Pogirale?* (Where Does Ganga Go?). Besides, in almost all the works of the American novelist Henry James, Love, Marriage and Marital Life are dominant.

Jayakanthan's Ideas of Life



Jayakanthan

On similar grounds, Tamil novelist Jayakanthan has delicately dealt with the theme of marriage. Jayakanthan opines that the function of Literature is to reflect the greatness and progress of human beings. This approach forms the firm foundation of Jayakanthan's works. In one of his interviews, Jayakanthan comments "I am a part of society and through my writings and works, I attempt to refine myself first and then the society" (Jayakanthan 2006: 14).

Similar to Henry James, Jayakanthan also acknowledges the close relation between Literature and Society. Literature projects and reflects the greatness and progress of society and sometimes stresses the negative issues only to improve the society.

In Jayakanthan's works, when marriage and the institution of marriage is pictured in the negative light, it is only to perfect the flawed institution. The union of man and woman from different castes and different economic strata of society through "love marriage" is projected in Jayakanthan's works; inter-caste marriages and the bridging of rich and the poor through "love marriage" is very common in his works. On his creation of characters, Jayakanthan comments that he takes themes from real life and not characters from it; he creates characters to suit the themes and not the other way round.

Jayakanthan has never created works of art to please the society. He comments on the act of writing as a commitment to the society and the resultant effect of the work of art is dependent on the individual. In all his writings, Jayakanthan reveals an amazing familiarity with the inner landscapes of the human mind from the various strata of the society. Jayakanthan is an original thinker par excellence and he expresses his ideas frankly and openly without any fear and greatly practices artistic autonomy and freedom. He touches several issues where others feared to raise and evokes intellectual freedom through his well-chiseled characters, in most of the cases, through the central woman character.

Jayakanthan greatly believes in the goodness of women and comments that he believes in women and not men. Women are spoiled by men and women are innately pure. “The Friction of Love is in the cupboard of every home and Jealousy is the other side of Love; the development of Love is Possession, carefulness, vigilance and protection” (Jayakanthan 2006: 47).

Jayakanthan is a staunch supporter of Feminism and comments that “Feminism is a branch of radical thinking and principle; it is not against Men and understanding Feminism and approaching it as against Men is very much against Feminism itself” (Jayakanthan 2006: 44).

Jayakanthan also instructs that men must not approach women as the storehouse of Beauty and the source of fulfilling desires; society and women must shed away such notions in them. Freedom of women is not concerned with women alone, but it is an issue concerned with the development and progress of society. Men and women are not rivals or enemies; freedom for women is possible only in an unexploited society wherein equality of sexes is viable. Jayakanthan opines that Religion is operated by Society and Modern Women are those who are able to evade religious and caste pressures and such influences on them. The responsibility and efforts of the individual woman is highly mandatory to achieve freedom and to enjoy Individuality and Identity in the society.

Jayakanthan believes that Freedom is indispensable to everyone including the ruler and the ruled. Jayakanthan presents this concept more as a highly a mythical and religious word. Man must free himself from his desires, ignorance, and bad characters including dominating and enslaving others. Enslaving others is a primitive behaviour and custom and cultured people must be against it. He adds further:

Legally, ethically and culturally man and woman are accepted as equals; in all respects we have accepted this; but in following and implementing the same we find deviations and difficulties... Life without control may not be a life of Freedom; the other side of the concept of Freedom is control; without self control there cannot be freedom; women by nature with more self control deserve to be free individuals more than men himself...Men must learn discipline from women as they are the origin of Discipline... (Jayakanthan 2003: 195)

Portrayal of Women in Henry James’ Works

The same ideology is found in the case of Henry James and the projection of women characters as Guardian Angels and custodians of Culture and Morality. In issues related to the importance given to women characters (women are innately pure and they are the custodian of Culture and Morality, the importance attached towards Love, Marriage and Family life) we find a subtle point of confluence between these two writers. Note, however, Henry James (1842-1916) lived in a different world and in different times.

The basic ideology of these two writers in issues such as Love, Marriage and Familial life are to be discussed in the forthcoming discussion to arrive at a concrete picture about these two writers.

Women Characters of Henry James and Jayakanthan Contrasted

The women characters of Henry James are more passive but strong willed; the women characters of Jayakanthan are mostly active, aggressive and strong willed but both their women retain their individuality and identity by exhibiting their refined female subjectivity. In most of the cases, James' women are more adjusting to the societal norms and conventions, but Jayakanthan's women flout the empty and meaningless manifestations of societal norms and conventions.

