

**THE 'VILLAGE' IN NARRATIVES:
A STUDY OF THE REPRESENTATIONS OF RURALITY IN
SELECTED NOVELS OF MULK RAJ ANAND, R.K. NARAYAN,
RAJA RAO AND KAMALA MARKANDAYA**

BOSE JOSEPH

Research Guide

Dr. M.V. Narayanan
Department of English
University of Calicut

Thesis Submitted to the University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in English

Research Centre
Department of English
University of Calicut

August, 2007

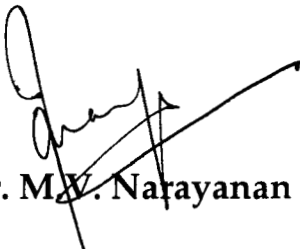
Dr. M.V. Narayanan
Department of English
University of Calicut


CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled **"The 'Village' in Narratives: A Study of the Representations of Rurality in Selected Novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Kamala Markandaya"**, submitted by Bose Joseph to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a bona fide record of the research carried out by him under my supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, title or recognition.

Calicut

24 - 08 - 2007


Dr. M.V. Narayanan


T. M. Mohamed Abdoul Galeb
HEAD
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT



DECLARATION

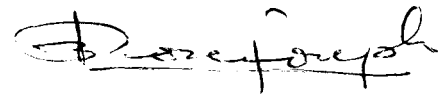
I, Bose Joseph, part-time Research Scholar at the Research Centre, Department of English, University of Calicut, hereby declare that this thesis, entitled **"The 'Village' in Narratives: A Study of the Representations of Rurality in Selected Novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Kamala Markandaya,"** which is submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a bona fide record of research work done by me, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or other similar title or recognition.

Research Centre

Department of English

University of Calicut

24-08-2007



Bose Joseph

CONTENTS

	Page No.
Chapter I Introduction	1
Chapter II The Indian Village: A Multi-dimensional Space	10
Chapter III The Village as a Physical/Real Space	112
Chapter IV The Village as a Social/Lived Space	152
Chapter V The Village as a Conceptual/Mental Space	265
Chapter VI Conclusion	291
Select Bibliography	296

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At this moment of completion of my thesis, I am moved by a deep sense of gratitude to a number of persons who helped me at different stages of my work. I am greatly indebted to my Research Supervisor Dr. M.V. Narayan, Department of English, University of Calicut for his sincere, painstaking and scholarly guidance and help without which I could not have completed this work. He was so friendly and obliging at all stages of my work. To him I express my heartfelt thanks.

I am indebted to Prof. T.M.A. Jaleel, Head, Department of English, University of Calicut for his friendly and valuable help, especially in tackling the administrative issues.

I remember Dr.R.Viswanathan, Dr. N. Ramachandran Nair and Dr. B. Sreedevi, the former Heads of the Department of English who helped me at different stages of my work. I am very thankful to Dr. M. Dasan, Head of the Department of English, University of Kannur, who conducted my preliminary viva voce in spite of his personal inconveniences.

I owe a deep sense of gratitude to Dr. A.A. Baby, Head of the Department of Economics, St. Thomas College, Thrissur who is more than a friend and was always a source of inspiration, encouragement and support right from the beginning to the end.

I am indebted to Dr. V. Uma, former Head of the Department of English, Mercy College, Palakkad for her perusal of the thesis and valuable advice and suggestions, which helped me a lot.

I record my thanks to Sri.Manikandan A.D. who willingly assisted me on the technical side of the work. I also thank Sri.Geevar P.D. who skilfully formatted this thesis.

My thanks are also due to Sri. Pauly Manjaly of Educare Infotech, Thrissur for the flawless printing of the thesis.

I gratefully remember my parents, my wife Derby, my daughter Neethu and my son Nibu for all their support and encouragement.

My greatest thanks are to the Almighty for all His blessings and help in this regard.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Indian writing in English is a modern facet of that creative glory, which, starting from the Vedas, has gone on spreading its mellow light, at times with greater radiance and at times with lesser brilliance, under the inexorable vicissitudes of time and history, up to the present day. For centuries, literary expression was in Indian languages. The names of Kalidasa, Jayadeva and others will never be forgotten. Indian regional literatures presented a harmonious blending of Eastern ideas with those of the west. Quality works have been produced during the last two hundred years. The names of Rabindranath Tagore, Madhusudhan Dutt, Mohammed Iqbal and others are worthy of mention in this regard. It was with the arrival of the British that English language arrived on the Indian literary scene. The spread of education with the establishment of schools, colleges and universities, the widespread readership of English newspapers and periodicals, the advent of satellite channels, the internet and so on has only promoted Indian writing in India.

It would not be wrong to say that Indian English fiction had its real beginnings in the work of the great Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94). His first published novel- *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) was in English. This was followed by Raj Lakshmi Devi's *The Hindu Wife* (1876), Toru Dutt's *Bianca* (1878), Kali Krishna Lahiri's *Roshinara* (1881), H.Dutt's *Bijjoy Chand* (1888), Kshetrapal Chakravarti's *Sarata and Hingana* (1895) and so on. "The first Indian English novelist who attracted the attention of the Indian readers was K. S. Venkataramani"(Kalinnikova, 1982:73). Indian English fiction gained a firm foothold in the Indian literary scene with the arrival of such gifted writers like Rabindranath Tagore, K.S.Venkataramani, R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, K. A. Abbas, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Manohar Balgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Anita Desai and others. The spark of Indian English fiction kindled by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and set ablaze by R. K. Narayan, Anand and others has burst into a roaring fire with the arrival of modern writers like S.

Menon Marath, Sasi Tharoor, Salman Rushdie, Arundhiti Roy and Kiran Desai to the scene.

Many novelists who wrote in Indian languages had selected the Indian villages as the major backdrop for their tales. This may be because India is essentially a land of villages and hamlets and the majority of Indian people live in villages. The novelists might also have realised that the true depiction of the life in the villages is indeed the depiction of the life in India. Authentic representations of the villages and the life therein, can be found in plenty in vernacular literatures. But in Indian Writing in English these are not so common. This may perhaps be due to the fact that most of the Indian Writers in English are of the urban set and belong basically to towns and cities. Another possible reason might be that the life in the villages may appear to be eventless, and can draw attention only when its placid routine is disturbed by irresistible and most often external forces. Despite this, many novelists like Venkataramani, Anand, Bhattacharya, Narayan, Rao, Malgonkar, Markandaya, Desai and others have a special attachment to villages and have chosen to narrate the stories of the life and people of the villages.

An attentive perusal of the novels of these writers throws up a primary feature that the villages constitute not merely a backdrop but also play an important role in the very construction of the narratives, influencing and partaking in every depicted activity of the village. The village may act as a background, a locale, or a conceptual matrix, providing the basic, fundamental framework within which the narrative proceeds. It may remain as a passive observer silently witnessing the joys, sorrows, passions, losses and poverty of the village folk. Or, much more importantly, the village may become a veritable character in the novel by conditioning and determining each and every substantial turn of the story, or it may become a catalyst promoting effervescent reactions and responses in the characters. It will be no exaggeration to say that the stories narrated cannot happen anywhere else but in these villages.

Anand, an ardent believer in the doctrine of social revolution and the socialistic pattern of society, while shedding light on the Indian village, exposed the evils of industrialisation, land tenure and the *zamindari* system; casteism and the plight of the

plantation workers; coolies and similarly poor, socially, economically and politically exploited, illiterate, ignorant and superstition-ridden people of the lowest strata of the Indian society. His novels, which deal with the life in the villages, bring home to the reader, the pathetic condition of the over-burdened villager who is defenseless against superstitions and social conventions.

Anand also notices how the villagers in India lay groaning under gruelling poverty. It is also clear from the tone of his work that on his impressionable mind was also indelibly imprinted how the very life-blood of the poor, simple, illiterate farmers was being sucked by parasites like the landlord, the moneylender and the religious priest. "Anand had gained first hand experience of all these categories of people and his experience stood him in good stead, when he decided to write about them"(Agnihotri, 1984:28). Thus, the dismal life and humiliating conditions in which these downtrodden people, who were victims of the iniquitous social, economic and political order that existed in the Indian villages, was the subject Anand chose for himself.

Anand chose for the scene of action of his novels the villages of Punjab with which he was quite familiar. The scene of his first novel *Untouchable* is laid in a small remote village in Punjab called Bulandshahr. Though Anand speaks of the life in Bulandshahr, it is in a way quite universal, as far as India is concerned and the incidents narrated are pan-Indian in character. The second novel *Coolie* is located in various villages of the Punjab, though later it moves to Bombay and Simla. The hill boy Munnoo starts his journey from the village of Bilaspur. In *Coolie*, Anand focuses his attention on the economic exploitation that had been mercilessly and systematically carried on against the poor landless people known as coolies. In *The Village* and *The Sword and the Sickle* Anand portrays the burden of superstitions shouldered by the simple village folk and the atrocities committed by the village mahant, the moneylender and the zamindar. Economic exploitation of the simple village farmer is the theme of the novel *The Village*. The novel describes the life of the simple illiterate peasants of a Punjabi village called Nandpur. In *Two Leaves and A Bud* which deals with the miserable life of the Assam tea-plantation coolies, the hero Gangu, a Punjabi who belonged to a village near Hoshiarpur in the

Punjab goes to work in the Macpherson Tea Estate in distant Assam, little knowing that a tragic change of events awaits him there. *The Road* focuses on the miseries and the disabilities to which the untouchable cobbler youths are subjected to in the Indian villages. *Gauri* also highlights the economic exploitation in the villages. Hence it is obvious that in Anand, the village is intricately and inseparably blended not only with the life of the characters but also with the ebbs and eddies of the narrative.

When we come to Narayan the pure artist, whose literary achievement depends to a great extent on his superb ability to remain uninvolved, we see in his novels a faithful representation of the life, customs, problems and superstitions of the rural folk. By creating a highly unforgettable fictional region called Malgudi and portraying its development from a village to a town, he explores, the growing impact of an industrial and urban, economic and commercial culture on a predominantly rural, agricultural community. In the process, he is able to present, the undoing of old ways of living and values cherished for centuries, and their replacement by new patterns of life and values. Malgudi is always in a state of flux. In spite of all its apparent modernisation, Malgudi is still rooted in the past and derives its vital force from its ancient culture. While depicting the contours of the archetypal South Indian village through Malgudi, Narayan portrays the sorrows, joys and ironies in the life of different types of people, who live and die in Malgudi or those who pass through it.

In the earlier novels, we have the simpler pictures of school children, college boys and college teachers. In the later novels we enter the more complex world of dreamers, artists, financiers, speculators, adventurers, eccentrics, cranks, cinema stars, sanyasis and several others. (Agnihotri, 1984:28)

Strictly maintaining an attitude of non-involvement in and unconcern with the problems of the day, Narayan confines himself to Malgudi and deals with the life, romance, marriage, sorrows and joys of the folk living there. Malgudi has well defined landmarks, and the physical features of the region are fixed and well marked. But in other respects it is like any other real village or town, Malgudi also grows and develops through the various novels. It would be indeed interesting to speculate on the

correspondence between the ‘virtual’ village of Malgudi and the real villages of South India and observe how far ‘faithful and true’ Narayan’s depiction turns out to be. In one sense, Malgudi is no longer a village because it appears to have many institutions, offices and other paraphernalia, which one usually associates with an urban setting. Mention is made about the construction of the railway line to Malgudi and about the trains going to various places from Malgudi. When the Mempi Hills grow into a famous tourist attraction, the railway station also develops and acquires importance. Raju in *The Guide* runs a stall on the station platform. The Mempi Hill is connected with Malgudi railway station by means of buses and taxis. Many new shops and hotels are opened and Malgudi grows and develops. Chandran and Ramu in *The Bachelor of Arts* visit “The Palace Talkies” where both Tamil and English films are shown. Despite these unmistakable marks of an urban setting, the values, customs, life pattern and belief systems of the people of Malgudi seem to belong, to a great extent, to an age-old and time-tested rural practices and attitudes.

The philosopher novelist Rao has portrayed, on the one hand, the economic exploitations and social disabilities of rural India, and on the other, the political awakening that swept through the Indian villages. He has also shown the influence of the charismatic personality of Mahatma Gandhi on the poor Indian villagers. Rao has depicted the tyranny of casteism in the village and the exploitation of the poor. Rao depicts the day-to-day life of the villagers with the monotonous events of planting, harvesting, marrying and celebrating festivals. Rao’s novel *Kanthapura* portrays a typical South Indian village caught in the whirlpool of communal hatred and genocide that followed the partition of the Indian sub-continent. The novel is easily recognisable as a village novel, and it has obvious affinities with those novels that record the largely unchanging yet ever-shifting spectrum that is Indian village life. The descriptions of the village – its physical features, its separate living places for different castes, the occupations of the villagers, the celebrations of festivals – are quite vivid and realistic. The novel sheds light upon the appalling social conditions of the Indian villagers during the colonial period. Thus the village of Kantapura is a pulsating picture of a representative South Indian Village going through a hectic phase of the independence

movement under the inspiring guidance of the great apostle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi. In short, it may be said that *Kanthapura* is a modern village epic.

Markandaya, the returned expatriate, portrays the sorrows and sufferings of the village people and their ties to the land in her novels. She also shows admirable ability in delineating disturbed feminine sensibilities with masterly strokes of characterisation. In her novel *Nectar in a Sieve* she presents the husband and wife Nathan and Rukmani, as the mute representatives of the thousands of uprooted peasants India. The novel exposes the evils of modern industrialisation:

It is also the story of a few peasants whose destiny is to suffer. Here is a group of peasants who lead a hand-to-mouth existence from what their tenant-holdings earn. With the establishment of a big tannery this little South Indian village with its peasant population is thrown to the blood-sucking human jackals. Flood, drought and famine rushed to aid of the landlords and the businessmen who callously exploit the situation. (Radhakrishnan, 1984:106)

Nectar in a Sieve is in fact the story of the rural Indian farmer who, standing knee deep in water and perspiring in the burning heat of the sun, cultivates rice. Rice for them is like nectar, the valuable drink of gods that gives everlasting life. But no matter how hard the peasant may toil, he is unable to have rice in his home. Just like water in a sieve, rice slips through his fingers into the barns of the landlords and the moneylenders. The novel exposes the poverty, the starvation and the humiliation to which the Indian peasants are subjected. It also shows the lures of industrialisation, the economic and psychological crisis of generations, the consciousness of the working class and the beginnings of the trade union movement. *Nectar in a Sieve* is a simple, down-to-earth story of human suffering which more than a shelf of books of history and economics explains the plight of the people of India.

Thus it is manifestly clear that the novels of these Indian writers in English present realistic accounts of Indian villages and the changes felt and experienced in them during the twentieth century. The Indian villages in spite of their diversities have a

fundamental unity. Even though there are differences in language and the subtleties of social structure, there is a common basic pattern recognisable all over India. It is very often in the rural context that the regional reality and the Indian reality merge. The reflection of this merger can be clearly perceived in the Indian English novels.

Centuries before the arrival of the British, the Indian villages existed as self-sufficient, self-governing communities. Based on a rural agrarian economy, structured on the basis of castes, a feudal class system and a rigid hierarchy, the villages remained largely static. In a sense, they were little self-sufficient republics. The arrival of the British brought a radical structural transformation to the traditional community life of the Indian sub-continent. The ancient isolated pattern of the village was slowly and forcibly reformulated into an industrial or colonial pattern. The national movement invested the Indian villages with a new identity. The work of the Indian National congress and Gandhi made the Village community more reactive and more responsible. The social reforms, economic independence movements and political self-determination helped the village communities to play an entirely new social role.

This developmental process of the Indian villages is depicted most strikingly and explicitly in the Indian English novels and so the novel is perhaps the most appropriate literary genre for a study of the transformative processes which overtook the Indian village in the past one hundred and fifty years. In the post independence era the institution of parliamentary democracy, the incessant process of urbanisation, the interventions of a national economy and the globalisation and liberalisation have brought in their wake a new identity for the Indian village community even while preserving certain basic features of its rural identity.

An attempt is made here to trace the structural and formal changes of the Indian village as a physical space, lived space and a conceptual space as depicted in the selected novels of the Anand, Narayan, Rao and Markandaya. The village as it appears in the Indian novels is a set of discursive practices regarding topography and space, structure and hierarchy, ways of life and occupations, rituals and conventions, customs and beliefs, and so on. Hence a detailed study concerning the process of Indian modernisation, the

changes in the rural and socio-cultural patterns, and the economic and political organisations is very essential.

Any study of the village in narratives can proceed only through a fundamental understanding of what constitutes a village, what a village is, in the Indian context. In other words, one will be required to isolate the fundamental factors, which go into the constitution of whatever is understood as a village. Indeed, it is a commonplace to say that there are different notions – and hence definitions too – of the village for different people, depending on what factors enter predominantly into their considerations. The village has been variously understood as a geographical space, a structure of dwellings, a territorial entity, a system of ownership/holding, a community, a set of life practices, a social formation, an entity of economic production, the source of certain conceptual systems and beliefs, and so on and so forth. From the above itself it goes without saying that the village is a highly complex phenomenon, which requires theorising, and analysis on a number of different levels if one is to be able to grasp the vast richness of its contours.

Empirical data on the transformations of the Indian villages as documented by economic and social surveys is a must in this direction. That being the case, the present study attempts to bring an understanding of Indian villages, in terms of social, political, economic, religious, cultural, and geographical factors that determine and influence the village community, to bear upon a detailed analysis of the representations of the village in Indian narratives in English.

Titled “The ‘Village’ in Narratives: A Study of the Representations of Rurality in Selected Novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao and Kamala Markandaya,” the present study is divided into six chapters. In this study, the village is approached from three different perspectives thereby offering three categories of analysis as follows:

- (a) The village as a physical/real space;
- (b) The village as a social/lived space;

(c) The village as a conceptual/mental space.

The village is first taken up as a physical space where the different definitions and theories regarding a village are examined and an attempt is made to view different types of villages on the basis of these theories. This category addresses questions and issues such as territory, geographical location, factors of size, shape, layout, planning, features of ownership and holding, structures of houses and dwellings, populations and the like. In this category the village is approached as a physical entity in a particular place at a particular time with specific particulars of physical existence. In the next step, the Indian village is considered as a social space and attention is paid to the factors of community, society, economy and occupations. It also tries to explore the life practices and the family structure of the villagers. A concise study is also made of the caste system, which has existed in the villages from time immemorial and is quite strong even today in the twenty-first century. The different classifications of the village, the kinship and marriage systems, and social legislations all come within the purview of this section. Next the village is studied as a conceptual space. This section analyses the rituals, the belief systems, the knowledge systems and religion of the village community. In other words, it is the inner realm of ideas, that function as the rationale of everyday life, that is the focus here. An endeavour will also be made to examine the historicity of the fictional works and arrive at the different types of historicities present therein.

CHAPTER II

The Indian Village: A Multi-dimensional Space

The village as a physical/real space

The village is probably the most significant unit of Indian society. It is the theatre where the totality of rural life unfolds itself and functions. To an Indian, a village means many things. On its definition stands the political shape of the country; on its interpretation depends the economic progress of the nation. The description of an Indian village means, in effect, the narration of the very face of the country. An Indian village is in fact the mirror of India, of both the past and the present, and on its future depends the future of the nation. The importance of the village in India's socio-political life has been so paramount that it has even led to the conceptualisation of a new political theory – 'Villagism' – in India (Prasad, 2003:161).

The definition of an Indian village and the analysis of the definition are difficult tasks. It is a contradiction that in a country dominated by more than six lakh villages; we have great difficulty in defining a 'village.' There are differences of opinion about the definition and concept of a village. Prasad writes:

It should be noted that all the six hundred thousand odd units, so-called villages, cannot be treated as such because tens of thousands of them consist of but a few houses. Only a place at least with twenty families can be considered a village and defined as such. (2003:161)

But Dube, on the other hand, does not give importance to the number of families residing in a village and defines the village in different terms as "a unit of social structure, which cuts across the boundaries of kin and caste and unites a number of unrelated families within an integrated multicasite community" (2006:204). It is at this juncture that we face certain relevant questions as: What are the main characteristics of a village? Does the description of a village depend only on the number of houses or

families? Or does it depend on the population figures? What are the sociological backgrounds of these groups of people spread in six lakh far flung places known till now as villages?

The concept of a village differs slightly from country to country. Whereas to the Western schools of thought the concept is more or less recent and modern, the Eastern schools make it more classic and basic. Prasad supplies a lot of information on this topic. According to him in Britain or the U.S.A. the village is thought to be:

...intermediate between the hamlet and the town. A hamlet is defined there as a settlement with several families and some form of commerce but not with a big population. A settlement with more than a thousand people is popularly known as a town. (Prasad, 2003:164)

Hence it can be assumed that a settlement in the U.S.A. with a population of less than a thousand people and some sort of commerce is known as a village. But there are exceptions too. There are even villages with more than ten or twenty thousand people, as for example, in the northeast of U.S.A. But in India, there were no two opinions on the concept of a *grama* in ancient, medieval or modern India as long as it denoted “a group of families living in a certain place” (2003:162). But the difference between a hamlet and a village in the west is only of recent origin. “The finer distinction between a hamlet and a village as noticed in the West is more or less recent compared to the distinction between the *grama* and *palli* in ancient India”(2003:162).

One of the most popular western definitions of a village is “an assemblage of houses larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town” (2003:162). This entirely coincides with the conception of a village in ancient India. It is interesting to note that in Indian treatises, epics and myths, this subtle distinction between the village and the hamlet was noticed. The conception of *grama* and *palli* means exactly what their western counterparts – village and hamlet – signify. *Rig Veda*, composed around 1500 B.C. and one of the most ancient scriptures of the world, defines a village as “an aggregate of several families sharing the same habitation” (Dube, 1955:145). An aggregate of families

or *kula* formed a village or *gram*. The opposite of the village was named a forest. The family was thus the unit of social organisation. However, there is no indication of the number of families that was required to constitute a village:

The general definition of the village did not suggest any minimum number of families. But from other references in the *Rig Veda* it is clear that the size of a village is not as important an attribute as its constitution and functioning. (Vidyalankar, 1964:157)

In the Vedic period most people lived in villages. The village was then under the supreme control of a village headman who was called a *gramini*. He administered the village with the help of a village council. The administrative organisation of the village was more or less a democratic one, with the *gramini* being elected by the *janas* or the people.

When we come to the epic period, the distinction between small villages and large villages is seen in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In these epics too, some details are available on villages. For instance, small villages were called *Ghos* and large villages *Gram* (Shankar, 1998:2). A similar classification of villages is also reported in the *Manu Smriti* of the 1st century B.C. Manu distinguishes village, town and city – *grama*, *pura* and *nagara* (1998:2). According to the *Mahabharata* (c.A.D.400), a village had certain characteristics, for example, multiple types of inhabitants, cattle farms, and small hamlets. Giving a full account of the description of an Indian village and the Indian village organisation during the *Mahabharata* period, Dube writes:

Through the *Mahabharata* we get an outline of the system of village and inter-village organisation. According to the epic, the village was the fundamental unit of administration and had as its head the *gramini*, who was its leader and chief spokesman; one of the major responsibilities of headman was to protect the village, which had a radius of about two miles, and to safeguard its boundaries. The administrative system was organised on the basis of the grouping of villages, each group having its own recognised leader. Thus a group of ten villages were

under a *das-gramini*, and this was the first unit of inter-village organisation. Two such groups, that is, twenty villages, used to be under a *vimsatipa*. A group of a hundred villages was headed by a *satagramini* or *grama-satadhyaksha*. Finally, a group of a thousand villages was under an *adhipati*. (1955:65)

We also come to know that in ancient India, society developed in a series of ascending formations starting from the family (*griha* or *kula*) and gradually extending to the village (*grama*), the clan (*vis*) the people (*jana*) and the country (*rashtra*) (1955:1).

The great poet Kalidas who lived in the 5th century A.D. also gives a description of the Indian village but no hard and clear-cut picture can be traced throughout his works. Among the earlier authors in India, a precise description of an Indian village was provided by Chanakya or Kautilya who lived around 200 B.C. during the Maurya period. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* gives a clear and categorical definition of a village:

Villages consisting each of not less than a hundred families and of not more than five hundred families of agricultural people of Sudra caste, with boundaries extending as far as a *Krasa* (2,250yds.) or two and capable of protecting each other shall be formed. Boundaries shall be denoted by a river, a mountain, forests, bulbous plants, caves, artificial buildings (*setubendha*) or by trees such as *Salami* (silk cotton tree) *Sami* (Acacia Suma) and *Kshiravraksha* (milky trees). (Prasad, 2003:163)

Kautilya gives us some ideas about the village group too. The villages were organised under unions of 10 called *Samgrahana*, of 200 called *Karvatika*, of 400 called *Dronamukha*, and of 800 villages constituting a *Mahagrama* and administratively termed *Sthatnuja*. It is recorded in Kautilya's treatise on the administration of villages:

There shall be set up a *sthaniya* (a fortress of that name) in the centre of eight hundred villages, a *dronamukh* in the centre of two hundred villages and a *sangrahama* in the midst of a collection of ten villages. (Prasad, 2003:164)

Some information is available regarding the villages under the Gupta dynasty, which ruled from 320 A.D. Under the Gupta kings, the lower administrative unit was the village. At the same time, in South India:

The largest administrative division was the *mandala*, which was subdivided into *valanadus* or into *nadus* and *kottams*. The lowest administrative units were the *kurram* (union of villages) and *grama* (village), each under its own headman who was assisted by assemblies (*ur*, *mahasabha*). The village headman had his counterpart in the *nagarapati* of cities. In certain rural areas, the village assembly consisted of the adult population, in others of Brahmanas or a few great men who were selected by a kind of ballot. (Majumdar et al. 1970:188)

Hence, it is seen that a village has no exact or commonly accepted size limit. Tagore states his opinion about the Indian village as follows:

Instead of each family living among its own fields, the Indian village is generally a concentration of many households with their holdings scattered over great distances. The village community in India is thus close and compact. (1928:13)

India's economic prosperity lies in her villages. Her economic development depends more on all round rural progress than on the towering skyscrapers in the towns. There are villages in India, which are bigger than many western towns. No definition by population or revenue income has yet turned them into towns. Tagore says that in India, "Villages with populations of four or five thousand are not rare and there are occasionally villages with as many as ten thousand inhabitants" (1928:18). The Indian village is the symbol of economic self-reliance. Some of them resemble, even today, townships, eastern or western. Due to the harmonious growth of agriculture and industry, and because of the country's abundant manpower, the Indian village is, even in the modern age, largely self-sufficient and home to a largely contented community. The most authentic documents on the patterns of living in India have been the census figures and the masterly analytical reports. Let us see what the census reports say about a village. The 1951 Report records:

Arrangements for the census count were made village-by-village and town-by-town. We have thus got account of all the different places where people live. The total number of such places is between 561, 107 and 558, 089 villages and 3,018 towns. Out of 3,569 lakhs of people whom we counted, 2,950 lakhs were found in villages and 619 lakhs in towns. (Census of India, 1951:41)

Like every social phenomenon, the village can be considered as a historical category. The emergence of the village at a certain stage in the evolution of the life of man, its further growth and development in subsequent periods of human history, the varied structural changes it experienced during thousands of years of its existence, the rapid and basic transformation it has undergone during the last hundred and sixty years since the Industrial Revolution — all these constitute a very fascinating and challenging study. When we examine history, we find that the growth of the village is closely connected with the growth of agricultural economy. The emergence of the village signifies that man passed from the nomadic modes of hunter-gatherer life to a settled one. This was mostly due to the improvement of tools of production, which made agriculture possible and hence settled life in a fixed territorial zone possible and necessary. Desai is of the opinion that “with the invention of the plough, man could develop stable agriculture, the basic source of assured food supply” (2006:13). With the development of agriculture, man’s nomadic mode of life came to an end. Man stopped wandering from place to place in herds in search of means of subsistence. They settled in a definite territory and organized villages, which were based on an agricultural economy. Thus we see that agrarian communities with villages as their fixed habitation and agriculture as their main occupation came into existence. This was a landmark in the history of mankind, and it inaugurated a higher phase of social existence:

At a certain stage in the development of agricultural economy, due to the greater productivity of agriculture, a section of the community was freed from the necessity of engaging in food production and could therefore concentrate on secondary industrial or ideological activity. This gave momentum to the growth of technology, arts, science and philosophy. (2006: 14)

With different types of peoples living in different parts of the world, different types of villages came into existence with the development and spread of agriculture. This was mainly due to differences in geographical environments in which those peoples lived:

The history of the village, in time and space, reveals such diverse village types as the Saxon village, the German Mark, the Russian Mir, the self-sufficient Indian Gram, the village of the feudal Europe which was an integral part of the manor and finally the modern village, which is an integral part of national and world economic systems. (2006:14)

To know more about the Indian villages one has to depend on the ancient Indian texts. Malaviya (2006:171-76) gives us an idea of the village as described in texts dating from the 5th century BC. The Buddhist and Jain texts of the time give us extensive information about the villages of those days. The canonical books of the Buddhists elaborately refer to the arrangement of villages, towns and forts. *Gama*, *nigama*, *kula* and *nagarka* are often mentioned. The Jain texts refer to settlements such as *ghosa*, *kheta*, *khavata*, *gram*, *palli*, *pattana*, *samvaha*, *uagara*, *matamba*, etc. The average village referred to in the Buddhist Jatakas consisted of families numbering up to 1000. The village dwellings were fairly close to one another, so much so that a fire starting in one might spread to the whole village. The villages almost invariably had a gate, the *gram-dwara*. Beyond this was usually found the village orchard, and then the *gram-kshetra*, that is the cultivated area of the village. The crops were protected from pests, beasts and birds by fences, snares and field-watchmen. The *gram-kshetra* was extended, as and when the need arose, by cleaning the forest. Beyond this arable area, used to be the village pasture, which was invariably held in common and the cattle of the king or the commoner, all had equal rights over it. The Jatakas also refer to *gopalaka* (meaning “protector of the flocks”) a village official or employee, a sort of a common communal shepherd whose main job was to open the flocks at night or, in the alternative, return it to their owners by counting heads. The cultivated area of the village consisted of individual holdings. It appears that the demarcation of areas was done in a well-planned manner.

There seems to have been a system of co-operative irrigation with the water channels dividing the holdings. About the possession of the grasslands used for grazing the cattle, Malaviya remarks:

No individual could acquire, either by purchase or inheritance, any exclusive right in any portion of the common grassland or woodland. Great importance was attached to these rights of pasture and forestry. Even when the king made grant of some village to some priest or other dignitary, in effect, it was not a conferment of free rights over village lands. (2006:174)

Malaviya also furnishes information about the administrative staff in the villages during that period. The village administrative staff comprised the *Adhyaksha* (the Headman); the *Samkhayaka* (the accountant); the *Sthanikas* (village officials of different grades); *Anikasta* (veterinary doctors); and *Jamgha Karika* (village couriers). Besides these, there used to be an officer to look after village sanitation (*Chikitsaka*) and a horse-trainer (*Ashwa-Damak*) with a view to build up a cavalry for needs of war. These officials were granted land, free of rents and taxes, but they were forbidden to alienate it by sale or mortgage. In Chandragupta's time, around 300 B.C., the villages were divided into three categories according to their population: *Jyeshtha*, the bigger ones, *Madhyama*, the middle ones, and *Kanishtha*, the smaller ones (2006:175).

In later times were appointed the following officers and public servants in a Madras village, at the beginning of the 19th century, as revealed in the 1812 Select Committee Report of the House of Commons, the famous Fifth Report:

1. The Headman: - In charge of general superintendence, collection of village revenue, police work, and settlement of village disputes.
2. The Accountant: - In charge of keeping accounts of cultivation and maintenance of registers of allied affairs.

3. The Watchmen: - These were of two types, the superior and the inferior. The first one had to get information of crimes and to escort and protect persons travelling from one village to another. The activities of the inferior one were confined to the village and included, among others, guarding the crops and assisting in measuring them.
4. The Boundary man: - Responsible for prescribing the limits of the village and giving evidence about them in cases of disputes.
5. The Superintendent of the Tank and Water Courses: - Responsible for distribution of irrigation water.
6. The Priest: - Responsible for the performance of village worship.
7. The Schoolmaster: - In charge of teaching village children to read and write 'in the sand.'

Besides these, are mentioned the astrologer, the smith and carpenter, the washer man, the barber, the cow keeper, the doctor, the dancing girl, the musician and poet (2006:176).

Karve (2006:186) describes the different types of villages seen in India in the 20th century. These villages are situated on a high plateau of the Deccan. They are nucleated villages with the habitation clearly defined from the surrounding cultivated fields. In such villages, while the habitation area is well marked, the boundaries of the village together with its fields are never perceived. The fields owned by one village merge into those owned by another except where a hillock or a stream or a highway forms the boundary.

The second type of village is found on the west coast (the Konkan) near the coastal region. The villages are generally strung length-wise along the two sides of a road. The houses stand in their own compounds with their fruit and coconut gardens and are fenced on all sides. One walks or drives between fences on both sides of the road all the time. There are numerous tiny streams joining the Arabian Sea and there are also

spurs of the western mountains (the Sahyadri), coming right into the ocean. In such villages, the gardens of coconut and areca nut palms, plantain, jack fruits and cashew nuts are planted near the house and fenced in, while the rice fields may lie a little away from the houses, though in some areas they come right to the steps of the houses. There is no sharp distinction between the habitation area and the cultivated area.

The third type of village is found in the Satpura Mountains on the northwestern boundary of the Marathi-speaking region. The houses are situated in their own fields in clusters of two or three huts, all belonging to a single close kinship group. They are either the huts of a father and grown up sons, or brothers and their wives. Sometimes a woman and her husband may have a hut in the same cluster as that of the father and brothers of the woman. The next cluster of huts may be as far as a furlong or two away, depending on how big the holding of each cluster is. The village boundaries are in many instances not defined by streams or hillocks because the houses belonging to one village are situated on separate hillocks or divided by streamlets.

The function of the roads is different in these three types. In the first type (the tightly nucleated villages) there are two types of roads: a) the roads connecting different villages and meant for inter-village communications; b) the internal streets or narrow alleys connecting housing areas. Sometimes a main arterial road may pass through or near a village. In the case of the villages of the second type, the main road in the village is generally the main arterial road joining the villages of the coast for miles and miles in one linear direction. Such roads are seen in most villages of the west coast from Bombay to Kanyakumari.

In the third type of village there are no village streets because no houses are aligned along streets. There are only footpaths leading from one house cluster to another:

A village is thus an ever-changing nucleus of habitations from which tiny clusters separate and remain attached or separate completely to form a new nucleus. Generally, an Indian village is, socially a complicated structure. The complexity is reflected in the way houses are built and roads existed. (Karve, 2006:38)

People of more than one caste live in a village. A map of a village will show almost invariably that the habitation area of each caste is separated from that of the other by a greater or a lesser distance. Sometimes a few castes may live in houses situated side by side, but others live apart. The castes, which are always separated from the others, are those whose touch is supposed to pollute the rest -- the so-called untouchables. The *Kumbhars* (potters) also live a little away from the rest of the village. Villages, which have weavers in their population, also have a separate area where weavers live. If there are a number of Brahmin houses in a village, they may have an exclusive area for themselves. The shepherds live so far away that their habitation area is termed a '*wadi*' of the village. This tendency to have separate sub-areas for habitation within a large unit called a village can be explained in various ways and on different grounds like caste hierarchy, ideas of impurity and pollution, the need for certain occupations to have room for carrying out the different process needed for their craft.

Indian villages can be classified according to its physical form too. This is the most useful and objective type of classification. Nandi and Tyagi (2006:207) describe the different orders of villages found in North India. According to them the following different orders can be distinguished in India. Each type has a fairly wide range of variation, so that instances may not be rare when it becomes difficult to determine if a particular example should be placed in one category or another:

1. Shapeless cluster or agglomerate with streets not forming an integral part of the design. These may be of the massive or dispersed type, in which the village is reckoned to consist of an assemblage of discreet clusters of comparatively small size. It may be noted here, that in villages belonging to this order there may be a tortuous or irregular road; but this grows according to local requirements, not as part of the original design.
2. Linear cluster or assemblage with a regular open space or straight street provided between parallel rows of houses.

3. Square or rectangular cluster or agglomerate with straight streets running parallel or at right angles to one another.
4. Village formed of isolated homesteads, a number of which are treated together for convenience of collection of rent or tax.

The construction of houses in the villages is interesting. The layout of the houses may differ from area to area and according to the profession of the villagers. Spate (2006:193) gives a vivid portrayal of the layout of the villages and the houses in the Deccan. It is an agricultural area and the houses are generally built on to each other, or at least the mud walls of the compounds are continuous. In front of the house is a porch, used as a place for drying agricultural produce, as a formal reception room, as a place of female gossip when the master of the house is out, and above all as a sleeping-room in the stifling summer nights. Behind this is the main room, some 25 ft. square, part of which is a cattle pen, at threshold level; the remainder raised some 2 or 3 ft. is the general living-room, for sleeping, eating, more intimate entertainment of guests, and perhaps handicrafts. The most prominent object is the pile of grain stored in gunny bags and sadly depleted towards the end of the agricultural year. Behind are a separate kitchen (with a corner for the bath) and the back yard with manure-pit and haystacks.

In a representative village, the services are mostly grouped around the main village lane. It is also the market place for the weekly bazaar. There are about eight shops (four groceries, two cloth shops, one tailor shop, one of miscellaneous nature) and a number of booths selling tea and *bidis*, the cheap crude cigarettes of the Indian masses. Near the market place is the room of the village *panchayat* or caste council, an ancient institution generally fallen into disuse, but now being fostered as the first step in local government. Associated with this tiny 'urban core' are the government establishments – the police station, the post office, the grain warehouse etc. There are three mosques and more than half a dozen temples. There are also an Ayurvedic dispensary, a school for the Muslims and separate schools for boys and girls. The village also has two or three public wells.

The untouchables of the village live in outlying slums or sub-villages, sometimes located several hundred yards away from the main village of which they are service components. A typical sub-village may consist of two rows of huts with a narrow pathway or 'street' in the middle. The huts of the untouchables have thick mud walls, roofed with palmyra thatch, and low mud porches scrupulously swept. To enter, one must bend double; the only light comes from the door and from under the palmyra leaves and the furniture consists of a few pots and pans, a couple of wooden chests, and the essential paddy bin, 4 to 6 ft. high and 3 to 4 ft. in diameter, raised from the ground, and built of hoops of mud. Poor as they are, these dwellings are yet homes, and obviously loved as such: their cleanliness, the surrounding mango tress, and coconut and palmyra palms, redeem them of utter squalor.

While Spate portrays the village and houses in the Deccan, Kathleen Gough (2006:345) describes a representative village in Tamil Nadu. She has chosen a village in Tanjore district called Kumbapettai, a Brahmin village that lies eight miles north of Tanjore town. In the centre of the village is a single street containing thirty-six occupied and twelve unoccupied Brahmin houses. The Brahmins living in the village are small landowners, apart from six families who have recently sold their lands. Holdings of wet paddy on the outskirts of the village range from three to thirty acres per family. Near the Brahmin street are three streets of non-Brahmin tenants and servant castes comprising twenty houses of *Konan* tenants and cowherds; seven of *Kallan* paddy merchants and small cultivators – twelve of toddy-tappers, cultivators since prohibition; six of recently arrived *Ahambatiyan* and *Pataiyatchi* tenants; four of temple priests; three of potters; one of *Tevatiyan* prostitutes and low-caste temple dancers; four of *Ambalakkaran* fishermen; two of Maratha coolies; one each of blacksmiths, goldsmiths and carpenters; two of barbers; one of washer men; one of Muslim watchmen and one of Gypsies, who are now employed as road sweepers. The bulk of agricultural labour is done by landless labourers, formerly serfs, of the *Pallan* caste, who lived in eighty-nine houses in five streets, beyond paddy fields outside the village proper. Kumbapettai has no *Parayans* but employs two families from the next village to remove the dead cattle and beat drums at funerals.

Until about twenty years ago Brahmin families living in the village owned village land and held economic control over their tenants and Adi Dravida labourers. Forty years back all non-Brahmins of Kumbapettai were either tenants of Brahmins or specialised village servants working for the Brahmins and each other. *Konans*, the dominant non-Brahmin caste of the village leased land on an annual share cropping tenure from the Brahmins, from which they retained one-fifth of the crop for their maintenance and cultivation expenses. In addition, some worked as cowherds and gardeners for Brahmins and were paid monthly in paddy.

At present, Kumbapettai has moved about halfway in the transition from this relatively stationary feudal subsistence economy to a much wider-scale, expanding capitalist economy. First, one third of the land has in the last twenty years been sold by impoverished Brahmins to more prosperous traders or professional men from Tanjore and neighbouring towns. Further, twelve Brahmin families who have houses and own lands in the village have temporarily emigrated to towns, some to Madras, where they work as clerks in government offices, as teachers or as vegetarian restaurant owners. Some of these absentee landowners come home twice annually at harvest time to receive rent in kind from their tenants; others give their land on sub-tenure. Other non-Brahmins have become partly or totally emancipated from the feudal system in modern forms of work. Most of the seven *Kallan* householders, descendants of the ones who came fifty years ago earn a living as paddy merchants. Ten out of the sixty-seven non-Brahmin families have managed to buy between one and four acres of land from the Brahmins, which they cultivate themselves. Members of all castes when they can afford it, visit the cinema theatre in Tanjore and in the nearby town. The villagers often travel on buses and trains. Few families now receive clothing from their landlords. Most are required to buy it from the town themselves. Most important, the village as a whole is now in debt to the town. In short, the village is annually participating to an increasing extent in the wider urban economy.

The Brahmins were until recently, by reason of their economic power, able to prevent disputes within their village from passing into the hands of the local police, or,

alternatively, to negotiate with the police in such a way that their own authority, and traditional custom, were upheld. But today Brahmins complain that with the gradual loss of their economic power over the lower castes, the loyalty of tenants and labourers is no longer what it was, and the unity of the village is declining. The unity of the village was formerly dramatised in rituals at the annual temple festival of *Uritaicciyamman*, the mother-goddess of the village. This goddess like all village deities is a non-Brahman deity; though she is worshipped by the Brahmins and is regarded by them as an aspect of Sakti. Annually, however, at the large temple festival, all castes combine in rituals, which are sponsored by the Brahmins and conducted by both Brahmin and Non-Brahmin temple priests.

To sum up, the major share of India's rural population lives in nucleated villages, which most commonly have a settlement form described as agglomerate. Such settlements, though unplanned, are divided by caste into distinct wards and grow outward from a recognisable core area. The dominant and higher castes tend to live in the core area, while the lower artisan and service castes, as well as Muslim groups, generally occupy more peripheral localities. When the centrally located castes increase in population, they either sub divide their existing, often initially large, residential compounds, add second and even third stories to their existing houses, leap-frog over lower-castes to a new area on the village periphery, or, in rare cases where land is available, found a completely new village.

Within the shapeless agglomerated villages, streets are typically narrow, twisting, and unpaved, often ending in culs-de-sac. There are usually a few open spaces where people often gather. It may be adjacent to a temple or mosque, at the main village well, in areas where grain is threshed or where grain and oil seeds are milled, and in front of the homes of the leading families of the village or under a close-by shady tree. In the village, depending on the size of the village, might be found the panchayat hall, a few shops, a tea stall, a public radio hooked up to a loud speaker, a small post office, and perhaps a *dharmshala*. The village school is usually on the edge of the village in order to provide pupils with adequate playing space. Another common feature along the margin of a

village is a grove of mangoes or other trees, which provides shade for people and animals and often contains a large well:

There are many regional village patterns. Hamlets, each containing only one or more castes, commonly surround villages in the eastern Gangetic Plain. Scheduled Castes and herding castes are likely to occupy such hamlets. In southern India, especially in Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, villages have a more planned layout, with streets running north-south and east-west in straight lines. In many tribal areas the typical village consists of rows of houses along a single street or perhaps two or three parallel streets. (Prasad, 2003:175)

In areas of rugged terrain, where relatively level spaces for building are limited, settlements often conform in shape to ridgelines, and few grow to be larger than hamlets. Finally, according to Prasad (2003:189), in particularly aquatic environments, such as the Gangetic delta and the tidal backwaters of Kerala, agglomerations of even hamlet-size are rare; most rural families instead live singly or in clusters of only a few households on their individual plots of owned or rented land.

Most village houses are small, simple, and single-storey structures, housing both people and livestock in one or just a few rooms. Roofs typically are flat and made of mud in dry regions, but in areas with considerable precipitation they are generally sloped for drainage and made of rice straw, clay tiles or other thatching materials. The wetter the region, the greater is the pitch of the roof. In some wet regions, especially in tribal areas, bamboo walls are more common than those of mud, and houses often stand on piles above ground level. The houses usually are windowless and contain a minimum of furniture, a space for food, water, and implements, a few shelves and pegs for other possessions, a niche in the wall to serve as the household altar, and usually a few decorations, such as pictures of gods or film stars, family photographs, a calendar, or perhaps some memento of a pilgrimage. In one corner of the house or in the exterior is the earthen hearth, where all meals are cooked. Electricity, running water, and toilet facilities are generally absent. Secluded spots on the edge of the village serve the latter

need. The hot sun quickly decomposes the waste matter of humans and cattle. According to Shankar:

The streets are unpaved and electric supply is not adequate. The roads remain very dusty for a few months and water supply is somewhat polluted in most cases. Sanitation is generally very poor and the sewer systems are practically non-existent. (1998:165)

Almost everywhere in India, the dwellings of the affluent households are larger and usually built of more durable materials, such as brick or stone. Their roofs are also of sturdier construction, sometimes of corrugated iron, and often rest on sturdy timbers or steel beams. Windows, usually barred for security, are common. The number of rooms, the furnishings and the interior and exterior décor, especially the entrance gate, generally reflect the wealth of the family. There is typically an interior compound where much of the harvest will be stored. Within the compound, there maybe a private well or even a hand pump, an area for bathing, and a walled latrine enclosure, which is periodically cleaned by the village sweeper. Animal stalls; granaries, and farm equipment are in spaces distinct from those occupied by people.

Nomadic groups also may be found in most parts of India. Some are small bands of wandering entertainers, ironworkers and animal traders. A group known as the *Banjari*, originating in Rajasthan and related to the Gypsies of Europe, roams over large areas of central India and the Deccan, largely as agricultural labourers and earth workers. Many tribal people practice similar occupations seasonally. Finally, in the semi-arid and arid regions, where agriculture is either impossible or precarious, herders of cattle, sheep, goats, and camels live in a symbiotic relationship with local or nearby cultivators.

The Village as a Social/Lived Space

Villages form the basis of the cultural, social and economic life of the country. The real Indian society still lives in the villages. The essence of Indian life and culture can be seen primarily in the villages. The village community anywhere in India, be it in

Uttar Pradesh or Tamil Nadu or Kerala, has a typical basic form. This form may vary slightly or substantially from region to region or state to state. However, the essential features remain the same. According to Powell:

All Indian villages were regarded as having been originally constituted in a single typical form; this form being, consequently spoken of as of archaic date and of 'Aryan' parentage. So conceived, the village community, was asserted to represent a group of persons or households who cultivated and owned their land in common. (1989:2)

Though the Indian village communities may differ locally in detail, and may exhibit signs of decay and change, for the purposes of this study they may be denoted by a representative form to which all approximate. The evolution of the village community in India is quite interesting and a quick glance at the Indian village community is attempted here. A close inspection and analysis of the Indian village reveals that a well-knit, organised village community existed in India even in the Vedic age. The village community seen today is not of recent origin. It started evolving centuries back. A basic feature can be seen in any period – the basic unit was the family, which consisted of a large number of people that included the parents, children, a large number of relatives and also people associated with them. The family at that time was quite large. A number of families were organised under a headman and many such groups amalgamated into larger groups, which ultimately led to the formation of a small kingdom. The evolution of the rural community in India falls primarily into three phases or stages:

- a. Rural society during the ancient period (From about 4000 B.C. to the end of the Hindu rule in 4th century A.D.)
- b. Rural society during the medieval period (From the end of the Hindu rule to the end of the Muslim rule. c.1707)

- c. Rural society during the modern period (From the end of the Muslim rule and the coming of the British in the first half of the 18th century to the present.).

Villages seem to have originated when families in the ancient period decided to live together in the interests of their security, preservation and labour. This took place probably much before the Vedas. In the Vedic literature itself there are detailed mentions and descriptions of the village community of the period. The smallest unit of social life in those days was the family and a village was composed of several families. Many villages united to form a nation (Dube, 1990:98-106). The concept of a nation was certainly very narrow then. Since the people living in the villages were born out of the same forefather, naturally they had common traits and characteristics.

For the sake of convenience, the study of the village society in ancient India can be divided into a number of phases such as the mythological period, the *puranic* or post-Vedic period, the Buddhist period and the Maurya, Gupta and later periods. During the mythological period, (c.4000 – 3000 B.C.) “The village was the primary and elementary unit of administration” (Singh, 1990:64). Information can be obtained of the society of this period from the epics like *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Apart from the detailed and comprehensive description of various aspects of social life that they provide, the epics are also a treasure house of information about the socio-economic and religio-political organisation of the villages. We also understand that, “forts were built at a particular place for the defence of the people and the people living around the fort constituted a village” (Singh, 1990:66).

Villages had their own inter-village organisation. For defence and other administrative purposes, villages were clubbed together to form a federation of villages. While, the leader of a village was known as ‘gramin’, the other heads were known by different names:

The head of a group of ten villages was known as ‘Das gramin’ and the leader of a group of twenty was called ‘Vinshatic’. The head of a group of hundred was

known as 'Shat gramin' and the leader of a group of thousand villages was 'Adhipati'. (Singh, 1990:67)

Ample information about life in the *puranic* age (from c.3000 B.C. – 600 B.C.) is obtained from works like the *Manu Smrithi* (Butlet, 1967:85-92) of the 1st century B.C. It gives detailed information about the structure of the village society. Manu says that the members of the rural community found solutions to the problems that they faced. The leader of the village during this period also was known as the 'Gramin'. The leader of a hundred villages was called 'Shatesh' and that of thousand villages 'Shastresh'. There were smaller units of organisation too with ten villages and twenty villages. In this period the leader of ten villages was named 'Vinshi' and twenty villages 'Deshi' (Shankar, 1998:89). We also understand from the literature of the period that the organisation of the village community and the rural community in India had been growing continuously since the Vedic and post-Vedic times.

According to Desai, Buddhist literature also gives a vivid picture of the socio-economic and political structure of the rural community of the Buddhist period (c. 6th cent. B.C. – 4th cent. B.C.). During this period there was a scientifically planned and streamlined structure for the village community and the administration of the village was entrusted to a village *panchayat*. The rural community had a democratic structure and was well geared to take care of the various aspects of human life (Desai, 2006: 188). The structure of the rural community remained more or less the same during the periods of the rule of the Mauryas, the Guptas (c. 4th century B.C. – A.D. 600) and the period soon after that. During this period, the rural community was recognised as the basic unit of the social, economic and political structures of the nation. There was some difference in the structure according to the new needs and requirements. There was a quasi-democratic system of government, the vestiges of which can still be found in the form of the village *panchayat*.

During the medieval period (c.A.D. 600 – 1707) the political scene of the country changed much and the rural society too underwent a great transformation as far as the political, economic and cultural conditions were concerned. Another factor to be noted in

this context is the change in the patterns of living of the rural community. When we come to the modern period too, we see that the rural community in India has taken long strides during the period. This period commences with the end of the Moghul rule in India (1707) and the advent of the British rule. The modern period may rightly be divided into two, namely, the pre and post independence periods.

During the British rule or the pre-independence period the country was administered centrally. The system of decentralisation in administration that was an essential part of the Indian administration and political system hitherto, was given up. The period also witnessed the relegation of agriculture to the background because of scientific, industrial and technological developments. The Zamindari, Rayatwari systems and the new system of land settlement were introduced during this time. At the same time the British also brought about changes in the specific systems of government of the rural community. They did not want the villages to become self-dependent and self-sufficient as once they were. The post-independence period saw the rural community in India undergoing a lot of changes. The leaders of the Indian independence movement were fully aware of the fact that India cannot grow and prosper unless the village society became prosperous. Hence they demanded the amelioration of the adverse conditions of the village community. Efforts were initiated to make a scientific study of the rural community and formulate programmes for the welfare and prosperity of the rural society. Apart from successive governments and official agencies, non-official agencies and individual institutions have also made serious attempts to better the conditions of the rural folk.

The classification, which we have seen above, is based on time. There are other classifications of the rural society based on other parameters. Let us look at a couple of them. The famous sociologist Peake has made an interesting classification of the Indian rural society on the basis of the character of the people living in the villages (Misra, 1988:107-123). He has classified the rural society into three: Migratory, semi permanent, and permanent. In the migratory type of society, people resort to such professions that are not of a permanent nature. They are migratory in character and even those engaged in

agriculture change their location of cultivation often. Since these people do not stick to a place but move away often, this type of society is called migratory rural society. The semi-permanent rural society is an inferior type of rural society as far as the permanent place of agriculture of the residents is concerned. Here the people do not live anywhere in a permanent manner. They change their places, but again return to their original places to stay there for some time. They stay for a longer time at a particular place when compared to the migratory type of people. In the permanent agricultural rural society, people live permanently in certain villages and also resort to agriculture at a fixed place. They neither shift their place of residence nor their place of living. Most village studies are based on this type of society.

Yet another classification of the village society is into traditional, modern and postmodern societies (Ahuja, 1999:72-74). A traditional society lays emphasis on religion (and magic) in behavioural norms and values, implying continuity (deep links) with a real or imagined past. It widely accepts rituals, sacrifices and holy feasts. Broadly speaking, a traditional society is described as one in which an individual's status is determined by his birth and he does not strive for social mobility; the individual's behaviour is governed by customs, traditions, norms and values having deep links with the past, and the social practices of people vary only slightly from generation to generation; social organisation (stable pattern of social relationships of individuals and subgroups within a society that provides regularity and predictability in social interaction) is based on hierarchy; kinship relations predominate in interaction and the individual identifies himself with primary groups; the individual is given more importance in social relations than what his position actually warrants; people are conservative; the economy is simple, i.e., tool economy (and not machine economy) prevails and is conspicuous; economic productivity above subsistence level is relatively low; and mythical thought (and not logical reasoning) predominates in society.

Modern society, on the other hand, focuses on science and reason. Modernity is a substantial break with traditional society. According to Hall and Gay (1996:126) the six distinctive characteristics of a modern society (which also distinguish it from traditional

society) are the decline of religion and the rise of a secular materialistic culture (religious characteristic); the replacement of a feudal economy by an economy in which a money system provides the medium for exchange in trade (economic characteristic); the dominance of secular political authority over the state and the marginalisation of religious influence in state/political matters (political characteristic); the decline of a social order based on simple division of labour and the development of new divisions of labour based on specialisation, the emergence of new classes, and changed relations between men and women (social characteristic); the forming of new nations (community characteristic – ethnic or national) having their own identities and traditions to suit their own purposes, e.g., rejection of aristocracy and monarchy by France, Britain accepting monarchy only as a symbol, Egypt rejecting monarchy and accepting democracy, and so on (cultural characteristic) and the rise of a scientific, rationalist way of looking at the world (intellectual characteristic).

Thus, while the traditional society is characterised by ritual, custom, collectivity, community ownership, status quo and continuity, and the simple division of labour, the modern society is characterised by the influence of science, emphasis on reason and rationality, belief in progress, viewing the government and the state as essential in bringing about progress, emphasis on economic development and a complex division of labour, perceiving human-beings as capable of acquiring great control over nature and the environment, and seeing the world in terms of dualisms or opposites.

Post-modern society, or late modernity, concentrates on critical awareness and is concerned about the damaging effects of applied science on nature, the environment and humanity. It points out the risks and unintended negative consequences of the pursuit of progress. From nationalism (emphasised in modern society), it moves to the process of globalisation. Instead of giving importance to economic development (as in modern society), it gives importance to culture. Unlike modern society (which sees world in terms of opposites or dualisms), post modern society views unities, similarities and connections as important (Ahuja, 1999:236).

When we come to the actualities of the Indian village, the socio-cultural dimensions of the rural community offer a most interesting picture. Thus, rural people, whose main occupation is agriculture and who are very close to nature, have close personal ties of kinship and friendship, and lay stress on tradition, consensus, and informality. The density of population in villages is so low that it not only affects production and distribution but also the total life of the community and the peoples' living standards. Both birth rate and death rate are high in villages in comparison to cities, which adversely affect the quantitative and the qualitative growth of the rural people. Another aspect of the life of rural people (which requires study) is their distribution in age and sex groups. "About 45 per cent of rural people belong to a proactive age (15-59) and about 55% are sustained by working people" (*Manpower Profile, India*, 1998:135). The preponderance of children aged below fourteen years and the aged above sixty years considerably influence the economic and social life of the working section of the people. Similarly, the fact that the number of females per 1000 males is higher in the rural areas than in the urban areas and that 33 per cent of rural women belong to the working force (as against 56.1% of rural men) "affects sex mores, social codes, social rituals, and social institutions" (Ahuja, 1999:299). The family structure, caste composition, religious variations, economic life, land relations, poverty, and the standard of life in the villages also affect the villager's life.

The village family

Family being the basic unit of society is the primary institution that controls and regulates the various aspects of society. In order to analyse how the family unit contributes to the structures of a rural society, we need to first look at a few definitions of the family. Elliot and Meril define family as follows:

Family may be defined as the biological unit composed of husband, wife and their children. The family may also be considered as the social institution, as socially approved organisation for meeting definite human needs. (Singh, 1990:137)

Another definition of family by Burgess and Locke is as below:

Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption, consisting of a single household interacting, communicating with each other in respect of social role of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister and creating and maintaining a common culture. (Singh, 1990:138)

Family then, as a reproductive or a biological unit, consists of a man and a woman having a socially approved sexual relationship, and whatever offspring (natural or adopted) they might have. As a social unit, a family is referred to as:

A group of persons of both sexes, related by marriage, blood or adoption, performing roles based on age, sex and relationship, and socially distinguished as making up a single household or a sub-household. (Ahuja, 1999:97)

While the above definitions focus primarily on biological or blood relationships, Aileen Ross's definition of family includes the physical, social and psychological elements of family life. According to Ross, family is "a group of people usually related as some particular type of kindred, who may live in one household and whose unity resides in patterning of rights and duties, sentiments and authority" (1961:31).

Again, there are also different forms of families. Scholars have classified these forms differently, on the basis of their approach and methods of analysis. Chattopadhyay (2006:155) has given three types of family on the basis of the people who live in one: *simple* (man, wife, and unmarried children), *compound* (two simple families, say, ego, his wife and unmarried children, and ego's parents and unmarried brothers and sisters), and *composite* (lineal and collateral joint families). At the same time, on the basis of *authority*, families have been classified as husband-dominant, wife-dominant, equalitarian, and autonomic families. Burgess and Locke have classified them as *institutional* and *companionship* families on the basis of the behaviour of the individual members (Ahuja, 1999:98). In the former family, the behaviour of the members is controlled by mores and public opinion, while in the latter family; behaviour arises from mutual affection and consensus. Families are classified, on the basis of kinship ties, as

conjugal (priority given to marital ties) and *consanguine* (priority given to blood ties). Zimmerman (1956:20) has classified them as *trustee* (where members have to conform to family norms and they have no individual rights), *atomistic* (in which conventional mores lose their significance and each member can make his own choice) and *domestic* (which is an intermediate type between trustee and atomistic).

When we come to Indian society, generally, two main types of families can be observed: the single unit family consisting of the father, mother and children; and the joint family that consists of the grand parents, uncles, cousins, nephews, etc. The family provides emotional, social and financial security to its members. Often the resources of the entire family are pooled and each man looks upon the head of the family as responsible for meeting all his needs and those of his wife and children. Each member is loyal to the family name, prestige and property. The village family is generally an extended one in which sometimes two or three generations live together. The family head may not necessarily be the breadwinner: "The oldest man in the family usually remains the head and is consulted in important decisions about the children and property and marriage" (Zaidi, 1970:41).

In India, the structure of the family unit varies considerably and is determined by numerous variables. Caudwell et al (1988) identify four major family types, which include: a nuclear family which is a conjugal couple with their unmarried children; a stem family which includes two married couples in different generations; a joint family which includes married siblings living together; and finally, a joint-stem family which is the classical full pyramid where the older couple has with them more than one of their married children and usually grandchildren. Any of these can be extended if other persons, usually relatives live with them. There is also the possibility of eroded families. For instance:

If a widowed mother lives with younger couple because both couples shared residence before the death of the widow's husband, this is an eroded stem family; but if the widow joined the younger couple for support only after the death of her husband, this could be regarded as an extended nuclear family...any family

structure more complex than a nuclear family [is] called a large family, irrespective of relative numbers of members. (1988:111)

The joint family is the oldest of the above four types and it is seen that the members of a family remain together constituting a joint family as long as the economic conditions are favourable. Mandelbaum argues along these same lines:

People tend to remain in joint families longer when economic factors favour such families. The poorest and lowest groups tend to have the fewest joint families, but even at these social levels, most families become joint for at least a time after a son marries. (1970:54)

Attwood referring specifically to rural families in Maharashtra states:

The ideal family is the patrilineal, patrilocal joint family, consisting of a senior married couple, their sons, and their sons' wives and children. Owing to various contingencies of fertility and mortality (and economic opportunity), this ideal is often not attained in practice; and when it is, it appears only as a phase in a long cycle of family growth and dissolution. Nevertheless, there are good economic reasons why this family type serves as a conscious goal for many villagers. In brief, the family can be more productive and more secure if it combines the skills and experience of a senior couple with the vigorous toil of one or more junior couples. It is vital to combine the specialized efforts of men and women, and equally vital to combine those of the senior and junior generation of adults. (1992:17)

It is also seen that there is a relationship between family type and land holdings. Caudwell et al illustrates this relationship:

Among those with no land at all, 71 per cent are found in nuclear families; with land up to 1 acre, 65 per cent; with land from 1 to 4 acres, 58 per cent; and with

over 4 acres, 46 per cent. With more resources and a need for more labour, there is more point in keeping a larger family together. (1998:129)

Family and familism play a decisive role in the material and cultural life of villages and in moulding the psychological characteristics of the rural collective. While the joint family continues to be the predominant form, nuclear family also exists as a result of the growth of market economy in the agrarian areas, the migration of youth to the cities, and the impact of urban socio-economic forces on the rural society. In spite of this change, in comparison to the urban family, the rural family is far more homogeneous, integrated, and organically functioning. The ties between parents and children, husband and wife, siblings and siblings and among affinal kin are stronger and last longer than those in an urban family.

Another characteristic of the rural family is that it is generally agriculture-oriented, that is, a very large majority of its members are engaged in agricultural occupations. Since the members of the rural family form a single economic unit, cooperate with one another in agricultural operations, hold property in common usually managed by the oldest member of the family, and since they spend most their time together, their beliefs, attitudes, aspirations and values are generally similar. The interdependence of members on each other enables them to develop more collectivist family consciousness and less individualistic emotions. Though the impact of urbanisation, individualisation, education, etc., has weakened traditional authority structures, created centrifugal tendencies, and reduced economic homogeneity based on a single economic activity, yet the family has not become atomistic, and the family as an institution continues to be strong. Ahuja states:

It will not be illogical to hold that though the rural family is undergoing a qualitative change, the dominance of familism is dropping off, family ego is diminishing, and the rule of custom is being replaced by the rule of law, yet family is not disintegrating. (1999:300)

The most important type of family system that prevailed in India, and still prevails to some extent, is the Joint Family System. Let us see the salient features of this system. The concept of the joint family has varied with different scholars. While Karve (1953:26) regards 'co-residentiality' as important in jointness, Gould (1988), Desai (1956), Dube (1990), and Kolenda (1997) do not regard co-residentiality and commensality as essential ingredients of jointness. Desai (1964) gives importance to fulfilment of obligations towards kin, even if the residence is separate and there is no common ownership of property. According to Karve "the traditional ancient Indian family (Vedic and Epic periods) was joint in terms of residence, property, and functions" (1953:21). She has given five characteristics of the joint family: common residence, common kitchen, common property, common family worship, and kinship relationship. The word 'common' or 'joint property' here (according to The Hindu Succession Act, 1956) means that all the living, male and female members, up to three generations have a share in the paternal property. On this basis, she defines joint family as "a group of people who generally live under one roof, eat food cooked at one hearth, hold property in common, participate in common family worship, and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred" (1953:22).

According to Desai (1956), co-residence and common kitchen are not as important dimensions of joint family as intra-family relationships are. He thinks that when two families having kinship relationship are living separately but function under one common authority, it will be a joint family and calls it functional joint family. He defines a traditional joint family as one, which consists of three or more generations. He defines two-generation family as a marginal joint family. Mukherjee (1965:352-98), on the other hand, while giving five types of relations—conjugal, parental-filial, inter-sibling, lineal and affinal – has maintained that a joint family is a co-resident and commensal kin-group which consists of one or more of the first three types of relations and either lineal and /or affinal relations among the members.

There have been also some other significant classifications of the types of families. Desai (1956:38) has given five types of family – nuclear, functionally joint,

functionally and substantially (in terms of property) joint, marginally joint, and traditional joint. Kapadia (1959:74) has given five types of family: nuclear (husband, wife and unmarried children), nuclear with married sons (what Desai calls Marginal Joint and Ross calls small joint family), lineal joint, collateral joint, and nuclear family with a dependent such as a widowed sister, etc. Ross (1966:34) has given four types of family: large joint, small joint, nuclear and nuclear with dependants.

Taking all these types of families together as given by different scholars, a joint family may be defined as “a multiplicity of genealogically related nuclear families, joint in residence and commensal relations and functioning under one authority” (Desai, 1956:38). Gore has said that a joint family should be viewed as “a family of co-parceners and their dependents instead of viewing it as a multiplicity of nuclear families” (Gore, 1968:6-7). He holds that in a nuclear family, the emphasis is on conjugal relationship while in a joint family, emphasis is on filial and fraternal relationships. According to Gore, joint family is of three types: filial joint family (parents and their married sons with their offspring), fraternal joint family (two married brothers and their children) and filial and fraternal (combined) joint family.

In addition to the above, there is the fissioned family too. A nuclear family, which has been separated from the father’s or the married brother’s family, can be considered as a fissioned family. This fissioned family can be totally independent or dependent on some other nuclear family related through some type of kinship. The joint families can also be classified in terms of types of kin (primary, secondary, tertiary and distant) involved. Thus, there are three joint family types – large range kinship family with primary, secondary, tertiary and distant kin; intermediate range kinship family with primary, secondary, and tertiary kin; and small range kinship family with primary and secondary kin.

The joint family displays certain specific characteristics. These characteristics can be thus described: The joint family has an authoritarian structure, i.e., the power to make decisions lies with the head of the family (patriarch). It has a familial organisation, i.e., the individual’s interests are subordinated to the interests of the family as a whole. So

also, the status of members is determined by their age and relationship. The status of a man is higher than his wife; in two generations, the status of a person in the higher generation is higher than the status of a person in the lower generation; in the same generation, the status of a person of higher age is higher than the status of a person of lower age; and the status of a woman is determined by the status of her husband in the family. So also, the filial and fraternal relationships get preference over conjugal relationship in a joint family, that is, the husband-wife relationship is subordinated to the father-son or brother-brother relationship. It is also seen that the joint family functions on the ideal of joint responsibility. If a father takes a loan to marry his daughter, it is also the responsibility of his sons to repay the loan. All members of the joint family get equal attention. A poor brother's son will be admitted to the same school (even if costly) as the rich brother's son and finally the authority in the family (between men and men, men and women, and women and women) is determined on the principle of seniority. Though the eldest male (or female) may delegate the authority to someone else, yet even this delegation is based on the principle of seniority, which limits the scope for the emergence of individualism.

It cannot be said that the joint family is disappearing in India, or that a stage can be envisaged when the joint family will be totally lost from the mental horizons of the people; only the 'cutting off' point of jointness is changing. Instead of large joint families, there will be only locally functioning effective small joint families of two generations or so. At the same time, a nuclear-fissioned family (of husband, wife and unmarried children) will not be totally independent but will be functionally dependent on (remain joint with) some primary kin like father or brother, etc. This is evident from the work of various scholars such as Desai, Kapadia, Ross, Gore, Shah and Sachidananda who have conducted empirical studies on the structural changes of families in India in the last four decades.

Desai (1964:41-43) studied the families in Mahuwa (Gujarat) and found that the nuclearity is increasing and jointness is decreasing. He discovered that the spirit of individualism is not growing, as about half of the householders are joint with other

householders. Another finding was that the radius of kinship relations within the circle of jointness is becoming smaller. The joint relations are mostly confined to parents-children, siblings and uncles-nephews, i.e., lineal relationship is found between father, son and grandson, and the collateral relationship is found between a man and his brothers and uncles.

Kapadia (1966:112-116) studied rural and urban families (18% urban and 82% rural) in Gujarat (Navasari town and its 15 surrounding villages). His main conclusions are that in the rural community, the proportion of joint families is almost the same as that of the nuclear families and when viewed in terms of castes, in villages, higher castes have predominantly joint families while lower castes show a greater incidence of nuclear families. But in the urban community, there are more joint families than nuclear families. In the 'impact' villages (i.e. villages within the radius of 7 to 8 km. from a town), the family pattern closely resembles the rural pattern and has no correspondence with the urban pattern. Taking all areas (rural, urban, and impact) together, it may be held that the joint family structure is not being nuclearised. The difference in the rural and the urban family patterns is the result of modification of the caste pattern by economic factors.

Familism is a salient feature of Indian society. Burgess and Locke have defined it as "the acceptance of the welfare of the family group as the central value to which the interests of the individual members are subordinated" (Singh, 1990:142). This unique feature of the Indian society exhibits the strong hold of kinship and kin obligations. Every person expects that his relatives should help him. The wealthy man in the family feels guilty if he does not give a helping hand to the less fortunate members. This kinship ties not only the members of a joint family, but also the members of the same caste. Even today, relatives from villages and towns invade the house of a kin and stay there as long as they want. The guests are content with the simple food served and other primary facilities. This familial integration is sometimes identified as '*Kula dharma*' (Singh, 1990:143). The strength of kinship ties is also seen in the institutions of arranged marriages. At the time of celebration of marriages, festivals, feasts etc. all the relatives are invited. The members of the family look after all the old, handicapped and ailing.

This shows the strong sense of belonging to the kin group and the caste group. Traditionally, the village is the source of training for its children. They remain the responsibility of the mother or the grandmother until they are ready to go to schools or to the field to work:

The mother is often protective and to a certain extent permissive. The role of the father is only the peripheral in the early life of the child. The image of the father created in the mind of the child is one of the authority and power. (Zaidi, 1970:42)

The role of the father in the village is a harmonious balance between a strict teacher and sympathetic and informal friend. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is an old adage, which the villager still believes in. A child is mostly punished for disobedience. This attitude reflects one of the fundamental values of the society. "Respect for the elders is a very important virtue in the village society, and disregard of it is not tolerated by the family" (Zaidi, 1970:42). The parents often decide the future careers of their children. The father always has in mind the future of his children. The parents always wish their sons to be educated and obtain a good job. Under the present village conditions, the father does not wish his son to continue living in the village where opportunities are rare; he would prefer his son to move to the city and seek pastures new.

In the context of village culture, the role and status of a daughter are quite different from that of a son. The daughter leaves the parents after the marriage and goes to live with her husband. A daughter in a traditional village family does not provide any financial support to the parents. In fact, the parents consider it something shameful to accept financial help from a daughter or her husband. The qualities deemed essential in a good daughter are her doing good, studying hard, conducting herself properly and obeying her elders and husband. She should also have a good moral character, irreproachable behaviour and good housekeeping abilities. As for the son, his status is higher than that of the daughter, and he is supposed to look after his parents in their old age. Bad company, gambling, addiction to drugs and liquor, disobedience and misuse of money are disapproved in a son.

Hence we see that in India, the family is a very important social institution. It remains the primary unit of production and consumption. The family works on the land and the exchange of services is largely carried out between families. “Traditionally the family is the most important social institution within the village. If a family member has to make a choice between family duties and outside obligations, then certainly family duties come first” (Wiser, 1971:152). Research has revealed the importance and documented the influence the family has on the individual. According to Mandelbaum:

Each person learns the fundamentals of his culture and society from his family; he experiences his main satisfactions and shares his personal achievements with other family members. In his caste-group he is primarily identified as a member of his family, and he assumes the reputation of his family in the village. His whole life experience is embedded in his family relations. The main transitions of the life cycle are family celebrations, and the grand occasions of a person’s life are mainly those that occur in the context of the family. (1970:41)

Although the family remains a vital institution and an important influence in an individual’s life, in recent years there has been a shift in its role in India. Today, individual achievement is also highly respected. One does not automatically “assume the reputation of one’s family” anymore (1970:41). What one achieves based on one’s own initiative is an important and valued aspect of life. Another change visible in recent years is reflected in the source of knowledge and learning. Traditionally, “each person learned the fundamentals of his culture and society from his family” (Mandelbaum, 1970: 41). But today, news papers, periodicals, television, films etc; are important conveyors of culture, and children learn many of their values by reading and watching the above. Their aspirations, goals and ideals often reflect more of what they see in newspapers and magazines and watch on television and films than what they learn from their parents and grandparents.

The Marriage System

Marriage is perceived by sociologists as a system of roles for a man and a woman whose union has been given social sanction as husband and wife. “The equilibrium of the system requires adjustment between the two partners so that the role enactment of one (partner) corresponds to the role expectations of the other” (Ahuja, 1999:112). Indologists look upon Hindu marriage as a *sanskara*, having the three objects of *dharma* (fulfilment of religious duties), *rati* (sex), and *prajananam* (procreation). Marriage performed for *dharma* was called *dharmik* marriage, while one performed for sexual pleasure was regarded as *adharmik* marriage. Marriage was considered sacred because of several reasons. *Dharma* was the highest aim of marriage and the performance of the marriage ceremony included certain rites (like *havan*, *kanyadan*, *panigrahana*, *saptapadi*, etc), which were considered sacred. The rites were performed before the sacred god *Agni* by reciting *mantras* from the sacred scriptures *Vedas* by a sacred Brahmin and the union (between man and woman) was considered indissoluble and irrevocable. The chastity of the woman and the faithfulness of the man were given great importance.

Even today, the sanctity of the marriage is recognised by Hindus; in spite of the fact that marriage is performed for companionship and not for performing duties and whenever found a failure, it is dissolved by divorce. Mutual fidelity and devotion to the partner are still considered to be the essence of marriage. According to Kapadia, “Hindu marriage continues to be a sacrament; only it is raised to an ethical plane” (Kapadia, 1966:163). In simple words, marriage in Hindu culture is a spiritual union between a man and a woman for spiritual realisation. Hindu culture also recognises (besides the above-mentioned *brahma* marriage) seven other forms of marriage with lesser and lower ideals. Four of these marriages--*gandharva* (entering into sex before getting the social sanction of society), *asura* (eloping with a woman), *rakshasya* (forcibly abducting a woman from her home) and *paisacha* (man molesting a girl when she is asleep or intoxicated or in a state of unbalanced mind) had such a low ideal that they were termed as *adharmik* marriages. The remaining three – *daiva* (woman is married to a priest, a man of intellect and money, belonging to an aristocratic class), *prajapatiya* (entering wedlock for

biological function of sex satisfaction and having children) and *arsha* (woman marrying a man of intellect and character (sage) who is reluctant to enter marriage, so that she may get intelligent progeny and good home environment) – were given the label of *dharmik* marriages. The main reason for recognising the four-*adharmik* marriages as marriages was to confer the respectful status of a wife on the ‘injured’ woman.

The regulation of *mate selection* in Hindu society is subsumed under the concepts of endogamy, exogamy and hypergamy. *Endogamy* is a social rule that requires a person to select the spouse from within the caste and sub-caste; *exogamy* forbids selection from the same *gotra* and *sapindas* and according to hypergamy, a boy from the upper caste can marry a girl from the lower caste and vice-versa. In early society, caste endogamy was functional because it preserved the occupational secrets of the caste, maintained the solidarity of the caste and checked decrease in the membership or strength of the caste. In the present society, through it makes marital adjustment easier, yet it has proved to be dysfunctional in some ways since it creates inter-caste tensions which adversely affect the political unity of the country, makes the field of mate-selection limited and circumscribed, and creates problems of dowry, child marriage, etc.

The exogamous taboos were designed for restricting free marital relations between parents and offspring and between siblings. It was imposed for preventing transmission of family defects through heredity and for the fear that there may be clandestine love affairs and consequent loss of morals. However, these arguments are not accepted today for the reasons that decay of lineage is not reported among non-Hindu communities (say, Muslims) who practice cousin marriages. Kapadia has said that the “rule of *sapinda* exogamy was of the nature of a pious recommendation and remained so till the end of the eighth century” (Kapadia, 1966:127). Today, though this rule is followed by and large by all Hindus, yet cases of cousin marriages are not unknown.

The mate selection today involves three important issues: party to selection, criteria of selection, and field of selection. While earlier, parents selected mates for their children, now children believe in joint selection by parents and children, though cases of individual selection (i.e. selection by children themselves) are not rare. The criteria of

selecting mates by parents are quite different from those of children. While parents give importance to family status, caste, dowry and so forth, children give importance to education, character, physical appearance, skills, etc. The joint selection today keeps in mind the needs of the family as well as the interests of the person acquiring a spouse. No wonder, studies of scholars like Shah (1964), Cormack (1961), etc. showed that a very large number of young boys and girls wanted to select their mates in consultation with their parents.

Changes in the marriage system among Hindus may be analysed in seven areas: object of marriage, process of mate selection, form of marriage, age of marriage, economic aspect of marriage (dowry), stability of marriage (divorce), and widow remarriage. Of these, we have already discussed change in two areas, viz., change in the object of marriage (from *dharma* to companionship), and change in mate selection (party, criteria, and field of selection). Change in the form of marriage refers to change from polygamy to monogamy and change in age of marriage points to change from pre-puberty marriages to post-puberty marriages. The remaining three changes may be examined by analysing marriage legislation.

The Marriage Legislation enacted in India relate to the age at marriage, field of mate selection, number of spouses in marriage, dissolution of marriage, dowry, and remarriage. The important legislations relating to these aspects are The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (amended in 1978, dealing with age at marriage), the Special Marriage Act, 1954 (dealing with age at marriage, freedom of children to marry without parental consent, bigamy, and dissolving marriage), the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (amended in 1986, and dealing with age at marriage with parents' consent, bigamy and annulment of marriage), Anti Dowry Act, 1961, and the Widow Remarriage Act, 1856.

The first three Acts (of 1929, 1954 and 1955) pertaining to the age of marriage prescribe the marriage age of girls as 18 years and for boys as 21 years. The difference in the Acts is that the 1929 Act (amended in 1978) does not invalidate the marriage for violating the provisions in the Act. It only prescribes punishments for the bridegroom, parents, guardians and the priest (but not for women). The 1955 Act makes invalidation

of the marriage possible for violation of the age provision. This (1955) Act covers marriages performed with the consent of parents but the 1954 Act covers marriages performed through courts, with or without the parental consent. Both these Acts (1954 and 1955) prohibit bigamy and permit divorce also on various grounds and put restrictions on marriage within the degrees of prohibited relationships, unless custom permits such marriages. The Anti-Dowry Act, 1961, has made giving and taking dowry a legal offence. The Widow Remarriage Act, 1856 permits widows to remarry but forfeits them the right of maintenance from the property of the first husband. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956, has given a share to the wife and daughters in man's property equal to that of sons and brothers.

Social legislation is necessary for providing a new direction to culture and society by permitting change and removing evils by filling up the gap between social opinion and the social needs of the people. The function of the social legislations is to adjust the legal system continually to a society, which is constantly outgrowing that system. While social legislation is essential, the will to implement it is more crucial.

When we come to the Muslim society, we find that it is stratified not only among Shias and Sunnies but also among Ashraf (Siayed, Sheikh, Pathan, etc), Azlab (Momins, Mansooris, Ibrahims etc.), and Arzal (Halalkhour, etc.). The Ashrafs are the noble born, the Azlabs are lowborn, and the Arzals are the lowest of all. All these groups are endogamous and inter-marriages among them are condemned and discouraged. Muslim marriage, called *nikah*, unlike the sacramental marriage of the Hindus, is considered to be a civil contract. Its important objectives are control over sex, procreation of children and perpetuation of family, upbringing of children, and ordering of domestic life. But it will be wrong to say that Muslim marriage has no religious duty. It is an act of devotion and an act on *ibaddat*. Jang is, therefore, correct in maintaining "*nikah*, though essentially a contract, is also a devotional act. But is surely not sacrament like Hindus" (Ahuja, 1999:115). The Muslim marriage has five features: proposal and its acceptance, capacity to contract marriage, doctrine of equality, preference system, and *mahar*.

Marriage is an important occasion for each and everyone in the family. It is an occasion of joy and gaiety. The whole village takes part in the celebrations. Although marriage is technically a social and legal contract between couples, it is more significantly a tie between two families. It has generally acquired a religious significance owing to the religious orientations of the people. The customs and ceremonies of marriage in each community are clearly defined. As a general rule, a lot of money is needed for a wedding. There may be differences in the amount of money spent on different marriages but basically the ceremonies are same for every one, within the same community.

The lion's share of the marriages in the villages is arranged marriage. There are very strong social and religious conventions that support arranged marriages. Marriages in earlier times were more a tie between two families than between two individuals. In most cases, the father or the eldest brother arranges it. Sometimes uncles, cousins and brothers-in-law also take part in marriage negotiations. The young couples are not always consulted about each other's suitability. Usually the negotiations are made, the dowry is agreed upon and the date of the wedding ceremony is decided before the couples hear about it. Usually they are told that they are to be married to the son or daughter of such and such a person. The couples, being conscious of the cultural demands and generally adhering to the community beliefs and values accept the proposals without much ado. Besides, many village girls who do not have many occasions to meet men prefer that their parents find husbands for them. The womenfolk of the village are generally not aware of their rights and so till recently, most of them, and even now some of them, accept their subordination to men.

When the poor economic condition of the villages, is considered, the most important aspect of a village marriage is the expense involved. The marriage ceremony, which has become a sign of the family's social and financial status and of its conformity to the customs and traditions of the community, is also an occasion to exhibit family power and prestige. Since the expenses involved are very high, most of the village

families have to borrow money. In most cases, the father or the older brother borrows the money.

The dowry system is one of the greatest evils of the Indian society. Parents never wish for a girl child, as they have to bear the burden of a big dowry at the time of the girl's marriage. This even goes to the extent of killing the newborn girl child:

The dowry system is considered as one of the greatest evils of the whole country at present. In many cases, particularly in rich families, there are no contracts relating to dowry at all. There are mere expectations and fulfilments of expectations. (Misra, 1998:94)

In almost all cases, the bridegroom's family expects the bride's father to give his son-in-law enough to establish a home. It may be in the form of ornaments, money, clothes, bullocks, wristwatch, land etc., the usual presents being clothes, utensils, a couple of ornaments and some money. Usually the groom's parents look for a rich family from which to choose their daughter-in-law and the father of the bride accepts the situation because there is a greater responsibility in the case of a daughter than a son who is never thought a liability to a family.

Child marriage was a common practice at one time. Children were promised in marriage even at birth. This promise, which traditionally becomes an engagement, is therefore binding; unless the child refuses to uphold the promise of his parents when the child comes of age. Marriages are generally decided much ahead of time. The criteria for a good wife are usually skill in looking after the house, being a good cook, being able to sew, taking care of the cattle, having a fair complexion, good moral character, good family education etc. The life of a good village wife is not easy. In addition to the household chores she has to look after her husband and children. Sometimes she also has to help her husband in his work in the field.

Births too, like marriages, are occasions for rejoicing in the villages where people are unmindful of the population pressures and the need for family planning. A male child

is always preferred and so, on his birth there is great rejoicing and festivity. Usually the birth is celebrated by distributing sweets to relatives and friends. The naming ceremony is also very important.

Kinship System

Let us also examine the kinship system and its socio-cultural correlates. Marriage is a link between the family of orientation and the family of procreation. This fact of individual membership in two nuclear families gives rise to the kinship system. Kinship is defined as “a social relationship based upon family relatedness” (Ahuja, 1999:120). The relationship, which may be consanguineal (based on blood) or affinal (based on marriage), determines the rights and obligations of related persons. As such, kinship system is referred to as “a structured system, of statuses and roles and of relationship in which the kin (primary, secondary, tertiary and distant) are bound to one-another by complex interlocking ties” (Ahuja, 1999:121). Part of the reciprocal behaviour, characterising every relationship between kin, consists of the terms by which each addresses the other, i.e., by personal name or by kinship term (*pitaji, dadaji, behanji* or equivalents of the same in other languages) or by the combination of personal and kinship terms (‘Ram’s father,’ ‘Rita’s mother,’ etc). The kinship terms (of address and reference) which could be elementary (which cannot be reduced to any other term, e.g., *mata, pita, kaka, chacha, bhai, bahen*, etc.) or derivative (which is compounded from an elementary term, e.g., *bahnoi, mausa*, etc.) or descriptive (which combines two or more elementary terms, e.g., *mauseri bahen, phuphera bhai* etc.) can be differentiated as isolative (applied only to one kin as defined by generation, sex and genealogical connection, e.g., *bhai, bahen, pati, patni*, etc.) or classificatory (applied to persons of two or more kinship categories (e.g. cousins, used for father’s brother’s son as well as mother’s sister’s son) (Ahuja, 1999:167). Since the classificatory terms ignore one or more fundamental criteria (e.g. sex, age, generation, affinity, collaterality, bifurcation, etc.) they reduce the number of kinship categories from thousands to a very modest number.

After family, kinship groups play a very crucial role in daily life, rituals and social ceremonies. People turn to their kin not only for help in the exigencies of life but also on

regular occasions. The important kinship groups, after the family, are *vansh* (lineage) and *gotra* (clan). *Vansh* is a consanguineous unilateral descent group whose members trace themselves from known and real common ancestors. It may be either patrilineal or matrilineal and is an exogamous unit. The members of a *vansh* are treated as brothers and sisters. Lineage ties remain up to a few generations only. The main linkage among the families of a lineage is common participation in ritual functions like birth, death etc. The *vansh* passes into *gotra*, which though is a unilateral kin group, is larger than the lineage. It is an exogamous group. The matrilineal kin (related through mother) are as important in an individual's life as patrilineal kin (related through father).

The kinship features in North and Central India differ from those in South India. Karve speaks of the salient features of kinship in North, Central and South India (Karve, 1953:170-79). The socio-cultural correlates of kinship system are language, caste and (plain and hilly) region. In spite of the effect of these three factors on the kinship relations, it is possible to talk of kinship organisation on some collective bases, for example, on caste and zonal basis. Though kinship behaviour in the northern zone changes slightly from region to region and from caste to caste within each region, yet comparative study shows that it is possible to talk of an 'ideal' northern pattern referring to practices and attitudes generally found to be common among a majority of the castes.

Some of the important features of the kinship organisation of the Northern zone are: kin junior to ego are addressed by their personal names and senior to ego by the kinship term; all children in ascending and descending generations are equated with one's own sibling group (brothers and sisters) and all children of one's sibling group are again equated with one's own children; the principle of unity of generations is observed (for example, great-grandfather and grandfather are given same respect as father); within the same generation, the older and the younger kin are kept distinct; the duties and behaviour patterns of the members of three generations are strictly regulated; some of the ancient kinship terms having Sanskrit origin have been replaced by new terms; for example, *pitamaha* is replaced by *pita*. Suffix 'ji' is added to kinship terms used for kin older than the speaker (for example, *chachaji*). In Bengal, instead of 'ji,' the suffix 'moshai' is

added; marriage among close kin is not permitted; after marriage, a girl is not expected to be free with her parents-in-law, but when she becomes a mother, she achieves position of respect and power, and restrictions on her are lessened; the family is so structured that children, parents and grandparents either live together or social kinship obligations towards them are clearly met; apart from the joint family, which represents a person's intimate, and nearest circle of relations, there is always a larger circle of kin who play a part in his life. This kindred represents the circle of his *patri*-kin or *matri*-kin who may stand by him when the immediate family no longer suffices.