On the whole, it is surprising to observe that both James and Jayakanthan present women characters who are not conservative, but the society imposes and restricts their actions and at the same time they do not go against Traditions and Culture. In short, they stand at the cross borders between Tradition and Modernity. Marriage is a conflict between Morality and Existence and both these writers present Existential Marriage and in this respect they are Modernists in their ideology and style.

Marriage is the central focal point and a recurring motif in the works of Henry James. He attempts to focus on the flaws and shortcomings of the Institution of Marriage and his objective is to perfect the flawed institution as in the novels *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Golden Bowl*.

On the other hand, consciously or unconsciously, in the works of Jayakanthan also marriage has been a frequently referred to event but unlike James it is not the focal point. In many of his works, though reference to the Institution of Marriage is seen, as a ritual or as a ceremony or as an Institution, it is not that much approved by Jayakanthan. Similar to James, Jayakanthan also attempt to perfect man-woman relationship, but not necessarily by perfecting the flawed Institution of Marriage. In some of the references, one can observe that he advocates man-woman relationship even outside marriage as in the case of Ganga and Prabhu in *Gangai Engey Pogirale?* (Where Does Ganga Go?) and in *Katru Veliyiniley* (The Windy Moor).

Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*

In *The Portrait of a Lady*, Henry James explores the conflict between the Individual, and the Society by examining the life of Isabel Archer, who must choose between her independent mind and the conventions of the Society. The novel presents the central confrontation as between Isabel Archer and Charlotte Stant and later between Isabel Archer and Patrick Osmond. The character of Isabel is highly individualized and she becomes the representative of women of the day. Her confidante Charlotte Stant deceives Isabel. Osmond marries her only for monetary resources she possesses, inherited from her deceased uncle Touchett. As in the words of Osmond, "money's a horrid thing to follow and a charming thing to meet" (TPL: 320). Her marriage to Osmond stifles her independent mind as Osmond marries her only for money and treats her as an object and tries to force and share his opinions and abandon her own.

Isabel's separation from Osmond enables the exploration of the conflict between her desire to conform to the social conventions and her independent mind. Osmond knows the subtlety of implementing his evil desires onto Isabel as he does with his daughter Pansy; intellectually, emotionally and physically he exploits Isabel by his malignant plans with precision. At first, Isabel perceives that Osmond is intelligent, cosmopolitan and gentle; but later she understands and observes that the real Osmond is monstrously evil, immature and selfish.

The marital life of Isabel with Osmond begins to be bitter for her due to Osmond's overwhelming egotism and his lack of genuine affection for his wife, Isabel.

Many readers of the novel and critics are not satisfied with the ending of the novel, as Isabel returns to her unfaithful husband, though Caspar Goodwood is still ready to marry her.

Isabel refutes the marriage proposals of Lord Warburton and Caspar Goodwood and chooses Osmond to the utter shock of the readers and the other characters and well wishers of Isabel. She chooses Osmond, as she cannot understand him and this sense of a mystery fascinates her. Her reason for marrying Osmond is given in her own words as, "Why... because I know him better now than when I married him. That would be a paltry thing to do. I must make him like me better. While it remains unspoken, there is a chance it may improve. I think I owe him that. I think I owe it to myself" (TPL: 350).

In chapter 51, Osmond reminds Isabel of her own choice and freedom in the act of marrying him. He says to his wife as, "you are nearer to me than any human creature, and I'm nearer to you. It may be a disagreeable proximity; it's one at any rate, of our own deliberate making" (TPL: 583).

James projects Isabel as an Emersonian subject who attempts to improve and perfect herself and who refuses to be one among the common lot. James' realism is not only idealistic but also psychological and appears to be a psychological study rather than a novel.

Throughout the novel, Isabel vacillates between sexual and asexual and she refuses the passionate proposals of Lord Warburton and Goodwood as she feels they will be a threat for her independence, which she adores the most in her life; ironically which she loses after her marriage to Osmond. Thus, Isabel lives idealistically and entertains an imaginary world of her own to project an Ideal American Emersonian Self.

The Golden Bowl

The central action and the conflict in the novel *The Golden Bowl* are the marriages of the principal characters. Prince Amerigo, an Italian nobleman is in London for his marriage to Maggie Verver. Amerigo's former mistress is Charlotte Stant, the friend of Maggie.

Maggie after her marriage to Amerigo, realizes that her father is lonely and persuades him to propose to Charlotte. Charlotte accepts the old man for the sake of monetary status and security, hiding her illegitimate relationship with Amerigo.

Maggie learns the illegitimate relationship between her husband and her friend through the shopkeeper and confronts Amerigo. She begins a secret campaign to separate her husband from his illegitimate lover without her father's knowledge. She gradually persuades her father to return to America with his wife.