The salient features of kinship organisation of Central India are not much different from those of the North India. The important features of kinship in Central India are the following: every region follows northern India in practices of marriage, that is consanguinity is the main consideration, which rules marriage; many castes are divided into exogamous clans and among some castes, the exogamous clans are arranged in hypogamous hierarchy; the kinship terminology shows intimacy and closeness between various kin; in Gujarat, *mamera*-type of cousin marriage (with mother's brother) and levirate (marriage with husband's brother) are practiced by some castes; the custom of periodic marriages in Gujarat has led to child marriages as well as unequal marriages, which are practiced even today; in Maharashtra, there is impact of both northern and southern zones in kinship relations, for example, the clan organisation of the Marathas is similar to that of the Rajputs, which is arranged in a ladder-like manner. Clans are grouped into divisions and each division is named according to the number of clans it comprises; for example *panch-kuli*, *sat-kuli* etc. (The highest is *panch-kuli* followed by *sat-kuli*. The *panch-kuli* can marry among themselves, or can take a girl from the *sat-kuli*, etc. but *panch-kuli* do not give their daughters outside the *panch-kuli*); some castes like Marathas and Kunbis in the central zone practice bride price too, though dowry custom also exists among them; though the family system in Maharashtra is patrilineal and patrilocal, yet unlike in the north, where a wife permanently stays with her husband after *gauna* and rarely goes to her father's house in castes like Marathas, she moves to and from her father's house very frequently; though the kinship terms are mostly northern yet some terms are borrowed from the Dravidians in the south; for example, the use of the

terms *anna* and *nana* for brother along with the term *dada*, similarly the use of the terms *akka*, *tai* and *mai* for sister; the kinship system of the tribals in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh is somewhat different from that of the caste Hindus. The difference exists in terms of kinship terminology, marriage rules, and clan obligations. Thus, it may be stated that though the kinship organisation in the northern and central zones is almost similar, yet it can be described as a region of transition from the north to the south. "A state like Maharashtra is a region of cultural borrowings and cultural synthesis" (Karve, 1953:174).

The southern zone presents a complicated pattern of kinship system. Though patrilineal and patrilocal family is the dominant family type for the greater number of castes and communities (for example, Namboodris), there are important sections of the population which are matrilineal and matrilocal (for example, Nayars); also there are quite a few castes whose systems possess features of both patrilineal and matrilineal organisations (for example, Todas). Similarly, there are some castes / tribes who practice only polygyny (for example, Asari, Nayars) and yet others, who practice only polygyny and polyandry (for example, Todas). Then there are polyandrous patrilineal groups (for example Asari) and also polyandrous matrilineal groups (for example, Tiyans, Nayars) and polygynous patrilineal groups (for example, Namboodris) but no polygynous matrilineal groups. Similarly, there are patrilineal joint families and also matrilineal joint families. All this show varied patterns in kinship organisation in the southern zone. A close analysis of these patterns is interesting.

In the matrilineal family, the kinship relationship of women to one another is that of a daughter, mother, sister, mother's mother, mother's sister, and sister's daughter. In the kinship relationship of women with men, males are related to women as brother, son, daughter's and sister's son. The kinship relationship of males to one another is that of brother, mother's brother and sister's son. All these kinship relations are based on blood. Matrilineal joint family, called *tarwad* is found amongst the Nairs of Malabar and Travancore and a few other groups. The important characteristics of *tarwad* are: the property of the *tarwad* is the property of all males and females belonging to it; unmarried sons belong to the mother's *tarwad*, but married sons belong to their wife's *tarwad*; the

manager of the *tarward* property is the oldest male member in the family; called *karnavan* (his wife is called *ammayi*); *karnavan* is an absolute ruler in the family; on his death, the next senior male member becomes *karnavan*. He can invest money in his own name, can mortgage property, can give money on loan, can give land as gift, and is not accountable to any member in respect of income and expenditure; when the *tarward* becomes too large and unwieldy, it is divided into *tavazhis*. The *tarwad* before the 1912 Act and after 1912 are two different things. Earlier, the *tarwad* property was indivisible, but now it can be divided. Earlier, *karnavan* was an absolute ruler of the *tarwad*, but now his authority has become limited. Earlier, members of the *tarwad* were not entitled to maintenance unless they lived in the family house, but now members have become entitled to maintenance outside the ancestral house. Earlier, ancestor worship of the *karnavan* was common, but now it is no longer common. Earlier, relations between husband and wife were formal, but now the relations have become informal, personal and more close and intimate. Earlier, the self-acquired property of a member of a *tarwad* went to the *tarwad* after his death, but now it goes to his widow and children, and in their absence to the mother and the mother's mother. Thus, the *tarwad* of Nairs has now disintegrated after the enactments of the 1912 Act (Travancore), the 1920 Act (Cochin), the 1933 Act (Madras), and the 1958 Act (Kerala). The woman's property now goes to her sons and daughters and then to her father and husband. Kapadia (1966:348) has drawn attention to the fact that more than 90 per cent of *veedus* (houses) have only one *tavazhi*; this shows the extent of atomisation of the *tarwads* in the last few decades.

Ahuja (1999:124-26) analyses the clan organisation and marriage rules in the south. A caste is divided into five exogamous clans. The important characteristics of clan organisation are: each clan (composed of a number of families) possesses a name of some animal or a plant or some other object and a person from one clan can seek a spouse from any other clan except his own. However, this choice is theoretical because of the rule of exchange of daughters. In marriage, there is not only the rule of clan exogamy but also of family exchange of daughters and because of the marriage rule of exchange of daughters, many kinship terms are common. Marriage between maternal parallel cousins, that is, between children of two sisters, is not permissible. Sororate marriage (that is, marriage

with wife's younger sister) is practiced. Also, two sisters can marry two brothers in one family.

There is a system of preferential mating in the south. In a large number of castes, the first preference is given to elder sister's daughter, second preference to father's sister's daughter, and third preference to mother's brother's daughter. However, today cross-cousin marriage and especially the uncle-niece marriage is beginning to be considered as outmoded and a thing to be ashamed of among those groups which have come in contact with the north Indians or with western culture. There are also certain taboos. The taboos prescribed for marriage are: a man cannot marry his younger sister's daughter; a widow cannot marry her husband's elder or younger brother (that is, levirate is a taboo); and a man cannot marry his mother's sister's daughter.

Marriage is dependent on the chronological age differences rather than the principle of generational divisions as in the north. Yet, another feature of marriage and kinship in the south is that marriage is not arranged with a view to widening a kin group but each marriage strengthens already existing bonds and makes doubly near those people who were already very near kin. A girl has to marry a person who belongs to the groups older than her, and also to the group younger than her parents, that is, she can marry any of her older cross cousins.

The dichotomy of status and sentiments expressed in such northern terms like kanya (unmarried girl), bahu (married girl), pihar (mother's house) and sasural (husband's house) are absent in south. This is because in south, a girl after marriage does not enter the house of strangers as in north. One's husband is one's mother's brother's son and so on. Marriage in the south, thus, does not symbolise separation from father's house for a girl. A girl moves freely in her father-in-law's house.

The Status of Women

The position of women in Indian Society has been a very complicated one. They held a position of equality and respect along with men in the Vedic period. Gradually

their status declined and in the nineteenth century there was an utter degradation. Their condition improved in the Gandhian era and in the decades after independence. Researches have established that women held a position of equality with men during the Vedic period. Both boys and girls underwent *upanyanam* ceremonies to be initiated to the Vedic studies:

In fact, the education of women was looked upon as so important that the *Atharva Veda* asserted “the success of women in her married life depends upon her proper training during the Brahmacharya”. (Kuppuswamy, 2000:313)

There were some very famous women in the past:

Some of the renowned Vedic women are Lopamudra, Viswavara, Sikata, Nivavari and Ghosha. *Aswalayana Gruhyasutra* required posterity to read every day the works of great women like Sulabha, Maitreye, Gargi. Unfortunately, there is no record of their work. (Kuppuswamy, 2000:313)

Kuppuswamy further states that in the Upanishadic period there were many Brahmavadinis who were life-long students of philosophy. Women like Maitreye and Gargi were the gems of the Upanishadic period. In the *Bhrihadaranyak Upanishad* Gargi challenges the sage Yagnavalkya. One of the celebrated Upanishadic passages is the conversation between Maitreye and her husband Yagnavalkya. In the Buddhist period also there were reputed women scholars like Sanghamitra, the sister of the great emperor Ashoka, who went to Ceylon to spread Buddhism. Among the authors of *Theragatha* are 42 women, 32 of whom were unmarried. According to the Jaina tradition Yayant, a princess who remained unmarried received ordination from Mahavira (2000:314). On the basis of these facts from literature, Altekar writes: “we may therefore conclude that many girls in well-to-do families used to be given a fair amount of education down to about 300 B.C.”(1962:120). Marriage, though considered a religious and social duty and though an unmarried person was not eligible to participate in the Vedic sacrifices, it was not compulsory for every girl. According to Shastri:

The extent of the word 'Amajur', which means a girl who grew old at her father's house, and the reference to the attendance of maidens, young women at the 'Sumana' festival as well as the unmarried female rishis as Apala-Atreya, suggests that matrimony was not compulsory for a woman and that no limitation had been placed on the age of marriage. (1952:187)

In the *Rig Veda* there are references to the customs of '*Niyoga*' where a widow could marry the brother of her deceased husband with the permission of the elders. She could also marry other persons. "The *Rig Veda* does not mention anywhere the practice of the burning or burial of widows with their dead husbands" (Shastri, 1952:189). With regard to property rights, according to the *Rig Veda*, both husband and wife were joint owners. As Dutt writes:

...Hindu women held an honoured place... they inherited and possessed property; they took share in sacrifices and religious duties; they attended great assemblies and state occasions; they also distinguished themselves in science and learning at their times...[They were] considered as intellectual companions of their husbands, as the friends and loving helpers in the journey of life of their partners, in their religious duties, and the centre of their domestic bliss. Hindu wives were honoured and respected in ancient times. (1899:79)

This position of the Hindu woman in the early Vedic times was very different from the lower status to which they were degraded after about 300 B.C. As Altekar writes:

The reasons why daughters were not unpopular in ancient India during the early centuries are not difficult to understand. They could be initiated in Vedic studies and were entitled to offer sacrifice to God. The son was not absolutely necessary for this purpose. Further, the marriage of the daughter was not a difficult problem. The daughter herself solved it. There was no dread of widowhood because levirate and remarriage were allowed by the society and were even fairly common. (1962:165)

With the consolidation of Aryan power, and the Aryans marrying non-Aryan women, very soon non-Aryan women were prohibited from participating in religious sacrifices as they did not know Sanskrit and had no education. Gradually all women, Aryan and non-Aryan became ineligible for Vedic studies and religious duties. The increased complexity of the Vedic sacrifices rendered the wife's association a mere formal affair. Gradually, *upanyanam* for girls became a mere formality. Since girls were not educated, early marriages became common. About A.D. 205 some *Dharmashastras* declared that marriage was a substitute for *upanayanam* for girls and since it was performed at about eight or nine years, marriages too were performed at this age. Thus the end of *upanayanam*, the neglect of education and pre-puberty marriages led to disastrous results upon the status of women. Gradually *niyoga* and widow remarriage were prohibited. Wives were instructed to look upon their husbands as Gods. "When kingdoms became large, kings kept big harems and this led to the seclusion of women" (Kuppuswamy, 2000:325).

From 200 B.C. — A.D.1800, the position of women deteriorated further. The institution of *sati*, the prohibition of remarriage, the tonsure of the widow, the spread of the *purdha*, the prevalence of polygamy etc. made their position quite dreadful. Thus there was a great gulf between the status of women in the early Vedic period and in the 19th century. Desai says:

Ideologically woman was considered a completely inferior species, inferior to the male, having no significance, no personality; socially she was kept in a state of utter subjection, denied all rights, suppressed and oppressed; she was further branded as basically lacking the ethical fibre. The patriarchal joint family, the customs of polygamy, the *purdah*, the property structure, early marriage, *sati* or a state permanent widowhood, all these contributed to the smothering of the free development of woman. (1957:123)

Thus, in the Puranic, Brahmanical, and medieval periods, the status of women was lowered by the imposition of several restrictions. Pre-puberty marriages came to be practiced, widow remarriage was prohibited, the husband was given the status of God for

a woman, education was totally denied to her, the custom of *sati* was introduced, purdah system came into vogue, polygyny came to be tolerated and women were forbidden to offer sacrifices and prayers and read religious books. In the Muslim period, more restrictions were imposed on them due to the rigidity of the caste system and the imposition of Brahmanical austerities on the entire society. But even at this time, rural women took full part in agriculture and the craftwork of the husband. They had the freedom to sell milk, vegetables, fish and other produce in the nearby towns. Even now one can see hundreds of village women with head-loads of merchandise moving to towns every day. These women enjoy considerable freedom and equality.

However, the situation did undergo some change owing to the Bhakti movement, which permitted some social and religious freedom to women. In the British period, the status of women improved a little because of the spread of education, Christian missionaries' interest in girls' education, abolition of social customs like *sati*, enactment of some legal measures like Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, etc. The Civil Marriage Act of 1872 made marriage a secular ceremony and provided for the registration of marriage. This law also increased the marriage age of girls to 14 and permitted inter-caste marriage and also enforced monogamy. Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of India abolished *sati* and in 1829 made it a crime. But it took three quarters of a century for the Hindu society to accept these social changes.

The social movements initiated by enlightened leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Justice Ranade, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Maharishi Karve, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Annie Beasant, Mahatma Gandhi, etc., and the growth of women's organisations like Bharat Mahila Parishad (1904), Women's Indian Association (1917), National Council of Women in India (1925), and all India Women's Conference (1927) helped to raise the status of Indian women. Women like Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi (1835—1858), Pandita Rama Bai (1858—1922), Toru Dutt (1856—1877), Svarnakumari Devi (1855—1932) and Annie Besant (1847—1933) were some prominent women who inspired both men and women and who worked for the emancipation of Indian women.

The change in the status of women got further impetus after independence because of the enactment of new laws (Special marriage Act, 1954, Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Hindu Succession Act 1956 and Anti-Dowry Act 1961). Women's condition got better because of the laws pertaining to women's employment such as Factory Act 1948, Employees State Insurance Act, 1948 and Maternity Benefit Acts. Other factors which affected women's status were the effects of education, the leadership provided by educated elite women, increasing opportunities of employment, the change in the rigidity of the caste system, and so on. It was the American Mission, which first started a school for girls in Bombay in 1824. By 1829 about 400 girls were enrolled in this school.

The need for linkage between programmes oriented to women and the national policy towards weaker sections has come to be increasingly realised. Several commissions have been appointed by the central and the state governments to suggest measures for protecting women's rights in various fields. Two such commissions were appointed by the Central government in 1971 and 1992. The National Commission for Women (NCW), set up in January 1992, was directed to look into women-related issues, probe the status of women, examine various legislations and point out loopholes and gaps and assess the causes of discrimination and violence against women and suggest possible remedies. The latest development in this field is the Supreme Court's direction to set up a Women's Grievance Cell at all places where women work.

Some observers associate the changing status of women with factors like increase in divorce and female share of divorce petitions outnumbering that of men, increase in inter-caste marriages, decrease in number of crimes against women, and so forth. However, the factors which really point out the high status of women are the involvement of women in paid-work and acquiring economic independence; increase in the number of higher and better-paid positions in different departments occupied by women; increase in the number of female entrepreneurs and managers; increase in the number of women in legislative bodies; increase in the number of girls studying in universities, colleges and professional institutions, and so forth.

Earlier, the priority for most girls was marriage at the right time and leading a life based on the roles of wife, mother and daughter-in-law. Parents remained more concerned about the family background of the prospective son-in-law before fixing the marriage of their daughters. The demands of dowry were high. Walking out of marriage i.e., separation or divorce, did not have social or legal sanction. Women after marriage had, therefore, no option but to try and make their marriage work. The relations between husband and wife were supposedly based on mutual trust where he appreciated and helped her in her efforts of adjustment, based on patience, humility and understanding and she apparently trusted him. However, the family hierarchy was well defined. The father-in-law was the boss and his word was law; it had to be obeyed. And, more than anything else, a woman had to respect social norms.

But today, a large number of women with more education and with the capability and qualifications to work for a livelihood find adjustments difficult. Housekeeping and bringing up children are no longer a full-time job for a woman. Today, the main criteria for selecting a girl as life partner are her education and her employability. This is an age of earning couples. Girls have taken up the challenge even in the villages. Working couples leave their kids behind with their parents or even in crèches and pick them up in the evening. Marriages have become later by choice because couples tend to give due weight to their career graphs. 'Live-in' relationships are being tolerated and divorce is no longer a social stigma. The traditional institution of marriage seems to be slowly losing its sanctity. The old joint family system is also breaking. This has also affected the bringing up of children. A child in a nuclear family is a loner and tends to be self-centred. Old values are being replaced with modern values of equality, individualism and rationality. Though males have yet to be domesticated to share the daily chores, they have been made to realise that they do not hold dominant positions in the family. Thus, women have now greater privacy, more opportunities, and freedom of action and nearly equal rights. They have broken away from many of the shackles and the unfairly restrictive practices of the past.

The Indian Constitution provides to women the right to equality, freedom, property, education, constitutional remedies, and protection from exploitation. The state has also been enacting special laws for safeguarding the interests of women. In the social field, these laws relate to various aspects of marriage (like, mate selection, age at marriage, divorce, alimony, dowry, restitution of conjugal rights and remarriage), adoption of children and abortion. The economic laws pertain to: right to property or inheritance, equal wages, working conditions, maternity benefits, and job security. The political rights provided to women are female enfranchisement and eligibility for the legislature.

The reasons for the denial of rights may be related to individual, economic and demographic factors. The individual factors refer to the personality characteristics of those males who possess low intellectual ability (IQ), who suffer from immaturity, depression and frustration, who are alcoholics, who have unrealistically high expectations from women and/or who expect them to remain docile and passive. As regards the economic factors, non-earning women are more frequently denied rights than earning women; women in the low and middle-income families are more generally denied rights than the upper-income families; and among earning women, those engaged in non-professional or low status jobs enjoy fewer rights than those engaged in professions or high status jobs. Lastly, as regards the demographic factors, women in the upper castes are not so frequently denied rights as compared to women in the intermediate or the lower castes; the older males deny rights to women more generally than the younger males; and rights denied by women to women are more common than the rights denied by men to women:

Males who deny rights to women can be identified. These men are those who have depressions, inferiority complex and low esteem; lack resources, that is, have personality disorders; have possessive, suspicious and domineering nature; were victims of violence in their own childhood; and face stressful situations in their families. (Ahuja, 1999:133)

On the other hand, women who are denied rights most may be identified as those who have feelings of helplessness, suffer from inferiority complex, have poor self-image, lack social maturity, and are economically dependent. We may also identify six types of denials of rights: money-oriented, pleasure-oriented, power-oriented, victim-precipitated, denier's pathology-resulted, and stressful family situations-resulted.

Thus, if we were to describe the woman of contemporary times, we could give her the following characteristics: She has struck a perfect balance between tradition and modernity and she seems to be determined to try and prove to man that she is equal to him. While earlier, a woman has had an identity always through a male (either she was known as somebody's daughter or wife or mother) and her plight was like a satellite that kept orbiting around one planet – the man, today she has an opportunity to shine independently and reflect an identity of her own. She is no longer confined to orthodox beliefs, but capitalises on her own potentials and merits, and has carved a niche for herself that was once forbidden by society; she has begun to take responsibilities and decisions for her life rather than just playing wife's and mother's roles. Her aptitudes and skills are slowly breaking down all chauvinistic barriers. There has been a metamorphosis in the woman, from the conservative woman of the 1940s and 1950s, she became the feminist rebel of the 1960s and 1970s, the super woman and mother-wife-career woman of the 1980s, and the empowered woman of the 1990s and the 2000s, who demands and enjoys her rights and is not afraid to stand-alone. She makes her own decisions, and is not a doormat. She doesn't take any kind of injustice meted out to her. She can think for herself, she makes a life for herself, and she instils important values in her children too. The new woman is part of the old woman. She is not afraid to be tough, aggressive and assertive. At the same time, she is not afraid to be feminine, sensual, gentle, caring, and considerate. She can be a career woman as well as housewife and mother. She loves the people around her – family, friends, workfolk, etc., but she also loves herself as a person. She is full of aspirations, expectations and desires. But if she fails, she does not act like a weak woman.

Taking the general status of women in contemporary society, it may be averred that there is now more representation of women in parliament, state assemblies, municipal corporations and *panchayats*. There are more women entrepreneurs, more bureaucrats more professionals, more managers and more administrative officers. However, rural women are still traditional, deeply ritualistic, and fiercely conservative in their behaviour.

Of course, there are women who work as housewives, teachers, nurses, clerks, stenographers, telephone operators and also women of lower classes who work as labourers, domestic maids, sweepers and rag-pickers, etc. for whom life hasn't changed much. They are subordinated in our society and are still not economically emancipated from men. In social, psychological and moral dimensions also, their situation is not identical to that of men. When they start their career as adults, they are evaluated by the society with a different perspective. Since only a few women escape from the traditional feminine world and since they do not obtain from society or from family the assistance they need to become the equals of men, they fail to get recognition as successful role-performers.

Caste System

Two main criteria of social stratification are caste and class. Some other recognised units of stratification are age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Social stratification is different from social differentiation. The term 'differentiation' has broader application as it makes individuals and groups separate and distinct from each other for purposes of comparison. For example, within class strata, income, occupation and education provide basis for differentiation and comparison. Stratification occurs where differences are ranked hierarchically.

The Rig Vedic society was originally divided into three *varnas* or classes namely the Brahmins (priests), the Kshatriyas (warriors) and the Vaishyas (farmers and ordinary people). A fourth *varna* called the Sudra (servants) was added to the group soon after the invasion of India by the Aryans (c. 3000 B.C.). This fourth group consisted mostly of the

conquered people. Still another group of people – the fifth – lived outside the limits of the villages in utter poverty and they were called the *panchamas*:

They were treated as untouchables and their mere shadow could defile a twice born (*dwija*) — the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, and the Vaishyas. These five divisions of the Vedic society were the fore runners of the Indian caste system. (Ahuja, 1999:145)

Varna can be seen as the division of people into groups on the basis of aptitudes, abilities and vocations. The aptitudes and abilities are classified as those for scholarship; for administration and defence; for protection and distribution; and for unskilled labour. The first group of people who were engaged in priestly function, teaching, medicine, etc. came to be known as Brahmins and the second group engaged in fighting, ruling and administration were called Kshatriyas. The third group who were engaged in agriculture, trade and commerce were known as Vaisyas and the last group engaged in unskilled work was Sudras. The Brahmins were expected to possess the qualities of self-restraint, austerity, purity, serenity, simplicity, wisdom and philosophic insight into truth and reality. The Kshatriyas were to have the qualities of courage, strength, firmness skillfulness and administrative ability. The Vaisyas were assumed to be hard working, intelligent and quick in decision-making. The Sudras, who seemed to be deficient in abilities and aptitudes as a result of centuries of subjugation and marginalisation had to work under others and accept their supremacy.

Each group had its own duties. While the Brahmins offered prayers, performed ceremonies and sacrifices, and taught the scriptures, the Kshatriyas protected people from external aggression and internal disturbances. They governed the country and maintained law and order. The Vaishyas were engaged in agriculture, trade and commerce. The Sudras who were not permitted to read the Vedas or observe Vedic rites or recite mantras had to do things ordered by others. A person or a group was entitled to a *varna* membership by satisfying the qualifications. Any individual or a group could find a place in any *varna* if he/it satisfied the qualifications. So a membership of a *varna* was not determined by birth but by qualifications. Hence a Sudra could become a Brahmin by

merit and a Brahmin became a Sudra if he did not study the Vedas. The *Bhagavad Gita* states that the four *varnas* are constituted on the principle of *guna* i.e., natural and acquired qualities and character and *karma*, i.e., calling and profession.

The exact origin of the caste system is controversial. It is assumed that by some process the *varna* system changed into the caste system. The term '*varna*' means external appearance, colour, kind, letter, sound, etc. Many have erroneously concluded that *varna* is based on colour. Some have even related it with the colour prejudices in many parts of the world. Although it is true that in the later period of Indian history colour was correlated with *varna*, i.e., people of the *varnas* that were higher in the hierarchy of the system were fairer than others, in many parts of India, colour was not a deciding factor. Dark colour did not cause a person to be included in an inferior *varna*. It should also be noted that many important Brahmins as Vyas, the author of the epic *Mahabharata*, and many Hindu gods and goddesses like Vishnu, Krishna, Kali were dark in colour. "The word *varna* is appropriately translated as class and not colour or caste" (Hutton, 1961:66). It is believed that the word caste is of Latin origin. "The word caste probably was derived from the Latin 'castus', which implied purity of breed" (Risley, 1915:67). Hence it can be observed that the term caste is a foreign concept, which was superimposed upon the original concept of class. The origin of caste is often traced to a statement in the *Purusha Sukta* of the *Rig Veda*, which may literally be translated as, "The Brahmins sprang from the head of Brahma, the Kshatriyas from his arms, the Vaishyas from his thighs and the Sudras from his feet" (*Purusasukta Rig Veda*, X 90,12).

"Many scholars consider this a later addition to the Vedas that was intended to give continuity and sanctity to the already existing system of the four *varnas* in the society" (Kuber, 1967:97). In any case, the *mantra* should be interpreted in the proper social context. The social system was personified in the *Purusha Sukta* and different *varnas* were given different functions as parts of the body. The *varnas* were based upon function and not upon birth, although there was a correlation between family occupation and the *varna* of a person. In Vedic society, however, the representation of things was chiefly

symbolic and not literal. That birth in a family was not the sole determiner of a person's *varna* is evident throughout the Vedic period.

After the Vedic age, there was deterioration in religious values, and during the Brahmanic and Puranic periods the Brahmins started to interpret the scriptures in such a way as to establish their supremacy. Many tribes from the adjoining areas got mixed with the mainstream of the population. The mixture of different *varnas* produced many classes or castes. There is also some evidence of a tussle between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas in which the Brahmins got the upper hand. The Brahmins while retaining the right to read and interpret the scriptures, and the power of excommunication, gave the right of administration to the Kshatriyas (Ahuja, 1999:146). This certainly paved the way for the rise of Brahmin influence and the decline of the other *varnas*.

In the present day, caste refers to a group of people who engages in different types of social relationships, namely marriage, dining, working etc., with members of its own group and would shun such relationships with others. The membership of this group is by birth, and a member's profession, economic condition, social status and even political choice are often closely related to the 'mode' for that group or caste. However, scholars have put forward so many theories emphasising in various ways the social, the economic and the religious antecedents to explain the origins of the caste system (Ghurye, 1969; Hutton, 1961; Risley, 1915) that it is not possible to zero in on any one of them as the singular cause for the system. As Shankar suggests:

There does not seem to be an adequate definition for caste because it is nebulous and there are always exceptions. It is better to understand the caste system as a product of interaction between various forces throughout the Indian history than to explain its origin and function solely in terms of any one of them. (1998:7)

At the same time, an analysis of the caste system in terms of its social, political, economic and religious dimensions, as recognized by the scholars working in this field (Ghurye, 1969; Hutton, 1961; Jayaraman, 1981; Mayer, 1960, Prasada, 1910; Srinivas, 1964), is useful in understanding the formation and change in caste attitudes in the

villages because it is possible to describe the dimensions separately and even measure them.

The social dimension of the caste system is related to social interaction between families in a village, and interaction within a single family, which is the unit of social organisation in Indian villages. Marriage, eating and drinking together, friendship, worship, games etc., were the occasions for social interactions related to the caste system and are indexes of social distances between castes. The political dimension of the caste system was related to the power structure in the village. The organisation of the village council (*panchayat*) and the power wielded by its members were related to caste system. The economic dimension of caste system related a caste to its economic condition, which was generally dependent on the occupation of its members. Although the correlation between caste membership and economic condition was positive, it was far from perfect. People were not always very rich at the high end of the caste hierarchy, nor always very poor at the low end. There were always exceptions. The religious dimension of the caste system was related to the beliefs of the people about what they considered to be religion according to their age and *varna*.

The *varna* system, which was originally based upon a concept of the inherent nature and action of a person, and which was used to classify the Hindu society so that the right person should be given the right profession, worked well in the beginning. The system was not very rigid and a person had some freedom to move from one *varna* to another under certain conditions. When the *varna* system deteriorated into the caste system, social and economic exploitation of the lower castes by the upper castes began.

The caste system in Indian villages based on occupations became rigid in the course of thousands of years. The village structures and the economic and social relations among different castes living in individual or clusters of villages became so ossified and inextricably entangled with every facet of village life that they withstood outside pressures and survived for centuries. Changes in the central governance from the Hindus to the Muslims, and from the Muslims to the British did not affect the internal structure of the village community.

'*Varna Ashrama Vyavastha*' became the corner stone of the Indian social organisation. The peculiar feature of this system is the linkage of the concept of innate endowment with birth and this is at the basis of the Indian caste system. Thus the four castes, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, came to be 'innately' associated with the intellectual, the political, the production groups and the working class. As a result, a man is Vaisya not because he has the aptitude to produce wealth and engage in occupations connected with this, but because he is born into a particular family. In the villages, the hierarchical positions on the caste ladder and the customary behaviour patterns were accepted. Inside the village, the clusters of houses belonging to different castes were situated at different sites. Though the clusters were not far from each other, the sites were distinctly separate from each other. The cremation grounds and the ponds in which funeral '*sradhas*' were conducted were separate for the Brahmins and non-Brahmins.

The intra-caste relationship was more rigid in different non-Brahmin castes than in Brahmin castes. Marriages in all castes were strictly within the caste. For consideration of different social problems arising within the caste and irregularities committed by individual families, regular caste meetings were convened and specific decisions were taken. Any family disobeying the decisions and directions was ex-communicated. A man is born into a caste and dies in it. Neither success nor failure can change a man's position. A person of a particular caste can marry only within the caste. He cannot marry either above or below except by breaking the caste rules. A man of higher caste could marry a woman of lower caste (*anuloma*) according to the famous lawgiver Manu, but not vice versa (*pratiloma*). The members of the highest caste were strict vegetarians. The caste membership determined the customs and rituals regarding birth, marriage, death, etc. Generally caste determined one's occupations, particularly among lower castes. Each caste is thus an autonomous social unit. A curious side feature of the caste system was the attempt made by some caste communities to escape from their traditionally accorded lower status through a complete reinvention of themselves and their castes. An example in point is that of the smiths of South India during pre-British times who changed their name to '*Viswa Karma Brahmins*'. Later, under British rule this tendency received

special encouragement during the periodic census enumerations when the low castes changed their caste names in order to move up in the hierarchy.

The caste system provided for various functions necessary to social life from priesthood to scavenging. The sanction of religion was used to keep the members of the various castes to conform to their own caste rules. The caste order was preserved by two methods. Each member was enjoined to observe his caste rules because that is the only way in which he could obtain perfection. The *Bhagavad Gita* says, "one's own duty, though defective, is better than another's duty well performed" (Santokh, 1972:58). According to the ancient lawgiver Manu, a man could hope for birth in a higher caste in his next life by carefully fulfilling the duties of his caste in this life. Breach of caste discipline was considered a sin. The second method to preserve caste order was the formation of a barrier to inter-caste marriages. One could not marry outside one's caste and there were restrictions about ones eating and drinking with one of a different caste. There were also fixed occupations for different castes.

On occasions of marriage or other functions in any caste Hindu family, people from other castes were invited and were served sweets and fruits. But cooked food was generally served only to the people of their caste. The Brahmins did not take cooked food from families belonging to any other caste. Among the Brahmins, there were many sub-castes. Brahmins of higher sub-castes did not marry in lower sub-castes and did not take cooked food in such families. But in the families of high caste Brahmins all other caste people took cooked food. Each caste moved in its own groove and accepted the customary position and relation with other castes. There were no caste tensions and resentments. The people of the lower castes did not feel that since the Brahmins did not take cooked food in their houses, they should also not take cooked food from Brahmin houses.

Untouchability was another phenomenon of the caste system. There were religious, social and economic causes for the institution of untouchability. Those belonging to a particular caste known as 'Sudras' were considered as untouchables. The untouchables suffered from various social, political, economic and religious disabilities,

many of which were traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by higher castes. They were prohibited from walking on the roads that were meant for the use of the higher castes. They were not allowed to take water from a public well and were prohibited from making use of public places. The higher castes in the south would wear the dhoti in a manner that it would not touch the earth, because the earth would have been touched by an untouchable:

The Harijan children could not use the schools that were meant for the children of higher castes and hence they were deprived of the facilities for education. Similarly they could not sit on a palanquin or ride on a horse. They were subjected to great humiliation in the religious fields also. They were not only prohibited from entering temples but were also not allowed to use the cremation ground. (Singh, 1990:190)

Untouchability in India goes a long way back. Till the early 1930s, the *de jure* definition of the depressed classes, as they were then known, was in terms of the religious concept of pollution. The depressed classes were defined as “Hindu castes, contacts with whom entail purification on the part of high-caste Hindus” (Michael, 1998:171). Today, the number of people belonging to the scheduled castes has gone up very high. One out of every six Indians belongs to this category – ex-untouchables by law but still partially untouchables in practice. The important ex-untouchable castes are Chamar, Dusadh, Musahar, Bhuiya, Dhobi, Pasi, Regar, Dom, Bhogta and Halalkhor in north India and Paraiyans, Pallans and Chakkillis in Tamil Nadu and Mehar, Balshi, Bauril Meghwal, Rajbans, Mazhabhi Sikhs, etc, in other states. “The highest number of untouchables is found in Uttar Pradesh (21%) followed by West Bengal (12%), Bihar (9%), Tamil Nadu (8%), Andhra Pradesh (8%) and so on” (*Manpower Profile*, India, 1998:35). About two-thirds of these people are concentrated in six states. About 84% of them live in villages and are working as cultivators, sharecroppers, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. About 42% of these people fall in the category of workers. Of the total workers, only 4% work as scavengers while, the rest work as weavers (12%), fishermen (8%), toddy-tappers (7%), basket and rope-makers (5%), washermen (5%), artisans (1%),

shoe-makers (1%) and so forth. Though our constitution outlawed the practice of untouchability and The Untouchability (Offences) Act of 1955 declared it as a legal offence, yet, since Hindus are still deeply steeped in their concern for purity and pollution, the practice of untouchability has not been completely uprooted from the social and religious life of the country.

The social stigma of the untouchables manifests itself in all walks of life. They were denied access to temples and to the services of the Brahmins, and were shunned by the higher castes. They were considered to be born impure and were destined to live as impure. The rest of the society was so concerned about purity that they permanently kept the untouchables in a state of economic, social and political subordination. The stigma, congenital according to one's caste, lasts a lifetime. Though many *dalits* have given up their traditional caste-based occupations, yet a good number is still engaged in 'polluting' occupations. The change and diversification from 'polluting' occupations have not only removed the stigma of their untouchability but has also enabled many to rise in class mobility. The disabilities of status are now largely confined to the village. Discriminations in the matter of using the public wells or the temples are not so widespread as before. The immobility of the Harijans has also given way to mobility. This has been made possible by migration from rural to urban areas, education and entry to public service and into politics.

The changes among the *dalits* have come through three avenues: state policy in regard to untouchable groups, reform movements at various periods of time, and the process of Sanskritisation and westernisation. Great religious leaders and social reformers like Buddha, Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya and others tried to raise the consciousness of the people and help the lower castes. Under the influence of important religious leaders and reformers, caste attitudes have shown fluctuations throughout Indian history. In modern times, Mahatma Gandhi worked for the emancipation of the lower castes. In order to give them respectable status in the society, he called them 'Harijans' or 'the people of God'. Due to his efforts, the condition of the Harijans has improved considerably. Although the caste system is still alive, it is weakened by social reforms and legislation.

Many religious leaders and social reformers could not control or put an end to the caste system because they looked upon it as a religious problem. But, as Swami Vivekananda recognised, it “is predominantly a social problem” (Vivekananda, 1976:55). The caste system remained very hard and rigid in the rural areas up to the 1940’s when the caste councils were very powerful and caste decided the status and opportunities of the individuals. Not only the power structure but also the ownership of land existed on caste lines. But fortunately, after the 1950’s, with the spread of education, the means of communication, the growth of competitive economy etc., self-contained classes have been transformed into mobile classes. While many higher castes have lost their previous status, many lower castes have gained economic and political power and have emerged as dominant castes.

There is also a change in the habitat pattern based on caste. While earlier, the areas in which houses were built, depended on caste membership, today there is no relation between caste and habitat. Another factor important in the caste system in rural areas was occupational, economic, and social mobility. Now the members of a caste do not necessarily perform caste-determined occupations. As a result, some castes slide down the economic ladder while some castes go up. Earlier it was the caste that decided the attitude of the village folk towards education. But now a ‘sea change’ has occurred in this case and even the most backward castes have started imparting education to their children, including their girls. The religious life of rural people was earlier determined by caste. But now it is no longer affected by caste. Religious practices are slowly changing in villages. Caste leaders are no longer the leaders of the social, economic, political and ideological life of the villagers. New legislative measures also have affected the inter caste relations among the villagers. Thus caste has undergone vital changes in varied fields.

Though there are some scholars, such as Ghurye, Desai, Prasad, Kapadia, Dumont, Beteille, Gould, Dube, Madan, etc., who hold the view that the caste system is not transforming itself fast enough and that changes are only gradual; when we critically observe the caste system in the villages today, we can see that it is weakening or

disintegrating. Kaliprasad is of opinion that most of the upper caste people accept the lower caste people as their fellow-diners and that class divisions are being levelled up fast. Murphy (1953:65) concludes that caste has come to be challenged. Mukherjee (1958:54) opines that both the economic and social aspects of the caste system have greatly changed and has found change more pronounced in urban areas than in rural areas. Srinivas (1964) has maintained that the mutual rights and obligations among the castes are crumbling down. Kuppuswamy (1962) and Prasad (1954) have also pointed out some basic changes in the caste system.

All in all, the following major changes in caste functioning may be pointed out in the present times: The caste system, although it is not in the process of abolition, has a weakened religious basis which is making necessary adjustments with modern attitudes. Caste is no longer able to limit individual freedom and does not now determine the occupational career of an individual though his social status continues to be dependent on his caste membership. Very serious efforts are being made to grant equality to the backward castes. It should also be mentioned, at the same time, those inter-caste conflicts are increasing and casteism has also increased. Another notable feature is that caste and politics have come to affect each other. But caste does not act as a hindrance to social progress and to the country's development.

Village Occupations

Let us now examine the main occupations in the village. Obviously, the chief occupation in the village is farming. The farmers grew different types of crops according to the region where they lived. Rice, wheat, gram, millet, pulses etc. were the chief crops. At the same time, there were a number of other associated and inter-connected occupations:

The next most important chief occupations are basket making, sheep keeping, shop keeping, pottery making, tailoring, frying grain, barbering, washing, selling milk, driving horse-drawn vehicles, bidi making etc. (Barnabas, 1969:41)

In addition, while a few villagers were employed with the government services, railways, factories and other public and private firms, a great majority were agricultural labourers. Misra classifies agricultural labourers into three types: “Domestic servants, attached agricultural labourers by annual contract and free unattached agricultural labourers” (Misra, 1998:27).

The domestic servants, who stayed full time in the household and took all their meals in it, were paid in cash or kind according to their age and skill. They looked after the agricultural work in the field and the cattle, bullocks and cows kept by the family. They did not do any menial work like washing utensils or sweeping the floor. For these jobs there were women labourers. The attached labourers were expected to work everyday in the farm and were paid for their work in kind. The wages were paid once a week. They were also given a little land to cultivate and allowed to take the produce. They were usually contracted on an annual basis. The free labourers, on the other hand, were not bound by contract to work throughout the year in anybody’s farm. Their daily wages were the same as those of the attached labourers.

In addition to the above types, there was also another type of workers known as bonded labourers. Although, the Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act of 1976 ended the system of forced labour, it still continues in many parts of the country. Bonded labourers are known by different names in different parts of India:

In Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka bonded labourers are known as ‘Jeethams’, in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh as ‘Halis’, in Orissia as Gothees, in Tamil Nadu as Pandiyals and in Kerala as ‘Adiyas’ and ‘Paniyas’, and in Uttar Pradesh as, ‘Koltas’. The bondage generally originates mainly from economic and social pressures. (Sharma, 1990:52)

Not having any choice, they are “driven by poverty and hunger into a life of bondage, a dark bottomless pit from which, in a cruel exploitative society, they cannot hope to be rescued” (*Yojana*, 1 May 1987:32-33). According to the figures released in May 1977, on the basis of a state government sponsored survey, conducted as per the

Supreme Court order, Tamil Nadu had the maximum number of 24000 bonded labourers, in the country, engaged in 30 different occupations (*The Hindustan Times*, 13 May 1997).

There are many sections of people in the village who do great service to the village community. Misra describes the different artisans usually found in the Indian villages (1998:76-134). There were also a number of independent and semi-independent occupations that were essential for life in the villages. The people of the village would not go to a distant town for their everyday needs and so they attracted to themselves, and provided for, a little group of resident artificers and servants such as carpenters, potters, blacksmiths, cobblers, washermen, sweepers, cattle keepers, men to keep watch and ward, barbers, and so on. The village carpenters made new ploughs, agricultural implements, household furniture, doorframes, shutters, etc. The skilled carpenters were in great demand and earned good wages. Many moved to towns and cities and opened workshops in urban areas with the arrival of modernity. They were also marginal farmers and combined agriculture with carpentry. The village blacksmiths' work was sharpening the ploughshare for which they usually got annual grain payment in the past. They made simple iron and household implements and sold them in the market. The combination of agriculture and smithy continued, yet agriculture was their main occupation. The potters, like other artisans combined agriculture with their pottery work. Apart from the regular sale of pots, they supplied special wares on occasions like marriage, thread ceremonies, funeral ceremonies, etc. They also made roof tiles and dug wells and fixed burnt earthen rings in them. Pottery business faced competition from the aluminium utensils industry. Village households were using more and more aluminium pots for cooking and factory made buckets for drawing and fetching water, and so the demand for earthen pots declined. There were also oilmen families in the village who "used to take on their heads jars of oil conveniently placed in baskets from house to house and sell them regularly" (Misra, 1998:27). They had traditional oil crushers (*ghanies*) for pressing mustard and coconut. The Brahmin families, who had large number of coconut trees, processed the 'copra' in their houses and took them to the oilmen for pressing it into coconut oil. The confectioners were another group in the villages. They sold parched rice and sweet meats in the village. They also opened sweet stalls in the village and nearby towns. The families

of goldsmiths made gold and silver ornaments for the womenfolk. Since the poor villagers could not afford many ornaments, the goldsmiths catered for the families of zamindars and money lenders who used large amount of gold ornaments. Their workmanship was not poor but the villagers always justifiably had the impression that they adulterated the metals and that the likelihood of customers being cheated by them was high. In the twenties and thirties gold and silver were cheap. Due to their bad reputation, they did not have a good business then and with sky-high prices of gold and silver and change of fashion of ornaments, their business declined. In the old days, the women of the villages used very small quantities of gold ornaments, as most of them were poor. Their gold ornaments were confined to nose rings and earrings and rarely necklaces. All the required ornaments were purchased from the big shops in the towns and the village goldsmiths had naturally no work. The cobblers were seldom seen in villages as almost the whole population went without any footwear. The cobblers used to make chappals and sell them at their little wayside shops. The barber has always been an essential village service personnel. Apart from his usual job of haircutting and shaving he also practiced a rude kind of surgery. He also rendered many other services to the village families, working as a messenger carrying the good news of birth, invitations of marriage, and bad news of death of relatives in the family. In some areas it is the barber who carries the present of cloth, sweets and ornaments to the houses of relatives on the occasions of marriage and other functions. Many barbers have changed to other professions and some have opted for saloons in the urban areas because of the higher income. The washermen in the village cleaned the clothes of the caste Hindu families of the village. They did not clean the clothes of other Harijan communities who cleaned their clothes themselves. They also did some ritual washing especially on the occasion of death and also chopped wood needed for cremation. It was the washermen who took out the bangles from the hands of the women who became widows. Another class of village servants is that of the milkmen. Besides supplying milk, they carried the palanquins and loads of fruit, vegetables, sweets, milk or curd from different families to their relatives in other villages on occasions like marriage and other special occasions. Their function as milkmen was not so important because most of the village farmers reared cows. There were other service classes like the drummers and conch-blowers who were needed only on special

occasions. These two classes belonged to the Harijan community. The sweeper community did not do scavenging work in the village as they did in the towns. They were generally landless agricultural labourers. Drum beating was only a side business. The sweeper families also made baskets and gathered hides. Although these groups were untouchables, their work of drum beating and conch blowing were considered essential in all religious and social functions. All these groups of people are essential for the smooth functioning of a village. In many cases, they are not paid for the job, but are given a fixed annual allowance of grain, cash and perquisites. In some parts they have smallholdings of rent-free land, which like the duty are hereditary.

In connection with the different rural occupations, let us also have a look at the peasant economy of the village. Agriculture is the mainstay of the rural economy. So the entire social and economic structure revolves around it. The produces of the village community are sent not only to the towns and cities, but to foreign lands as well. In addition to rice, wheat, sugarcane, jaggery, cotton, tobacco, oilseeds, rubber, spices, etc., which are from the villages, handloom and potteries, are also traded from the villages. In this way, Indian villages still contribute a major portion of the national income.

The peasant economy also enjoins a series of obligations and duties on the inhabitants of a village. Kuppuswami speaks about the obligation of the craftsmen and service class as follows:

The farmers belonging to the agricultural caste constitute the pivot of the whole system in the rural areas. The craftsman like those belonging to the carpenter caste or blacksmith caste or the potter caste; those belonging to the service castes like the barbers and washermen; and the landless labourers belonging to the Harijan castes, all have obligations to serve the needs of the farmer. (2000:69)

Most of the economic transactions in the villages are based on exchange of goods or services. Thus there is considerable division of labour in the peasant economy. The artisan and service groups attach themselves to certain families of the farmers and the link goes on unbroken from generation to generation. The mutual obligation being so

tight, neither the farmer nor the members of the dependent castes can break away from each other.

In the traditional village, there is hardly any scope for social mobility. A man cannot change his caste since it is fixed by birth; nor can he change his status by increasing his income or wealth since there is not much scope for it in the village. An important feature of the peasant economy is the predominance of the sacred over the secular. The caste obligations persist because they are sacred and governed by dharma. When someone fails to discharge his obligations, the people of the village and those in the surrounding villages condemn him and hence the families are careful not to transgress the normal obligations.

Many families in the villages find it very difficult to make both ends meet. Agriculture is the main source of income for the villagers and it is dependent on monsoons and summer droughts. Hence none can forecast the kind of harvest that the villager would get. "Agriculture is the source of livelihood for 70% of the population. About 20% of the landholders hold 70% of the total land and 50% of the landholders are marginal farmers with less than one hectare of land" (Ahuja, 1999:307).

According to the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) definition, approved by the Ministry of Rural Development, a rural household with an annual income of less than Rs.11000 is described as a poor household. The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) after four years of study of 33000 rural households in 16 states observing 300 parameters released in December 1996 a report which revealed that 39% of the rural population was living below the poverty line or earning less than Rs.2444 per person per year. "According to the NCAER survey, however, the all-India annual income per family in Indian village was Rs.4485 in 1994" (*The Hindustan Times*, 4 Dec. 1996). The main cause of poverty in villages are low agricultural productivity, poor quality of livestock, low level of education, spending a large percentage of annual earnings on social ceremonies, absence of dynamic community leadership and so on.

Social legislation

Social legislations that were brought forward at different periods of time helped the village society in different ways. Some of the laws helped to get rid of the innumerable social evils that existed in the society and others helped to better the living as well as the working conditions of the people. Kuppuswamy (2000:138-145) discusses the important legislations that were enforced during the pre and post independence periods in India. Before independence, a number of laws were promulgated to bring about a change in the social conditions with respect to marriage, the position of women, juvenile delinquency, child and women labour, wages, working conditions etc. One of the most important social legislations in pre-independence days was the Act to abolish *Sati*. Leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Lord William Bentick were responsible for passing this act. There were other revolutionary social legislations also that attempted to protect the rights of women. The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act was passed in 1856. The first widow remarriage according to this Act was performed in Calcutta in 1856. As a result of this act, social reformers started homes for widows and widow remarriage associations in different parts of the country. They gave education to the young women who became widows and enabled them to remarry. The Female Infanticide Prevention Act of 1870 was enacted to prevent newborn female children being put to death. This evil practice had arisen because of the difficulty in getting a bridegroom from the same sub-caste and the heavy dowry and marriage expenses.

A number of laws concerning marriage were also enacted in the pre-independence period. The Special Marriage Act of 1872 provided for marriage irrespective of differences in religion. Till then marriage was looked upon as a sacrament only, but this act provided for civil marriage and registration of marriage. The Act was amended in 1923 to permit intercaste marriages also. Attempts were made to raise the marriage age of boys and girls. In 1860 The Indian Penal Code prohibited the marriage of girls below 10 years. In 1872 the Brahm Act fixed the marriageable age of girls at 14 and boys at 18. The Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed in 1929 raising the marriageable age of

girls to 14 and boys to 18. But this Act remained a dead letter because it never reached the village people for lack of publicity.

The law of inheritance used to be interpreted in such a way that the earnings of a member of the Hindu joint family were his own if his education was a general education, but earnings would belong to the family if he had been specially trained for a profession. To remove this difference and enable a man to have full right over his earnings from his profession, the Hindu Gains of Learning Act was passed in 1930.

A number of labour laws were also passed in the pre-independence era. The Workmen's Breach of Contract Act of 1859 helped the planters of Assam tea gardens to prosecute labourers who wanted to run away from the plantations. The Employers and Work Men (Disputes) Act 1860 made the worker liable to pay penalty for breaches of contract. These laws protected the employer and not the worker. The 1908 amendment abolished the system of penal contracts and the right of planters to arrest workers. The 1915 amendment abolished the indenture system. The Factory Act of 1881 prohibited employment of children below seven to work in cotton textile mills and also fixed hours of work for children. The 1922 Act limited the hours of work of adults to 60 hours per week. Again the 1931 Act limited hours of work to 54 per week and the 1946 amendment reduced it to 48 hours per week. The Workmen's Compensation Act 1923 required the employer to give compensation for accident, disease, disablement and death, when these are due to the working conditions. This may perhaps be the first step towards social security in India. The trade union movement in India started in the 19th century. The earliest recorded strike in India took place in Nagpur in 1877. Though trade unions existed, it was the Trade Union Act of 1926 that provided for the registration of trade unions. The Industrial Disputes Act of 1929 provided the machinery for settlement of disputes. The Payment of Wages Act 1936 provided for regular and prompt payment of wages.

The Children's (Pledging of Labour) Act of 1933 was passed to prohibit the pledging of the labour of children. But in spite of this enactment, many parents, in a number of villages continue to pledge children as bonded labourers. The Madras

Children's Act of 1920 provided that no child under 14 could be imprisoned, and with this law came juvenile courts and juvenile homes. The 1922 Act defined a child as a person under 15 and prevented employment of children below 12 years. The Employment of Children Act of 1938 regulated the employment of children in certain industrial employments. Under this law children below 15 were prohibited to take up employment in places that may be harmful to their health such as bidi making, cement manufacture, cloth printing, dyeing, making fire-works etc. The Beggary Act of 1940 tried to end begging.

There has been considerable social legislation since independence too that improved the social and living conditions of the Indian village folk. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 abolished all caste restrictions as a necessary requirement for a valid marriage. The act enforced monogamy and gave Hindus of all castes the same rights with respect to marriage. It also gave a secular outlook to marriage. Finally the act defined the term 'Hindu' in the widest possible manner to include all groups. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 overcame the prejudice against women getting the property of the father by conferring absolute rights over the property possessed by a Hindu woman. The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956 permitted the adoption of a son or a daughter and made adoption more of a secular act. The widow too got the right to adopt. Another landmark was the Dowry Prohibitions Act of 1961 that made the giver as well as the receiver of the dowry punishable. But this is another legislation, which has become ineffective. The Family Courts Act which was passed in 1948 provided for the establishment of Family Courts with a view to promote conciliation and settlement of disputes relating to marriage and family affairs. The Children's Act of 1960 was passed to provide for the care, protection, welfare, education, and rehabilitation of neglected or delinquent children. The Minimum Wages act 1948 provided for minimum rates of wages. The Untouchability (Offences) Act 1955 was aimed at improving the condition of the Harijans. But the status of the Harijans in the villages hardly improved because the upper castes continued to practice untouchability. The labour laws too have been changed after independence in the spirit of the Directive Principles in the Constitution. The Factory Act of 1948 raised the minimum age of workers to 14 and made provision for

their annual medical examination. The Motor Transport Workers Act 1961 stipulated 8 hours of work per day and 48 hours per week. The Employment Exchange Act 1959 provided for the registration of the unemployed.

The Employees State Insurance Act 1948 was passed to grant certain benefits to employees in case of sickness, maternity and injury etc. The Employees Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 1952, which initiated the institution of Provident Funds including Family Pension Fund and Deposit Linked Insurance Fund for employees working in factories and other establishments, followed this. The schemes were introduced in 1971 and the Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme in 1976. Many Social Welfare Legislation like The Bidi and Cigar Workers' Act 1966, Contract Labour Act 1970, The Bonded Labour System (Abolition Act) 1976, The Cine-Workers Welfare Fund Act 1981 were passed after independence.

Thus, we can see that a number of people-friendly Acts were passed in both the pre-independence and post-independence periods to help the common man and to get rid of many social evils and wicked practices that existed in society. The acts abolishing sati and promoting widow remarriage were landmarks. Many precious lives were lost as a result of the evil practice of *sati*. With these acts widows could be remarried. These laws gave a new life to many unfortunate women. Similarly acts preventing infanticide and child marriage were a boon to children. These laws put a stop to the practise of killing newborn girl children and marrying children at very early ages. Other laws prevented imprisoning children and paved way for the juvenile homes in the country. The trade union acts also improved the working conditions of the workers in the plantations and in the factories. The legislation, which made dowry illegal, did not make matters better as it failed to have any effect on the society. But the law against untouchability had a remarkable effect. In short, though these laws did not make any drastic and sudden changes, they created great ripples in the society and gradually found their mark. Many of these laws while bettering the conditions of the village people helped to bring them closer to modern trends and practices. For example, when the marriage age of children was increased, it helped them to go to the cities and study in the schools and colleges there,

and thus bring to the villages new and modern ideas, articles and contrivances from the cities. With better working conditions in the factories in the towns and cities, people from the villages flocked into the towns in search of jobs and this led to migration and its problems. Thus the acts passed at different times affected the village and its patterns.

Power Structure

Any discussion of the structures of power in Indian villages has to start with an analysis of the agrarian class structure in post-independent, rural India. Such an analysis reveals four major classes: three classes in the field of agriculture, namely landowners, tenants and labourers, and a fourth class of non-agriculturalists. According to Ahuja (1999: 300-02), landowners constitute 22%, tenants 27%, agricultural labourers 31%, and non-agriculturalists about 20% of the rural population. A large majority of the cultivators are marginal cultivators. The available land per family in villages is less than one acre, about 75% of the total sown area is for food crops and about 35% of the total produce is sold by cultivators. The marketing of agricultural produce is largely in the hands of middlemen who have their own interests and who control both credit as well as the disposal of produce. All of this leads to a rather unpleasant economic reality. "A large number of agrarian proletariat, a large number of uneconomic holders of land and a small number of artisans and self-employed people in villages reveal a miserable economic life lived by these people" (Ahuja, 1999:303).

At the same time, Ahuja's classification of cultivators in rural areas into the three categories of landlords, tenants and labourers is objected to by Thorner (1956:128) and Gupta (1991:261-270) on the ground that one and the same man can belong simultaneously to all three of these categories. A person may himself cultivate a few acres of land he owns, give some land on rent and in emergency may work another's field as labourer. Thorner has used three terms to analyse the agrarian relations: 'malik' for agricultural landlords, 'kissan' for working persons (including tenants) and 'mazdoor' for agricultural labourers. The 'maliks' are of two types; those who are absentee landlords and those who reside in the village in which they own land. These rich landlords wield considerable economic, social and political power. Though the emergence of cooperative

and credit societies in the villages has no doubt affected the power of the 'maliks' and the moneylenders since the villagers no longer depend on them for their money needs, yet they continue to be powerful by virtue of their traditional social status. The 'kissan' and members of his family perform field labour and may also work as agricultural labourers. Generally, the agricultural labourer can find work for wages for only about six months a year in the village. The rest of the period he indulges in some kind of self-employment or is largely jobless. Thus, he essentially lives below the poverty line. The landless 'mazdoor' earns a living by working on other people's land. When unable to find work in villages, the majority of this class migrates to towns and even other states and work as construction or industrial labourers.

It may also be observed that the traditional structures of power in the villages have undergone considerable changes, especially since independence. Traditionally, the power holders in the village may be classified into four groups: those who have power based on the ownership and control of land; those who have power based on their caste; those who have power based on numerical strength, and those who have power because of the positions they hold. In the traditional system, the main contexts of power were the *zamindari* system; the caste system and the village *panchayat*. The villagers referred their social, economic and other problems either to the *zamindar* or to their caste leader or to the village *panchayat*. The *jagirdari* and *zamindari* systems were in fact land revenue systems. The *jagirdar* was an intermediary between the tiller of the soil and the state, but he behaved practically as the owner of the land as far as the peasants were concerned. He collected revenue from peasants for supporting them and also for the military force which he maintained. The *zamindars* were big landlords but possessed no title. As Ahuja remarks, "The ownership of land and their economic status were the fundamental sources of *jagirdars*' and *zamindars*' power in a village" (Ahuja, 1999:306). The caste leaders also had high social status in a village, since caste councils were very powerful and could impose severe sanctions and even ostracise defaulters from the caste. The traditional village *panchayats*, which were informal organisations, consisted of village elders from amongst all the major castes in the village. The members gathered whenever issues involving the interests of the village were to be decided.

After independence, the *jagirdari* and *zamindari* systems were abolished and many land reforms were introduced which weakened the traditional power structure and created a new power structure. In the place of hereditary leaders and caste leaders, elected persons with political backing became leaders of the village and of the *panchayat*. Thus individual merit or political affiliation, and not caste or class, became an important factor in leadership.

Self-sufficiency and Change

There is a tendency to think that life in villages has been self-sufficient and has existed without much change or adaptation from time immemorial. The village was considered to be “a little republic, self-sufficient, having its own functionaries and surviving the ruin of empires”(Johnson, 2000:112). This romantic view of village life was held by many writing history books. For instance, Kumar presents the village as a miniature world self-sufficient in itself and contends that the absence of sharp differences in incomes in the villages creates a climate devoid of conflict and strife (Attwood, 1992:31). But Dumont argues that in such romanticised ideas of the ‘village community’ being self-sufficient and autonomous, the nonegalitarian aspects of village life go unmentioned and unrecorded (Dumont, 1966:158-59). Srinivas also maintains that this represents both an oversimplified and idealized picture of village life and this notion continued with few alterations for more than hundred and fifty years (1994:21).

The idea that villages were self-sufficient and harmonious economic units came about because crops harvested in the village fields enabled the villager to pay taxes to the government, provided food and seeds for the next season, and the means to pay essential artisan and servicing castes such as the carpenter, blacksmith, potter, barber, washer man and priest. The Gandhian concept of the village also centres on the idea of a self-contained or self-reliant economy. The appearance of self-sufficiency in the village was magnified by a caste-wise division of labour. But it can be observed that the transitional village community was not economically very self-sufficient. A close scrutiny reveals a few gaps. For example, salt was not produced in most villages and so also spices, which had to be imported into many villages. Gadgil (1948:69) points out that sugar-cane

farming was limited to certain regions. Similarly oil and jaggery, widely used by villagers, also had to be purchased in towns and weekly markets. Even the co-operation among the villagers was selective and occurred mostly out of necessity. For example, farmers with adjoining plots consulted and negotiated with each other during sowing season in order to plant complementary crops. During the harvest, the villagers pooled their resources and hired trucks to transport their crops to towns. They also shared their water and energy costs from common wells. However, we don't see many instances of this co-operation extending out to other areas of life in the village. Hence, the romantic notion that the village is harmonious, economically self-sufficient and politically autonomous has been disputed by scholars like Attwood (1992), Bandyopadhyay and Von Eschen, (1988), Srinivas (1994), Wade (1988) and others. In short, it may be better to conceive of the village society as part of a larger system; economically, politically and socially interconnected and interdependent with other villages and towns.

The idea of the unchanging village does not hold up in close scrutiny. For instance, close contact with the nearby towns as a result of progress in transport, communication and information technology has helped the villages to receive the merits as well as the defects of the towns. Many modern amenities due to technical and technological advances have diffused into the villages also. Till a few decades back, the villagers' only source of drinking water was the open wells, which often caused a number of parasitic diseases. Illnesses due to unclean drinking water were common in India. Now, in many villages drinking water comes from hand operated or motorised water pumps. A long line of women with pots in front of water pumps or wells is a common sight in many villages. Pipe water supply now reaches many villages. Village electrification has also been extensive. This has helped the villagers to use electric fans, televisions, stereo players radios etc. Gobar Gas Technology that uses cow dung and other wastes to create methane gas for fuel purposes has also been introduced. The fuel is mainly used for cooking, lighting, and heating purposes. Dandekar (1980:208) argues that this technology is best suited for many villages.

Newspapers, magazines, radio and television are common in many villages. They give the villagers information about local, national and international politics, economics and weather forecasts. But the primary use of these forms of media is as entertainment. Villagers spend as much as six or seven hours every day enjoying these media. The newspapers are read out loud by a literate member of the family and the other family members pay attention to the news items. For those who do not subscribe to newspapers the village teashop is the alternative. Hartmann's study of villages in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala in the 1980's reveals that "radios were owned only by those villagers of higher economic, caste and educational status" (1989:195). But this condition has changed and now many villagers of lower economic, caste and educational status own not only radios but also television sets.

The presence of television sets is changing the mores of life in village families. While earlier evenings were spent conversing with family members, friends and neighbours, now they are spent watching television. Instead of going out, people spend more time in front of the 'idiot box'. People are sleeping much less today than ten years ago and their daily schedule is organized around their favourite programme. Conversation within the household often centres on television programmes. Television is turning the village culture into something that mirrors the city culture. It affects people's perception of themselves, their society and the world at large. Television also facilitates the introduction of new ideas into traditional societies and helps modernisation. Salzman argues:

Each village, whether rustic or urban, pre-or post-industrial...is becoming more and more global, as, electronically, the world increasingly comes to each village and neighbourhood, hamlet and settlement, quarter, and suburb. (1993:1)

In conclusion, it may be said that the Indian rural society, though it has a very rich and ancient past and is quite different from the urban society, has also changed much due to social, scientific and technological developments. It is also true that the rural societies are not uniform throughout the country and differ from place to place according to their

geographical conditions and traditions, and their proximity or distance from towns, cities and centres of learning and industry.

The Village as a Conceptual/Mental Space.

The village is also definable in terms of its culture of belief systems, knowledge streams, and ritualistic practices that its inhabitants share. Perhaps in the Indian village, this feature is particularly relevant, since the centuries-old traditional culture, is nowhere better reflected than in the realm of the average villager, with his firm faith in the notions, attitudes and systems handed down through the generations by his forefathers. Beliefs and rituals thus play a very important role in the life of the villagers. Most of their social and cultural prejudices and attitudes can be explained in terms of beliefs that have a long history. It is both a history of their tribulations against the forces of recurrent calamities, as well as a part of their cultural heritage. Though these beliefs have been changing during the last few decades, possibly owing to the rising tide of modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation, it is a fact that this internal field of faith and belief remains largely intact even today.

Most people in the village are favourably inclined towards religion. They are basically religious and conservative in outlook. Religion not only controls the various aspects of life, but because religion and culture are intimately related, it influences the personality of the individuals, their conduct and behaviour, their philosophy of life, their modes of thinking, and their customs and traditions. Prayers are performed as a part of religious duty in order to placate the Gods and for favourable results. Sacrifices and rituals are also done for the same purpose. The *purohitis* and *sanyasis* move about and propagate the principles and characteristics of the religion. In other words, it affects the very character of society at every level, and is indeed the 'Alpha' and 'Omega' of Indian life.

Since the world is considered transitory and an illusion (*maya*) in Hinduism, the fact that the highest goal of the Hindu is to eliminate earthly concerns, desires and personal existence itself has introduced a large element of asceticism, intellectualism,

detachment and withdrawal. In no other country has so many renounced the world, and is there so much fasting and mortification as part of faith. However, as practiced in the villages, Hinduism certainly contains a worldly outlook. It means that the regulation and influence of the world forms a part of religion in the villages. According to Dube (1990: 261), Hinduism as it is practiced in the villages is not the Hinduism of the classical, philosophical systems of India, for it possesses neither the metaphysical heights nor the abstraction of the latter. It is a religion of feasts and festivals in which prescribed rituals cover all the major crises of life. In addition to the Hindus, the village population also includes the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and even Jains and Buddhists. Most often these people belonging to different religious denominations co-exist peacefully and amicably.

Along with religion, there are a number of other traditional knowledge systems that feature in the lives of the villagers. Before the arrival of the English system of medicine, people mainly depended on traditional Ayurvedic doctors, the *vaidyas*, when they fell ill. Most often, the occupation of the *vaidya* was a hereditary one, with the knowledge and practice staying within certain families and being handed down through the generations. Often, if the head of a *vaidya* family knew a particular herb for curing a particular disease, or a specialized kind of treatment, he kept that knowledge secret and on his deathbed handed over the secret to one of his sons. *Vaidyas* were not available in every village. But in a cluster of three or four villages there was always one:

Some of the *vaidyas* read Sanskrit and Ayurvedic *Shastras* and had passed the Ayurvedic examinations from Sanskrit institutions. They were learned persons and tried to diagnose diseases and treat them on the basis of their knowledge derived from the celebrated works of Charaka and Susrutha. (Misra, 1998:60)

The Ayurvedic system depended on herbal drugs and so the treatment was prolonged and the recovery slow. Many suffered from malnutrition and epidemics like cholera, smallpox, malaria, filaria and other diseases, which worsened the situation. Child mortality rate was also quite high as there were no trained nurses or midwives in the villages. There was also little sense of hygiene. Allopathic treatment and the use of allopathic drugs were extended to the rural areas only by 1920. It took still more time for

the functioning of an efficient medical system in the villages. Instances of fake *sadhoos* appearing at religious places and administering drugs for the cure of diseases to credulous patients were quite frequent. Illiterate people had the firm belief that epidemics like cholera and small pox were caused by the curses of goddesses and that other diseases like high fever and diarrhoea were caused by evil spirits. Therefore communal worship of goddesses at the time of epidemics and the treatment of sick children by the *tantriks* who chanted mantras to cure them were common.

After medicine, astrology had an important place in the village. The astrologers in the villages mainly prepared the horoscopes of newborn babies and studied the horoscopes of people who came to consult them and predicted their present and future calamities or brighter prospects according to the planetary positions in the horoscope. They even predicted the life spans of different individuals. Their services were in great demand for the comparison of the horoscopes of the bride and bridegroom and to fix an auspicious hour for marriage. They also told people the best time for thread ceremonies, laying foundations of buildings, house warming, etc. The astrologers also had the ritual function of reading the almanac of the New Year and predicting the general prospects of the state and its people, the prospects of rains, crops, prosperity and adversity.

It must be noted that the belief in astrology is based on the human fear of the uncertain and unknown future. Most people in rural areas, and even some educated urban people, believe that the future events of one's life can be predicted through astrology and that the course of unfavourable events can be counteracted by propitiation and worship of planetary gods. Thus, for beginning important events, for serious illnesses and at the apprehension of unavoidable calamities, astrologers are consulted. The *pundits* played a major role in the popularisation of astrology. They were learned Brahmin scholars, who were teachers of Sanskrit in schools. They taught grammar, literature, Ayurveda, astrology and other branches of Sanskrit literature. They were highly respected in the rural society and their advice was always respected. They were not priests because priesthood was practiced by Brahmins of lesser position.

Superstitious beliefs were very common and each village had a bundle of such beliefs. As Zaidi says: "It is generally believed that the simple village people in almost all developing countries are fatalistic in their attitude to the supernatural and the unseen" (1970:91). The Indian villagers were no exception and were ardent believers in fate. Their strong belief was that everything was predestined and however much they tried, they could not change what was bound to happen. In a sense, this was a kind of fervent fatalism, which Spiro defines thus:

Fatalism generally refers to a ready and uncritical explanation of a phenomenon in terms of the doings of unknown agent or agents. It is characterized by a rigid belief in the supernatural and a passive dependence on Nature's taking her own course. (Spiro, 1966:78)

Fatalists believe that man has no control over his means of livelihood and that God assigns it to him. To most villagers man is a helpless creature. They are resigned to fate and will not believe that any man could change what has already been ordained for him. They are rigid in this belief and therefore are usually indifferent and even apathetic to making efforts for the improvements over their situation. The greatest resistance that has been put against the family planning programme is related to villagers' fatalistic faith that births and deaths cannot be controlled by human effort. Another expression of their faith in the efficiency of prayer and the limitations of man's control of nature is their attitude towards scientific medicine. They have a firm belief that if a man is destined to die no medicine can save him. In connection with the fatalistic view of life, the villagers performed a number of rituals at various times to propitiate the gods and to curry their favour, or in other words to get the gods to intervene in fate on their behalf. A questionable practice that goes in the name of such rituals is the animal sacrifice at shrines and temples of goddesses. In many village temples, a large number of male goats are sacrificed to make the goddesses happy. Sometimes, in its extreme form, this takes the shape of human sacrifice to propitiate the goddesses.

Some other popular beliefs and rituals will be of interest. Though, generally, there is not too much difference among the different castes in the modes of observance of

many similar kinds of rituals, there are also certain rituals which are performed exclusively by some castes. Various rituals are performed during the life cycle of a person. When a child is born, the first ceremony is held on the sixth day at which time the child is usually named. Another ceremony is performed when the child eats solid food for the first time. The next ceremony is the cutting of the hair. Piercing of the ears follows. Previously the ears of both male and female children were pierced. But now it is done for the females only. While the above is applicable to most castes, the thread ceremony is observed primarily by the Brahmins.

There are innumerable agricultural rituals observed by the rural folk. At the commencement of the sowing season, the farmers invite the priest to perform some prayers and give religious blessings to assure a successful harvest. Prayers and a feast are arranged at the time of harvest too. Cultivators in some areas do not sow seeds or transplant the saplings on Tuesdays and Saturdays, as these days are considered inauspicious for sowing. In many places the first harvest is done on a Thursday or Friday. There is also a belief that if anyone puts oil on his head and then touches the fruit bearing trees, their growth will be retarded.

There are many other superstitions and practices which have been mixed up with religion, worship and rites, and which have been communicated by the older generations to the younger generations. Many of them are followed by the younger generations mechanically, though they realise that there is no meaning in them. Many such beliefs are associated with inauspicious functions like funeral rites and auspicious functions like marriage and thread ceremonies. In funeral rites, for example, it is believed that the spirit of the dead moves around in the surroundings where the person lived, until the relatives of the dead person perform certain rites to propitiate the spirit and help it to attain heavenly status. The village folk strongly believe in the supernatural and invoke the mercy of these forces whenever they are in danger or feel that all means of help have been exhausted. In matters of diseases, floods and other natural calamities, they perform a number of ritualistic ceremonies implying their superstitious beliefs in the unseen. Another confirmed belief of the villagers is in ghosts and spirits. An important

supernatural being is the 'Jinn' (genii), now considered a part of the total belief system of the Muslims. There might also be a trace of Hindu concept of the demon in these beliefs. Innumerable stories about ghosts are narrated by mothers and grandmothers to children. As Karim explains:

There is a wide range of popular beliefs among the villagers about supernatural beings living about the community unseen. These beliefs, besides being strong motivational forces in social behaviour, indicate the basic insecurity of life in the village. (1955:29-41).

There are many superstitious beliefs also among villagers. If an owl hoots at night when a person is lying ill in the house, it is believed that the person will soon die, The first sight, in the morning, of a barren women is considered inauspicious to begin a day. If a married women dreams of fruit trees, she will bear a child in the near future. When one's palm itches it indicates that he will receive money. There are also beliefs about what one should and should not do. One should not comb one's hair or look in a mirror at night, for it will shorten one's life and make him poor. Cutting nails or hair at night would make one poor. When a child breaks its baby teeth, it should be deposited in a rat hole. By doing so his teeth will become fine, sharp and even. These beliefs about supernatural beings, the popular superstitions and the fatalistic attitudes of the villagers are a part of community life in Indian villages. These beliefs are so important to the villagers that no logic or convincing proof of their falsity will have any effect. The child learns of these beliefs as a part of his cultural conditioning, both at home and in the village and then internalises them as a part of his personality. These beliefs constitute his inner world of meaning and determine his behaviour in many situations. These attitudes must be taken into account in any understanding of the villager's social behaviour.

Thus, we see that the people in the villages were highly religious and offered prayers and sacrifices to different gods and goddesses. They strongly believed in fate and thought that everything was predestined. They blamed their fate for all the disasters in their life. It is perhaps the fear of the future that made them believe in astrology. The villagers often went to the astrologers and consulted them before every important event

and fixed an auspicious time. There were many rituals connected with the life of a villager. As agriculture was the main occupation of the villagers, some rituals were connected with agriculture also. The uneducated villagers were gullible and often superstitious too. They believed in the supernatural forces.

The Changing Scene Of Indian Rural Life

Indian society continues to be an overwhelmingly rural or agricultural society. In contrast to the tribal and pastoral societies, the village community is socially more cohesive. This is due to kinship bonds and the possession of agricultural lands. The Indian villages present picturesque scenes in spite of the scarcity and poverty experienced by the village folk. Villages still abound in fruit trees, ponds, paddy fields and greenery. There are small clusters of hamlets surrounded by banana and palm trees and mango groves. The houses are mostly thatched with brick or mud walls. An important characteristic of villages is the village market, which is held once or twice a week and which serves as the meeting place for persons from the surrounding villages. People bring their marketable articles to sell and take home items for consumption. The village men and women come to the markets in their best dress and buy all the things necessary for their household from the markets. Vendors from far away places come to the village market to sell their wares. The village market is often a colourful place buzzing with activity. There are different types of shops in the village that cater to the needs of the villagers. One can see grain shops, tea stalls, shops that sell betel leaves and nuts, cigarettes and bidis. There may also be commercial establishments like flour mills, cycle repair shops, tailors' shop, textile stores etc. Villages often have some kind of elementary schools and places of worship. Zaidi, who has made a study of the village, says:

The simple villagers earn their subsistence partly through cultivation of smallholdings and partly through other lucrative subsidiary occupations like selling milk, fishing, making handicrafts and doing manual labour. The personal impression that the villager is a lazy man who whiles away his times either in useless gossip or in sleeping and procreating is not well founded. (1970:16)

Almost till the end of the nineteenth century the Indian village society was quite traditional and fairly stagnant. The system of production and the economic and social relationships remained largely unchanged for generations. Ancient customs and rules determined social and economic relationships. In a sense society was a closed system, permitting little alteration or little change. Though the economy was opened up to the impacts of world economic forces, due to the impact of import and export systems during the British period, most of the rural economy was self-sufficient. Village production and distribution systems were highly traditional, without innovations or experiments, and the villagers remained for the most part immobile and rooted to their lands.

After independence, a sea change took place in every aspect of the Indian village life. This change has not been confined to social life only, but has also affected economic, political, moral, material and spiritual life; in fact every facet of life in the village. This process of adjustment and acclimatisation is an inevitable part of social life because the dynamic character of the society can be maintained only through changes. The architects of modern India were determined to make changes in all fields especially in the rural field as it was the rural society that was infested with the evils of conservatism, caste system, untouchability, lack of education, and so on.

A great change has come over the attitudes of the villagers towards the different factors of life. Villagers who were the devotees of agriculture from time immemorial have changed their preference to other occupations. They now prefer other jobs with a stable and fixed income. Even five or six decades back, their attitude to agriculture was quite positive with the population less and the yield more. The amenities of life were cheaper and there were very few things within the individual level of aspirations that were beyond him. But later the demands of existence increased and the pressure of population was felt more acutely. The holdings were divided and further sub-divided leading to proportionate decrease in the deployment of resources.

There are many reasons for the widespread dissatisfaction of the villagers. They have no steady income. Their crops do not give sufficient yield and so they do not have enough money for household needs. Their loans and debts are on the rise without any hope

of repayment. The widespread diseases and the lack of medical and educational facilities have brought a sense of helplessness and economic insecurity to the villagers. While many see no way for the alleviation of their difficulties, some expect a change for the better when their sons grow up. In the traditional Indian village, with its joint families living in caste groups in different parts of the village, there was certain solidarity though there may be all kinds of factions and quarrels within the village between castes, within the castes and between the families. When the village people move into cities they generally try to retain the same kind of solidarity by settling down in a particular part of town. But with the development of new localities as a result of town planning, and also the non-availability of suitable locations, families of different casts and different religions find themselves living in one urban block and probably miss the old village solidarity. It is in this context that many villagers feel that their lot has not changed during the last sixty years. They feel that if things have changed or improved at all, the beneficiaries are not they themselves but others living elsewhere. Only a few feel that their situation has improved. Desiring a greater and assured economic security and social prestige, the villagers who are farmers wish for occupations as teachers, businessmen, or government officers:

The village folk no longer consider the cultivation of one's own land respectable, rewarding or giving psychological compensation. For them a job – even if of low income – is respectable, rewarding and psychologically satisfying. Village life has few comforts to offer and the older villagers enthusiastically encourage their wards to take up jobs in the urban areas. (Zaidi, 1970:53)

In the village of olden days, the older people were looked upon as repositories of knowledge and wisdom. But with modern formal education, introduction of new sources of knowledge like books, newspapers, radio, television, Internet, etc. the ability of the elders cannot remain unchanged. This is one of the reasons why there is today the general feeling that the young lack respect for the elders. In the traditional rural society the illiterate youngster had to go to the experienced elder to get information. But now this is no longer needed and the older people feel neglected.

With the high emphasis given to education, the villagers are sending their children to schools and colleges. Only very seldom do they send their children to the old model Sanskrit schools. Women's education also has received great stimulus in the post-independence period. As a result of education, the belief in superstitions, ghosts and other supernatural things have greatly lessened. Rural electrification has broken the darkness of the village to some extent and also the belief in ghosts. Besides, young people have started to question the beliefs and practices for which there is no evident rationale. There is also a marked change in the condition of women, landless workers, coolies and children etc. Conservatism is on the decline and new values and new patterns of life are emerging.

Industrialisation has affected the life of the people in the villages. There have been three important effects of industrialisation on family organisation: First, the family, which was a principal unit of production, has been transformed into a consumption unit. Instead of all family members working together in an integrated economic enterprise, a few male members go out of the home to earn the family's living. This has affected not only the traditional structure of the joint family but also the relations among its members. Secondly, factory employment has freed young adults from direct dependence upon their families. As their wages have made them financially independent, the authority of the head of the household has weakened further and in many cases, along with men, their wives also have started working and earning. This has affected intra-family relations to some extent. Finally, children have ceased to be economic assets and have become liabilities.

A major source for the change of the Indian village has been the process of modernisation. The process of modernisation can also be approached in terms of economic development. It involves a change from the traditional techniques of production toward the application of scientific knowledge; in areas of agriculture, from subsistent agriculture towards commercial production using improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, tractors etc.; in the area of industries, from the use of human and animal power to the use of power-driven machines. Development of rapid modes of

transportation and communication through use of modern technology is another result. As Nagpaul opinions:

It involves a transformation of social, political, and economic organisation, from change-resistant, sacred outlooks to change-ready, secular outlooks, from personal bonds to impersonal relations, from status-based relations to contract based relations. (1996:368)

With all these changes, the rate of urbanisation became quite fast that at least one third of the total population now live in cities and towns. There is also a contemporary problem of over-urbanisation, as a result of migration from rural areas at a rate higher than the expansion of employment opportunities in the cities. Most migrants eke out a living in the various service occupations resulting in the rapid growth and expansion of urban slums. The main feature of modernisation is the building up of an open society in which individuals of talent, enterprise and training can find places in the society appropriate to their achievements. Let us now look at the results of urbanisation and its effects on the village community. Ramachandran defines the characteristics of an urban place as follows:

A population of not less than 5000, a demographic density of not less than 400 persons per square kilometre, and 75 per cent or more of the working population engaged in non-agricultural activities like manufacturing, trade and commerce, service, etc. are said to be the important characteristics of a town/city or 'urban' place. (1998:101)

Rural and urban communities may be distinguished from each other on the basis of several criteria like occupation, size, density of population, environment, homogeneity-heterogeneity, social stratification, mobility and system of interaction. In addition, while rural social organisation is caste-based, urban social organisation is class-based and largely secular (D'Souza, 1985 and *ICSSR Report*, 1974:161). Rural-urban interaction is important because urbanisation and urban growth have their impact on rural areas; and activities in rural areas have their effect on the towns and nearby cities. The

rural people depend on the urban centres for their banking and credit needs, purchase of agricultural equipments and other supplies, sale of farm products and commercial recreation. Nagpaul says that urban centres depend a lot on village areas:

The urban sector is dependent on the rural sector for food supply, cheap labour, and vast market of its manufactured goods. The urban professionals like doctors, lawyers, etc. draw a large number of their patients/clients from rural masses because hospitals and courts are situated in towns and cities. (1996:155-156)

Another change seen is the development of a rural-urban fringe around cities. The cities have penetrated into rural areas to a distance of 14-15 km. As a result, the villages in the fringe area undergo a process of change which manifests itself in changes in land uses within the village; occupational changes, and changes in the social and economic life styles of the people of the village.

A major phenomenon that affects rural-urban relationships is migration. According to Prasad, "urbanisation is the movement of population from rural to urban areas" (2003:384). He holds that urbanisation involves not only movement of population to cities but also changes in the migrants' attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviour patterns. Most rural migrants who move to urban areas are young males who take up unskilled and semi-skilled occupations. Even those ruralites who receive higher education prefer to settle down in cities. This migration from rural to urban areas exerts pressures on urban public services and creates problems of social disorganisation. The natural environment of the ruralites is different from artificial environment of the urbanities. Rural work is determined by seasons and weather while urban work is carried out indoors in predictable conditions. Both sectors, therefore, develop somewhat distinctive sub-cultures of their own which further shape their social institutions and personalities. More and more people are moving from rural to urban areas, draining off young males from the rural sector, feminising the rural household, increasing rural-urban contacts, and diffusing urban ways of life far and wide into the villages.

In modern times, migration has also been identified as a development-fostering process. The mobility of human populations all over the world has become an important component of economic development and social change. Throughout the developing world, the rates of rural urban migration continue to exceed the rates of urban job creation and to surpass greatly the capacity of both industry and urban social services to absorb this labour effectively:

Migration today is being increasingly looked upon as the major contributing factor to the ubiquitous phenomenon of urban surplus labour and as a force which continues to exacerbate already serious urban employment problems caused by growing economic and structural imbalances between urban and rural areas.

(Torado, 1967:1-2)



NB 5838

Rural-urban migration is not only an integral part of industrialisation and economic development but it may also become a major instrument of social change both at the places of origin as well as those of destination. The urban setting is the fertile ground for the generation of social and economic changes and these are spread in rural areas by the process of rural-urban migration. Rural-urban migration in India is a search for economic progress. In the majority of cases, the 'push' factor is more powerful than the 'pull' factor. The person who migrates has to take care of his personal needs and requirements and also the well being of his parent family and other relatives at the place of his origin, in addition to his own nuclear family, which stays with him either in the city or remains back in the village. Migration of adults is to a great extent economically motivated. Economic incentives play a main role in the decision to migrate. The migrants almost always move from places of lower economic opportunities to areas of greater potential opportunities. Migration has attracted people from all socio-economic and educational strata of the society. Irrespective of their educational attainments and occupational skills, people move out of the village in search of employment. The rural distress is so acute that there is a one-way traffic in the movement of populations, i.e. from rural areas to urban areas. Migration in reverse direction is very rare, except when

compelled by non-availability of jobs, problems of adjustment, emotional strains and other compelling factors.

The migrants contribute to the economic progress of their family and their village in many ways. One major consequence of migration is the transfer of cash or other resources to the migrant's family remaining in the village. "This is more correct in the case of rural to urban migration and not rural to rural migration which results in much lower remittances, owing to lower earning capacity of the migrant" (Connell et al, 1976:92). Actually, it is the migrants placed in the lower social and economic categories in the city who contribute more than those placed at higher socio-economic levels. The former type obtain only low-paid jobs in the cities and have to keep their families at the places of their origin, which necessitates their sending regular remittances to the villages. The latter type is more cultured and status-conscious, and keeps their families with them and hence spends a larger part of their earnings in the city. The remittances from the migrants raise rural incomes and consumptions. They also encourage technological changes. The money may be spent on productive investment and development and diversification of agricultural or non-agricultural activities or spent on having education or to relieve the poverty of those who remain in the village. The money may also be used unproductively and may even erode work habits since resources are expended without the need for any effort on the part of the recipient. The urban life has cut the roots of the joint family system and has reinforced the nuclear family system. Cities provide immense opportunities for education and new occupations. Those who come to cities and take up new occupations different from their traditional family occupations, show a greater shift in their attitudes than those who follow the traditional occupations.

The village society today has changed a lot due to urbanisation. It mirrors cosmopolitan models of life. It is very common to see cars and motorcycles rushing along the village roads. Modern home appliances like electric fans, television sets, refrigerators, gas stoves, steel cupboards, etc. decorate village houses. More people build latrines next to their homes or attached to their homes instead of defecating in nearby fields. Village teenagers have given up the traditional village attire and now wear jeans and T-shirts and

shoes. Girls wear modern dresses and copy the modern hairstyles they see on television. Thus all through the village, one can see the reflections of urban styles of life and work. People in the village spend more time in watching television. Villagers have begun to imbibe many of the ideas, images, principles, and values they see on television and evidence suggests that their behaviour begins to reflect some of those values and images.

The migrants not only send money to the members of their family or other relatives in the village but also provide economic and other kinds of assistance in various ways. On their visits to the village they bring various items from the city, which spread urban culture in rural areas. Items such as radio and television help the rural masses in their contact with the outside world and in enlightening them with new ideas and thoughts. Though these items become the property and 'status symbol' of the parent family, the whole village community is greatly profited. The migrants also make their contribution to village welfare activities such as the construction of schools, clinics and community centres, and the repair of roads, wells, etc. Connell et al opinions:

A steady and substantial flow of remittances seem to occur where migrants have a strong commitment to return; where the native village households are exceptionally poor, and most clearly, where the original act of migration was an attempt to get relieved from this poverty. (1976:93)

The migrant also transmits urban ideas or customs like the discipline of the workplace, the concept of fair wages, ideas of health and hygiene, perceptions about the usefulness of books, newspapers and education, notions such as dignity of labour, and so on. Although the migrants may choose to live at the new urban workplace they invariably think of their village with love, pride, allegiance and nostalgia.

Urbanisation has created many problems such as overcrowding and slums, unemployment and poverty, crime and juvenile delinquency, drug trafficking and pollution, violence and sexual harassment of women, tensions and strains etc. According to the 1998 UNI report (*The Hindustan Times*, 9 May 1998), between one-fourth and half of the urban population in India's largest cities lives in makeshift shelters and slums.

Overcrowding encourages deviant behaviour, spreads diseases, and creates conditions for mental illness, alcoholism, and riots. Another effect of dense urban living is people's apathy and indifference. City dwellers do not want to get involved in other people's affairs. Water supply and drainage are very poor in cities. The transportation and traffic in all Indian cities are extremely unsatisfactory. So is the case of sanitation. Many Indian cities and towns pollute the environment by discharging its sewage and industrial effluents into the nearby rivers. The exhaust fumes of motor vehicles make city life terribly unhealthy.