Towards the end of the novel, Adam and Charlotte depart to America and Maggie's diplomacy attracts Amerigo and her sheer will and embraces her. She opts to exhibit silence as a method of resistance.

On the surface level, it appears that the male characters are predominant and rule the action, but it is Maggie Verver who decides and alters the course of action. Though she knows that her husband and her stepmother have an illegitimate relationship before her marriage, by sheer resilience she alters the course and without any disruptions in their respective families and marital life, she brings the happy ending to the novel – the union of her father, Adam Verver to Charlotte Stant. Her union with her husband Prince Amerigo exhibits her sheer will power and perseverance. Maggie's mental plight and her state of mind are best revealed in the following lines of the novel:

Maggie went, she went...she felt herself going, she reminded herself of an actress who had been studying a part, rehearsing it, but who suddenly, on the stage before the footlights, had begun to improvise, to speak lines not in the text ... Preparation and practice had come but a short way, her part opened out and she invented from moment to moment what to say and to do. She had but one rule of art ... to keep within bounds and not lose her head; certainly she might see for a week how far that would take her.

(TGB: 348)

In the depiction of her mental plight, Maggie comes very close to Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* and Jayakanthan's Kalyani in *Oru Nadigai Nadagam Parkirale*. The golden bowl is the symbol for Marriage and the Prince who wonders whether it is a bad omen first notes its flaw. Maggie wants no violent confrontation to settle the familial chaos caused by the illegitimate relationship between her stepmother and her husband. She subtly shifts and manipulates to exclude her rival and regain her husband. She is a character that James has invested with a lot of imagination and a character that grows beyond immeasurable dimensions and heights.

Thus, Maggie refuses to judge and punish, but wants to rectify the situation. In the initial phase of her marriage, in the name of filial loyalty and fairness, she is unwilling to give up her father to her husband and does not understand that the two men are in conflict with each other to attract her attention. Akin to Isabel, Maggie also enjoys to be a dutiful wife and "her cheerful submission to (wifely) duty", (TGB: 526), exhibits this point. Her commitment to her husband, though a worthless, unfaithful husband, is reflected as in the lines, "Let me admit it... I am selfish...I place my husband first" (TGB: 542).

Maggie's mental vigour and her creative energies are greatly underestimated by Charlotte and others as she thinks that Maggie will live in the narrow world of her father only. Instead of confronting with Charlotte about her affair with Amerigo, Maggie offers her a lesson in

reading. Words such as “sacrifice”, “scapegoat”, “martyr” and “victim” that appear very frequently in the second book of the novel clearly symbolize the related themes of love, marriage and money of the novel.

The Ambassadors

The novel *The Ambassadors* depicts a 55-year-old American Lambert Strether’s attempts to persuade Chad Newsome to return from Paris to the United States. If Strether is successful in his attempts to persuade Chad it will result in Lambert’s marriage to the rich widow Newsome. During his stay in Paris, he comes in contact with the woman, Marie de Vionnet. Chad feels he is madly in love with her. Vionnet transforms Chad and the ordinary young American has become a man of the world in Paris. Strether is greatly surprised by the manners and looks of Chad and really touches him to see if he is real;

The effect of it was general...it had cleared his eyes and settled his colour and polished his fine square teeth...and at the same time that had given him a form and surface, almost a design, it had toned his voice... it was perhaps a specialty of Paris.
(TA : 97-98)

The depiction of the rich complexity and grandness of the character of Madame de Vionnet is revealed in the following lines:

Women were thus endlessly absorbent, and to deal with them was to walk on water...it took women, it took women; if to deal with them was to walk on water what wonder the water rose? And it had not surely risen higher than round this woman. (TA: 322)

Lambert comes to the conclusion that Chad must not leave such an exquisite lady. He returns to America with the rich European experience. As the novel is narrated wholly from the perspective of Lambert, it also portrays the rich transformation of the narrator from a stern puritan to his gradual change, dynamics of staying himself and becoming different. It is very surprising to note that the action of the novel begins, when he accepts the bid put forth by Newsome for a possible marriage as she is a rich widow. Finally he is content as an ambassador and as an observer of the happenings in the novel.

Lambert changes radically towards the end of the novel and three women are responsible for it – the invisibly powerful Mrs. Newsome, who sends him as a Queen sends her ambassador; second the lady who recreates and redesigns Chad, the French lady Marie de Vionnet; thirdly the seductive Maria Gostrey. Perhaps the greatest single influence is Vionnet, the personification of Paris itself to Lambert. She embodies the present and the past, the beauty and the danger, and all the varieties of the great city. She possesses the richness and complexity of fifty women in her and Lambert sees her as the source of Chad’s transformation and later he himself is transformed by the rich complexity of this French lady and everything is prompted by the possible marriage to Newsome.

The Wings of the Dove

In the novel, *The Wings of the Dove*, the presence of Sex and the depiction of physicality is a recurring motif, which marks the uniqueness of this work of art. The novel is a triangular love and betrayal story.

Kate Croy is in love with a penniless Journalist Merton Densher, postpones the marriage for want of money. Kate instructs Densher, her fiancée to show love to Milly Theale, a rich, dying American heiress, so that after her death, Densher will inherit the money. Milly is in love with Densher and Kate exploits her love for meeting out her own financial needs.

The narrator in *The Wings of the Dove*, recalls directly the name of the heroine Milly Theale, to 'dove'. She is attributed with the features of dove - gentleness, generosity, innocence and vulnerability. It is Kate Croy, who first describes her as "dove-like", as reflected in the lines,

For Milly, Kate's epithet comes like an inspiration: she found herself accepting as the right one...the name so given to her...she met it on the instant as she would have met revealed the truth; it lighted up the strange dusk in which she lately had walked. That was what was the matter with her. She was a Dove, She wasn't she...
(WOD: 283)

On the contrary, James' description of Kate is very striking and interesting to quote as follows,

She would have been meanwhile a wonderful lioness for a show, an extraordinary figure in a cage or anywhere; majestic, magnificent, high-coloured all brilliant gloss...
(WOD: 23)

James is an expert in describing characters; Kate is like a lioness, acting to her interests and likes and preys on others; on the other hand, Milly is compared to that of a Dove, soft and helpless, preyed upon by others. Her gentle, soft nature and her fear of death, eventually kills her easily than the real illness.

The meeting between the doctor Sir Luke Strett and his comments that the survival depends on Milly's "taking the trouble to live" (WOD: 154) exposes her mental plight. The comment reveals that she can live, if she wishes but on the contrary, she thinks of death and wishes death and dies at the end. But, she leaves huge money to Densher in spite of all the complications and complexities.

Marriage as the Means to Earn Wealth

Marriage is taken as the means to earn huge wealth and status in a relatively shorter span of time is evidently seen here and a lover ready to sacrifice her love and fiancée to another lady for the sake of money also evokes a lot of discussion and debates. Kate instructs and persuades Densher to pretend as if he is in love.

Towards the end, in that most famous scene, Milly turns her face to the wall and dies; she comes to know the relationship between Densher and Kate and her willingness to live dies and ultimately she dies. Milly's death is an ethical death and she dies because of her desire to die.

Thus, all the actions in the novel centre round and are controlled by marriage – the postponed marriage between Densher and Kate and the expected marriage between Densher and Milly.

The ending of the novel is quite satisfactory as the relationship between Kate and Densher deteriorates, Milly dies and leaves a huge fortune to Densher; Densher is unwilling to accept the money and leaves the decision to Kate to decide upon. Densher's conscience pricks him of his betrayal to Milly and decides that Kate can have the inherited money without him or she can have Densher without the money and not both. If she wants money, he is ready to bequest the fortune on her, or if she wants Densher, he is ready to marry her.

But, the novel ends with the powerful statement from Kate, "We shall never be again as we were!" (WOD: 475) and the novel ends at this point, leaving the rest to the reader's imagination.

Milly is done to death in a social world with evils in it; everyone uses and is used by everyone else and Merton Densher's final perception that he has been saved, blessed and nurtured by Milly symbolizes her as a Dove, Angel, Saviour or as a Priceless Pearl. Milly is innocent, victimized by such victimizers like Kate, Merton Densher and Maud Lowder. Milly is with an illness resulting in her death, a popular trend of the Literature produced at that time. Kate, Densher and Maud Lower are presented with mercenary traits and duplicity killing the innocent Milly and in the end it is Densher who transforms ethically, resulting from his conscience of guilt and betrayal to Milly.