The population movement from the rural to the urban areas has also led to a decline of authoritarian power. The individual has started functioning without any restrictive familial controls. Formerly, when the man of the family worked and all family members helped him in his work, there was more intimacy among the family members but now since he works in the industry, away from the family, the intimacy in relations has been adversely affected. The effect of industrialisation on the pattern of family relationships is also evident from the decline in self-sufficiency of the family, and the attitudinal changes towards the family. Industrialisation has, thus, contributed markedly in the creation of a new social and physiological setting in which the survival of the early joint family with its authoritarian organisation has become very difficult.

Another stimulus, which helped change, was westernisation. It implies change in dress, diet, style of eating manners, etc., on the lines of western practices. An important change that has taken place with westernisation is in the medium of instruction. With the introduction of English education, schools were thrown open to all people. It helped the young to seek government employment and jobs in good commercial establishments. Western education also paved a way for vital change in the outlooks and attitudes of the Indian youth. Exposure to English literature, history and political institutions made them adopt a humanitarian outlook and promoted in them an active concern for the welfare of human beings irrespective of caste, creed and other considerations. It also promoted, egalitarianism, secularism, rationalism and a critical outlook. As the style of living changed, many gave up their inhibitions toward meat eating and alcohol. Western styles

of dressing, dining, learning to appreciate western music, participating in ball dances, etc. became common. Humanitarian outlook among the westernised elite led to social reform movements and later on, to the independence movement. They were aware of the existing social evils like child marriage, taboos against widow marriage, seclusion of women, hostility to women's education, untouchability, taboos against intercaste marriage and intercaste dining.

Sanskritisation or Brahminisation had put a taboo on meat eating and alcohol consumption in contrast to Vedic religion, which approved both. Westernisation promoted both. Highly westernised Brahmins shed their inhibitions about the two. Among the lower classes there were no taboos against widowhood, divorce and remarriage. The wife did not look upon her husband as a deity. In one sense, their customs were in tune with westernisation. A section of the Brahmins adopted western ways because of the prestige of the ways of the masters and the monetary benefits of secure careers in the government and commercial offices. The lower castes chose westernisation as the means to enable them to move up in status in the society and to some extent to escape from the inequities of the caste system.

Politically, the villagers have become more conscious and the frequent elections to different political bodies have made them conscious that they have some role to play in the administration of their country. There is a great deal of political activity in the villages these days, both in the positive sense as well as in the negative sense. Common people have learned to exert pressure on the local leaders and members of the local bodies and legislative assemblies for the redressal of their grievances, gaining of local facilities and other general benefits. But at the same time, pressure is also being wielded for attaining personal favours. In addition, the village people have also been divided on party lines and often local problems are taking party colours and there are tensions and factional fights which were not prevalent before the forties. But still, many of the villagers are still relatively ignorant of the larger political developments in the state or at the centre and are yet to fully understand the importance of their right of franchise.

In the economic sphere, many classes of people who controlled the economic life and played vital roles in the lives of the villagers have declined or disappeared. Some old classes continue without improvement in their conditions, while some other classes continue with a change in their positions. Some new classes have also emerged. The landlords have disappeared and the money lending classes have declined, though the new generations of old moneylender families have directed their business to other lucrative avenues. The marginal farmers, tenants, agricultural labourers and artisans continue to follow the same occupation and remain as poor as before, while a small group of solvent farmers and traders have become more prosperous and form the class of the new rich in the villages. These families are often successors of the previous moneylenders or large farmer families. Now they have assumed the roles of contractors, traders and small businessmen. At the same time, institutional agents of economic change are also making their presence felt in the villages:

The village people are coming into contact with the agents of economic change, namely agricultural extension officers, the village level workers, officials of the banks and co-operative societies, family planning officials, block development officers, etc. Many of these officials are stationed in the villages and have become a part of the village people. (Zaidi, 1970:45)

Before the 1940's these types of people were not there in the villages and the villagers came into contact only with the officers of land revenue, irrigation, tax collection and the court. Many steps have been taken to improve the rural economy and thus the rural society. The abolition of the Zamindari system was one such. As a result, the vested interests in agriculture were removed and people without land received land. The Bhoodan movement of Acharya Vinoba Bhave accelerated this phase. Later, various steps were taken to change the land tenure system and also to bring about reforms in land ownership. Provisions were made to give land to the landless and the members of the weaker sections were indemnified from the evil effects of the traditional moneylenders. As a result of the nationalisation of banks in 1969, not only were new branches opened in the rural areas, but also institutional finance was made available to the agriculturists,

artisans, and other village folk. Because of the availability of loans at nominal interest rates, agricultural production went up and new cottage and small-scale industries were set up in the rural areas.

The abolishment of Privy Purse, the nationalisation of banks and other steps, which were part of a larger agenda of government initiated socialism, weakened the institution of capitalism in the country. The industries that affected the life of the ordinary people were taken up by the government. Because of the public sector, the institution of private enterprise which is a part of the capitalistic order and based on private profit motive and exploitation of man by man did get a jolt. All these things had their repercussions on the village life and economy. The Five Year Plans and the land reforms after independence helped in raising the standard of life of the villagers. The traditional method of cultivation has given way to the scientific mode of cultivation. Artificial fertilisers, high-yield seeds, tractors, modern agricultural methods and irrigation facilities have improved the agricultural production.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw a rapid expansion in educational facilities. Educational institutions were established for women alone and so women who had hitherto received little education could advance their learning. Children were trained by expert teachers in institutions and were made fit for good professions. The traditional schools that transmitted only traditional knowledge were restricted to the children of the upper caste. With the starting of innumerable educational institutions, the Brahmins and other castes changed over to secular education. English education enabled the young men and women to enter government services, banks and other concerns. The new education system also helped to create a changed outlook regarding the vital aspects of life.

The village occupations too have felt the wave of change. The labourers and artisans were usually paid in grain and cloth for the work done. But with the passage of time they began to be paid in money. Many of the artisan families also gave up their traditional jobs and went seeking pastures new. Many village carpenters and cobblers moved to towns. Some opened shops in urban areas. Although, more villagers have taken to the habit of wearing footwear, the village cobblers have little work to do. The

availability of factory made sandals and shoes have left them with only repair work. So most of them have given up their profession and have taken to other odd jobs. The work of the village blacksmith has been declining as people have started buying factory-made implements from the markets. The flooding of the markets with steel cutlery also adversely affected the village blacksmiths. The business of the potters too is on the decline. They are facing competition from the aluminium industry and more recently from the steel and plastic industry. The oilmen also find it a losing battle. People no longer buy oil from them. The old practice of carrying oil on the head and selling it from door to door is no more. Oil is available in cans, bottles and pouches at reasonable prices in shops. The village confectioners are also now rarely seen in the villages, with the arrival of modern bakeries, pastry shops and packed sweetmeats that can be preserved for a long period. The introduction of new technologies in village handicrafts has been another reason for the decline of the old crafts. So, as Jannuzi remarks, "New goods and classes of people have entered the village. Large number of persons from each village has gone out of it to distant towns or cities to work. The closed and rigid society is broken and a free society is emerging" (Jannuzi, 1990:108).

Among the service classes, though the barber is still in high demand, the number of barber families in the villages is on the decline. Some have opened saloons in urban areas and have so modernised their job that their income is much higher than the customary income of their counterparts in the village. At the same time, members of the barber families who have received education in schools and colleges seek other more lucrative jobs. As for the washermen, with the widespread use of washing machines, and with polyester cloth, detergents and washing materials available everywhere, there is an increasing amount of home washing and hence the washing loads of the washermen are also getting reduced. With the disappearance of palanquins and with the advent of the large scale processing and distribution of milk, the milkmen have largely lost their caste functions. The milkmen families now supply milk to nearby semi-urban centres and milk societies. With the arrival of freezers, refrigerators, milk pouches and milk powder the milkmen are not in great demand. They are now engaged in agriculture and other occupations.

As faith in daily rituals and associated habits are declining, the demand for the priest is also less. But the traditional needs for the service of the priest on special occasions such as birth, marriage, thread and funeral ceremonies and community or individual *poojas* of gods and goddesses still continue. On the one hand, new members of priestly families have in many cases received good education and have become doctors, teachers, officers, clerks, etc. and thereby have moved away from their family profession. On the other, a number of priestly families find themselves in abject poverty, and are not equipped for modern professions. It appears that in the near future, the priests will become so scarce that people will have to run to distant villages to arrange a priest for a special function or cease to employ priests altogether.

Despite changes, the basic structure of the village with its cultivators, essential artisans and service classes still stands as a rock, though with some erosions:

There is no revolutionary change in the village production structure. From decade to decade, in the working of the village production structure, some old things fall into disuse and some new things from the cities are introduced. But the old system moves on assimilating the new things from time to time. (Misra, 1998:145)

Any observer can notice the old and new elements in the village society in an important social function like marriage in a big landowner's family. The agricultural labourers are busy in drawing water, cleaning courtyards, fixing *shamianas*, peeling vegetables and doing many other sundry jobs. However, the weaver does not supply any clothing for the marriage anymore. Many pieces of handloom cloth used in the rituals of the marriage are purchased from the cloth store in the market place. But the carpenter and blacksmith still supply the wooden and iron articles necessary for the marriage rituals. So also does the potter supplying the earthen pots necessary as auspicious articles. There is some dependence on them as the articles supplied by them are not easily available in the village market place. Such articles are made to order. All other commodities used are purchased from the market. The drummers and the conch blowers play important roles as they did in the past. If it is a son's marriage, a band party from the town accompanies the groom while the village drummers perform the auspicious ritual duties in the groom's

house. The traditional socio-economic structure and the customary relation gradually wear out. But it is not an abrupt or revolutionary transformation.

The pre-independence period was the period of *vaidyas* and traditional Ayurvedic doctors. In the 1930s, allopathic medicine gained ground. But, since medical services were seldom available in emergencies, the villagers did not have a high opinion about the dispensaries. From the late fifties, however, the health care scene changed. Medical colleges and hospitals were started. More primary health centres were established in villages. Besides, taluk and district hospitals also started functioning and the number of qualified private practitioners working in semi-urban and rural areas also increased. This also brought about a sea change in the attitudes of the villagers, probably aided by higher levels of education: “The superstitious beliefs that the diseases are caused by the goddesses and evil spirits have vanished, to a great extent. Vaccination and inoculation are common in the villages” (Misra, 1998:103). Due to advanced transport facilities, serious cases are being easily brought to bigger hospitals in towns. Now people are being given free medical aid and also provided with free medical services as a result of which the villages are no more haunting places of diseases. The span of life and longevity has gone up. The maternity and infant mortality rates are also diminishing rapidly. Undeniably, all these have improved the quality of life in the average village.

The rapid expansion of transport and telecommunication facilities has also contributed to the opening up of the village. The availability of good roads and modern transport facilities, and the presence of radio, television, telephone, newspapers, and of late even computers, the Internet and mobile phones means that the village economy and village society are no longer isolated and closed as before. The habits, fashions and practices of distant lands now spread quickly even to remote villages. This, of course, has positive as well as negative effects. As Kuppuswami notes, “Many evils of the city life such as liquor shops and sale of drugs were unknown in the villages decades back. Even teashops at different village centres were not common before the Second World War” (2000:111).

The common village sights that one saw some fifty years back are no more seen in the villages. The village drummers who used to come along the narrow path in the paddy fields announcing the festival in the local temple are no more seen. In olden days: “The Kurava women came at noon with their parrot cages and the Chetti women with infants on their hips. Saturdays were alms days. The beggars got rice and clothes and sometimes gruel” (Surayya, 1998:19).

These people are very seldom seen now and remain only in the nostalgic memories of the older generation. Thus, the old form of villages is seen no more. As seen earlier, the villages are fast disappearing now. The recent globalisation and advance in technology has sounded the death knell of the villages. As towns are overcrowded and land is cheaper in the villages, people turn to villages for starting new factories, educational institutions, housing complexes, airports, techno parks, container terminals and special economic zones (SEZ). The recent incident in West Bengal where the villagers were evicted from their lands to start factories for the corporate giants is an example. Hence, a day may come when it will be difficult to see a village.

CHAPTER III

The Village as a Physical/Real Space

It may be said that the basic characteristics of all Indian villages are more or less the same. The houses, roads, rivers, wells, temples, land, hills, means of transport etc., all have somewhat the same character in whichever village they appear. If we examine a representative Indian village, we find that there is a network of narrow roads within the village and wider roads connecting the village with the nearby villages and also the nearby towns. They are often muddy during the rains and dusty in summer and winter. The roads are the lifelines of the villages. If we closely observe a village, we find its meandering, dusty, unpaved and rutted road runs from east to west. At the west end it turns south and joins with a provincial road, which was also dusty and unpaved in the past, but now properly made and tarred. From this main road branch out several lanes and by-lanes where two hundred and odd straw-thatched, mud-walled houses stand in single or double lines. About two thousand people belonging to different castes live there with their cattle and other domestic animals. Most of the families in the past were joint families of parents and several brothers not so long ago. Though things are different now and there are more unitary families, many families still maintain their joint nature.

The families, whether joint or unitary, live in permanent or temporary houses constructed in the village. Houses are often subdivided to accommodate separate families. Where sub-division is not possible, rooms within the same courtyard are allotted to different families. The houses are usually overcrowded with men, women and children. Each house unit has one or two courtyards. The front lane or by-lane is common to all the houses, each of which has a front verandah and an entrance to the house. Behind each row of houses are also lanes common to all the houses. Each house has a cow shed as a part of the house or as a separate construction, and an enclosed yard on a convenient side according to the location of the house for keeping reaped paddy, for its threshing, and for storing straw and farmyard manure throughout the year.

The design of the houses, the layout of the lanes, the system of drainage, the location of temples, cremation grounds, pastures, ponds, tanks and wells, both common and private, all follow certain age-old patterns. The houses appear either as single units or in clusters. Very often they are on both sides of the lanes or streets. There may be one, or more temples belonging to each caste. The temples may be situated at the centre of the village or at the different areas where the different castes live. The cremation grounds are found a little away from the village, often on the other side of the river, as in the case of Malgudi. In Malgudi the cremation ground is on the other side of the river Sarayu. While the pastures are outside the village and a little far away, the ponds, tanks and wells are situated at different places in the village. The wells are dug according to the convenience of the villagers.

The pastures and the agriculture lands are irrigated using canals. The lanes, community tanks, and pastures usually belong to the community and are used in common. Looking at the plan and pattern of housing, it appears to be the most suitable one for living with security and sharing of amenities. Living is not only secure but also quite economical, because except for the small portions of individual houses and yards, most of the space necessary for living is used in common. Different castes and sub-castes live in different lanes but the pattern of housing is the same. The villagers cultivate the land lying in open fields surrounding the village. Agriculture is the main occupation and source of income of the people. The population is divided into different castes, each rendering a specific service to the village community and carving a living out of the work. In the past, a single village or a contiguous group of villages was economically self-sufficient. In such village environment, people have lived for centuries, generation after generation. Even today many do not feel the necessity of going beyond five miles of the village. Living in such an environment produced the highest forms of fellow feeling, cooperation, and community life.

There are many facilities available in a village or in a close group of villages. Primary education facilities, post office, middle school, dispensary, canal irrigation, bus stand, bi-weekly market, panchayat office and so on are found in the villages now.

Within the last thirty years or so, a lot of facilities, even a railway station and college have been created within the village itself. The villages have now been electrified and its transport facilities have greatly improved. With the changing circumstances, the socio-economic life of the people of the village is undergoing an inevitable change

The physical characteristics of the villages mentioned above can be seen in the novels of Anand, Narayan, Rao and Markandaya. Most of their stories take place in villages. Anand, especially, had a first hand knowledge of the Indian villages. He had spent some of the happiest days of his childhood, boyhood and youth in his mother's village in Central Punjab, among the tribesmen of the North-Western Frontier and in the Kangra Valley. The Punjabi poems, proverbs and folk tales had distilled into his consciousness through the recitals of his three maternal uncles. His fellow students at the Khalsa College, Amristar, who came mostly from the villages, talked of harvest and drinking *lassi* and sugarcane juice. These pleasant thoughts which got mixed up with his disgust with the ritual-ridden social life, religious fanaticism and superstitious belief of the villagers, and also his awareness of their painful life of toil from dawn to dusk only to pay back the claims of the money-lenders, the absentee landlords and the revenue hunting government made Anand a novelist of the downtrodden (Prasad, 2001:125).

Anand has drawn the picture of a pre-War Indian village in his novel *The Village*. In the opening chapter of the novel, a village atmosphere is created with remarkable skill. The singing of the robin, the twittering of sparrows, the chattering of crows, the flowering of the thorny bush, the paddy fields, the movement of domesticated donkeys, the village black dog named Kalu, the bullock cart whose driver everyone knows, the typical way people talk with blessings or curses, all make the reader feel that he is in a village in north India.

The village of Nandpur that Anand describes in the first novel of the trilogy -*The Village* - is symbolic of any Indian village in the early decades of the twentieth century. The village is inhabited by Sikhs. Anand depicts the life in the village and the changes that occur due to pressure from rapid modernisation. Anand's village is a village of the time when the initial resistance to the entry of an alien power had weakened into a

passive acceptance of the presence of the British. The tremors of the new awakening of nationalism had not yet reached the village. The village had unscrupulous landlords, greedy moneylenders, fleecing lawyers, orthodox religion ossified through years into mere rituals, social life saturated with superstitious practices etc.

While Anand portrays the North Indian villages, Narayan, Markandaya and Rao depict the South Indian villages. Anand describes a number of villages such as Nandpur, Bulandshahr etc. in his novels but Narayan presents only a single village in his novels, namely Malgudi. The place mirrors the time and image of the whole of India. It is in a sense a microcosm of India, combining the old and the new, tradition and modernity, the mood of the novelist and that of the contemporary world. As Holstrom says: "What happens in India happens in Malgudi and whatever happens in Malgudi happens everywhere" (1973:89). Just as Wessex is the microcosm of the declining English agricultural community, "Malgudi is a small town and stands at the nicely calculated cosmic distance between East and West. The superficial influence of the western and modern force on it, does not destroy its basic character" (Prasad, 1994:141).

Malgudi was certainly, in the recent past, a small village on the bank of the river Sarayu, which gradually grew into a big village and later into a town. The first houses in Malgudi were built more than two centuries back. This points to an important conclusion that the change of Malgudi from a small village to a big town was very slow and gradual. It must have consisted of a few lanes and some houses on each side of the lane. The village must have had a temple, wells, and trees of *banyan*, *peepal* and *tamarind*, under the shade of which the villagers rested. As the village grew, there must have developed separate areas for the different castes. Some villages grow very quickly and transform themselves into small towns and then into big towns and cities. In spite of the quick growth of Malgudi, and the changes witnessed there, some landmarks such as the Sarayu, the Mempi hills, the jungles, the groves etc. remain without any change at all.

Unlike Malgudi, the South Indian village that is depicted by Markandaya in her novel *Nectar in a Sieve* is not modern. Though she has not named her village or given hints as to its location, the village certainly becomes a microcosm of rural India. The

novel very vividly presents the life of the simple, rural people of a representative South Indian village. The village is a group of huts and small houses with a *maidan* 'field' nearby where children play games. Electric lamps are seen nowhere in the village as electricity has not reached the village. For lighting, the village has wick lamps or oil-filled coconut shells used as lamps. The village that Markandaya has depicted in this novel has two facets: one the quiet village before the introduction of technology and the other after the starting of the tannery. The novelist has not given a description of the village when it was at the height of its glory but at its transitional period. The change was mainly due to the arrival of the tannery.

Rao in his novel *Kanthapura* describes the accurate location of his village. The village is situated in the interior "with narrow, dusty, rut-covered roads"(7) that wind through the hills and connect this interior village with the outside world. A walk through the village will give one an idea of the village. If we follow Moorthy, when he goes to his mother, we can, to a certain extent, have an idea of the layout of the village:

He [Moorthy] skirted the temple, flower-garden and, hurrying round Boranna's Toddy Booth and crossing the highway, he rushed up the village road to the panchayat mound, turned to the left, followed Bhatta's Devil's field, where Pariah Tippa was weeding, jumped across Seethamma's stile and went straight through the backyard. He ran over the Temple Promontory and straight across the Brahmin Street Corner to Rangamma's house, but seeing that Rangamma had not yet returned from the river he walked back to see his mother. (57)

Kanthapura is a village situated in the hilly region of Mysore towards the Malabar Coast. The village is located on the way to Karwar, Maddur and Rampur. Saturu, Maluru, Shantipura, and Kashipura and many more are the neighbouring villages. The whole region is located on the Sahyadri mountain range on the western coast of India. Full of woodland terrain, it has a lot of wetlands as well as dry lands growing rice as its staple food. In this small village there are people of all castes, crafts and ideologies. The geographical position of the village of Kanthapura, which is in the province of Kara, is as follows:

High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar Coast is it, up Manglore and Puttur and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugarcane. Roads narrow, dusty, rut-covered roads, wind through the forest of teak and jack, of sandal and of sal, and hanging over bellowing gorges and leaping over elephant-haunted valleys, they turn now to the left and now to the right and bring you through the Alambi and Champa and Mena and Kola passes into the great granaries of trade. (1)

The colonial village of Kanthapura is an individual village but it can be any village in India. Basically all villages have the same characteristics; the form and nature of villages remain the same. According to Narasimhaiah, “Kanthapura is India in microcosm: what happened there is what happened in many places during India’s fight for freedom” (1974: x). The village of Kanthapura with its own culture and history is like any other village in India. The selection of the village as the locale of the narrative suggests yet another dimension of the novel. It is a Gandhian novel and in Gandhi’s philosophy of the nation, the village acquired a significant position. He saw India not as a nation-state but as a vast network of villages because the soul of India lived in its villages. “I have believed and repeated times without number,” says Gandhi, “that India is not to be found in its few cities but in its 7,00,000 villages” (Gandhi, 1936:8).

Of the seven lakh villages, most of the villages are situated near a water source, which is very often a river. Villages always mushroomed on the banks of rivers, streams and lakes as water is essential for drinking, grazing cattle, cultivation, hygiene and transport. Wells were another source of water. There were one or more wells in a village. One of the important features of the Malgudi landscape is the river Sarayu. Like the villages of Anand and Rao, which are situated on the banks of different rivers, Malgudi is situated on the shore of river Sarayu. It is the lifeblood of Malgudi. The people of Malgudi believe that this river was born of a scratch made by Rama’s arrow when he was on his way to Lanka. The holy river is the pride of the town. With each new novel of Narayan, we advance in time by a few years, and Malgudi grows in importance. But the major landmarks remain the same: the river Sarayu that flows by the side of Malgudi, the

Mempi Hills, and Nallappa's Grove etc. River Sarayu is an integral part of Malgudi and appears in all novels of Narayan. This river, which flows through the country of Kosala, is mentioned in the first stanza of Kamba's *Ramayana*, which is retold by Narayan. Rama, Sita and Lakshman spent a night on its bank on their way to the forests. The river, especially as one associated with history and the epics, is the symbol of purification and transformation. Srinivas in *Mr. Sampath* wrote the imaginative history of Malgudi since the *puranic* 'legendary' times. According to him, perhaps Rama passed through Malgudi on his way to Lanka and made the river Sarayu flow and perhaps Buddha preached on the very spot where now the Lawley Extension is. Malgudi asserts itself, and continues to live, change and grow from a small village to a town.

River Sarayu was some ten minutes walk from Ellamman Street, the last street of the town, chiefly occupied by the oil mongers. Its sand banks were the evening resort of all the people of the town. The Municipal President took any distinguished visitor to the top of the Town Hall and proudly pointed to him the Sarayu in the moonlight, glistening like a silver belt across the North (*Swami and Friends*) and the "Albert Mission College hostel was not more than a couple of hundred yards from the river" (*The English Teacher*, 6). There were many villages on the other side of the river Sarayu. Some distance away on the other side of the river was the village of Mangala where Velan (*The Guide*) lived.

River Sarayu is intimately connected with the lives of the people of Malgudi. It is here that the bully Mani waits for Rajam to throw him into the river. (*Swami and Friends*). It is on the bank of the river that Chandran meets Malathi (*The Bachelor of Arts*). The people of Malgudi take leisurely strolls on its sandbanks. This river has been the site of historic events in the life of Malgudi. In *Swami and Friends* we see about two thousand citizens assembling on the bank of the river Sarayu to protest against the arrest of Gauri Shankar and it is here that the crowd waits for the Mahatma. The Sarayu plays a very important role in the lives of the Malgudi characters. Chandran falls in love with Malathi at the first sight on the bank of this river and Sushila in *The English Teacher* washes her feet in the river and purifies herself before she dies. It is here that Daisy in

The Painter of Signs reveals the secret of her life to Raman. Raju in *The Guide* spends his time with Rosie on the steps near the river. He also begins his life as a holy man on the bank of Sarayu and ends it on the riverbed. In summer, the river Sarayu dries up like the wells in Malgudi. As a result women have to carry water in pitchers from a long distance. Like Sarayu in Malgudi, Kanthapura also has a river—Himavathy, which is a holy river for the people of Kanthapura. In *Nectar in a Sieve* too we find that there is a stream near Nathan's village where the women wash their clothes. In *Coolie*, Munoo's village is situated on the bank of a river — river Beas:

And her [Gujri's] gaze travelled beyond the mango-grove to the silver line of the river Beas, and roved angrily among the greenery of the ferns and weeds and bushes that spread on either side of the stream against the purple gleam of the low hills. (1)

The bank of the river provided green pastures where the cattle of the village were grazed: "He [Munoo] had been grazing cattle on the banks of the Beas and had begun to play while the buffaloes and cows in his charge had entered the low waters of the marsh where they now sat chewing the cud" (1). Similarly, in *The Village* Nihal Singh's village was near the rivers Ravi and the Chenab: "The road [to Nihal Singh's house] was narrowing ahead of him towards the pukka bridge of the new canal that had been opened to irrigate the region between the waters the Ravi and the Chanab" (14). There were ponds or tanks in the village, which the villagers used for all their needs:

Lalu went to the tank. Some of the women of the village were washing clothes as they couched on the steps, a short distance away from the professional washerwomen who hit the clothes on a slab of stone. And two girls were emerging after a dip. (38)

Bullock carts were the usual mode of conveyance in the villages in the past. In addition to this, some villages could boast of a number of buses and trains too. The trains had become a part of the village landscape in Anand's novel, *The Village*. The village of Nandpur had a freshly painted railway station, the surroundings of which were kept neat

and tidy. Lalu's father Nihal Singh who came by train to Nandpur got down at the railway station and walked home.

Nihal Singh came by the train from the district town of Manabad in a crowded third class carriage to Nandpur station. He emerged into the sun soaked compound, strewn with broken white pebbles and smelling of the fresh tar that was painted round the rim of the red-brick building. (5)

The train passes through the fields sending out huge curls of black smoke and carbon particles, which Nihal Singh, who is quite conservative at heart and hates modern innovations, considers very harmful to the crops. He says:

This machine [train] is like a devil ... and the smoke it belches is so bad for the fields. Just blights away the harvest. I am glad I have no fields near the railway. To think of our young corn blasted by the foul smoke and sparks of the stone coal, which these *injans* belch forth day and night, night and day. The age of darkness has come. (5)

The train has also brought a change in the geography of the village. The big fields are cut through the centre by the railway lines and it has heralded in the process of urbanisation too. Thus we see industrialisation and modernisation bringing change to the physical nature of the village. At the same time this mode of modern transport is faster and more efficient than the conventional mode of transport that exists in the villages. Lalu who is quite modern tells Nihal Singh:

Bapu, you know you wouldn't like to be carrying all those stacks of grain to Manbad and Sherkot on your back. The bullock cart drivers stop twenty times to smoke and to feed the bullocks and often get drunk and take two days and a night sometimes. But you can send anything to town in an hour by the goods train. (6)

But many villages were not lucky enough to have a railway, and the age-old bullock cart moved in the midst of sights and sounds from nature. Roads were the chief

means of transport in villages. The roads in most of the villages were suitable only for bullock carts as they were dusty and narrow and it took a lot of time to travel from one place to another. The roads in the villages were mostly mud roads or sometimes paved with stones. There were also tarred roads. But these were found connected to the main roads or highways and went only for some distance into the village and were later continued by mud roads. In Nandpur also, the roads were unpaved, narrow, dusty and muddy:

Where the short, well paved stretch of the railway road ended, it gave place to the dusty, rutted open high way. Nihal Singh glanced at the profusion of dead leaves that lay in the pits of the road, covered with dust and bespattered with mud and at the ochre and golden and yellow colours of the hanging boughs of *jamias* and jacks and *neem* trees. (7)

The roads in the village of Nandpur were narrow like the roads in most of the villages. So when a cart passed, Nihal Singh “balanced himself precariously on a boulder, to let the cart pass without splashing mud or covering him with dust” (15). In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Nathan and Rukmani had to travel a long distance in a bullock cart to reach Nathan’s village. “For six hours we rode on and on along the dusty road, passing several villages on the way to ours, which was a good distance away. Halfway there we stopped and a good distance away” (3). Malgudi has many unpaved, rutted, dusty roads, which turn muddy in the rainy season. The adjoining villages are connected by such roads. Malgudi has some tarred roads too. One big road, which passes through Malgudi, is the Trunk Road from Madras to Trichy. Another important road in Malgudi is the Market Road, which is the lifeline of the place. “It had a tendency to take abrupt turns and disrupt itself into side streets, which wove a network of crazy lanes behind the façade of buildings on the main road” (*Mr. Sampath*, 5). It is a major business centre and hence is crowded, noisy and dirty. The ‘beauty’ of the place overwhelms Margayya in *The Financial Expert*. In *The Painter of Signs* we find the Market Road crowded and active as ever. “This was the hour at which the train arrived, and all kinds of barrels, packages and bags were unloaded at the railway station, and then piled up on the bullock carts, which

lumbered along to the godowns behind the market”(78). By nightfall Malgudi is quiet. The roads appear deserted. Only one or two shops are open. *In The Vendor of Sweets*, when Jagan walked back home:

... at a little past seven-thirty, a lull had fallen on Market Road. Only the Krishna Dispensary was open. An enormous shaft of blue light fell on the road from the Krishna Dispensary. He noticed Dr. Krishna at his table peering at the throat of a patient. A street dog lay snoring on a heap of stone on the road side kept there since the first body was elected in Free India in 1947. (63)

Roads were the life veins of transport in Kanthapura. This village was not as modern as Malgudi where there were cars, buses and even auto rickshaws. In Kanthapura the chief means of transport was bullock carts. The bullock carts carried men and goods. Subba Chetty had two strong bulls, which had cost him three hundred and fifty rupees:

Cart after cart groans through the roads of Kanthapura, and on many a night, before the eyes are shut, the last lights we see are those of the train of carts, and the last voice we hear is that of the cart-man who sings through the hollows of the night. The carts pass through the Main Street and the Potter’s Lane and then they turn by Chennayya’s Pond, and up they go, up the passes into the morning that will rise over the sea. Sometimes when Rama Chetty or Subba Chetty have merchandise, the carts stop and there are greetings, and in every house we can hear Subba Chetty’s 350 rupee bulls ringing their bells as they get under the yoke. (1-2)

All kinds of goods were taken into and out of the village in bullock carts:

Carts rolled on and on. Fair carts of the Kanthapura fair, those that came from Maddur and Tippur and Santur and Kuppur, with chillies and coconut, rice and ragi, cloth, *tamarind*, butter and oil, bangles and kumkum, little dolls, little kites etc. Carts rolled by the Sampur knoll and down into the valley of the Tippur stream, then rose again and groaned round the Kenchamma hill and going straight

into the temple grove, one by one, with lolling bells and muffled bells with horn-protectors in copper and back-protectors in lace. (56)

The surroundings of Malgudi present quite an interesting view. Fringing Malgudi or just beyond it is Nallappa's Grove and the Mempi Forest, which could be reached by the Grove Street, and the Forest Road respectively. The river could be crossed near Nallappa's Grove, a little downstream. Men and cattle crossed the stream there and went to other places. Country carts drawn by bullocks also crossed the river at this place. Raju with Gaffur crosses the river at Nallappa's Grove and climbs the opposite bank, and goes to the village on the other side of the river to find a cobra for Rosie (*The Guide*, 59). Beyond the Sarayu on the other side of the river is a garden. Margayya in *The Financial Expert* collects the red lotus from the garden. The priest tells Margayya; "Beyond Sarayu, towards the North, there is a garden where there is a ruined temple with a pond. You will find red lotus there"(48). Jagan, in *The Vendor of Sweets*, establishes an ashram beyond the river. Krishna in *The English Teacher* goes to the garden house beyond the river to communicate with his dead wife. The garden, the lotus pond and the ruined temple on the other side of the river present a separate but not discontinuous world from that of Malgudi. The garden is not merely a cluster of trees. It is inhabited by a variety of creatures such as lizards, chameleons, birds, frogs and monkeys. In *The English Teacher* we get a description of the garden:

Over this little building loomed *banyan*, *peepal* and mango trees and beyond them stretched a grove of casurina, the wind blowing through their leaves creating a continuous murmur as of sea-waves. The surroundings were covered with vegetation of every type: bramble, thorn-bushes, lantana and oleander intertwined and choked each other. (115)

Just as we have the Nallappa's Grove and the Mempi Forest near Malgudi, there was the Skeffington Coffee Plantation near the village of Kanthapura. While the coffee plantation is physically encircled by a fence and gate, keeping the coolies in and the others out, the village is represented as a closed and exclusive social order keeping the agents of the colonial matrix out. Thus Bade Khan, the policeman is not offered a home

in Kanthapura. The Skeffington Coffee Estate keeps on growing bigger and bigger. And, as it grows in size, coolies from far and wide reach there in search of work:

The Skeffington Coffee Estate rises beyond the Bebbur Mound over the Bear's Hill, and hanging over Tippur and Subbur and Kantur, it swings round the elephant valley, and, rising to shoulder the Snow Mountains and the Beda Ghats, it dips sheer into the Himavathy, and follows on from the Balepur Toll-gate Corner to the Kenchamma Hill, where it turns again and skirts Bhatta's Devil's fields and Range Gowda's coconut garden and at Tippur Stream it rises again and is lost amidst the jungle growths of the Horse-Head Hill. Nobody knows how large it is. It is at least ten thousand acres wide. Later the estate began to grow from the Bear's Hill to the Kantur Hill, and more and more coolies came from beneath the Ghats, and from the Bear's Hill and Kantur it touched the Snow Mountains, and still more and more coolies came and then it became bigger and bigger till it touched all the hills around our village and still more and more coolies came—coolies from below the Ghats and talked Tamil or Telugu and who brought with them their old men and their children and their widowed women.

(64)

On the outer boundary of the village were toddy booths, which were sponsored by the government. The poor villagers frequented these toddy shops and lost their hard earned daily earnings. Moorthy opposed this evil and felt that, "toddy trees are Government trees, and toddy booths are there to exploit the poor and the unhappy"(178).

In the villages a zoning was clearly visible. For example, Malgudi was divided into different areas. The rich inhabited certain areas and the middle class and the poor people other areas. Mostly the different castes lived at different places. The untouchables lived secluded and a little apart from the rest. The Lawley Extension was an important place in Malgudi, which had developed, much later. Rich and important people like Rajam's father, the superintendent of police lived there. In *Swami and Friends*:

Rajam's father lived in the Lawley Extension. The name Lawley was given in memory of the mighty engineer Sir Frederick Lawley, who was at one time the superintending engineer for Malgudi Circle. The extension consisted of about fifty neat bungalows, mostly occupied by government officials. The Trunk Road to Trichinopoly passed a few yards in front of these houses. (151)

The Lawley Extension, which was inhabited by the wealthy people once, formed the southernmost limit of Malgudi, but later it was extended further south. In *The English Teacher*:

Lawley Extension formed the southernmost portion of the town, and consisted of well laid-out residential buildings, lining the neat roads and cross roads. It was the very end of the town, beyond which passed the Trichy trunk road, shaded with trees. At one time, only those with very high incomes could have residences there, but about five years ago, under a new scheme, the extension developed farther south: even beyond the Trunk Road the town was extending. There was a general scramble for these sites and houses, which received an uninterrupted southern breeze blowing across the fields. (60)

The Anderson lane in Malgudi was a street within a street, and a lane tucked away into a lane. The families in Kabir Street and Ellamman Street were once very rich. They were the landlords who lived in big houses. Their descendants now lived there in all pomp and splendour. The narrator in *The Talkative Man* tells us:

I belonged to one of those Kabir Street families, which flourished on the labours of an earlier generation. We were about twenty unrelated families in Kabir Street, each having inherited a huge rambling house stretching from the street to the river at the back. All that one did was to lounge on the *pyol*, watch the street, and wait for the harvest from our village and cash from the tenants. We were a vanishing race, however, about twenty families in Kabir Street and equal number in Ellamman Street, two spots where the village landlords had settled and built houses nearly a century back in order to seek the comforts of urban life and to

educate their children at Albert Mission. Their descendants, so comfortably placed, were mainly occupied in eating, breeding, celebrating festivals, spending the afternoons in a prolonged siesta on the *pyol* and playing cards all evening. These women rarely came out, being most of the time in the kitchen or in the safe-room scrutinising their collection of diamonds and silks. (4)

The houses in Malgudi, at the time when it was a small village, were mostly built by the house owners themselves. Raju's father had built the house himself. "He had dug the earth kneaded the mud with water from the well and built the walls, and roofed them with coconut thatch. At that time trains were not even thought of" (*The Guide*, 10). The streets were shabby and swarming. Jagan's father lived in a hut, but when he had money he improved his house:

Jagan's father, as everyone knew, had lived at first in a thatched hut at the very back of this ground. Jagan remembered playing on a sand heap outside the hut; the floor of the hut was paved with cool clay and one could put one's cheek to it on a warm day and feel heavenly. When he had money, Jagan's father put up the walls of the bathroom laying the bricks with his own hands. His father expanded the house from the backyard to the front. (*The Vendor of Sweets*, 25)

Margayya, in *The Financial Expert*, lived in Vinayak Street. His father also had built the hut with his own hands:

No. 14 D, Vinayak Street had been a famous landmark, for it was the earliest house to be built in that area. Margayya's father was considered a hero for settling there. It was a lonely place where there was supposed to be no security for life or property. The house was now divided into two; the other portion was occupied by his brother. But the houses had a common backyard. (98)

There were other houses also which the owners themselves had built. For example in *Waiting for the Mahatma*:

Sriram's house, number '14' in Kabir Street was very old and looked it. It was the last house in the street or "The First House" as his great grandfather used to say at the time he built it. From here one could see the back of market buildings and hear the sound of the crowd on the market road. (4)

All the streets in Malgudi were not alike. Some places in Malgudi like the Lawley Extension, Kabir Street and Ellamman Street were liked by all. But there were places, which were equally disliked by many. Vinayak Mudali Street was one. In *The Guide*, Vinayak Mudali Street is not a very comfortable place to live in, and in *The Financial Expert*, the priest complains to Margayya: "Our Vinayak Mudali Street! It's like an oven in summer'. Margayya agrees, 'What a lot of mosquitoes'" (24). There were other buildings like the Elementary School, the Fund Office and so on near Sriram's house in Malgudi:

Next door to Sriram's was a small printing press and next to it was another two-hundred year old house in which six noisy families lived, and beyond that was the Fund Office. A crooked street ran in front of the houses; their closeness to the market and to a Higher Elementary Town School, the Local Fund Dispensary and above all to the half-dozen benches around the market fountain, was said to give these houses in Kabir Street a unique value. (*Waiting for the Mahatma*, 4)

It is certain that the houses were the first buildings in Kabir Street. It was only after the houses that the other buildings and offices such as the Fund Office, The Dispensary, The Town School etc. were built. The houses were all alike—a large single roof sloping down to the slender rose-wood pillars with carvings and brass decorations on them, and a *pyol*, an open brick platform under the windows, on which the household slept in summer. The walls were two feet thick, the doors were made of century-old teak planks with bronze knobs, and the tiles were of burnt mud, which had weathered the storms and rains of centuries:

All these houses were alike. You could see end to end the slender pillars, sand tiles sloping down as if all of them belonged to a single house. Many changes had

occurred since they were built two centuries ago. Many of them had changed hands, the original owners having been lost in the toils of litigation, some were rented out to tradesmen, such as the Sun Press, the Butter Factory, or the Fund Office, while their owners retired to villages or built themselves modern villas in Lawley Extension. (*Waiting for the Mahatma*, 4)

The houses of ordinary people in Malgudi were not furnished properly. They were people of simple habits and tastes. The people sat mostly on the ground. They ate their food sitting on the floor. Houses were not electrified and the kerosene lamp was used to ward off darkness. In *The Guide*, We see Raju and his mother sitting on the floor side by side and eating their meal together from a rice pot within reach of both, by the sooty tin lamp stuck on a nail in the smoke-stained wall and after the meal the boy sleeps on a mat on the verandah while the mother waits for the return of her husband. Raju's house did not have separate rooms for dining, sleeping, and so on. Raju and his family had got used to a common living in the hall:

It had never occurred to us to be otherwise. We never wanted anything more than this. My father lived in his shop, I played under the tree, and we received male visitors on the outside *pyol* and left the inner for mother or any lady that might come. When we slept we went in. If it was warm, we slept on the *pyol*. The hall was passage, dressing room, a drawing room, a study, everything combined. My shaving mirror was on a nail; my finest clothes hung on peg. For a bath I dashed to a chamber on the backyard, half open to the sky, and poured water over my head, drawn straight from the well. (126)

But we find Raju living in a fine two-storeyed house once his financial condition has improved:

The stylish house at New Extension was more in keeping with our status. It was two storied, with a large compound, lawns, garden and garage. In the upper floor we had our bedrooms and a large hall where Nalini practiced her dances. It was carpeted. A bronze image of Natraja was fixed in one corner. (166)

Houses are also available for rent in Malgudi. People who do not have their own houses live in rented houses there. In *The English Teacher* Krishna and his wife, who are well-off search for a good house in Malgudi and are able to find a house to their liking:

At last we came to a house, which seemed attractive. It had a wide compound, broad windows, and a general appearance of spaciousness and taste. All the doors and the walls looked fresh with paint...a few steps led up to the veranda, a fairly deep, cool veranda, with a short parapet...a hall, four rooms in addition to the kitchen, a pleasing light blue paint and all the walls inside the house. It was really the very last house in the last crossroad of the New Extension. Fields of corn stretched away in front of the house and far beyond it a cluster of huts of the next village, and beyond it all stood up the blue outlines of Mempi Mountains. (64-65)

In Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, we find that Nathan's house, like every poor farmer's abode, is a small thatched mud hut near a paddy field in the vicinity of a couple of similar huts. A garland of mango leaves is hung across its doorway to herald happiness and good fortune. Nathans's hut, like other huts, has two rooms, one of which is a kind of storehouse for grain, whereas the other is for virtually everything else. A third had been begun but was unfinished; the mud walls were not more than half a foot high. Nathan had built the hut with his own hands. Nathan did not own the land he cultivated like Rukmani's father. But they had their own ploughing bullocks and kept a milk goat. Rukmani had a vegetable garden of her own and spent her time tending the plants when she did not work in the field. Near their paddy field there was a small brook. She could wash her clothes and bathe in the running water of the brook. At that time the concept of a nuclear family or a small family with two or three children had not evolved and so like every village family, Nathan's family too had several children – one daughter and six sons.