The Europeans

The central focus of the novel *The Europeans* is whether Eugenia Baroness Munster will marry Robert Acton or not. In fact, there are three other marriages in the novel – Clifford and Lizzie Acton, Felix Young and Gertrude, Brand and Charlotte. These three marriages end happily but it is the expected marriage between Eugenia and Robert Acton that evaporates. Eugenia directly and indirectly involves, directs and influences these marriages. She comes to New England, in search of fortune through a possible marriage and sets her eye on Acton. Her discussion with her brother Felix clearly reveals the intension and plan of Eugenia:

Yes, I am ambitious, she said at last. 'And my ambition has brought me to this dreadful Place...' "That is all I expect of them", said the Baroness. 'I don't count upon their being clever or friendly – at first – elegant or interesting. But I assure you I insist upon their being rich.'
(TE:39-40)

Robert Acton, the cousin of the Wentworth family is a man of wealth, worldly wisdom and a man of the world. Eugenia sets her mind on Acton and finally their relationship ends with a

twist, as Eugenia returns to her husband, from whom she has been thinking of legal separation so far.

Eugenia cunningly postpones signing the legal document that will result in her divorce. She almost weighs the situation and the characters and wants to come to a conclusion whether her past husband is manageable or whether she must go for an alternative marriage.

During her stay, she is able to realize the cross-cultural and intercontinental relationships which result in a much more serious havoc and though Robert Acton is willing to marry her, she decides to go back to her husband, as she is not ready to end up in another possibly complicated relationship through a second marriage.

In this respect, she resembles Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* to a certain extent. The parting scene between Acton and Eugenia is worth quoting,

I am going away, said the Baroness. And she turned away again as if to illustrate her meaning. 'When are you going?' asked Acton, standing a moment in his place. But the Baroness made no answer and he followed her....What could I say to keep you? asked Acton. He wanted to keep her, and it was a fact that he had been thinking of her for a week. He was in love with her now... the only question with him was whether he could trust her...'She is not honest, she is not honest, he kept murmuring to himself
(TE 169-71)

Eugenia and Acton are not united because he cannot trust her and her intention is to achieve money and status and it is almost like one sided affair. In their case also, marriage becomes a conflict and the other three marriages unite three couples after a greater conflict.

In the case of Felix Young and Gertrude it is love at first sight and both are mutually attracted and the conflict arises because of Wentworth's opposition to the marriage; Clifford and Lizzie Acton's marriage is formulated by the family and Eugenia tricks and helps Lizzie to marry Clifford and it is the ill-mannered, non-committed youth life of Clifford brings the conflict at the early stage and who gets refined and committed to Lizzie by Eugenia; Brand and Charlotte's marriage is a marriage forced upon others and Charlotte has real affection and respect to Brand and Brand has no alternative to chose and accepts the hand of Charlotte.

Stories from Jayakanthan

Jayakanthan's short stories greatly reveal his lifelong concern for the common folk, their little joys and sorrows and their dignity and sense of honour even in the face of adversity. His major theme is to sing the glory of Man and he is very much committed to Life.

Most of his stories also display his greater concern for women's equality, evidently seen throughout his works, both in his short stories and novels. Though the characters in his later novels and masterpieces are to some extent upper middle class people, his concern lies with the common lot.

A radical and Communist Jayakanthan can be found in his short stories. His concerns in these stories were both human and economic. His fiction, however, focuses more on the aspects of the human nature, more a psychological bent, and its social play, without any explicit notions of class struggle, etc. The language of Jayakanthan in his works is akin to a cleansing storm sweeping away the debris far away from the society. It is popularly and widely accepted that no other Tamil writer has had greater and deeper concern for the common lot as Jayakanthan.

Marital relations and gender issues are discussed in detail on similar lines with Henry James. His novels are the depiction of the contradiction or conflict between middle class beliefs and the reality and the old values and the present practices. In such contexts, the marital relationship, familial bondage and ties and the clashes between man and woman on issues such as Love and Family life are discussed.

Vaazhkai Azhaikiratu (Life Beckons)

Jayakanthan's novel ***Vaazhkai Azhaikiratu*** (Life Beckons) displays the artist's genius and perfection even in the early phase of his career. Raja, the protagonist of the novel is a jobless, aimless youth with full of moralistic and idealistic principles. He is unable to cope up with the corrupt world full of exploitation. He leaves his native place and reaches Singaanallur, where he meets Thangam, a desolate poor soul. Raja attempts to save Thangam from the clutches of Sarangan, the local rowdy. Sarangan wants to mint money by making Thangam to yield to the lust of the Village Administrative Officer (VAO) Chidambaram Pillai, a man of influential administrative and economical backgrounds. Raja becomes close with Sarangan and he treats Raja as his own brother.

To save Thangam, Raja acts as if he is in love with Thangam. Sarangan believes that Raja is really in love with Thangam and almost prepares for their marriage. Later, he escapes from the place and encounters his uncle's daughter Geeta. The brief love episode ends tragically with the suicide of Geeta and finally Raja decides to marry Thangam.