There was a clear difference in the size and structure of the houses in which the rich and the poor lived. While the average villagers who always remained poor, lived in huts of one or two rooms, the rich and the wealthy lived in houses, which were bigger and had many rooms. In short, the size and structure of the houses depended on the

financial status of the villagers. In Malgudi there were even a few palatial bungalows belonging to very rich and influential people. One such house was the house of Mr. Natesh, the municipal chairman in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. He boasts of having spent two lakhs of rupees for his house:

I have spent two lakhs on the building. My garden and lawns alone have cost me twenty five thousand rupees so far...I can live in a hut...but this is to receive the Mahatma. This is the biggest and the best-furnished house in Malgudi. (24)

In his novels Anand depicts the villages and houses of the higher castes. In some villages, the upper castes lived in better surroundings. Their houses were better than the houses of the poor peasants. In *Coolie*, we have a picture of the village home of Munoo. Here we find the surroundings and home in a better condition. The roads leading to these villages were also slightly better:

“Munoo ohe, Munooa oh Mundu”, shouted Gujri from the veranda of a squat, sequestered, little mud hut thatched with straw, which stood upon the edge of a hill about a hundred yards away from the village in the valley. And her eagle eyes explored the track of gold dust, which worked its zigzag course through rough scrub, beyond the flat roofs of the village houses under the relentless haze of the Kangra sun. (1)

While the peasants lived in a pitiable condition, the landlords and the high castes lived luxuriously. Lal Singh in *The Village* speaks about this state to his beloved Maya:

There has been no time like the present, my darling. No such unrighteousness—that hundreds and thousands of men in our land should be mortgaged up to their loincloths. That almost every mud-hut, every fruit tree, every bedstead and every bullock should be mortgaged, while in the houses of landlords stand milch cow, fine bulls, white horses and granaries well stocked. (358)

The landlords and a few rich people in the village had big houses like that of the municipal chairman in Narayan's novel *Waiting for the Mahatma*. On his way home from Manabad, Nihal Singh in *The Village* saw that: "...it was the new-fashioned three and four storeyed big brick house of the landlord, the sahuakar, the confectioner and the other shop keeper that spoilt the contours of the township for him" (18).

The village expands with the coming of new houses. Invariably, the land in the possession of a family gets further divided into smaller pieces as time passes. When sons get married, new houses are built for them and they move into them and thus a new family is born. When the land is divided among the sons there occurs a decrease in the area of the land possessed by the family. In *The Village*, Lalu's mother Gujri is anxious about the marriage of her sons. She says: "The younger boys will marry and they will go with their wives and divide the land that remains, and I will have to sit at the doorsteps of their houses" (121). She wants to build new houses for her sons, but at the same time she wants to keep some of the ancient structure intact:

She would have three new brick houses built in the corners of the courtyard for the boys. But the old barn she must keep intact. The ancients had built it themselves, built it strong against enemies, of mud, so that it might look humble and not excite the envy of the neighbours and authorities. (123)

She does not want the new houses to be flimsy but wants them to be big and beautiful:

The other two boys--they should not have flimsy mud huts or cottages of twigs and leaves like those of the paupers of the village and the menials. The family had not descended so low. She would have two storeyed houses built for them with blue flowerpots on the terraces. (124)

It has been illustrated that there existed a zoning in the villages. In Narayan's novels, we are able to see this zoning. The rich landlords, as already mentioned, lived in Kabir Lane and Ellamman Street and the affluent and the influential ones in Lawley

Extension. The lower caste people were not allowed to mix with the higher castes and had to live in a separate place far away from the living area of the upper class. Hence, we find the sweepers' huts beyond Nallappa's Grove. In the unnamed lanes behind the market lived a class of handloom weavers. All along the lane they had set up weaving frames with yarns dyed in blue, and hung out to dry on frames. Similarly, near Ellamman Street lived a group of oil mongers. The untouchables lived in huts made with torn cloth, tin sheets and coconut matting. The tiny huts were overcrowded, and did not give them much protection from the vagaries of nature. Rain and sun found no difficulty in entering their huts. In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, we find Gandhi visiting the hut of an untouchable:

The Mahatma entered the hut of a sweeper. This was one of the dozen huts belonging to the city sweepers who lived on the banks of the river. It was probably the worst area in the town, and an exaggeration even to call them huts; they were just hovels, put together with rags, tin-sheets and shreds of coconut matting, all crowded in anyhow, with scratchy fowls cackling about and children growing in the street dust. The municipal services were neither extended here nor missed, although the people living in the hovels were employed by the municipality for scavenging work in the town. (23)

Quite different from Malgudi, the social stratification was very strong in the village of Kanthapura. Every caste had its own space of living. Of all the castes, the Brahmins were the supreme inhabitants of the village. As in other Indian villages, due to social stratification, the houses were constructed in caste-wise clusters. There was a separate living space for the Brahmins and also different quarters for the pariahs, potters, weavers and the sudras. The entire village seemed to be divided into several caste and class segments, which was, of course, a common social problem of the Indian society. Moorthy's village had four hundred and twenty houses, but all the houses were not big like the house of Postmaster Suryanarayana, situated by the temple corner. The Potter's Street was the smallest of the streets. It had only five houses. There were Lingayya, Ramayya, Subbayya and Chandrayya of the potters' street who had owned big houses

and had been quite well off previously, but now on account of the modern Mangalore tiles, had to turn to land. Industrialisation had affected them adversely. Old Kamamma had a little broken house at the end of the street. Formerly, the Potter's Street had been a flourishing place. Chandrayya made festival pots and the rest of the potters were a simple lot, who tilled their lands, and now and then, went out to neighbouring villages to help people to make bricks. When one turned round the Potters' Street and walked across the Temple Square, the first house one saw was the nine-beamed house of Patel Range Gowda. About the number of houses the narrator in *Kanthapura* observes:

Till now I've spoken only of the Brahmin quarter. Our village had a Pariah quarter too, a Potters' quarter, a Weavers' quarter, and a Sudra quarter. How many huts had we there? I do not know. There may have been ninety or a hundred—though a hundred may be the right number of course you wouldn't expect me to go to the Pariah quarter, but I have seen from the street-corner Beadle Timmayya's hut. It was in the middle, so—let me see—if there were four on this side and about six, seven, eight that side, that makes some fifteen or twenty huts in all. Pock-marked Sidda had a real *thothi* (inner courtyard) house, with a big veranda and a large roof, and there must have been a big granary somewhere inside, for he owned as much land as Patwari Nanjundia or Shopkeeper Subba Chetty. (7)

All the houses in the villages were not of the same size. In many villages there were big houses and small houses. In *Kanthapura* too, there were a few big houses. The narrator in *Kanthapura* describes the houses there in the village:

Our village had four and twenty houses. Not all were big like Postmaster Suryanarayana's double storied house by the Temple Corner. But some were really not bad to look at. Our Patwaari Nanjundia had a veranda with two rooms built on to the old house. He had even put glass panes to the windows, which even Postmaster Suryanarayana could not boast of. Then there were the Kannayya-House people, who had a high veranda and though the house was I know not how many generations old, it was still as fresh and new as though it had been built

yesterday. No wonder that Waterfall Venkamma roared day and night against Rangamma. (4-5)

The way of identifying the people who lived in different houses was also very peculiar. The owners were identified by their houses as Moorthy was called 'Corner House Moorthy' and another family was identified as 'Kannya-House' people and yet another as 'Fig-tree House' people. Although in Kanthapura there were no buildings of public importance, in Malgudi there were a few buildings, which were of importance to the public. The Malgudians were very proud of The Co-operative Bank and The Circuit House in Malgudi. There were also schools, college, shops and other establishments in Malgudi:

One of the proudest buildings in Malgudi was the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank, which was built in the year 1941. The Circuit House on the edge of the town was an old East India Company building on an acre of land on the Trunk Road. Robert Clive was supposed to have halted there while marching to relieve the siege of Trichinopoly. The citizens of Malgudi were very proud of this building. (*Waiting for the Mahatma*, 24)

Malgudi had a number of shops. The shops were at first crude structures made of deal wood. Many tiny shops were seen about Malgudi with the shopkeepers hunched on the counters selling plantains, betel leaves, snuff and English biscuits. Raju's father too kept such a shop; it was built of deal planks and gunnysacks. His father sat in the shop selling peppermints, fruits, sweets, tobacco betel leaf, and parched gram measured out in tiny bamboo cylinders. The wayfarers on the Trunk Road came to this shop, which was known as the 'Hut Shop'. Very often a crowd of peasants and drivers of bullock wagons were seen gathered in front of this shop. Sometime after the coming of the railway, Raju's father was given the charge of the stall on the railway platform. With the passage of time, the idea of a shop also underwent a change. The shop on the platform was more spacious, and paved with cement and fitted with a number of shelves. The articles exhibited also underwent a change. The new shop was filled with bunches of bananas, troughs of fried stuff, bread, buns, cigarettes etc. Raju's father, who could not adapt

himself to the change, soon moved to the old shop where he was more comfortable, and entrusted the care of the railway shop to Raju. Malgudi had its common tea-stall, Muthu's tea stall, which sold tea in unwashed tumblers.

In the early days, a *pyol* school also existed in Malgudi. Such schools were common in the villages. The *pyol School* was conducted on the broad verandah of the village headman's house, where all the classes were held at the same time. The schoolmaster "addressed his pupils as donkeys and traced their genealogy on either side with thoroughness" (*The Guide*, 24). The other important places in Malgudi included Anderson Lane, where editor Srinivas lived, the Vinayak Mudaliyar Street, the Kabir Lane where Sampath had his establishment – The Truth Printing Works, etc. Malgudi also had a cricket ground and a market place. As time passed the place soon achieved a college and a film studio and a bridge across the river. Looking around Malgudi one could see a number of other villages. One such village was Kuppam. Jagan went to Kuppam in order to take a look at the bride proposed for him. When Jagan went to Badri Hill, with his family:

... the bus deposited them in a village at the foot of the hill. It was probably the smallest village on any map, consisting of two rows of huts and a couple of wooden stands made of packing cases on which a little merchandise was displayed for the convenience of pilgrims going uphill—coconuts, bananas, betal leaves and flowers. (115)

Another village was Solur, described in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. It was a small one with about fifty houses on a hill slope. Often, the villages did not have a definite form. It was even doubtful if they could be considered villages. For instance:

Sriram, whenever he heard the word 'villages', his mental picture was always one of green coconut groves, long and numerous steps leading down to the large tank, with elegant village women coming up bearing pitchers, the low roofed houses with broad *pyols*, and mat covered wagons moving about dragged by bulls with tinkling bells around their necks. He owed his idea to all the various Tamil films,

which he had seen. But reality was different. Some villages were hardly a cluster of huts. The first time he saw an actual village he could not recognise it and asked Bharati where the village was. (58)

The Indian villages did not meet up to Sriram's expectations, because the real Indian village was totally different from his idealised notion of villages. The villages he saw came nowhere near his mental conception:

Sriram's vision of a village was nowhere to be seen. Hungry parched men and women with skin stretched over their bones, bare earth, dry ponds and miserable tattered, thatched roofing over crumbling mud walls, streets full of pits and loose sand, unattractive dry fields—that was a village. Here pigs and dogs lounged in dry gutters. Sriram wondered how people ever managed to go on living in such places. (59-60)

The villages were not so beautiful, clean and fresh as one might suppose. Most of the villagers did not pay heed to cleanliness and had little sense of hygiene. Nandpur in the novel *The Village* has all the basic characteristics of a representative village. It was also dirty, unclean and unhygienic. Nihal Singh who comes from Manabad to Nandpur by train, "left the main path, and took a short-cut full puddles across the fields scattered with drying and decaying dung, broken pitchers, ashes, rags and bits of iron" (12). Lalu had to cover his nose when he passed through some spots in the village. He hurried:

...through the parts where the stink was most offensive, the loose end of his turban lifted to his nose and the folds of his *tehmet* in his hand. But the sickening smell of the stale lentils, wet crumbs, torn rags, mud refuse and garbage, which choked the drain, still lingered. For the wind seemed to be blowing toward the bazaar way and filled the nostrils with a stench that was enough to make the shop of Mota Singh, the perfumer and sherbet vendor, smell like a sewage farm. (16)

Again the picture of a dirty village is presented when Lalu observes the houses of the cowherds in the village:

Lalu sat down to rest on a boulder halfway down the hill, which overlooked the houses of the village menials, ruminating on the bare, rugged contours of the familiar landscape. In the dirty courtyard of the cowherds' lightless, lousy, pest-ridden houses, by the mounds of dry cow-dung cakes, some children were dragging the life out of a calf, pushing her, pulling her and mauling her about.
(61)

The villages were sometimes storehouses of diseases. Mr. Long, the government representative, came to inspect the village of Nandpur and spoke to the villagers in explicit terms, throwing much light on their deplorable condition:

I have inspected its different parts, and I think it is an awful place to live in. It is unhealthy. That is why you are always ill half of the year, and why your women die in childbirth and your children are either still born or have sores all over their bodies. I have counted fourteen rubbish heaps in the vicinity of your village and three big and small dirty tanks, all of which receive their water from the black, smelling sewers, which flow down from your lanes and alleys. Your overcrowded mud houses are crumbling to pieces your wells are dangerously near the drains and must receive all the mud and slush of your narrow streets when the rain falls. You have no open spaces outside your village for you to take the air or for your children to play in. Your village then is a place fit only for animals to live in, and if that be so, since you live here in this dirt, you are all animals, and not men.
(160-61)

Quite different from Nandpur is the pre-independence village of Bulandshahr, which Anand describes, in his first novel *Untouchable*. In this novel, Anand gives a vivid picture of the colony of the untouchables, which is, in fact, a rudimentary village. Many towns and villages had an outcastes' colony, which was itself a small village by all means. The outcastes or the Panchamas were forced to live away from the main village. They were not allowed to use the wells in the village as caste Hindus thought that their mere touch polluted it. The Panchama men and women had to wait at the well for a long time until a caste Hindu poured water to them. The outcastes' colony or their village

consisted of a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows, outside the boundaries of the towns and separate from them. In the colony lived the scavengers, the leather workers, the washer-men, the barbers, the water carriers, the grass-cutters, and the outcastes from Hindu society. The condition of their village was very pathetic. There were no drains, no light, no water; people lived in the marshland among the latrines of the townsmen and in the stench of their own dung scattered about everywhere. The children wallowed in the mire, bathed in the marshes and played among its rubbish heaps. In the novel, Anand describes the filthy condition of the outcastes' colony:

A brook ran near the land, once with crystal-clear water, now soiled by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and shins of dead carcasses left to dry on its banks, the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cow and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes. The absence of the drainage system had, through the rains of various seasons, made the quarter a marsh, which gave out the most offensive smell. And altogether the ramparts of human and animal refuse that lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the misery, which lay within it, made it an uncongenial place to live in. (11)

The village of the untouchables was the same everywhere. The houses, the people, the surroundings and the habits all remained almost the same. Anand in *The Village* describes another village of the untouchables. Here too the conditions were the same. The place appeared extremely dirty and nauseating:

Lalu darted across the breadth of the bazaar towards the cobbler's lane frightening the hens and cocks into cluck clucking as he slipped on the mouldy soil around the drains. He jumped into a ravine beyond which stood the sweeper's straw huts, winking with distended eyes at the village from which they were segregated by the filthiest, most foully odorous pond in the village, from which outcastes drew their water and where they and their cattle bathed. The elders among the high castes told the children that it was part of the kingdom of *yama* in hell, to which it was connected by a subterranean passage. (102)

The untouchables were never allowed to possess any land. They built their huts and lived on the land of the landlord and could be evacuated at the whim and fancy of the latter. As Thakur Singh, the landlord tells Suraj Mani and Panditji in *The Village*, “And, as for those chamars, they are living in huts built on a plot which our family has given them in this village. They can be asked to go” (39). In Anand, Narayan, Rao and Markandaya the houses of the untouchables were crude structures with four walls made of mud or with a mixture of bamboo and mud. The thatching was also very weak and it could not keep out the rainwater. The houses mostly had only a single room and sometimes they were partitioned into two. As to the furniture there were none except one or two cots. Bakha’s (*Untouchable*) home was a one-roomed mud house where the whole family lived. In his home Bakha lay:

... covered by a worn-out, greasy blanket, on a faded blue carpet, which was spread on the floor in a corner of the cave-like, dingy, dank, one-roomed mud-house. His sister slept on a cot next to him and his father and brother snored from under a patched, ochre-coloured quilt, on a broken string bed, on the other side. (12)

Laxmi, Bhikku’s mother also had a one-room hut with thatched roof like the rest. Her hut stood by the six other tumbledown homesteads of the brotherhood of the Chamar untouchables. Ghulum, the weaver boy in *The Village*, also lived in a dirty one-roomed hut:

Ghulam, the weaver boy, lived with his mother in a small hovel, It was a filthy room, cramped with a loom in the middle, an oven on one side and a huge bedstead on the other on which the whole family slept. And sheep, hens and cocks revelled among their droppings all over the place, reeking with several varieties of smell, and slimy with dirt. (61)

Since the huts had only one room, they had to be used the same place for sleeping, eating, cooking food etc. As cooking food inside the hut was very uncomfortable, many people cooked food outside. Thus Bakha’s sister had her kitchen outside:

Sohini had kept up the outdoor kitchen, which her mother had made, adjoining the door of her house. It was not strictly a kitchen in the Hindu manner, for there were no four lines defining its limits, according to those laws of hygiene, which are the basis of Hindu piety. A couple of brooms stood out next to the fire-place, an empty refuse basket, a can, two earthen pitchers and a chipped enamelled jug lay scattered about. Most of the utensils were of clay, darkened by the soot of many fires, and never washed since Bakha's mother had died. (85)

Although not an outcaste, in Nihal Singh's house too, food was prepared in the kitchen made outside: "Nihal Singh passed through the large sun baked courtyard by the open-air kitchen to the barn where the family of six lived. The smoke of cow-dung cakes from the hearth-fires of peasant homes choked the alleyways" (*The Village*, 20).

The marginalised outcastes had to depend on wells or tanks for their needs of water. But they were prohibited from drawing water from wells, as it was believed that their touch would pollute the water. They were very poor and had no money to dig a well and had to collect water from the common well. In *Untouchable* Anand Presents how the low caste women had to cringe for water:

The outcastes were not allowed to mount the platform surrounding the well because if they were ever to draw water from it, the Hindus of the three upper castes would consider the water polluted. Nor were they allowed access to the nearby brook, as their use of it would contaminate the stream. They had no well of their own because it cost a lot of money to dig a well in such a hilly town as Bulandshahr. Perforce they had to collect at the foot of the caste Hindu's well and depend on the bounty of some of their superiors to pour water into their pitcher. (26)

The villagers were strong believers and so, very often, there was at least one temple in every village. Sometimes the temple or the place of worship would be an idol placed under a *peepal* or a *banyan* tree. There were also different temples belonging to different castes. The untouchables were not allowed to come anywhere near the temple.

Their entry would 'pollute' the temple and it had to be cleansed and purified. In the vicinity of the temples trees like *peepal* and *banyan* were seen. These trees were common in the villages and they provided shade and a resting place to the villagers. It gave them physical and mental comfort. Meetings were convened under the shade of these colossal trees. They were also a religious symbol. Sometimes the base of the trees served as the altar of a small temple with the idols of gods. The *peepal* tree is mentioned in *Untouchable*:

He [Bakha] threw the basket and the broom he had in his hand on the ground and girt up his loins to attack his job as he stood in the shadow of a *banyan* tree that spread its dense foliage over the temple courtyard. A brass cage of a miniature temple with the beautifully polished image of a snake enclosed in it, lay on a small stone structure which surrounded the giant trunk of the *banyan* tree....He saw a regular stream of people pass through the courtyard after touching the foot of the altar on the miniature temple, by the *banyan* tree. (64-65)

In *The Road* Saunu, son of the land lord Thakur Singh, fox-face Daya Ram, cow-herd Mahesh and cock-eye Ram Nivas, "were seated on the plinth under the *peepal* tree"(2). The *banyan* or *peepal* trees were sometimes the centre of the village itself. In *The Village* Nihal Singh on his return from the town, "rushed by the porch under the bearded *banyan* tree which was the village centre and took a short cut through gully to avoid passing through the bazaar"(19). Trees such as *peepal*, *banyan* and *tamarind* are deeply rooted in the life of the people of the village that it is impossible to think of a village without any one of these trees. People take rest, converse, and sleep under the cool shade of these colossal trees which are also considered sacred. Wherever there is a temple or a shrine or any other religious or sacred spot, the *peepal* tree is invariably found. The tree, which spreads over a large area, gives shade to man and beast. In *The Guide*, in Mangala village there is a large platform under a *peepal* tree at whose root a number of stone figures are embedded, which are often anointed with oil and worshipped. It is shady, cool and spacious. It is a town hall platform for Mangala:

He [Velan's brother] was panting when he ran into the assembly of his village elders. They were sitting solemnly around a platform in the centre of the village, discussing the rains. There was a brick platform built round an ancient *peepal* tree, at whose root a number of stone figures were embedded, which were often anointed with oil and worshipped. This was a sort of town hall platform for Mangala. It was shady and cool and spacious; there always was a gathering of men on one side conferring on local problems, and on the other women who carried loaded baskets on their heads and rested; children chased each other; and the village dogs slumbered. Here were sitting the elders of the village discussing the rain, the fight tonight and all the strategies connected with it. (88)

In *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan's Gayatri temple is also surrounded by *peepal* and other trees. There were *peepal* trees on the banks of the river Sarayu too. "The *peepal* branches overhanging the river rustled in the breeze and scattered the leaves on the stream below"(Swami and Friends, 46). Malgudi can be seen as a true homogenous community where corporate living is possible around the village *peepal* tree, the spacious brick platform round it, the stone figures anointed with oil and worshipped by women, and on the other side of the spacious platform, the village elders sitting, conferring on local problems, children chasing each other and dogs slumbering. The shade of the *banyan* tree is always comforting. When Chandran, in *The Bachelor of Arts*, reaches Koopal village after wandering for eight months he goes to a *banyan* tree and sits in its soothing shade. Again the English teacher waiting for the bus from Trichinopoly finds three women, a coolie and an ass waiting under a *tamarind* tree with sparse leaves in order to escape from the tremendous heat of the day (196). Margayya in *The Financial Expert* sits under the *Banyan* tree in front of The Central Co-operative Bank with his old tin box (2). During Raju's childhood, the village cartmen used to rest under the tree and they unyoked their bullocks for the night there (18). The *tamarind* tree was the seat of his childhood activities. Raju and his friends played under the tree and enjoyed themselves to their fill:

Raju played under the shade of a tamarind tree across the road. It was an ancient, spreading tree, dense with leaves, amidst which monkeys and birds lived, bred, and chattered incessantly, feeding on the tender leaves and fruits. Pigs and piglets came from somewhere and nosed about the ground thick with fallen leaves. (12)

Most villages in India have a *sthala purana* or a legendary history of their own. Some god or godlike hero has passed by the village—Rama might have rested under the *peepal* tree, Sita might have dried her clothes after her bath, on the yellow tree or the Mahatma himself on one of his many pilgrimages through the country might have slept in the hut, the one by the village gate. In the temples attached to the villages, the villagers observe religious festivals where religious scriptures are read out, explained, and heard with reverence. But with the coming of Gandhi and the freedom movement, along with such regular functions, gradually came the Gandhi bhajans.

In the centre of the village of Kanthapura stood the Kenchamma's temple. Along the river, there were other temples also like Kanthapurishwari's, Ishwars and so on. The presiding deity was the Goddess Kenchamma. She protected them from all famines and diseases. As Kenchamma was a powerful goddess people from far and wide came to the temple to pray to her:

When the sun rises over the Bebbur Mount, people come from Santur and Kuppur, people come from the Santur Coffee Estate and the Kuppur Cardamom Estate, from coconut gardens and sugarcane fields, and they bring flowers and fruit and rice and *dal* and sugar-candy and perfumed sweet meats. (4)

Kechamma was the patron saint of the village. She was their protector. The devotees would prostrate at her feet and cry: "O! Kenchamma! Protect us always like this through famine and disease, death and despair. O most high and Bounteous! We shall offer you our first rice and our first fruit and we shall offer you saris and bodice cloth" (9-10).

The villagers also worshipped Himavathy, the river goddess who was the child of the hill goddess Kenchamma. Towards the end of the novel, Range Gowda says: "I drank three handfuls of Himavathy water, and I said, "Protect us Mother" (258). It is also interesting to note the origin of a village temple. It might be due to the accidental discovery of an idol or a relic at a particular place. In Kanthapura, the Kanthapurishwari's temple came into being when Moorthy, while passing through a backyard happened to see a *lingam* lying half buried in the soil. Soon a tiny temple was built to protect it. The narrator of the story tells us:

Between my house and Subba Chetty's shop, on the Karwar Road was the little Kanthapurishwari's temple. It was on the Main Street Promontory, as we called it, and became the centre of our life. In fact it did not exist more than three years ago, and to tell you the truth, that's where all the trouble began. Corner House Narasamma's son, Moorthy—our Moorthy as we always called him—was going through our backyard one day and, seeing a half sunk *lingam*, said "Why not unearth it and wash it and consecrate it?" "Why not!", said we all, and as it was the holidays and all the city boys were in the village, they began to put up a little wall and a tile roof to protect the god. (15)

Most of the changes in the villages were brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation. In the novels of all the writers under consideration the impact of industrialisation and modernisation on the villages is seen. The villagers depended on agriculture or cottage industries for their livelihood, but the arrival of industries changed not only the occupation of the villagers but also the layout of the villages, their economy and also the social relationships. *The Big Heart* shows how the starting of factories have made the *thathiar* community of Amristar jobless and how, therefore many of them have become poor. Their social and personal relationships have likewise taken a bad turn. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, the tannery causes a sea change in the village.

Anand's villages are slow changing. For example in the novel *The Village*, when Lalu returns briefly to the village to see his ailing father, he finds the entire village disintegrating on account of unreasonable taxation, land mortgages and appropriation of

the small peasants' lands by the landlord and the money lender. As uncle Harnam Sigh tells him: "I am not the only one, almost the whole village is ruined" (236). The village bears the unmistakable marks of suffering it has lived through during the long drawn out World War. The War has had disastrous effects on the entire peasantry. As the government "took away crores of rupees as free gifts and loans from the county to support their war" (*The Sword and the Sickle*, 63) the village economy was left in ruins. Several villagers were rendered homeless and some turned into refugees and migrated to towns while others lived in abject poverty. The loss of their homes and work compels the villagers to migrate to towns seeking better opportunities. In *The Village* even Lalu, when he is about to launch on a voyage away from home, realises that the village of Nandpur "with the broken walls of its decrepit houses pasted with cow-dung cakes on which the crows pecked as they cawed" (285) is dearest to him.

The village of Malgudi is also a growing one. From a small village consisting of a few houses and a few lanes, and housing a population of a few hundreds, Malgudi develops into a big village and then into a town having many facilities. But it has to be noted that it took Malgudi a long time – more than two hundred years – to develop into its present state. In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, there are houses in Malgudi, which are more than two centuries old (4). The first four Malgudi novels trace the gradual development of the village. From *Swami and Friends* to *The English Teacher* Malgudi remains almost without any change. The first hint of its development is seen in *Mr. Sampath*. In this novel Srinivas, the editor of *The Banner*, begins to focus on the problems of the town in his issues and the chairman of the municipality feels helpless and revives the shelved Malgudi extension schemes. Also Mr. Sampath tells Srinivas that Mr. Somu, the District Board President is going to open a bridge. "He is opening a bridge, five miles from here across the Sarayu – a grand function. Do you know that it is going to transform our entire Malgudi district?" (70).

When Narayan introduces Malgudi in his first novel *Swami and Friends* it has two schools–The Albert Mission School and the Board School, a Town Hall and a club. Motorcars seldom pass along the roads. Malgudi had a theatre, which from time

immemorial had entertained the citizens of Malgudi with tattered, silent films. This old kind of corrugated-sheet-roofed hall was dismantled and “Malgudi in 1935 suddenly came into line with the modern age by building a well-equipped theatre ‘The Palace Talkies’” (*The Dark Room*. 20). The growth of Malgudi from a village to a town was slow and gradual. The new land marks of Malgudi which soon evolved are the Malgudi Railway Station, the Central Cooperative Land Mortgage Bank, The Bombay Anand Bhavan, Kabir Street, Abu Lane, Star Studios, Lotus Club, North End, Lawley Extension, The Regal Hair-cutting Saloon, the statue of Sir Frederick Lawley, Ellamman Street, Nalli’s Hardware, the office of ‘The Banner’ etc. Malgudi had grown from a big agricultural village to a town. The Malgudi of *Swami and Friends* is different from the Malgudi of *The Vendor of Sweets*. In some novels like *The Guide* one finds Malgudi growing. Raju shows Rosie the town, which includes the ‘Town Hall Tower’. They dine on the terrace of the Taj from where Sarayu is easily visible. Scientific and technological progress is responsible for topographical transformation. The bullock carts are replaced by auto rickshaws. In *The Talkative Man* the author takes Rann in an auto rickshaw through Malgudi (21).

Malgudi was always growing. As Malgudi grew, more and more hands were needed to complete the construction. Several works started there and so workers were brought from other places to work in Malgudi. This migratory population formed a colony of their own within Malgudi:

The District Board and the Municipality had launched a feverish scheme of road development and tank building, and three or four cotton mills had suddenly sprang into existence. The labour gangs brought in from other districts, spread themselves out in open spaces. Babies sleeping in hammocks made of odd pieces of cloth, looped over tree branches, women cooking food on the roadside, men sleeping on pavements—these became common sights in all parts of Malgudi. The place was beginning to look more and more like a gipsy camp. (*Mr. Sampath* 26)

In *The Guide* the Malgudi had grown further. As time passed and more water flowed in the Sarayu, Malgudi also expanded. At one time the Lawley Extension was the limit of Malgudi, but later the South Extension and the New Extension all stretched out beyond the statue of Sir Frederick Lawley. Jagan's ancestral home, which had been the last house out skirting Malgudi, became the first one for all the newer colonies:

Speaking from the topographical point of view, the Albert Mission College headed by Principal Brown, the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank with its imposing structure, the newly-built bungalows in the Lawley Extension, The Englandia Banking Corporation, The Sunrise Pictures — all speak emphatically of the story of the growth of the town. (Mukherjee, 1969:77)

Narayan also wrote about the change of Malgudi: "Malgudi was changing in 1972. It was the base for the hydroelectric project, somewhere on the Mempi Hills. Jeeps and lorries passed through the Market Road all day" (124). Traffic had also increased through the Trunk Road, which runs from Madras to Trichy through Malgudi. The railway meant the ruin of Raju—he becomes a guide and soon gets emotionally entangled with a married woman—Rosie—and brings ruin upon himself and Rosie. The novel presents a complete picture of Malgudi, of its emergence from the peace and self-assurance of the thirties to the more eventful and turbulent years of the Gandhian and Post-Independence period.

In spite of all the changes that Malgudi has undergone, it remains fundamentally the same, in the sense that the basic form and nature of the village is still visible under the thin crust of modernisation, urbanisation and globalisation. Malgudi has been more or less the same not only during the past decades of seeming topographical and technological change, but also during the long vistas of the past. The changes, which Malgudi undergoes, are only like the change of costumes. The changes do not affect the personality. Hence, in spite of the apparent changes and the human drama enacted, the soul of the place defies all changes and is victoriously and unalterably itself. All things pass and change, names change, fashions change, men fade away but the old landmarks – the Sarayu, the Hills, the Jungles, and the Groves – remain.

Kanthapura remains a village to its last breath. Unlike Malgudi, Nandpur and the village of Nathan and Rukmani, the effects of industrialisation and modernisation do not affect the village at all. In this respect it remains a virgin till its last moment. Kanthapura is perhaps one of the few villages that have been spared by industrialisation and urbanisation. The resistance offered by the villagers of Kanthapura to the foreign rule destroys their village. Their huts are set on fire and the people flee to save their lives. The villagers who have run away from Kanthapura, which has been destroyed, settle down in another village called Kashipura and start a new life again. When Range Gowda goes back to Kanthapura he sees the houses destroyed:

The Corner House was all but fallen except for the byre, and Rangamma's house was tileless over the veranda, and Nanjamma's house doorless and roofless and the hearthstones in every corner. There was neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura, for the men from Bombay had built houses on the Bebbur Mount, houses like in the city for coolies, and they own this land and that and even Bhatta had sold all his lands to the Bombay men and had gone to Kasi. (259)

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, the village remains a peaceful one till the arrival of the townsmen to build a tannery in the village. The evils of industrialisation create havoc in the village. This is one of the villages that has been most affected by the onslaughts of industrialisation and urbanisation. Abbas presents this picture in *Inquilab*:

Village industries, such as hand spinning have been destroyed leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, ruining their talents and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries, for the talents thus destroyed ... British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. (239)

A slow change was coming over the village where, Iyengar feels, "life has apparently not changed for a thousand years," but now with the invasion of industry and modern technology "sinister consequences issue" (438). The village seems to have lost its calm and peace. Rukmani complains that the industry invaded their village "with clatter and din, had taken from us the *maidan* where our children played and had made the

bazaar prices too high for us” (42). She dislikes the change that has come over their village because of its stinking smells and crowds. The birds seem to have forgotten to sing or the noise drowns their melodious calls. The quietness of the village is more and the village now has “all noise and crowds every where and rude young hooligans idling in the street and dirty bazaars and uncouth behaviour and no man thinks of another but schemes only for his money”(66). There is nothing but the smell of tannery, the crowds shouting and the incessant disturbance. Ira turns to prostitution. The moral values are lost and money is what everybody is interested in.

When the tannery arrives Kunti is happy that their “village is no longer a clump of huts but a small town”(29). She also visualises having shops, tea stalls and a bioscope. The tannery becomes an integral part of the village and her sons fetch a good salary from the tannery. She is happy that the village has become a growing town. Everyday for two months the line of bullock carts came in laden with bricks, stones and cement, sheets of tin and corrugated iron, coils of rope and hemp. The kilns of the neighbouring villages were kept busy firing the bricks, but their output was insufficient, and the carts had to go further, returning dusty and brick-filled. Day and night women twisted rope, since they could sell as much as they made and traders waxed prosperous selling their goods to the workmen. They were well paid; the men bought lavishly rice and vegetables and *dal*, sweetmeats and fruits. Around the *maidan* they built their huts for there was no other place for them and into these brought their wives and children, making a community of their own. Thus a new community was established. The building was completed one day and the workers departed leaving the empty huts behind. Rukmani was happy that they had gone. It grew and flourished and spread. Not a month went by but somebody’s land was swallowed up. Another building appeared and thus the industrialisation changed the layout and geography of the village.

Day and night the tanning went on, the never-ending line of carts brought the raw material—thousands of skins—and took them away again tanned, dyed and finished. It seemed impossible that markets could be found for such quantities. In a further construction, a water reservoir was built for the tannery workers and their families, but

others were also allowed to take a little water. Very often there were storms in the villages. The storm, which raged through the village, created havoc and destroyed the crops and the mud huts of the villagers. The shacks in which some of the men lived were no more. But the tannery stood. The officials of the tannery lived in new colonies; in brick cottages with white washed walls and red-tiled roofs. Their way of life was quite different from that of the villagers. The tannery changed the face of the village beyond recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants in a myriad ways. A few were raised up, many others cast down. Rukmani thinks: "The tannery cannot be blamed for every misfortune we suffered"(113). Tannery or not, the land might have been taken from them. It had never belonged to them.

Thus a close reading of the novels of Anand, Narayan, Rao and Markandaya reveal that the village in India is basically the same everywhere. There might be regional or other differences. For example, certain villages may not contain all the different castes, or agriculture may not be the occupation of the villagers, or temples may be present only in the neighbouring village. Often one village may differ from another in certain respects. But still the fundamental characteristics are generally similar. The characteristics of the villages of all these writers mostly agree with the characteristics of the villages, as seen in the sociological study made in the first part of this work.

The village can thus be seen as a group of houses situated near a river or other source of water such as a lake or pond or stream. It is divided into different zones where people belonging to different castes live. Agriculture or cattle rearing is the main occupation. In coastal villages fishing may be the main occupation. Very often the workers do not own the land. The land belongs to the landlords. All the villagers visit the temples for worship. But the lower castes and the untouchables are not allowed entry into the temple. Trees such as *peepal*, *banyan*, *tamarind* are important in any village and the villagers have a variety of uses for them. The houses are simple, permanent or temporary structures with one or two rooms. They may appear as single units or as a group. The roads are often untarred, narrow and dusty. The Bullock cart is the chief mode of travel in the villages. But buses have become common in many villages and in rare cases trains are

also seen passing through the villages. The village and its surroundings are often dirty. Every village has a history or a myth connected with the place. The urban areas very often encroach into the village premises. The onslaught of industrialisation and globalisation has changed the face of the villages and has converted villages into urban pockets. Thus the villages have shrunk and the towns have grown.

Villages do not remain villages forever. The transformation or the development of the villages is very quick in some cases, and slow and gradual in some other cases. New roads, railways, factories, modern transport, schools, colleges and other features of modern life and urbanisation have already reached the villages. All the villages have the same form and nature. All the villages studied except Malgudi are in their very initial stage of development and are cent percent villages. Malgudi is in the process of transforming itself into a town, but still shows all the basic characteristics of a village. The essential features of a village such as the river, temple, *banyan* and *peepal* trees still exist in Malgudi. But one cannot be an adult without being a child and so it is not difficult to imagine Malgudi as a perfect village.

CHAPTER IV

The Village as a Social/Lived Space

Many novels have been written by Indian writers in English delineating the social aspects of Indian village life. Some of the Indian novels written with a social purpose are K.S.Venkataramani's *Kandan the Patriot* (1937), Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two leaves and a Bud* (1937) Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) Bhabani Battacharya's *So Many Hungers* (1947) *Music for Mohini* (1952) Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *A Handful of Rice* (1967) Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *A Situation in Delhi* (1977) Salman Ruahide's *Midnight's Children* (1981) Amitav Ghosh's *Circle of Reason* (1986) Upamanyu Chatterje's *English August* (1988) Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1990), Chaman Nahal's *The Salt of Life* (1991) etc.

Anand, Narayan, Rao, and Markandaya have depicted the Indian society in slightly different ways. The Indian society with its myths and rituals, beliefs and superstitions, is almost the same in the novels of these writers. However, while Narayan's is the faithful presentation of the life of the middle class people he is intimately familiar with, Anand has in his heart genuine concern for the people crippled under the weight of social taboos and inhibitions. While Narayan holds his characters up to mild ridicule for their eccentric ways, Anand has mounted a scathing attack on the hypocrisy of the upper castes, exploiting the gullible masses in the name of God and religion. While Narayan, held in high esteem as a detached observer of life, looks at his characters from his 'ivory tower' without involving himself in their day-to-day affairs, Anand has a sense of commitment to the eradication of social evils. He has observed keenly the life and the people around him; and the cruelty, injustice and exploitation he has seen in the society prompts him to take up the cause of the underdogs who have suffered for centuries.

The world of Narayan is relatively free from the terrible privations and agonies, political conflicts and economic depression of Anand's India. Though some writers of Indian languages had written about untouchables and outcastes, no Indian English writer

had stepped into that territory. Anand was the first writer to venture into the territory hitherto untrodden--the world of the untouchables, sweepers, coolies, the debt-ridden farmers and the like, who were not allowed to enter the precincts of Indian English literature. Anand had a first hand knowledge of the people, for he writes in the preface to *Two Leaves and a Bud*: "All these heroes as the other men and women who had emerged in my novels and short stories, were dear to me, because they were the reflections of the real people I had known during my childhood and youth" (Forster, 1951:v).

The age-old division of the society, be it rural or urban, into two classes--the pleasure-seeking affluent class and the toiling masses--is evidently unjust and the masses deserve a better deal. Anand believed that man is responsible for superstition, bigotry, class, caste, capitalism, exploitation, overpopulation and tyranny. Hence man can fight and undo them too, if he has the vision doubled with requisite will. Anand who discarded fatalism believed that man's destiny is controlled by man himself. Anand presents the correct picture of the Indian society with all its religious hypocrisy and injustice thriving on anachronistic practices such as untouchability, feudalism, and economic exploitation of the have-nots by the haves. Anand, as a novelist, exposes decayed Indian traditions, and champions the cause of modernism as a cure for the ills of Indian society.

Anand portrays a day in the life of an untouchable in his first novel, *Untouchable*. Bakha recognises his social position with a shock. It illuminates the inner walls of his mind. He realises that though like any human being he possesses, head and heart, and flesh and blood, he is in the eyes of the world an untouchable. Then, conscious of his position, he shouts aloud without fail the warning words, "posh, posh, sweeper coming" (57) to announce his approach.

The Assam plantation is a micro-society of the kind one finds all over the world. There the poor are exploited and harassed by the planters. The novel has a haunting nature. The characters like Gangu, De La Have, Reggie Hunt, Croft-Cooke, Leila and Sajani haunt the readers as the representatives of contemporary society. Kamala Das said as a reaction to the reading of *Two Leaves and A bud* and *Coolie*, that the two novels:

... had done their job as neatly as an assassin's knife, killing in me the desire to remain safely ensconced in the feudalistic society of my home town and just as the knife lies abandoned after the deed is done, the books lay forgotten. Only the message flowed in my veins, causing me to rise whenever a labourer was flogged by an irate relative or when a pregnant maid servant lay floating in the well where her rich lover had thrown her at dead of night. (Narasimhan, 1987:12)

The villagers always very adamantly stick to social customs and manners. In *The Bachelor of Arts*, Chandrans's mother cannot deviate even an inch from the social customs. "If you want us to be there, everything must be done in the proper manner" (91). We find that the social manners count much for her. In connection with Chandran's marriage she says: "Be patient, Chandran, You must allow things to be done in the proper order"(92). Till the last, she takes the opposite view and she cannot go beyond the prescribed formulae of the society. Chandran has to bear the social pressures and he comes to terms with the situations of practical life. He never leaves the orbit of social norms and does not become a true *sanyasi*. In preference to the life of a *sanyasi* he prefers other alternatives. The social stigma attached to suicide compels him to come back to his house in Malgudi after wandering for eight months.

Narayan's depiction of the Indian society is remarkable in its breadth and scope. Like Chaucer, Narayan presents a cross section of the Indian rural society. In fact, neither Rao, nor Markndaya could give a panoramic view of the Indian society like that which Narayan gave. There is 'God's plenty' in his novels. To have a good glimpse of the Indian rural society one need go through the novels of Narayan. Narayan skillfully portrays the subtle and complex relationships that hold a family together. In *The Financial Expert* he introduces a villager crazy for wealth. Margayya, the financial expert, is tempted to amass wealth with a view to providing a bright future to his son, Balu. His financial acumen and the dubious methods he adopts amply demonstrate that he never cares for the society. He goes on endlessly exploiting the poor masses and extracts high interest in the money-lending business. His religious devotion is artificial. He is a hard-hearted financial expert. His love for his son is unreciprocated. On the other hand,

the son spends his father's earning unscrupulously. Dr. Pal, the sociologist cum financial adviser, brings about Margayya's ruin. His greed for money compels him to think again about the only prospect of returning to the banyan tree opposite the Land Mortgage Bank in Malgudi.

Narayan has great regard for family ties and the pieties of home. Therefore, domestic relationships occupy the central place in his novels. Father-son relationship is very important in all his novels. Most of his major characters are devoted fathers e.g. Chandran's father in *The Bachelor of Arts*, Margayya in *The Financial Expert* and Jagan in *The Vendor of Sweets*. The relationship between Chandran and his father is very healthy and may even be called ideal. There is proper co-ordination between the two. Chandran can very frankly open his heart to his father. The father is always ready to solve his problems and is always concerned about his happiness. In *The Financial Expert* and in *The Vendor of Sweets* the picture is different. The bond of love is one-sided. "In Margayya, the financial expert and Jagan, the sweet vendor, we see paternal love carried to the point of imprudence" (Parameswaran, 1998:76). Margayya's yearning for shaping the future of his sweetly spoilt son who grows into a silent, wayward and frustrated man is very pitiable:

He wanted Balu to grow up into an educated man, graduating out of a college and probably going for higher studies to Europe or Australia. He could undertake any plan with ease; ... His son might become a great government official. (87)

Margayya cuts a sorry figure when his ridiculous effort to boost up Balu for one more attempt to take examination fails: "The boy made a dash for the book, snatched it from his father's hand before he knew what was happening, tore its entire bulk into four pieces, and ran out into the street and threw the pieces into the gutter" (118).