Thus, the novel sums up the existential agony and it advocates living in the midst of sufferings and complex difficulties as the meaning of life is derived in living it. The novel also touches feministic angles and exposes the physical, mental and economical exploitations and tortures women experience in a male dominated society. Towards the end of the novel, as Raja is attracted by Thangam's innate character, he marries her and plays the role of a dutiful husband and guardian for her.

Gangai Engey Pogiral? (Where Does Ganga Go?)

Gangai Engey Pogiral? (Where Does Ganga Go?) is undoubtedly one of the masterpieces in Tamil Literature. The evolution of the character of Ganga proceeds from his short story **Agnipravesam** (Entry into Fire), **Cila Nerangalil Cila Manithargal** (Some People in Some Situation) and **Gangai Engey Pogirale?** (Where Does Ganga Go?). In Agnipravesam, Ganga, a schoolgoing innocent girl, is seduced on a rainy day, by the rich rogue Prabhu. She matures as a college girl and settles in a decent job in society with the help of her uncle, Vengu. She cleverly escapes from the lustrous eyes of her uncle and searches for Prabhu who

seduced her twelve years before. It is because of her love to Prabhu, Ganga escapes from the seductive clutches of her uncle, as reflected in the following lines:

The love she has for him (Prabhu) gave her the physical strength and independent will to keep her uncle at a distance...It was her uncle who deserves the ill treatment from her. (GEP: 13)

Later, the bitter and harsh treatment of Ganga makes her uncle Vengu a miraculously transformed soul. He writes a letter, seeks her forgiveness and entitles all his property on her as a mark of redemption and goes for a pilgrim. It is only because of her uncle's wish she goes in search of the man who molested her twelve years before. She manages to locate and identify him and there blossoms a highly matured friendship between them. In the later novel, Ganga is introduced as a drunkard who attempts to forget Prabhu in vain. She is a radical and revolutionary woman who is able to stand independently in the society without anyone's assistance and relationship. The type of relationship Ganga longs from Prabhu is evident in the following lines:

What did I ask you? Nothing, I don't want anything... is it wrong to think you even as a friend...neither of our lives can be changed hereafter...then what? Why should we both unnecessarily comment about each other? I don't want anything more than man-woman relationship or sexual connections...no, no...I just want your friendship... (GEP: 68)

There is a re-union in the relationship between Prabhu and Ganga. There blossoms a new, real and genuine relationship between them as they share mutual love, affection and trust. The wellwishers of Ganga, even Prabhu, force her to get married and settle in a family life, which she dislikes and hates the most. In fact, she has already accepted Prabhu as her husband, though not by marriage. Later, towards the end of the novel, they decide to spend the last phase of life on the banks of the Holy River, Ganges. The novel ends up with the submersion of Ganga in the holy river, wherein Ganga fuses with the Ganges.

Some of the important quotes from the novel are evident to sum up the views of the author on Marriage:

In today's world, related to marriage, leave the decision to be taken by the individual whether to get married or not...(GEP: 129)

What is the uniqueness or greatness, a woman gets out of marriage? It is a yoke to dominate, enslave and ill treat woman...I don't want you to see doing all the house hold duties to a man...I don't want to see such a sight and such a sight will be the most displeasing sight. Similarly I can't do the same as a married woman myself. (GEP: 167)

Oru Natikai Natakam Parkiral (An Actress Is Witnessing a Play)

Oru Natikai Natakam Parkiral (An Actress Is Witnessing a Play) is a psychological and artistic masterpiece of the writer. In this novel, the writer attempts to study deeply the

consciousness of two major characters, their emotional tangle, their self-introspection and their ultimate union.

The novel is full of psychological action between the two major characters – Ranga, a 32 year old Reporter, and Kalyani, a 31 year old stage actress. There is a steady and dynamic growth in both these principal characters. Kalyani. Kalyani is introduced in the novel as a stage actress of minimal mental maturity and her state of mind is referred in the following lines as,

She doesn't know herself. Her desires, her likes, her ambitions, her joys, her aesthetics, she bears all of them as a burden. She realizes that those burdens are pressuring her but without alternatives, bears them all...
(ONP: 16)

Ranga meets Kalyani accidentally and gets mutually attracted even in the very first meeting. Her attraction and fascination for him gets intensified because of his skill, intelligence and his discoursing abilities in his professional life, as an art critic.

They start meeting frequently and their relationship blossoms into friendship, mature as love and ends in marriage. Ranga judges Kalyani's character as,

She is a very rare and unique woman...she is an artistic fan...Her characters are basically good, which she maintains even after entering stage-acting; this acts as a touchstone for her artistic career...
(ONP: 55)

Ranga, himself is of the opinion that his marriage with Kalyani will be a mature and highly successful one:

Their mature minds and rich experience will enable a good relationship evading silly things and will be highly a pragmatic one is his opinion.
(ONP: 64)

After her marriage, Ranga becomes conscious of his inferior economic status compared to his wife Kalyani. Ranga is an intellectual and critical analyst in his professional life; but he is very emotional, self-centered and highly sentimental in his personal life. In his subconscious mind, he suffers from inferiority complex before the highly independent and matured Kalyani.

In the initial phase of their marital life, he attempts to capture the self of Kalyani, but fails in his attempt. Kalyani, being a highly independent woman, indulges in a battle of words and discourses with her husband, which causes further rifts in their relationships, because of the ideological clashes between them. The real complexity reaches to the peak, when Ranga understands the indomitable mind and unshakable will of Kalyani, as he comments,

She is not ready to forgo or sacrifice on his behalf anything or unwilling to bear anything; the same idea gave him a bitter taste and disgusting effect that what was the meaning of such a relationship...
(ONP: 161)

This creates a breach in their relationship; when Kalyani falls sick of TB in the spinal cord, the couple gets united again. There is a clash in the nature of both Ranga and Kalyani; Ranga is highly sentimental, egoistic and emotional but, on the contrary, Kalyani is highly realistic, more matured and less detached and less sentimental towards the happenings in life. Ranga is now able to understand her better and analyse her 'self' authentically with a clear and unprejudiced vision. He openly confesses to Kalyani that,

The self that attracted me towards you as a lover, later becomes unpalatable when I became your husband. I am unable to exist as your husband, accepting your 'self' and tried to destroy your 'self' unconsciously so far...you are very strong and at last your mental strength has exposed my weak mind and this is my 'self' ...
(ONP: 252)

Thus, the novel ends happily with a renewed, redefined man-woman relationship as husband and wife – totally without any egoistic feelings or domination of one 'self' by the other 'self'. The novel exploits Feminism and Psychoanalysis using the Stream of Consciousness technique. To bring into focus, here also it is the conflict in the relationships between Kalyani and Ranga, through their marriage as the central preoccupation.

Cuntarakandam (The Life of Sita)

Cuntarakandam (The Life of Sita) is a typical novel of the writer with social and revolutionary concern for women. Love, marriage and marital life are not concerned alone with women but they are all linked with society. In his preface to the novel, Jayakanthan comments that,

Young Ladies! This story warns you against the betrayal in a male dominated society in the form of Love or Marriage...supposing such a relationship happens to be with a social criminal, the bondage with such a person will not control you...
(CK: 4)

The novel epitomizes that women should not be enslaved or chained by love or marital life. The novelist supports the decision of woman liberating herself from an unfaithful and immoral husband.

In this respect, Jayakanthan's Sita differs from Henry James' Isabel Archer. The heroine of Jayakanthan's novel Sita is the third daughter of Sundararama Sharma, the editor of a magazine. Her father brings Sugumaran, a rich middle-aged man with loose morals. In the very first meeting, Sugumaran gets intensely attracted towards Sita and decides to marry her. The marriage between Sugumaran and Sita proceeds in a lightning pace, in spite of the protest of Sita. In fact, literally speaking, her father sells her to Sugumaran in the name of marriage. She attempts to avoid such a marriage with Sugumaran, whom she hates for his character and attitudes. Her comments are worth quoting here which can be taken as the voice of the author himself:

In general, through marriage, which is a social bondage, a woman may face both good and bad; how to safeguard the good and how to evade the evil is my present search and research... (CK: 48)

At last to save her father's life and save him from his debts, she agrees to marry Sugumaran. She remains chaste and never loses her virginity to Sugumaran. In her personal conversation with her husband Sugumaran, Sita says that, "For my sake you need not do any sorts of sacrifice...I also won't do any sacrifice for you" (CK: 107).

The will to retain one's own identity and individuality after marriage is stressed in the above lines and Sita observes and achieves this dictum in her martial life, of course, an unhappy, incomplete marriage life. Sita stands in the threshold of Modernity and Traditionalism, stamps her individuality and identity and leads a chaste life, as symbolic of her name.

The sufferings, physical and psychological exploitations of women in a male dominated society, are presented through the characters of Sita's mother, the nurse Meena and the widowed sister of Ramadassan, Ambujam. In the end, Sita gets divorce from Sugumaran and decides to lead an independent, individual life as reflected in her own lines:

...Today women who are educated wanted to remain independent...to lead such an independent life, education and profession are the sources...a woman who lives her life alone and independently, suppose the number of such women increases, the nature and approach to marriage will change... (CK: 375)

Katru Veliyiniley (The Windy Moor)

Katru Veliyiniley (The Windy Moor) is an autobiographical novel to a large extent and the hero of the novel is modeled on the writer himself. The life of the writer during his early entry and his political experiences and endeavors are highlighted in this novel.

The hero of the novel Athmaraman is one of the immortal characters created by Jayakanthan. Athmaraman is a jutka puller. He gets acquainted with Rajeswari and Kalyani. Kalyani and Raji are cousins and Kalyani comes for the medical treatment of her legs. In the brief span of time, Kalyani has doubts whether Athmaraman is a real jutka puller, because of his refined manners, behaviour and his highly polished speech. There exists a soft corner between Kalyani and Athmaraman. During their travel to the nearby temple, the inner mind of Kalyani and Athmaraman confluences:

I will never indulge in love or marriage is the thing she tells to her inner mind very strongly...when she sees Athmaraman, a flash of smile comes from him as an acknowledgement of her inner voice. (KV: 31-32)

The same view is later echoed in the mind of Athmaraman, which he comments to his leader as, "...no...I don't want to indulge in love; but I want to dream of it..." (KV: 40).

Later due to political reasons, he leaves the job of a jutka puller and continues with his political endeavors. Kalyani's brief stay at Rajeswari's home brings Rajeswari and Kalyani closer, though they are ideologically different. Kalyani is highly independent, matured and has a bitter and disgusting opinion about marriage and she comments about the ceremony:

...are we flirts? The people who come to see us for marriage, should we attract him and win him and long for making us to marry him...if that is the case, I want to remain handicapped rather than to get cured and get married....
(KV: 57)

The discussions Athamaraman has with Kalyani express the status of women as an exploited group:

Our women, whatever caste, creed or religion they belong, basically are like working class; similar to working class, our women were marginalized, controlled, exploited and they are fighting even for their very survival...
(KV: 83)

Towards the end of the novel, the views on love, life and marriage are best expressed through the protagonist of the novel, Athmaraman as follows:

Love is a divinely word...but love making is a mean English word... sexual indulgence without love is equal to prostitution...Yes! Love is very serious...
(KV: 339)

Love is not a game and it is the conflict and struggle of the life and soul of an individual.
(KV: 339)

Further the views on marriage and the sufferings undergone by women in a male dominated society through their marital life are expressed by the comments of Kalyani as follows:

Women's life is like a life of prostitution...without money no women can live a chaste life...for her food and dress a woman has to share the bed of her husband...is this your genuine life? To earn this living she suffers, experiences disgrace and agony...to me such things appear highly foolish...
(KV: 342)

Thus, Jayakanthan advocates that pure and noble man-woman relationship is possible even outside the realm of marriage through Athma and Rajeswari and Athma and Kalyani. In the end, Athamaraman, Kalyani and Rajeswari live together as companion souls loving each other.

To Conclude

In this paper a brief introduction to marriage, the depiction of the institution of marriage, and the theme of marriage presented by the authors of the past in English, French and Tamil Literature were discussed.

A brief outline detailing the salient features of both the authors taken up for the detailed study was presented. The processes of marriage as a money making machine (Henry James) and as an insult to the individuality of women (Jayakanthan) were described through a detailed description of selected novels of Henry James and Jayakanthan.

The depiction of Marriage, Love and Family Life by both these writers and their views and ideologies related to these issues were also given.

Some of the important findings and interesting concepts emanating from such an in-depth examination can be summed up as follows. The handling of the theme of Love, Marriage and Family are on similar grounds in most of the cases related to Henry James and Jayakanthan. Both these writers present the existential version of marriage. The women characters are given greater importance and focus. They initiate the wheel of action and the crucial and determining actions of the novel center around them. They also serve as the beacon lights and the Guardian Angels for the other characters towards a better destiny.

The theme of Marriage and the actions that lead to the marriage of the central characters decide the fate of the other characters in their works. Both the novelists stress an Ideal man-woman relationship. The difference is, Henry James advocates this relationship only within the realm of marriage, but Jayakanthan advocates that it is possible even outside marriage.

The women characters of Henry James are projected as slaves, enchained by the norms and conventions of the society; they constantly wage a battle to set their marriage right, they adjust, alter and try to perfect their marital relationships. In the case of the women characters of Jayakanthan, marriage is not the only solace of comfort and he even tries to advocate man-woman relationships outside marriage and also advocates women to liberate them from an unworthy and unlovable husband. In this regard, their respective social conditions and their times greatly decide their consciousness and decisions.

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