The relationship between the father and the son is strained and Balu even demands his share of the property: "I want a share of the property"(167). Such sons who want to break away from the control of their parents and who demand their share of the ancestral property are not uncommon in the Indian society. Even in *The Vendor of Sweets*

the father gets disillusioned by his son's ingratitude, the motherless son whom he has given love even at the cost of personal happiness. He always tries to reconcile himself with the new situation but the last blow of Mali's arrest is unbearable for him. Then he passes beyond all attachment and learns the fact of life. He apprehends that his lenient nature is the cause of his ruin. Krishna in *The English Teacher* is a unique example of a father who, for the sake of his motherless little daughter, turns his back on all the happiness of the world. The rarity of Krishnan's double role can be seen in his mother's appalled amazement, "That I should be destined to see these things in our life-I have never known such things in our family"(117). The sense of kinship is always strong in the villages. For example, Magayya and his brother are next-door neighbours and they are not on talking terms. But they are always ready to share each other's joys and sorrows. When the family suspects Balu's death, Margayya's brother and his family come to console Margayya and his wife.

The family is not a set of disjointed individuals but a set of interlinked members acting and reacting on one another. Every one of them exists in his/her own individual capacity. As they live together, their life currents cut across, merge with and change one another. Their emotions, thoughts and actions strengthen one another when they take the same path, but collide against each other when they cannot bridge the intermittent gap. The generation gap is often revealed through the difference between beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, activities, customs and traditions. The study of this generation gap is an inevitable part of the study of human relationships. In Narayan's fictional world this generation gap, at times, plays a crucial role. In *The Bachelor of Arts* this gap moulds Chandran's life. As long as Chandran is a college student everything goes on smoothly, but when enters adult life, this gap becomes quite clear. This rift is more perceptible between mother and son than between father and son. The father is more liberal in his opinions and outlook, whereas, the mother is more dominated by old customs and traditions. "A head clerk's daughter was not what she had hoped to get for her son"(69). Man always craves for a high social position because that is the recognised value-scale in society. It is a social custom that a marriage should take place between two families

having equal status. Again from the words of the mother, it becomes clear that she is also much attached to the old belief of superiority of the boy's side:

Whatever happened they would not take the initiative in the matter; for they belonged to the bridegroom's side, and according to time-honoured practice it was the bride's people who proposed first. Anything done contrary to this would make them the laughing-stock of the community. (70)

The society as presented by Narayan in the novel is traditional and superstitious. The people are illiterate and poor. And they are always on the look out for some divine help to solve their problems. As result, even the ex-convict Raju in *The Guide* is mistaken for a holy man. He has been pulled into so-called holiness by the gullible country folk including Velan. The situation is taken full advantage of by the hypocrite Raju. It is a frontal attack made against the fake pretenders, made much of, by the ignorant masses like Velan. "Narayan grabs the Indian mind fully with all its superstitious comprehension of life, gullibility, an appreciation of pseudo-scientific things and that simplicity which is the warp and woof of our life" (Dev, 1982:159). Ramteke says: "even after a candid confession by Raju of his illegitimate love affair with Rosie and his subsequent conviction for forgery, society compels him to undertake a total fast to the bitter end" (1998:139).

Dowry is another social evil that Narayan touches upon in his novels. Not only the village society, but also the whole Indian society is obsessed with the dowry system. The parents of the bridegroom demand big dowries, which very often the bride's parents are not able to give. It is the elders who are bent upon perpetuating this evil despite the hue and cry being made from time to time by social reformers. Chandran's parents too have a craving for dowry and wants Chandran to get a handsome amount as dowry. Their greed is exposed through the character of Chandran's mother who says:

My father gave seven thousand in cash to your father, and over two thousand in silver vessels, and spent nearly five thousand on wedding celebrations. What was

wrong in it? How are we any worse for it? It is the duty of every father to set some money apart for securing a son-in-law. We can't disregard customs. (84-85)

Margayya has been portrayed as an astute businessman of Malgudi now changed into a semi-agricultural town wherein the rigidity of castes seem to have disappeared from the social scene; and in place of the feeling of inferiority that had haunted Margayya's ancestors for about three generations for their originally belonging to the caste of corpse bearers, now comes the sense of superiority which Margayya possesses with a longing to have his son's marriage alliance with the daughter of a rich tea-estate owner of the Mempi Hills. Dowry system comes down to the present times through the generations. It is the parents who are bent on perpetuating the social evil, which has caused a number of deaths of young and beautiful brides. The adjournment lawyer in *The Financial Expert* reveals the reality when he says: "It's only after a marriage that one discovers how vicious one's new relatives can be. How many things they demand and keep demanding!" (158). And the old evil continues to eat into the vitals of Indian society even today. Narayan in his novels ridicules the dowry system. In *The Vendor of Sweets* before Jagan's marriage was celebrated, the bride's parents had to give five thousand rupees in cash, and some presents in gold; and silver vessels. And when the bride's father failed to present a gold belt, Jagan's mother was heard taunting:

Ambika took the rice and served, leaving her mother-in-law to continue: "One doesn't ask for extra ordinary things; they are not for us, we are not destined to enjoy the spectacle of a gold waist-band, like hundreds of others, but one wants at least a sensible...". (177)

Markandaya also speaks about the big dowry, the gifts and the feast accompanying the marriages. She also shows how a rich man becomes a pauper by marrying off his daughters. Rukmani is a child of the transition between the insular, autonomous village of old and the new village that is dependent upon urban civilisation and in constant contact with it. Rukmani's wedding was not half as colourful as her three sisters' had been. "Four dowries are too much for a man to bear"(1), Rukmani's mother

says; but it goes further. The changes in agrarian politics and economics were responsible for the diminishing dowries given to each. Rukmani says:

Shanta first, a big wedding that lasted for many days, plenty of gifts and feasts, diamond earrings, a gold necklace, as befitted the daughter of the village headman. Padmini next, and she too made a good match and was married fittingly, taking jewellery and dowry with her; but when it came to Thangam, only relations from our own village came to the wedding and not from surrounding districts as they had done before, and the only jewel she had was a diamond nose-screw. (1-2)

The society Narayan presents in the novel is largely superstitious and full of blind beliefs. They have absolute faith in what the priest prescribes. Moreover, they are so gullible that they go by the so-called sacred *shastras*, which they believe to have emanated from the Gods themselves. The scriptures were philosophical, idealistic and noble. But their later employment by men to further their selfish interests made the scriptures exploitative and cynical. The reasoning faculty is hardly used in drawing reasonable inference at the time of any crisis that occurs in their life, with the result that if anything happens, they simply attribute it to gods and goddesses, and leave no stone unturned to appease them at the behest of the priests who are always bent on extracting huge amounts from the gullible folk.

The conflict between the old and new generations appears in Narayan's novels. In *Swami and Friends*, unable to face his father, Swami runs away from his home. There is a difference of opinion between Chandran (*The Bachelor of Arts*) and his parents. He too runs away when he finds that he cannot marry the girl he loves owing to the impediment of the horoscopes. Contrary to the wishes of his mother, Raju (*The Guide*) accepts Rosie in his house. Jagan (*The Vendor of Sweets*) has to leave his house owing to the differences with his son Mali who has brought in Grace from America. Margayya and his son, Balu (*The Financial Expert*) also have contempt for each other. Ironically it is Balu who becomes an instrument for the ruin of Margayya's financial edifice in the end. Raman's aunt (*The Painter of Signs*) goes on a pilgrimage when she learns that he

proposes to marry Daisy, a Christian girl. One thing that appears common in all these cases is that the people of the old generation have stuck to the old social values which, the younger ones feel, have choked them resulting in frustration in life. Sometimes it is the old ones who leave their homes, unable to bear the pangs in their heart. On some other occasions, we find the younger ones, leaving their homes in protest against the traditional values their forefathers have held so dear in their lives.

The Hindu society in the villages being traditional and fatalistic, the social values they cherish cannot be otherwise. They are a God-fearing lot. For whatever they do, they throw themselves at the mercy of God. Their success and failure, happiness and sufferings are all considered as God's benediction. The society by and large is God-fearing and deeply religious. They have absolute faith in the 'Almighty' and pray to Him day and night for their salvation. Not only that, every care is taken to see that their children and grandchildren should also imitate them in their worship of God. Raju the protagonist of *The Guide*, narrates his routine. His father used to wake him up very early in the morning when an eccentric cockerel made a shattering cry. Raju says: "I washed myself at the well, smeared holy ash on my forehead, stood before the framed pictures of God hanging high up on the wall, and recited all kinds of sacred verse in a loud, ringing tone!" (11).

The country folk with all their abiding poverty, innocence and gullibility are well represented by Velan and others of the village of Mangla. They depend on the rains for their crops and for everything. When the drought hits the countryside, they quarrel at the waterhole for priorities, with fear, desperation, and lamentation in their voice. In utter helplessness, they turn to the Swami.

In the villages, though the temple priest is held in high esteem, the class of temple dancers as a whole is looked down upon with contempt. In *The Guide* Raju's mother never likes a temple dancer at home. She tells Rosie: "After all you are dancing girl; we do not admit them in our families" (69). But it is the high caste people in the society, who nurture the profession for selfish ends: "One should not at all be surprised when Rangī, a

temple dancer exposes the reality. She says, ‘Sir, I am only a public woman, following what some of the so-called family women are doing....’” (Walsh, 1983:77-78).

Generally the middle class people of the conservative Hindu society that Narayan presents in his novels are hardly ever ready to bring about any reformatory change; nor do they seem to receive with interest any alien influence. They are just complacent with what they possess and are absorbed in glorifying the culture to which they belong. And yet, under zealously guarded norms, mores and values, there appears a simmering discontent amongst the people of the new generation, who when awakened to their rights and liberties, try their utmost to rise above the so-called pre-ordained roles they have been playing for generations together.

Rao is a novelist who has successfully imbibed and incorporated Gandhi’s programmes of social reforms, his fight against untouchability, drinking, dowry, racial discrimination etc. In *Kanthapura*, he speaks about the fate of an Indian widow. A caste Hindu woman’s worst fate is the state of widowhood. A widow is inauspicious and luckless in herself, and is a harbinger of bad luck to whoever sees her the first thing in the morning, or while venturing forth on a mission, or while initiating a sacred ceremony. Ratna the child widow in *Kanthapura* offends the village folk by openly defying the accepted codes of behaviour. She takes great care in dressing, wears expensive jewellery, lashes out at her critics, and displays her fiercely independent spirit by going about her preoccupations alone.

The status of the widow is so degrading that it is frequently employed in swear words when there is “a battle of oaths” in the village between the police, and the villagers. Venkamma feels such esteem that she says to herself, “Ah, widow, you would not even lick the remnant leaves in the dustbin, you polluted widows....” (67). Likewise, when the police raid at night to arrest Moorthy and there is great furore in Rangamma’s house, Venkamma’s reaction is foreseeable. “Ah, you will eat blood and mud I said, you widow, and here you are!”(88). In the village, much more than in the city, a childless woman — even one with a daughter but without a son — is considered an ill-fated one. The life of woman, who has no children at all, is worse. Ira’s husband deserts her because

she is barren. The husband in the rural area had a social sanction to discard his barren or son-less wife.

Markandaya is another writer who portrays the Indian village society very successfully. Her novel *A Handful of Rice* “fictionalises the sociology of India by awakening the polite society to the plight of the rural people” (Reddy, 1984: 154). *Nectar in a Sieve* presents the panoramic picture of a society, which is in flux. In the novel Markandaya subtly portrays the lives of two generations of rural people, those who survive the economic and psychological crisis in a period of transition. The older generation thinks that their survival depends squarely on the land and they continue to feel attached to it while privileging the life of the village community. The younger generation breaks the traditional ties and become individualistic. The villagers’ lack of awareness about family planning in the villages also forces the rural families into poverty as in the case of Nathan’s family. Poverty and unemployment lead to many other social problems like prostitution, beggary and crime etc. *Nectar in a Sieve* that has the sub title *A Novel of Rural India* portrays poverty, hunger, industrialisation and urbanisation that destroyed the very basis of rural life.

In every society, one finds a division based on various factors such as religion, language, economic conditions, different interests and ideology. In many societies, especially in the patriarchal ones, men are considered superior to women. This is evident not only in the novels of Anand, Narayan, Rao and Markandaya but also in the novels of other writers. Even in the small village of Aymenam in Kerala, in the southern part of India it is so. In *The God of Small Things*, the Booker Prize winner Arundhati Roy gives ample instances of the superiority of men. When Chacko visited Pillai’s house, Kallyani referred to her husband as ‘*addeham*’ (a respectful form of ‘he’) whereas he called her ‘*edi*’ (which is almost ‘hey you’). Another great divide in the society is the gulf between the rich and the poor, the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’.

In the villages there are entertainment programmes connected with festivals. All the villagers take an active interest in it like the villagers of Kanthapura who actively take part in the *Harikathas*. The festivals begin at the beginning of the harvest year with

'Akshya Tritiya', the third day of the moonlit fortnight of the month of 'Baisakh'. The day is observed by all farmers as the beginning of sowing of rice seeds. The goddess 'Dharitri', the earth, is worshipped and each farmer at least symbolically does sowing in one piece of land. Opera dramas are enacted in the adjoining villages for a number of nights. Four or five such opera parties existed in different villages. Dramas were staged in open-air pandals in the earlier days with oil burned torches, then carbide gaslights and ultimately with petrolmax lights. There were no women actors in the past and males performed the roles of women. Entertainment programmes in the villages were limited but due to frequent contact of the people with urban areas the style of the functions changed. Light music, use of records, mikes, lights and dresses used by artists changed the style of the function. The plays now staged in the villages are more social in themes written by modern writers and not based on stories from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* or puranic themes. The dialogues are mostly in prose and not in poetry as in the past. Decades back, there were no cinema houses near about. Malgudi with its ancient cinema house, "The Select Picture House", which Chandran and his friend visit in *The Bachelor of Arts*, is an exception. Even in district towns, there were only one or two very poor cinema houses with straw thatched roof. At present there are cinema houses at close distances in the villages and a large number of villagers often visits them.

There are some other novels also which show much variety of subject matter and a deeper understanding of social problems. The importance of the inner conflict also seems to be well realised by the authors of this period. *Athawar House* is S. Nagarajan's full-length novel of South India based on the conditions between 1919 and 1935. *The Gong of Shiva* (1935) by Dewan Sharar tells us about the social reform especially widow remarriage, and the orthodox Hindu custom of children marrying under the order of parents. English education brought about many changes and joint homes were broken up. *A Daughter's Shadow* (1941) is also written on the same line. *Tomorrow Is Ours* (1943) by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas is a story of life and trends in Indian society.

Economy and Service Class

Indian villages were self-sufficient economic units in the past. The villages produced sugar cane, cotton, spices, oil seeds, etc. Indian handloom cloth and potteries were famous in ancient days. But with the advent of the foreign powers, especially the British, the scenario changed. The British took the Indian produce to their country, processed it and sent it back to India as manufactured goods with a high price tag. This broke the backbone of the Indian economy. The village economy, which was independent, became highly dependent. It was mainly to save the village economy that Gandhi advised the Indians to boycott foreign goods, especially foreign cloth. Boycott of foreign goods soon became a great movement.

In the Indian villages, in addition to the British, there were also the zamindars and the moneylenders to exploit the village folk and increase their misery. Anand, Narayan, Rao and Markandaya have dealt with this dilemma of the villagers in their novels to varying extents. In *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* Anand focuses his attention on the economic exploitation of the Indian peasant and worker by the oppressive forces of capitalism and colonialism. Anand makes it clear that the so-called civilising mission of the colonisers is a myth and that the economic self-interest of the empire has been a major motivating factor for colonisation. In this novel, Anand shows how the policy of industrial capitalism promoted by the colonial power spread its tentacles over the poor and helpless, often claiming their lives.

In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Anand turns to the theme of economic exploitation, against the background of the tea plantations in Assam. The novel draws upon the real life accounts of plantation labourers in British-owned tea estates in Assam. Gangu, who is hired for work in the Assam tea estates and is taken from his own village in Hoshiarpur, finds his dreams shattered when he reaches the estate, for he is deceived by the British as well as by the Indians. He finds himself in a prison with the *chowkidars* ever like watchdogs.

To consider another village, Nandpur, in *The Village*, is symbolic of any Indian village in the early decades of the twentieth century. The peasants in the village submit themselves to all kinds of exploitation. In the novel, Anand shows how the native rural economy has begun to collapse with the introduction of British land reforms. The colonial rulers, totally ignorant of the efficacy of existing social structures, introduces changes that strengthens the position of feudal landlords.

As described in the novel, *The Sword and the Sickle*, the First World War had disastrous effects on the entire peasantry and the govt “took away crores of rupees as free gifts and loans from the country to support their war” (63). As a consequence, the village economy was left in ruins. Several villagers were rendered landless and homeless. Some of them turned into refugees and migrated to towns while the others lived in abject poverty. Harnam Singh, a poor peasant who has lived through the various stages of British rule in India, cries out in rage: “Oh, Hindustan! Hindustan! This country is like a lean bullock that has been reduced to the bone by the *Angrezi* lion...”(64). In the novel we get a complete picture of colonial exploitation. Harnam Singh, who has mortgaged his six acres of land to the moneylender, analyses the situation correctly when he shouts out in fury and agony:

They took our grain, our timber, our tea, why, even the skins of our buffaloes and the oil from the poor man’s saucer lamp! And there are some people in the villages around here today who hide their nakedness in the clothes discarded by those who have died of plague while their children go naked. (63)

In Rao’s *Kanthapura*, the Gandhian Moorthy refers to the economic exploitation of the poor Indians and peasants by the ‘Red-man’ who purchased rice and sold their finished foods at higher rates after finishing them in their own big mills, thus taking the money away to their own country. The Indian cloth market was virtually controlled by the British textile industry and the prosperous handloom industry of the old days had already been destroyed. From the first decade of the twentieth century the Swadeshi movement in the handloom industry declined due to the growth of Indian cotton mills and the weavers maintained their families by weaving and agriculture. When Nanjamma is

unable to understand Moorthy's views about the economic exploitation of the Indians, he expounds his views to her:

But they buy foreign yarn, and foreign yarn is bought with our money, and all this money goes across the oceans. Our gold should be in our country and our cotton should be in our country ... you grow rice in the fields. Then you have mill agents that come from Sholapur and Bombay and offer you tempting rates ... then they take it away and put it into huge mills brought from their own country and run by their own men – and when the rice is husked and washed and is nothing but pulp, they sell it to Banya Ramanlal or Chotalal ... Now, sister, calculate and you will see. You get six seers to the rupee, not to speak of the fodder-husk, instead of seven, and your rice does not go to the stomach of Rangi or Modi, but goes to fatten some dissipated Red-man in his own country. (25)

India had been conquered formerly many a time, but those conquests resulted only in a change of political regime and did not affect the basic economic structure of the country. This stubborn survival of the economic structure of the pre-British society was due to the fact that none of the invaders introduced a new mode of production higher than the feudal mode, on which the Indian economy was based. But Britain had already overcome feudal economy and integrated itself into a modern nation. The self-sufficient nature of the Indian villages was destroyed by the British. Industrialisation and large scale production of goods sounded the death knell of the Indian cottage industries and the millions of trained artisans and craftsmen, spinners, weavers, potters, tanners, smelters and smiths, crowded themselves into agriculture. In *The Big Heart* we find the *thathiars* or the coppersmiths of Amristar losing their job due to the coming of the factory, which produced goods cheap. In this way India was transformed from being a country of combined agriculture and manufacture into an agricultural colony of the British. India was further impoverished.

In the village there were groups of carpenters, potters, blacksmiths, cobblers, washermen, barbers etc. There were also families of confectioners in the village. They sold parched rice and sweetmeats in the village in the past. Their position also declined

but some of the families opened sweet stalls in the village and others became either tenant cultivators or agricultural labourers. In Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*, we see Jagan who keeps a sweet stall in Malgudi and has a thriving business. There was no revolutionary change in the village production structure. From decade to decade in the working of the village production structure, some old things fell into disuse and some new things from the cities were introduced. But the old system moved on assimilating the new things from time to time. The decline of cottage industries and the resultant poverty of the masses are pointed out by Abbas in his *Inqilab*:

Village industries, such as hand spinning have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, ruining their talents and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries, for the talents thus destroyed...British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufactures, and revenue from them is not used to lessen the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration. (239)

Gandhi tried his best to protect and preserve the village industries and the artisans. He was against any kind of exploitation and strongly opposed the exploitation of the Indian villages by the British. Gandhi believed that India lived in her villages and made every attempt to save the village economy. Iyengar remarks:

Gandhi's essential insight was that the Indian village has a high power of recuperation; his programme was to help that process and not to hinder it. The constructive side of his thought is mainly sound. The critical side is weak, but even this rests on an assessment of the impact of industrialisation on India that is largely correct. (1984:259-60)

Gandhi was against the economic monopolisation by any country, nation or group of persons. He believed that socially produced wealth should be equally divided amongst those who have produced it. He remarks:

The economic constitution of India, and for that matter of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, every body should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realised only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. (Kripalani, 1961:368)

Rao could not leave out the influence of Gandhi in the history of India's independence. In *Kanthapura*, Moorthy who is a follower of Gandhi organises the villagers according to the Congress principles. He distributes spinning wheels and cotton obtained free from the Congress and exhorts them to wear only home-sun Khaddar. He tells the villagers:

Millions and millions of yards of foreign cloth come to this country, and everything foreign makes us poor and pollutes us. To wear cloth spun and woven with your god-given hands is sacred, says the Mahatma. And it gives work to the workless, and work to the lazy...our country is being bled to death by foreigners. We have to protect our Mother. (29)

Thus we find the villagers in the novels of all these writers—Anand, Narayan, Rao believing that the British rule is responsible for the economic crisis of the villages and trying their best to overcome it. Hence the boycott of foreign goods was a common phenomenon in the villages during the pre-independence days. Obeying Gandhi's behest, all the villagers rose to the occasion in the boycott of foreign goods and in the attempt to save the villages from an economic crisis.

In *Coolie*, we find the emphasis being given to the economic status of the poor people. Here, caste is not given the primary focus as in *Untouchable*. It is their poor economic status that compels the poor people belonging to the higher castes to do the menial work of servants. Munoo, a Kshatriya and Verma, a Brahmin, are forced to work as servants, due to their poor economic status. It is money that matters for them. Here their poor economic status becomes their caste as Munoo says:

Whether there were more rich or more poor people, however, there seemed to be only two kinds of people in the world. Caste did not matter, “I am a Kshatriya and I am poor, and Verma, a Brahmin, is a servant boy, a menial, because he is poor. No, caste does not matter. The Babus are like the *Sahib-logs* and all servants look alike: there must only be two kinds of people in the world, the rich and the poor”. (55-56)

Hence the subjugation of the village people is not only because they are born into the lowest class, but also because they are poor. In *Coolie* Munoo does different jobs to make a living. He works as a domestic servant in Sham Nagar, as a worker in a pickle factory, as a coolie in Daulatpur, as a labourer in a cotton mill in Bombay and finally as a rickshaw-puller in Simla. In Anand’s novels the economic factor becomes more crucial than social status, as Cowasjee states:

Money is the great God, and in the novels after novels Anand repeats that there are two types of people—the rich and the poor. In the final analysis, money decides both caste and class. It also decides one’s political affiliations. (1977:137)

As Munoo realised, there were two kinds of people in the world—the rich and the poor---and money was more important than the air one breathed. Money was sometimes dearer to the villagers than their kins. It sometimes distorted the life of the poor villagers. Anand criticises man’s greed for money. In *Gauri*, Dr. Mahindra sees through the situation more clearly and tells Laxmi how man’s madness for money has brought falsity and wretchedness into the life of the village:

We tie as many oxen and cows and buffaloes to the halter as we can, and when we have no money we sell our daughters ... I am not blaming you ... I am just saying those Banias who buy and sell, have brought falsity into the life of the village. (224-225)

Narayan has drawn the picture of a rustic who sees poverty as the cause of all his miseries and wishes to become wealthy in *The Financial Expert*. Here, Margayya

discovers the importance of money. He tells the priest that he wants to acquire wealth. He will do whatever the priest suggests. The priest tells him: “Wealth does not come the way of people who adopt half-hearted measures. It comes only to those who pray for it single-mindedly with no other thought” (29).

To Margayya money is the main criterion for being respected and honoured in the society. “Nothing is impossible in this world ... if I have money, I need not dodge that spectacle dealer; need not cringe before that stores man. I could give those medicines to my wife” (23). If he had money he would send his son to the convent school. He would buy his son a car when he went to college. He would send him to America for studies. Thus go Margayya’s dreams of acquiring wealth. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Markandaya also is fully aware of the importance the villagers attach to money. Nathan and his wife do not have a pie with them and this results in the miseries they have to suffer.

The zamindars and landlords

The village leadership was in the hands of high caste moneyed people who were mainly big landowners and moneylenders. Misra speaks about the power structure in the villages (1998:128-134). The leaders were mostly elderly people. They settled disputes, which people did not like to take to courts, and managed village social affairs. Caste and other irregularities committed by individual families were decided in meetings of the elders where the above class of leaders dominated. Village leadership was mostly effective in the arrangement of religious and social festivals, entertainment programmes and in the control of village temple property. As the village leaders were mostly big landholders and moneylenders, they had knowledge of the court procedures, access to courts and public offices. Public officials like the police, revenue and settlement officers, the agents and Tahsildars took assistance of the village leaders in the discharge of their functions. Very few of the leaders were honest or virtuous. In the twenties and thirties, when the impact of the national movement was felt in the villages, the elderly village leaders did not support it. They had full faith in the British power and considered the regime advantageous to them. But the movement greatly influenced the young people.

The police, who are supposed to preserve and protect the law, are often seen siding with the rich and the powerful in their oppression of the poor and the helpless. This is obvious in the arrest and torture of Prabha in *Coolie* for non-payment of debt. The police arrest him without a warrant. The person responsible for the arrest was sub inspector Ramnath, whose father, Sir Todar Mal had a quarrel with Prabha. Though he pleaded that he had become bankrupt, the police continuously beat him so that he might 'confess the truth'. The inspector "struck him blow after blow in wild orgy of excitement, his face set, his lips stiff and his body towering over the poor man's frame" (132).

The sufferings of the villagers were to a large extent caused by the *zamindari* system that existed at that time. The zamindars were often absentee landlords. They did not stay in the villages, but lived in the cities and never came to the villages. People paid the revenue annually, preserved the receipts and felt secure over the right of ownership of the land. The *Tahsildar* camped in the village for about a week every year and collected the revenue through several clerks. He also travelled in a palanquin, but the common people could not approach him. They had to meet his clerks. Only important people of the village met him and paid respects to him. He seldom did anything benevolent for the villagers. In some places the agents of the zamindar were oppressive, and harassed the people in several ways. But some were very helpful and built temples, and schools, dug tanks and gave employment to people. They also arranged festivals and various entertainments. During social functions like marriage, or naming of babies, the common people were sumptuously fed and given presents of cash or cloth. The zamindars received the highest social prestige and occupied a position of power and influence.

Anand tells the story of the exploitation of the zamindars and the landlords in *Coolie*. It is the tale of a fourteen-year-old orphaned boy from the Kangra hills. He is forced to earn his livelihood at an early age of fourteen as his father's land and property had been attached away by the village landlord:

He had heard of how the landlord seized his father's five acres of land because the interest on the mortgage covering the unpaid rent had not been forthcoming when the rains had been scanty and harvest bad. And he knew how his father had died a

slow death of bitterness and disappointment and left his mother a penniless beggar to support a young brother-in-law and a child in arms. (2)

Similarly, Markandaya has very elaborately portrayed the cruelties of the zamindars and landlords in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Nathan, a landless farmer, has to live at the mercy of the zamindar. He suffers a lot under the Zamindari system. Nathan works for thirty years under the illusion of owning the land and of his sons working on it with him, but he is cruelly dispossessed of it on the eve of his life. Whether the harvests are good or not, he has to pay the revenue of the land. He sells the utensils, two brass vessels, the tin-trunk, two shirts of his eldest son, whatever gains that were left and even his bullocks and seeds so as to retain the land, to clear the dues with the hope that today or tomorrow he will own the land:

“Rather these should go”, said Nathan, “than that the land should be taken from us; we can do without these, but if the land is gone our livelihood is gone, and we must thenceforth wander like jackals. The bullocks must go. Otherwise we shall not have enough”. (74)

This was not the end of it all. The blow came when he heard from Sivaji, the rent collector, that the landlord was going to sell his land. He was told that the landlord had completed the deal and the papers had been signed. They were given two weeks’ time to leave. He was fully aware that it was not just and also not right. But it was a cruel reality. “There is no law against it. We may grieve, but there is no redress,” (136) he told his son Selvam. At the same time he knew that he could not live except by the land, for he had no other knowledge or skill. As Rao remarks: “Rukmani and Nathan, the peasant couple in South Indian village are victims of two evils; Zamindari system and the industrial economy” (1972:64). Thus we find Nathan and many more like him becoming landless due to the greed of the landlords and the coming of industrialisation.

Other novelists too have depicted the exploitation of the zamindars and the landlords. *Tamarind Tree* (1975) by Romen Basu is a fine sympathetic portrayal of Indian reality in terms of the lives of the dispossessed. In the novel, the former zamindar,

Paramesh Ganguli, symbolizes the social and economic exploitation of the low-caste people in the village, Basuli. He is the embodiment of social bigotry and resentment towards the low-caste people. Their children are not allowed in school. They could not use tube wells. Medicine is denied to them in the dispensary. He instigates the high-caste people to assault Sambal's father physically because as an 'untouchable' he has entered the Kali temple. Further, the low-caste people are subjected to economic exploitation. The zamindar pays the lowest daily rate and anyone who demands better wages is beaten ruthlessly. He has forcibly occupied hundreds of acres of land, which belongs to poor peasants. Labourers are squeezed to starvation. Thus we see that the exploitation of the villagers by the zamindars and the landlords was universal in the villages of India.

Moneylenders and Exploitation

The moneylenders were still another group in the villages that exploited the common people. By lending money, they were able to seize the property of the villagers when the latter could not repay the loan taken. Money lending was done on the basis of mostly unregistered hand notes with thumb impressions or signatures of the borrowers, which were enforceable by courts in case of default. There were some mortgage loans, which were registered, as in case of land mortgage; but mortgages such as gold or silver ornaments or brass or bell metal utensils were not registered.

In *The Village*, Sharm Singh, a victim of Seth Chamanlal, tells Lalu about his ruin: "Nothing son...only I am ruined. I have mortgaged the whole of my land to Chamanlal. But I am not the only one; the whole village is ruined" (109). In the Lalu trilogy, Anand has frequently referred to the nexus between the British government and the Indian landlords and moneylenders. Fazlu in *The Sword and the Sickle* mentions the cruelty and ferocity of Harbans Singh, a landlord:

I was bought up in turn by Harbans Singh, who has left no small farmer in these parts alive. The breath of famine is in his mouth. The spirit of the storm is in his behind. His feet create an earthquake wherever they tread. Thieves! Carrions! Traitors! Hounds! Miscreants! (63)

Lalu sees from his own experience how the village landlord and the village moneylender, created and sheltered by the British system of administration, have exploited them, too, like others, to their total ruin. It is a tragic story of the ruin of a family under the exploitation of the landlords and moneylenders let loose by the British Government. Lalu can become only a helpless spectator as his family is shattered with the hanging of his brother because of the landlord's conspiracy; and the death of his father in futile complaints and protests against the agents of the British Raj. In *The Sword and the Sickle*, when Lalu comes to India after being freed by the Germans, he hopes to get a grant from the government and redeem his lost land and property from the landlord and the moneylender and open a farm like those he had seen in Europe. But he sees everything topsy-turvy. His mother is dead and his property is auctioned away by his enemies, and he does not have a house to live in. Lalu tells Maya: "Hundreds and thousands of men in our land should be mortgaged up to their loincloths. That almost every mud hut, every fruit tree, every bedstead, and every bullock should be mortgaged" (358).

Thus Naik rightly observes:

Lalu finds the rustic a victim of all-round exploitation by numerous agencies—the landlord, the money lender, the trader, the lawyer, the religious leader, the government officials, and also unjust laws and policies of the British government. (1973:58)

The loans, which the villagers took, were in cash or in terms of paddy. The court recognised the register and gave decrees of recovery in case of defaults. Some moneylenders combined other business with money lending. The Seth in *Two Leaves and a Bud* to whom Gangu goes to get a loan for the funeral rites of his wife does the grocery business along with money lending.

When we come to the novels of Rao we find him very eloquent on the subjects of exploitation and moneylending. In *Kanthapura* the moneylender is a Brahmin. Young Bhatta, who began his life with a loincloth on his waist and a copper pot in his hand, is

transformed to a rich landowner who has no scruples about buying up the fields of freedom-fighters, when they are auctioned after the “no tax” campaign. The Brahmin, whose duty it is to lead the people along the right path, has slipped into being an avaricious moneylender. More and more land is mortgaged to him:

But Bhatta will have the last word. That field is not worth more than two hundred and fifty rupees. Let us say two hundred and seventy five. Two hundred and seventy five it shall be. Stamp charges three rupees; registration bribes two eight, and eight annas for the head peon and four annas for the doorkeeper. (33)

The rate of interest was 37% per year. The smaller moneylenders and more exacting bigger moneylenders charged higher rates, 50% or 75%. Margayya in *The Financial Expert* collects deposits from the people at a high rate of interest--twenty percent. The moneylenders often liked to collect only the interest on loans every year, leaving the principle intact. But usually the debtors were in such a poor and weak position that they could neither pay the interest regularly nor the principle, and they were in perpetual indebtedness to the moneylenders, and in the final settlement parted with the little asset they had, mainly agricultural land. In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Gangu's peasant home in Hoshiarpur is seized by the government saying that as the brothers hold joint property, Gangu should incur his brothers' debt. “Strange,” Gangu thought, “how the interest on my younger brother's mortgage piled up, so that all my three acres and my hut as well went just as a free gift to Seth Badri Dass” (3). In many cases, the moneylenders arranged auctions of the household movable assets through the assistance of the courts and also attached homestead land. In cases where the moneylenders took the land of the debtor in settlement of debt, the debtor was allowed to cultivate his own land as a sharecropper. In cases where the relations were strained, he was completely dispossessed. The evil moneylenders are also found in novels such as Kushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Bhattacharya's *A Goddess Named Gold* and Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* to name just three novels.

The debtors in general were afraid of the moneylenders and once they incurred the loans, they were never able to clear up the loans and finally lost their movable and

immovable properties. The debtors could not avoid going to the moneylenders at the time of dire necessity due to death, disease, marriage and many other social and economic needs. Gangu, in *Two Leaves and a Bud* approaches the moneylenders at the time of the untimely death of his wife Sajani. Paddy loans were needed to save the family from sheer starvation. The moneylenders maintained a pious external appearance, but the people in general hated them.

The Moneylenders Act, which was passed in 1954, required the moneylenders to be licensed. Unlicensed moneylenders could not get the facility of recovery of loans through courts, which reduced the rates of interest to 12.5% in case of secured loans, and the maximum amount that could be realised from a debtor by the moneylender to not more than double the principal. They also lost the patronage of the courts, which was their greatest support. As a result, the total money lending transactions dwindled. Till about 1955, the moneylenders were the main source of credit.

Cooperative banks and commercial banks entered the field of rural credit along with the Government and started anti poverty programmes. In *The Financial Expert* we find the villagers taking loans from The Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank in Malgudi and the protagonist Margayya sitting under the shade of a banyan tree near the bank. These banks reduced the role of the moneylenders. The successors of the old moneylenders had turned to other fields. It is also seen that the moneylender families remain rich in the still poverty ridden villages. The bases of their wealth are their landed property and accumulated family capital. According to Darling: "Nowhere has money lending been brought to a finer and more diabolical art than in India" (1947: 21). The money is lent at an unimaginably high rate of interest and from the very start there is little hope of it being repaid. Then the landlord comes in and he increases his territory by buying the mortgaged land. If the poor peasant ventures to approach a lawyer, he too jumps upon the penniless peasant to suck his remaining blood. Anand's *The Village* holds a mirror to these realities of the Indian society. The opening chapters of *The Sword and the Sickle* present the post-world war effect on the villages. Apart from the world war, famine and drought kills the people in thousands. As George finds:

Those who have money, mainly the moneylenders and landlords, rejoice at the swelling situation, as it is a boon for them to expand their territory. The labourers become street beggars; the small landholders lose their land to the landlords and moneylenders end up as tenants, and many tenants are forced to become bonded labourers. (1994:110)

Exploited by the government, landlord, moneylender and the priest, the condition of the labourers and coolies in India was very pathetic during the pre-independence days. They were almost slaves. Though slavery was long time back abolished in India, it was practised in the country in different forms. It was the coolies in the plantations that suffered most. Though the system had no legal support, slavery to different extents was seen in many places in India: "Though slavery as an institution was unknown to the laws in the British India, it came into this country through the back door under the name of contract labour or indentured labour system". (1994:124)

The poor villagers were often lured from the villages to the estates, which were inescapable prisons. Special recruiting agents of the owners of the tea estates used all sorts of bait to lure the landless peasants from the remote villages into working on these estates. The most important of all was the promise of a piece of land. Once the workers were recruited and transported to these uphill estates, they found themselves practically prisoners, left to the mercy of ruthless planters and greedy middlemen. They were constantly ill treated and flogged at work, their women were often insulted and molested, and these families were condemned to live in tin sheds with no basic amenities.

Gangu in *Two Leaves and a Bud* has to leave his village near Hoshiarpur in Punjab because he and his brother cannot repay a loan, which he has taken. Gangu who is taken to the tea plantation in Assam finds that he is deceived. After a week of hard labour in the estate, the amount given to Gangu's whole family is less than 8 annas. It reminds him that in his village he alone used to earn 8 annas a day by working on the landlord's land. It makes him sad to think what a liar Buta has been in all his talk about high wages, about the free land and so on. Within a week of their employment in the tea estate, Gangu becomes a victim of malaria. When Gangu needs money for the cremation of his wife, he

goes to Croft Cooke but is kicked out. Buta, the barber-turned-sardar also does not give him a loan. He makes excuses. So, desperately he goes to the Bania breaking his vow that he would never approach him for a loan. He borrows twenty rupees from him for Sajani's cremation.

Anand presents an authentic picture of the coolies in *Two Leaves and a Bud*:

These docile, gutless, spineless coolies, who never raised their voices except on the day of the holi, who went about the plantation with masks of crass stupidity on their faces, whose habitual submission was never disturbed by an outrage of man or beast, by hunger, pestilence or slow disease. ... (198)

The British allowed the Indian feudal lords to exploit the poor Indian farmers by realising exorbitant rents and taxes from them. If it is the British planters who exploit the workers in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, we find the workers being exploited by the British industrial capitalism in *Coolie*. Sir Reginald White, president of Sir George White Cotton Mills, Mr. Little, the manager, and Jimmy Thomas, the foreman are the British exploiters who exploit the coolies by instructing the mills to go on short time and by "cutting short the labourers' already meager wages to what is less than even starvation allowance" (Sharma, 1978: 66). Naik aptly comments on the working of the factories: "The factory is a huge octopus with its numerous tentacles clutching the labourer in its deadly grasp, slowly paralysing and poisoning him" (1973:41). In the same novel Anand has referred to the exploitation of the poor peasants by Seth Chamanlal, the landlord, who, "at the connivance of the government, hoards up food grains and fleeces the poor peasants by purchasing it at the lowest rates and selling it at the highest" (Sharma, 1978:72). The coolies of the Sir George White Cotton Mills are exploited beyond redressal; they are often under-paid and even forced to sub-human existence, condemned perpetually to live in unhygienic slums, where they are huddled up like animals. In *Two Leaves and a Bud* too Anand, the crusader against exploitation, gives touching instances. Dr. Havre who sides with the Indians sees the chance of a revolution. He observes:

The black coolies clear the forests, plant the fields, toil and garner the harvest, while all the money-grubbing, slave-driving soulless managers and directors draw their salaries and dividends and build up monopolies. Therein lies the necessity of revolution in this country. (123)

Individual workers like Munoo also have to suffer ill treatment. The ill treatment that Munoo in *Coolie* has to suffer is shocking. Bibiji, a “shrewish and vindictive housewife” (6) ill treats and exploits Munoo by exacting more and more work from him and not allowing him to take rest from his irksome task. She not only takes the undue advantage of his helplessness and poor economic status but also, by using abusive and derogatory words like ‘brute’, ‘savage’, ‘swine’, ‘dead one’, ‘dog’, compels him “to escape from the atmosphere charged with sharp abuse, unending complaints and incessant bullying” (59). Even the merchant in *Coolie* uses the expressions like ‘ohe, lover of your mother,’ ‘ohe illegal begotten’, ‘little rascal’, and ‘little wretch’. The poor waif is not only abused and ill treated, but also beaten mercilessly by Babu Nath Ram when he plays with his children and tries to mix with them. The Babu “slapped Munoo on the cheek with his thin, bony hand and kicked him with his shiny black boots, the boots which had been dream of Munoo’s life” (73). In the same novel the goat-faced Ganpat cruelly trashes Munoo for a trivial matter:

Ganpat’s second slap fell on the hard, conic bone at the corner of the joint. His hand was hurt. He was infuriated beyond control. He struck the boy in the ribs with his first toe, three blows, till Munoo fell stumbling on to the mud in the passage, sobbing and shrieking hoarsely. (116)

In *Apology for Heroism*, Anand says:

It never seems to have entered the heads of our masters to give the coolies the slightest chance of bettering themselves. They worked from dawn to dusk, old and young, male and female for their masters, they were treated like dogs. (1967:74)

S.M Akhtar's doctoral thesis "Emigrant Labour of Assam Tea Garden" and P.H Daniel's novel *Red Tea* present horrendous descriptions of sex exploitation and cruelty inflicted on the plantation workers. The inhuman treatment Daniel's coolie Karuppan and his wife Valli received from the General Manager Mr. White is much more terrifying than anything inflicted on Gangu and his family. According to Cowasjee what is narrated in the novel *Two Leaves and a Bud*, is nothing but the truth:

At night the coolies are locked like cattle. Any one trying to escape are caught by the chowkidars and thrashed. Taking these facts into consideration there can be no doubt that the novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* is absolutely based of facts. (1977:85-86)

In *The Big Heart*, Ananta refers to the exploitation of the labourers at the hands of the capitalistic forces in India and the British government: "Our people have been living a life of terrible, awful suffering, and poverty, under the relentless oppression of the sarkar and the rich of our own country" (200). To John de la Havre, in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, "the contents of a cup of tea" are nothing but, "the hunger, the sweat and the despair of a million Indians" (22). He angrily asks: "Why do these swarming, under-nourished, bleary, worm-eaten millions of India suffer so?"(122). He finds their condition worse than that of the slaves in North America:

The position of the plantation coolies in India is, in many respects, similar to that of the cotton plantation slaves of the southern states of North America, of whom Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. If there is any difference, I think that actual inquiry would prove that the present economic condition of the Indian coolies is worse than that of the Negro slaves in America. (124)

Anand portrays the hypocrisy of the holy Brahmin priest who maintains that the mere presence of Bakha polluted the temple but invites his sister Sohini inside the temple and molests her in the face of the prevalent belief that a temple can be polluted by the presence of a low caste man within sixty-nine yards of it. While Kalinath of *Untouchable* forgets all about his Brahminical religion when he attempts to molest Sohini, the Mahant

of Anand's trilogy is presented as eternal exploiter who does not want any progress of the village or any education of the people. He dislikes his authority being questioned by others. Nandgir, the village Mahatma who is the custodian of the Sikh religion smokes charas, drinks ground hemp (bhang) and leads a life of lechery and fornication and yet he is a religious guru. In yet another novel by Anand, *Seven Summers*, Pundit Jairam exploits the poor innocent people by extracting money and delicious food items from them. In *The Road*, Pundit Suraj Mani is the religious exploiter who demands money and different food items even from the untouchables; but never allows them to enter the temple for worship. He asserts: "The temple teaches the Dharma, they cannot enter the house of God. I will never allow them there. But they can make dry offerings for the preservation of the Dharma, which may emancipate them" (41). The village thus is the stronghold of the powerful trinity of exploiters: the landlord, the village Shaukar, and the village Mahanta. They help one another in keeping their vested interest firmly entrenched in the village. To quote Iyenger:

The typical ingredients of village life---landlord and the shaukar, Sarkar and mumbo jumbo convention and superstition, mass conformity and mass hysteria, the cupidity and cruelty of some and the apathy and helplessness of the many--inevitably conspire to daunt and all but crush the free and ardent spirit of Lalu Singh. (1984:347)

The exploitation in *Kanthapura* can be compared with that in the Italian novelist Ignazio Silone's *Fontamara*. It is the tragedy of a village destroyed by the force of tyranny and oppression. Although there is similarity between the economic exploitation of the poor under Mussolini in the thirties and that of the Indians under the British rule, there is difference in the spirit of the novels. As against the final despair of the people of Fontamara, the people of Kanthapura become conscious of something that has eventually entered their hearts: "an abundance like the Himavathy on Gauri's night, when lights come floating down" (255).

In Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* too we find evidences of exploitation. The social and economic exploitation evident in the system of tenant farming finds an echo in

Rukmain's rumination. Rukmani believes: "Tannery or not, the land might have been taken from us. It had never belonged to us, we had never prospered to the extent where we could buy, and Nathan, himself the son of a landless man, had inherited nothing" (134).

The economic exploitation of the villagers has been the subject of many Indian English novels. In an earlier novel, *Murugan the Tiller* by Venkataramani, we find echoes of economic exploitation. In the novel, Ramu sells his cultivable land to the village moneylender to whom he had been in debt, and his coconut-garden to Murugan. Ramu observes in the novel:

We are powerless in our own land. Just see what happens in a village. By direct taxation, Government takes one third of the gross produce, and yet another third goes in the wake of civilised needs, cloth, kerosene, coffee and sugar, and but one third is left in the village. The rest we have to export. We need shelter both from the howling trade winds of civilisation and enormous cost of Government. No wonder we are ill fed. And the lands don't yield well. (75)

Anand and Bhattacharya have exposed the unprincipled Indians who exploit the situation for their own benefit and who are no better than vultures and jackals waiting for the flesh. In *He Who Rides a Tiger* it is such people that drive Kalo, a blacksmith, and a sincere and honest person in his life, to become a cheat, and start deceiving both people and gods. The poor peasants are crushed under the debt. They fall into steep debts thereby enriching the village moneylenders who cash money even on the ashes of the poor. The interests accumulate like sins and the borrower has only to entrust his debt to the care of his children. The heartlessness and the cruelty of the moneylenders are pointed out with vehemence. In the novel: "The Seth's milch cow died and he would not replace it; the jug of milk needed could come from milk woman by way of interest on the loan she had taken after her husband's sudden death by snakebite" (Rao, 1997:129).

Industrialisation and its effects

The coming of industrialisation paved the way for a sea change in the village set up. It changed the face of the villages. Though many new amenities and facilities were obtained, the villages lost their peace, calm and innocence. It is Markandaya who voices the evils of the change in her novel *Nectar in a Sieve*:

When an Indian village is on the threshold of industrialisation, the peasant community suffers both physically and mentally. Nathan and Rukmani are representatives of millions of tenant farmers in India and their life is an example of the havoc caused by industrialisation. The whole novel thus reveals the story of an Indian village shaken to its roots by the onslaught of modernisation. (Bhatnagar, 1995:69)

Markandaya has not given the description of the village at the height of its glory but at its transitional period, when it was affected by the setting up of the tannery. “Life has apparently not changed for a thousand years” but now with the invasion of industry and modern technology, “sinister consequences issue” (Iyengar, 1984: 43). The quiet life and the village economics are both affected—values have lost their roots and money is what everybody is interested in. Industrialisation affects family, the very basic institution of a society. The sweet harmony of the peasant’s life is disrupted mercilessly by the intrusion of industrialisation and the consequent urbanisation. The tannery’s imperceptible and lasting consequences filter down to all the layers of the village, geographical, economic, social and moral. The calm serene and peaceful atmosphere of the village is destroyed. As Rao remarks: “Industrialisation with its main emphasis on the urban development and the mechanisation of the means of production and distribution necessarily result in the social dislocation of the family”(1972:64).

Due to industrialisation Nathan and Rukmani lose their land and are left with no means to eke out a living. Nathan loses the soil, which he cultivated for more than three decades, as the land is sold to the factory owners. Nathan and Rukmani move to the town to try their luck. Their sons leave them. Two of their sons go to far away Ceylon. One son

gets killed and their only daughter turns to prostitution. Nathan dies and Rukmani, finding no moorings in the town, returns to the village. This is the balance sheet of Nathan's family, which was destroyed due to the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation. Migration is one of the consequences of industrialisation.

When we go through the novels of Narayan we do not find such disastrous effects. The change caused by industrialisation is evident in *The Guide*. The coming of the railway in Malgudi is the impact of an industrial and urban society on a predominantly simple, agricultural community with its new problems, which means the undoing of the old ways of living and of the cherished values of life. The shade of the tamarind tree which was the seat of Raju's boyhood days and of the village cart men who unyoked their bullocks for the night is now full of lorries packed under it—for there is brisk activity because of the laying of the railway track. Raju, who grew up in a decent home, has now picked up terms of abuse from the railway men, and his father's words, "Just my misfortune" sound ominous in the light of the impending disaster. The railway also meant the undoing of Raju.

The industrialisation of the villages naturally led to urbanism. The rural entities started slowly changing into small urban areas and then into large urban centers or towns and cities. A perceptible effect of the growing westernisation and urbanisation, according to Srivasthava, "has been the gradual collapse of warm and sincere love and the birth of commercialised love" (1984:128). Markandaya clearly shows the evil effects of urbanisation in her novels *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice*. Nathan and Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve* continue to remain models of loving husband and wife, but their daughter Ira and son, Murugan—the products of an industrialised nation—have no qualms in forsaking their spouses. "Ira's son Sacrabani and Murugan's wife's child are concrete examples of the commercial love and sex" (21). Because of the encroachment of the urban people, price rise, disease and corruption have all been established in the village. *Nectar in a Sieve* is based on the results of industrialisation on the villages.

Urbanisation induces people from the villages to migrate to the towns. When life in the villages becomes cumbersome, they try to flock into the towns, which they think is their 'promised land'. But greater tragedy awaits them there as in the case of Ravishankar in *A Handful of Rice*. Ravi, the main character, forces his entry into a tailor's house crying desperately for food, "I am hungry, I want a meal" (6). It is the economic conditions that compel Ravi to flee from his native village to seek his fortune in the city. Contrary to his expectation, the city offers no scope. It is full of social evils. It is the seat of black marketers, hoarders, bootleggers and cheats. "Grab or go under" (117) are the watchwords of the city dwellers. Life in the city is a grim struggle for existence or survival. This lawless, subterranean city is a jungle. "It held out before them like an incandescent carrot the hope that one day, some day, there would be something" (25). Here the civilization is based on perversion, distortion of values, corruption, nepotism, exploitation, sycophancy, murder, incest, robbery and all forms of social evils. Ravi cannot become part of such a civilisation. There is no escape for him. He has to face it.

With Appu's death, the entire burden of the family falls on Ravi. He loses his job in the hospital and his first born dies. Nalini is ill. The price of rice goes up day by day. *A Handful of Rice* shows how a villager withstands the temptation of the city, its corruptions and temptations, and comes out whole, indeed better. In *Nectar in a Sieve* we see how city culture invades village culture, which succumbs to the economic and moral depredation of the city. *A Handful of Rice* takes us to the other side of the issue--why villagers leave the village and what happens to them when they come to the city. Because of the encroachment of the urban people, prices rise, disease and corruption have destabilised the village. An innocent village woman like Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve* cannot accept the changes. She speaks about the men who have come from far away: "They may live in our midst but I can never accept them, for they lay their hands upon us" (28).

Industrialisation paves way for Modernisation, which helps the village and its people in some ways. In *Untouchable* there is the mention of modernisation which is in the form of a "machine which clears dung" (173) and which may enable a sweeper to

change his profession so that he may no longer be thought of as an untouchable. This attracts Bakha's attention. He realises that it can also replace the label pasted on some sections of society as scavengers.

The main obstacle to the progress of a society is its unwillingness to accept modernisation. The enemies of modernisation are the people themselves who are unwilling to give up their old ways of life and who protest against anything new and more advantageous. In *The Village* Nihal Singh's comment about the train, "This machine is like the Devil. How it made my heart jump! Wah Guru! Wah Guru! And the smoke it emits is so bad for the fields..." (2), makes Lalu protest, which in turn creates an amusing clash of opinion between the father and the son, the conservative and the progressive. Lalu retaliates that when bullock carts take more than two days to reach town, the goods sent by train take only one hour to reach town.

Lalu, like Bakha in *Untouchable* and Munoo in *Coolie*, is an admirer of the machine. Lalu observes how progressive farming in France by the use of tractors and fertilisers has made the farmer and the country rich; and the facility of the French farmers for borrowing money from the Cooperative Bank at a very low interest is new to India. The poor wages and deplorable working conditions, which came along with the industrialisation gradually, led to the establishment of trade unions and the idea of a revolution. In Narayan, the arrival of the train and the building of the bridge in Malgudi are examples of modernisation.

Trade Union and Revolution

Industrialisation also paved the way for many other changes and activities. For example, it gave an impetus to organised activities of the working class, which led to trade union movements and later on to an attempt for a revolution. The villagers who formed the working class had heard of the Russian Revolution and this set fire to their blood. They wanted something to happen in India too. They thought that it would break all their shackles and liberate them from bondage. Hence they were very eager for a revolution.

To facilitate this they attempted to organise trade unions, which were the first step for an organised revolution.

Anand's characters are among the foremost who express this sentiment. Like all proletarian leaders, Ananta in *The Big Heart* believes in 'unity in diversity', and endeavors to bring labourers and skilled artisans under Trade Union as a first step towards collective revolution. He pleads with the coppersmiths to forge a union to bargain collectively with the capitalists and the factory-owners; and gets the unstinted support of the poet Puran Bhagat Singh. Ananta feels the imperative necessity of "Revolution" (89), as it is the only binding force, in establishing "brotherhood" (138) and unity. Ananta has already learnt to "master his destiny with only a big heart" (138) and fraternity of the like-minded people, which alone he feels, can spearhead a 'Revolution' (175). Ananta in his long harangue with his mistress Janki, point out:

A 'Revolution' after which men would find a new way of living, in which they would discover a new brotherhood, away from the pettiness created by the miseries of the present, by the greed of profit makers and the lust of powers of the *sarkar*.... (176)

Anantha explains how at present the caste-brotherhood of the old days has gone out of fashion and people should form class-brotherhood for their own welfare. He supports his point by the example of Murli Dhar not inviting his own caste-brothers to the ceremony in his house, they being of a different class now from his. He pleads for the formation of the union of all the jobless coppersmiths who are of the same class. Most of the unemployed coppersmiths are convinced about the need of such a union. Though Mahasha Hans stands in the way and foils the attempt, Ananta does not abandon hope of forming the union.

The poet Puran Singh speaks about the need for bringing about a proletarian revolution for the betterment of the working class. It is imperative, he feels, to destroy the illegitimate owners of the workers, the capitalists, who use the machine and the workers for amassing wealth. He promises the creation of a classless society, based on equality

and fraternity: “Only a Revolution will complete the reformation and renaissance that is going on among us and produce the new community with new morality in which, and through which men can live creatively” (143).

As the hero of the novel, Ananta, tells his friends:

The workingmen of *Vilayat* themselves took their destiny in their own hands and banded themselves into the new brotherhood of unions. At first they were persecuted and penalised by the employers, and the *Sarkar*, which was behind the employers. The men stuck together, and struggled and struggled, until today there are few workingmen and women in factories who are not members of the union. They bargain together for higher wages, shorter hours, against bad condition, for holidays with pay, and defend their rights by strike action (200)

In *Coolie*, Sauda the leader of the Red Flag Union of workers attempts to organise the masses into a collective revolt, which is also, the seminal thrust of Anand’s thesis in the novel. He exhorts them:

Standup then, stand up for your rights, you roofless wretches, stand up for Justice, stand up, you frightened fools. Stand up and fight. Stand up and be the men that you were meant to be and don’t crawl back to the factories like the worms that you are! Stand up for life, or they will crush you and destroy you altogether. Stand up and follow me! From tomorrow you go on strike and we will pay you to fight your battle with the employers. Now stand up and recite with me the charter of your demands. (88)

In *The Sword and the Sickle*, Lalu too feels the necessity of a revolution. He addresses the peasants thus:

Come worthy little people, we will now make a real Revolution! Come, we shall work day and night and learn now to make Revolution For Revolution is the need of togetherness, Comrade, the need to curb malice among the men, the need

for men to stand together as brothers ...Now it is the time to change the world, to fight for life and happiness comrade, sing brave songs of struggle (384-85)

The same need for a revolution, which the villagers express in the novels of Anand, is seen to a certain extent in the novels of Narayan also. But the novels of Rao and Markandaya are silent on this topic of revolution. In the novels of Narayan we find people becoming revolutionaries and organising revolts and subversive activities.

Sriram in *Waiting for the Mahatma* comes under the spell of Jagdish, the photographer, and becomes a terrorist. He transmits messages and receives messages verbatim. Jagdish gives Sriram cyclostyled copies of messages and asks him to drop the pamphlets in army camps. It is risky and so Sriram merely throws the pamphlets beyond the fence of the camp. Then he is busy with Jagdish in wrecking trains and burning railway stations.

Labour

It is no wonder that the workers tried to organise themselves into trade unions and stage a revolution as a natural reaction to the atrocities caused by the landlords, moneylenders and other exploiters. The factory owners were still another type of oppressors who clung to the workers like leeches and drew their lifeblood. The working conditions of the labourers had hit the bottom level. The workers were subjected to all kinds of torture in inhuman surroundings. In the households there were three kinds of agricultural labourers. Some were domestic servants, some others were attached agricultural labourers by annual contract and others free unattached agricultural labourers.

When the villagers found it difficult to continue life in the villages, they migrated to different places — near and far away — to keep their body and soul together. They worked in mosquito-ridden estates and congested factories. They hoped to earn good wages. But a few days' life in the factories and estates disillusioned them. They became aware of the inescapable trap they had fallen into. We get a picture of their state in the

novels of Anand, Rao and Markandaya. In *Coolie*, Munoo who went away from his native village to the city finds that he has fallen from the frying pan into the roaring fire. Munoo's life in the dark chambers of the pickle factory at Daulatpur was really a hell:

It was a dark and evil life. He [Munoo] rose early at dawn before he had his full sleep out, having gone to bed long after midnight. He descended to work, in the factory, tired, heavily, heavy-lidded, hot and limp, as if all the strength had gone out of his body and left him a spineless ghost of his former self. (188)

The crowded dwellings, dirty latrines, regular cuttings made from the low pay given to them on one pretext or another made the life of the workers really miserable: They worked from day to day in the dark under world, full of intense heat of blazing furnaces and the dense malodorous smells of brewing essences, spices and treacle, of dust and ashes and mud (110). Same was the experience of many a villager who left his village seeking pastures new. The plight of the other coolies of the Sir George White Factory was no better. They crept like ghosts:

That little spark of life with which made them move about willingly had died, and left them a queer race of men, dried up, shrivelled, hollow-chested, hollow-cheeked, hollow-eyed. Their wretchedness had passed beyond the confines of suffering and left them careless, resigned. (115)

The coolies were exploited beyond redressal; they were often under-paid and even forced to live the life of sub-humans condemned perpetually to live in unhygienic slums, where they are huddled up like animals:

The bodies of numberless coolies lay strewn in tattered garbs. Some were curled up in knots, others lay face downwards on folded arms, others were flat on their chests, pillowing their heads on their bundles or boxes, other crouched into the corners talking, others still huddled together at the door steps of closed shops or lay on boards, in a sleep which looked like death, but that it was broken by deep sighs. (177)

The factory is an insufferable inferno with unbearable heat radiating from the tin sheets, the continuous wild hum of the machine, the monotony of the work, the threat of impending danger and above all, the inhuman attitude of the employer. The coolies working under such conditions degenerate into moving corpses with fear fixed on their brows. The experiences of Prabha, Parvathi and other workers in the pickle factory, Hari, Lakshmi and several industrial workers in Bombay, Mohan and many rickshaw pullers in Shimla were also really pathetic.

Rao and Anand describe the supervisors luring the poor landless labourers to the estates through false promises. They come there with high hopes of earning a lot of money and going back to their native village, but both novelists show that once on the estate, only death can release them. In Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud*, they are held there by force and as Gangu's friend says: "This prison has no bars, but it is nevertheless an unbreakable jail. The *chowkidars* keep guard over the plantation, and they bring you back if you should go" (38). In *Kanthapura*, it is not physical force but economic necessity that keeps the coolies from returning home. When the new arrivals talk of saving three hundred rupees and going home, an old coolie, Siddayya remarks, "we all said that"(78). "He knew that when one came to the Blue Mountain one never left it"(78). The workers waste their money on *toddy*. What is left is spend on marriages, deaths and religious festivals. Rao presents the anonymous planter and the nameless coolie. This has the effect of showing how widespread the evil is. The British planters ill-treated coolies of not only Skeffington Coffee Estate but also of other plantations as well.

Nectar in a Sieve presents the younger generation as losing interest in the soil and turning to other professions. But there too they are not successful. Some even leave the village and go to alien lands. Nathan's children try to help their father. But unexpectedly there is a strike and they became jobless. When the tannery stops work Arjun and Thambi go to Ceylon to work as labourers. The other sons are not able to provide for their family. Once again Nathan has to bear the burden of looking after the whole family. Selvam, like his brothers, was very hard working and conscientious. Though he had been reared on the land and had the earth in his blood, he did not take to farming. He had no love for it and

in return it did not yield its fruits to him. He had knowledge of crops and seasons, but where crops thrived under Nathan's hand, under his they only wilted. One day he declared that he was giving up cultivation. "The land has no liking for me, and I have no time for it" (111). Dr. Kenny had offered him a job in his hospital and he would take up that. The development of industry and the job opportunities, which came along with it, induced the villagers to migrate to urban centers in search of suitable jobs.

Migration

Migration of the village folk to the cities is a common phenomenon seen in the Indian English novels. Migration to cities is very common in the novels of Anand, Rao and Markandaya. In Anand's *Coolie*, the hero Munoo, a frail boy in a hostile world abandons his village and migrates to the town and from the towns to the city and ultimately to the mountains. Life for the migrant is a test of his vitality and impetuosity. His fundamental right to happiness is denied to him in the hostile climate. Munoo leaves the village in the hope of finding a better place to make his living. But the towns, to which he goes, offer no consolation. In the cotton mills in Bombay where he finds work to eke out a living, Munoo is exposed to the full force of the callous capitalistic order. There the boy experiences the savage struggle for survival. He has to suffer "the foul smells and stink, damp and sticky sweat, dust and heat and dung" (Mishra, 1983: 85). In such a climate he finds life a despair and death a delight.

Nectar in A Sieve and *A Handful of Rice* illustrate the effects of industrialisation of the villages. *A Handful of Rice* reveals the novelist's great concern for the simple villagers who migrate from their native villages to the cities in search of green pastures but who actually find themselves being shifted from bad to worse. In *Nectar in a Sieve* Markandaya brings the despair of the farmers to the limelight. They are desperate because of the rampant hunger, natural calamities, ruthless machines and heartless men. The tannery contributes to the disintegration of Nathan's family. Rukmani out of her affection for her sons and anxiety opposes the idea of migration of her sons. She asks them: "What is it that calls you? Is it gold? Although we have no money, remember that money is not everything" (68). The new assertiveness of Arjun and Thambi stand in

complete contrast to Rukmani's nostalgia for the land. Her sons represent the aspiration of the new generation for economic success and social mobility, which is quite evident in the reply:

It is [money] an important part of living. There is nothing for us here, for we have neither the means to buy land or to rent it would you have us wasting our youth chafing against things we cannot change? ... she says in agony "If you go you will never come back...the journey costs hundreds of rupees, you will never have so much" (68).

When her sons desert the soil and leave for distant lands, a sorrowful Rukmani bids them farewell with a heavy heart and a deep sigh. Rukmani sorrowfully recollects: "My sons had left because it [life] frowned on them; one of them had been destroyed by its ruthlessness" (136). Exodus to alien lands and urban areas is the consequence of industrialisation of the villages. Though Nathan has great emotional attachment for the soil in which he has sweated for about three decades, he is evicted from his familiar abode because his land is sold to the owners of the tannery for a high price. The news of the sale effaces all his hopes. He suffers and cannot contemplate a life away from his beloved land. In this moment of crisis Nathan takes the decision to migrate to the town in the hope of finding subsistence there.

But when they reach the city, Nathan finds that they are misfits in the city. Even their meagre belongings are stolen and they are reduced to near beggary. The search for their son yields no result. Nathan is totally disillusioned and says, "it is better that we should go now, while it is still light" (164). The city has nothing to offer to the farmer couple. Soon Nathan dies and Rukmani finds herself alone in this world. Her frustration is transmitted by her renewed hope in the village life and she decides to return to her native village. Rukmani comes to her native village to live with her son Selvam and her daughter Ira. Ultimately she finds that it is "better to starve where we are bred than live here" (167). Thus a counter-migration too takes place. In *A Handful of Rice* economic conditions compel Ravi to turn his back to his peasant past and he flees from his native village to seek his fortune in the city. But he does not belong to the city. The city disowns

him. It dispels and discards him. Venkataramani's *Murugan the Tiller* presents South Indian village life both in its traditional and dynamic aspects. Ramu is tempted by his friend Kedari, in Madras and migrates to the city leaving behind his fertile soil in the care of Murugan.

In Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud* the migration of the poor workers takes place from the plains to the hills of Assam. Gangu, and his family are tempted by the promises of Sardar Buta and leave the village near Hoshiarpur in Punjab and come to the promised land of the Mac Pherson Tea Estate in Assam. Again the migration is from bad to worse, for they find that they are trapped in a prison. In *The Road*, Bhikku, who is humiliated, insulted and hurt by the high caste boys, decides to quit the village and takes the road he has helped to build, and starts his journey to Delhi "where no one knew who he was and where there would be no caste or outcaste" (110). The reason for Bhikku's migration to the city is untouchability. While in *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* migration takes place from the village to the city, in Anand's *The Big Heart* a counter migration takes place. Here Ananta, a coppersmith returns to his hometown of Amristar having worked in the industrial townships of Bombay and Ahmedabad, to resume his hereditary trade.

One of the reasons that promoted migration was extreme poverty as seen in the migration of the coolies in Rao's *Kanthapura*. The coolies come from far and wide southern states to work in the estates. Rao describes the long line of coolies moving towards the estates. Coolies come in search of work because they are almost on the verge of starvation:

...And still more and more coolies came--coolies from below the ghats that talked Tamil or Telgu and who brought with them their old men and their children and their widowed women--armies of coolies marched past the Kenchamma Temple, half-naked, starving, spitting, weeping, vomiting, coughing, shivering, squeaking, shouting, moaning coolies--coolies after coolies passed by the Kenchamma temple. (67-68)

Rural Poverty

In the Indian village society, the village folk lived a hand-to-mouth existence. Their main occupation was agriculture, which always depended on the monsoons, which were often erratic. Severe droughts and floods destroyed their crops. So the village peasants always harvested poverty. The condition of the industrial workers was worse. Living in slums, they were no better than animals.

In Anand's *The Village*, most of the farmers in Nandpur are poverty-stricken and miserable. Lalu's uncle Harnam Singh has to mortgage the whole of his six acres to the moneylender Chaman Lal to pay the land rent to the Sarkar and to have a little money on hand for the seed. Most of what they grow goes to the moneylender as interest and there is no hope of paying back the capital for years. Yet poverty never teaches the villagers to be frugal. Instead, the empty illusion of prestige induces them to spend money on marriages and other functions and the 'holy men' who are embodiments of hypocrisy. Lalu disliked men like Nandgir who led a luxurious and immoral life and took grain and clothes from the poor villagers.

In *Coolie* the condition of the coolies of St. George White Cotton Mill is very pathetic. These coolies have come from villages in search of work to make a living, meagre though it might be. The writer faithfully depicts the plight of the coolies, the harrowing condition in which they are surviving. Munnoo's arrival in the darkness of night when the coolies are sleeping on the pavement on the wooden boards attains symbolic significance. It is a dark ocean where teeming and seething millions are struggling for existence, fluttering and falling like fading leaves of autumn. Munoo while working in the mill lives in a slum:

The mud floor was at a level lower than the pathway outside; overgrown with grass, which was nourished by the inflow of rainwater. The cottage boasted neither a window nor a chimney to let in the air and light and to eject the smoke. But then, had it not the advantage of a sound sackcloth curtain at its door, when most of the huts in the neighbourhood had torn and tattered jute bags, or broken

cane chinks old rags, bent tins and washing and what not, to guard them against the world? (176)

In Anand's *Coolie* Sauda tries to open the eyes of the workers to reality: "Stand up for your rights, you roofless wretches, stand up for justice...stand up and fight—stand up for life, or they will crush you and destroy you altogether" (233). Indeed, it has been the fate of the poor peasants of India to toil day and night and cultivate the lands, and it is a pity that they live in perpetual poverty and hunger only to enable the landlords to flourish. The producer has ultimately nothing to consume. The fate of the Indian farmer whose life is crushed under the wheel of grinding poverty is drawn with a breath of vision by Anand and Markandaya. A peasant is caught up in a vicious circle—from his meagre returns he has to satiate the landlord through payment of rent, propitiate the gods and their earthly representatives—the priests, through periodical offerings, feed his family and maintain a false status in order to impress his caste-brotherhood. Invariably the peasant fails to meet all these requirements and raises debts at an exorbitant rate of interest from the moneylenders who eventually acquire the mortgage of his lands.

In Anand's *Gauri*, the heroine soon realises that she is an unwanted burden on the family's meagre resources. Once again poverty and hunger subsume all personal and familial relationships and Gauri is sold against her will to a rich banker in Hoshiarpur. Vijayasree comments: "Ironically, when Laxmi, Gauri's mother had to choose between her cow that feeds the family and her daughter whom the family has to feed, she chooses the former!" (1998:44).

Markandaya in *Nectar in a Sieve* has drawn the tragic picture of hunger seen in the villages. Rukmani divides the little rice she has into twenty-four small parts to feed the entire family for as many days. Such starvation leads to human degradation. Ira, seeing her family starve during the famine turns to prostitution. Hunger leads to the suspected theft of calfskin by Raja and his subsequent death. Starvation forces Kuti's death. As Mehta rightly points out, it is "the struggle between man and the overpowering hunger, before which honour, mortality and even God do not count" (1979: 255). The adverse physical conditions like drought make Nathan unable to pay his land revenue.

Puli has to face poverty and go on begging because he has none to support him. Puli has “no mother--there is no one to worry about me--and none to worry me either, which is a good thing” (230). Hunger and disease cause Nathan’s death and Rukmani comes back to her native village to live with her son Selvan and her daughter Ira. Ultimately she expresses her consent with her husband’s view, “Better to starve where we are bred than live here” (167).

Like O-Lan of Pearl S. Buck’s *The Good Earth* Rukmani becomes an embodiment of tolerance. Even poverty, hunger coupled with misfortunes, does not divert her piety. Rather, these strengthen her spirit of struggle. In her husband’s home she experiences poverty and starvation. She suffers for the sake of her family but she does not succumb. She fights against the heaviest odds and never accepts defeat. Actually, she hails from a family, which has become poverty-stricken due to the wedding of three daughters. She has been offered to Nathan, a helpless and hapless tenant lost in all walks of his life. Very soon she has to feed her husband and six children. Her daughter Ira who wants to save her younger brother and cannot tolerate hunger anymore is compelled to turn to prostitution. Again, it is hunger that induces Kunti to take to prostitution. In this novel, we see Rukmani’s patience to suffer miseries. Nathan is good to her and even in his misery he consoles Rukmani: “It is a thing that might happen to anybody...do not fret. Come, dry your eyes and sit up here beside me” (3). In the novels of Markandaya, awe, starvation and frustration are the characteristic feelings, which dominate the villages. It is “fear of the dark future; fear of the sharpness of hunger; fear of the blackness of death” (79). Rukmani remarks that ‘hope and fear’ are the twin forces in the villages that drag the people first in one direction and then in another. “Fear, constant companion of the peasant. Hunger, ever at hand to jog his elbow should he relax. Despair, ready to engulf him should he falter” (79). Rukmani and her family bear the physical and spiritual pangs of indigence and degradation poignantly.

Nature is often unkind to the villagers. Cultivation is highly dependent on the vagaries of nature. Nature very often turns hostile and this hostility of nature is best seen in *Nectar in A Sieve*. In the novel the peasant couple suffers due to both drought and

floods. The net result for them is poverty and starvation. Heavy rain creates untold miseries for the people of the village. When the water subsides the villagers venture out again. Nathan goes to Hanuman, the dealer of rice and tells him that the gruel he and his family had been taking has been almost plain water for the past few days. But Hanuman is not kind enough to part with any rice. What he parts with is an excuse, which says that whatever he had was enough only for his wife and children. He then directs him to Biswas another merchant who also only disappoints Nathan. The choice now left before him is to break the dam. His wife and children, who are sunken-eyed, accompany him, carrying nets and buckets. The evil force of nature plays a significant role in destroying the crops of Rukmani and Nathan. They recall how their paddy crop was ruined by the heavy rains:

It rained so hard, so long and so incessantly that the thought of a period of no rain provoked a mild wonder. It was as if nothing had ever been but rain...but Nathan and I watched with heavy hearts while the water rose and rose and the tender green of the paddy field sank under and was lost...the rains have destroyed much of our work. There will be little eating this year. (43-44)

But the next year rain failed and each day the level of the water dropped and heads of the paddy hung lower. There was nothing to reap when the harvesting time came. They were caught in the clutches of drought:

Day after day the pitiless sun blazed down scorching whatever still struggled to grow and baking the earth hard until at last it split and great irregular fissures gaped in the land. Plants died and the grasses rotted, cattle and sheep crept to the river that was no more and perished there for lack of water, lizards and squirrels lay prone and gasping in the blistering sunlight. (81)

Those who live upon the mercy of the land always experience tragedy in their lives. “The fruit of the peasant’s labour goes either to the landlord or is destroyed by the ravages of nature” (Jain, 1985:79). It became inevitable for Ira to earn some money to keep the family going. The family got used to it, and with her earnings Ira was able to

buy rice and salt, and milk for her mother's youngest child who was too weak for anything else. The tragic death of the Old Granny is an indicator of the intensity of poverty that existed in the village. Old Granny lived in the village on what she made by selling peanuts and guavas. She lived on the street and died there. She had no relatives left—no person on whom she had any claim. There was no one to enquire whether she made a living or how much longer she could continue to do so. Certainly she was one who struggled hard to survive but failed rather miserably. "One day she quietly disappeared. They found her body on the path that led to the well, an empty mud-pot beside her and the gunny sacking tied around her waist. She had died of starvation"(122).

Ammu, Murugan's wife was another woman who made every effort to make both ends meet. When Rukmani reached her house with her husband what she saw around was abject poverty. It was evident that the child and his mother were starving:

Except for a small bowlful of rice there seemed to be no other food in the place. The little boy was thin and hollow-cheeked; his mother looked worn and haggard and was obviously hardly able to feed the baby who kept whimpering fitfully; the cry of hunger, which is different to the other cries of infants. (162).

Puli, a nine-year-old boy had no mother or anyone to worry about him. It was this boy who took Rukmani to the quarry to do some odd job. He always returned with them to the temple. Whatever they earned they entrusted to Puli to make them safe. The disease, which was rotting his body, had eaten away nail and flesh to the first knuckle. It was the very same boy who gave company to Rukmani when she returned to her native place after the death of her husband. Thus we find the boy fighting all odds to survive without fingers and only stumps.

Like the British doctor John de la Havre in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Dr. Kenny in *Nectar in a Sieve* ridicules the submissive nature of the villagers. Dr. Kenny has no patience with their submissiveness, their calm resignation to miseries and misfortunes. He also laments the lack of planning, orthodox sexual morality, wasteful use of cow dung etc. resulting in overall poverty and misery of the people. The "eternal, shameful

poverty” (71) of the villagers is awfully disgusting to him. Once again Markandaya gives a picture of the Indian village where people:

... lived between bouts of gentle and acute poverty, the kind in which the weakest went to the walls the old ones and the babies dying of tuberculosis, dysentery, the falling fever, recurrent fever and any other names for what was basically simply nothing but starvation. (Williams, 1976:168)

Due to poverty, the old people and the children are liable to be infected with diseases. Their constitution is weak due to malnutrition. The majority of the Indian poor are unable to afford even medical treatment. In *A Handful of Rice*, like many other urban poor middle class people, Ravi who has come from the village, brought Nalini and the newborn baby back to his home within thirty-six hours of birth to avoid medical bills. Ravi's son is infected by meningitis. When his wife asks him to call a doctor, he in an agony of helplessness cries out: “A doctor, what! Are we memsahibs or something to send for a doctor for every ache and pain? Will you pay his bill?” (228).

In *A Handful of Rice*, Ravi goes to the extent of stealing, due to poverty and starvation. He struggles but fails to get even a handful of rice:

He struggled to reach the grain, this time at least, and he clenched his empty hands and watching with frantic eyes as the rice heap dwindled and the empty sacks flopped and sagged and were snatched up and filled or jump away full on shoulders that could bear them. (235)

Finally with Apu's death, the entire burden of the family falls on Ravi. He loses his job in the hospital. His first-born dies. Nalini falls ill. On top of all, the price of rice goes up day by say. With the upward spiralling prices, Ravi's family fortune “slips down with increasing momentum”(196). His dog-eat-dog condition compels him to sell Apu's bed for eight rupees—the bed on which he had slept with Nalini for only ten days after their marriage. They had to devour rice full of black stones. Bad harvest followed by the drought worsens the condition. “Week by week the price crept up. Then one month it

shot skyward” (226). What Ravi gets is not enough for him and his children. Hence, the reason why the people leave their villages is clear—to escape the endless cycle of poverty and hand-to-mouth existence, buffeted between nature’s storms and the landlord’s extortions. In Markandaya’s novels there are deaths due to sheer starvation, whatever the medical term for it be. Kutty and Nathan in *Nectar In A Sieve*, Val’s mother in *Possession*, Ravi’s mother in *A Handful of Rice* and The tribal people in *Coffer Dams*.

Corruption and Crime

Corruption is a universal phenomenon. The villages are also prone to it. The extreme poverty in the villages prompts the villagers to do petty crimes like thefts. It is the extreme poverty of Kunthi that makes her to steal the rice from the house of Nathan and Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Narayan describes some aspects of village corruption in his novels. In the society as revealed in *The Man Eater of Malgudi*, corruption is rampant in every walk of life. The bus conductor is seen pocketing a lot of cash collected from passengers:

As he explained to me, “These poor fellows will get stranded on the highway if we are not considerate. After all they are also human creatures”. He was a compassionate conductor who filled his pockets with the wayside fare, never issuing a ticket. At this rate he could buy a Rolls Royce rather than a Morris Minor, I thought. (55)

Jagan in *The Vendor of Sweets* keeps double account books and treats parts of sale produce as ‘free cash’. He does not show this money in his income tax accounts and thus amasses a huge amount of black money. He rationalises the recycling of stale stuff by saying philosophically, “after all, everything consists of flour, sugar and flavour” (19). The villager who migrates to the city stands aghast at the corruption there. For example, in *A Handful of Rice*, Ravi encounters corruption in its myriad forms:

The callousness of the affluent, their insane craze for conspicuous consumption, their wooden hearts, the exploitation of the ‘have-nots’ by the ‘haves’, the infernal

prosperity of the bootlegger, the black marketer, the drug peddler at the cost of the innocent poor, the down-hearted and the desperate – these are the images of the modern city that prey upon individual conscience and social values. (78)

Bhattacharya makes a scathing attack on the inhuman and corrupt practices of the rich and apathy of the administrators. He writes in *So Many Hungers*:

Corruption had grown like an epidemic and money had become a man-made hunger. Never in the land's history had the process that made the rich richer, the poor poorer, gained such ruthless intensity. The authority took little heed and set it aside as a passing phenomenon, but the poor suffered untold misery and the end of one tale was the beginning of another. (109)

The village was not a very safe place. Thieves were known and were living among the villagers. But, cases were very petty and the families of the persons committing the theft carried a social stigma for generations. Snatching ornaments from elderly people, regular cases of theft of coconuts and other fruits were the kind of crimes committed. If the criminals were Brahmins, the social stigma was greater, because a much better conduct was expected of the Brahmins. The thefts of vegetables and agricultural implements were also common. Very rarely a daring theft occurred. Most of the villagers were poor and did not possess much valuable household articles or jewellery. The scope for big thefts was extremely limited. The thieves were all local men who had no contact with thieves in rural areas. The thieves and their victims lived in the same village or neighbouring villages normally as neighbours.

Many of the local thieves came into contact with professional criminals of the towns. Local elements formed gangs, located moneyed people in different villages and committed dacoities in a planned manner. The unemployed youth of the villages were quite prone to criminal activities. Such frustrated and unemployed youth whiled away their time in the teashops and village market places. Illicit liquor brewing and consumption also started in the villages. Political leaders of different parties take

assistance of the youth and hence clashes and even murder became not uncommon. The police who maintain law and order in the villages are also usually corrupt.

Family and Marriage

The Indians attach greater importance to the institution of family than their counterparts in western countries. The evils that seeped into the urban family life did not have great impact on the village family life. Marriage was considered a holy sacrament and the sanctity of married life was inviolable. All the novelists under consideration speak of the importance of the family. Many joint families of the past have now changed into the nuclear families. In the past child marriages were very common. It is not known when the practice began but the usual ages of marriage for girls were seven or nine and for boys from twelve to sixteen. Such marriages were of course mere ceremonies. Consummation of marriages took place after the boys and girls attained puberty. In Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts* Chandran's mother was thunderstruck to hear that the girl proposed for her son was sixteen years old (69). It was already recognised that child marriage was an evil practice. It affected the health of young people. Maternity was cruelly imposed on young girls; and young boys were being encumbered with a family burden before they became adults and were capable of supporting a family by their own earnings. Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve* was married at an early age of twelve and soon became the mother of six children. The necessity of education for both boys and girls, the adverse effects of rapid population growth and the concept of family planning were not thought of then. An obvious bad effect of early marriage of girls was the large number of child widows in such families. Ratna in *Kanthapura* is a child widow.

In the Indian society particularly in the rural areas, the free mixing of grown up boys and girls is greatly restricted and so marriages are for the most part arranged. Love marriages are exceptions. Even in the novels of Narayan love marriages are very rare:

Generally, in an orthodox Hindu family free communication between a girl and a boy before marriage is not allowed. These two never meet or talk before marriage and their only contact is by way of optical communication. (Singh, 2002:22)

In the intermediate caste Hindu families and in the scheduled castes, widow remarriage was common and socially acceptable. There were many cases where the woman married two or three times after being widowed, as in the case of the widow in the *English Teacher* who got married four times. Divorce is also not common. Among the Brahmins and other high castes divorce is rare. Marriage is sacramental and sacred. Divorce though permitted under law is rarely done in village societies. Similarly society disapproves of bigamy or polygamy.

In the earlier days, very often the bride's family was not in a position to pay dowry, and the groom's family did not expect or claim such payment of dowry. The expenses of marriage were mainly due to purchase of articles required for the performance of the rites and the community feast. The bride took new clothes for the bridegroom's family and sweets for the household. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani's father had exhausted all his wealth after three consecutive marriages. However, the practice among richer Brahmin families was different. Such families having large quantities of landed property demanded payment of some cash from the bride's families for meeting the expenses of marriage procession, journey etc. They also expected the bride to bring with her a considerable amount of gold and silver ornaments, brass and bell metal utensils, and good clothes for all the members of the bridegroom's family, furniture and other household articles. In *The Bachelor of Arts* Chandran's mother is described as demanding a substantial dowry. The groom's families also arranged expensive marriage processions, fire works and feasts. Marriages were occasions of demonstration of the wealth and power by such families. Gradually the practice of giving big dowries and gifts spread to the other castes too, and the parents of the bridegrooms of even average families started demanding big dowries. Elaborate marriage functions were much beyond the capacity of the middle class parents belonging the other castes. The grooms of poor families also became educated, wanted to marry into rich families and get good dowries. Thus the evil spread its roots in the society.

The opening scene of Anand's novel, *Gauri*, describing Gauri's marriage ceremony, exposes the absurd and the ridiculous proceedings that have become part of an

Indian marriage: the loud music, the procession, the uncontrollable crowd of uninvited guests for the feast, children fighting for the showered copper coins, the quarrel over the dowry, the complaint over the quality of jewellery, the ceremony of the 'showing' conducted by the females with a chorus of lampoons and throwing of riddles at the bridegroom until he loses his patience and forcibly pulls aside the *jhund* of the brides *dupatta* to see her face and so on. The marriage here is a most rigid type of arranged marriage prevalent in some parts of India in which the bridegroom is not even allowed to have a glimpse of the bride before the ceremony is complete. Since the bride's face remains hidden until the ceremony is over, the bridegroom has to depend on the rumours regarding the appearance of his wife-to-be. In Gauri:

He [Panchi] was anxious only for one thing: that when the four turns were finished and the whole embarrassing ritual of the marriage and the customary feast were over, he would be able to lift the red *dupatta* which enshrouded the girl's face, to conform the rumour that she was not ugly but was as light-skinned as her mother. (21)

Such marriages were devoid of love, the main force behind the marriage and were often drowned in the long negotiations for dowry. In such marriages the parents simply impose a wife or husband upon their children unmindful of their likes and dislikes. Narayan and Anand have touched on marital fidelity, the basic tenant of the Indian family. Like Savitri in *The Dark Room*, Gauri also puts up with all sorts of insults and inhuman treatment at the hands of her husband in the village of Hoshiarpur. The moment Panchi is incensed against Gauri's chastity; she is driven out of the house. But Gauri herself solves her problems, since there are no gods to intervene on her behalf. Her reaction is, in fact, symbolic of the modern woman, keenly conscious of her rights and potentialities. She hits back saying: "Acha, if I am a curse on you, I will go away...and if you strike me again, I will hit you back..." (283). Hence, we find Anand, a spokesman of the oppressed, has become conscious of the change that the Indian village women have undergone in the course of years. They are now able to stand on their own feet.

Narayan, in *The Dark Room*, speaks of the unhappy conjugal life of a woman whose husband neglects her and has been enamoured of a flirtatious woman, a subordinate employee in his office. When Savitri, who is very dutiful as a wife and mother, learns of this affair of her husband, she rashly quits the house in a bid to commit suicide and take revenge upon her husband that way. Her attempt is, however, foiled by a villager who, out of kindness, takes her to his house. She is given a job in the village temple since she refuses to go back home. But just after spending a night in the temple, she is repentant for choosing such a life and longs for her home and children and comes back home to be greeted by her children and husband.

The matching of the horoscopes is the first step in fixing a marriage. It is very important because no marriage will take place unless the horoscopes agree. But there are people like Margayya who cheat in this matter also. Narayan very elaborately discusses this in his different novels. Usually, the horoscopes of the boy and the girl are exchanged and an astrologer is consulted. If the horoscopes are auspicious, the bridegroom and his parents and relatives go to the girl's house and the girl is paraded before the boy and his relatives. Chandran's marriage to Malathi in *The Bachelor of Arts* does not materialise because their horoscopes do not match. Krishnan's wife dies within a short period after marriage because of the evil influence of Mars, in his horoscope. The astrologer had suggested to him at the time of arranging his marriage, not to marry, and Krishnan had to bear with the consequences. Margayya impressed by the circumstances of Brinda, the beautiful daughter of a wealthy tea estate owner, calls an astrologer to examine the horoscope. But the pundit does not approve of the marriage because the horoscopes do not match. In spite of the offers made by Margayya, the pundit refuses to change his word. Later with the help of Dr. Pal he finds another astrologer who gives a report that the horoscopes perfectly match.

No marriage in Narayan's novels takes place without both parties consulting the horoscopes. The marriages of Jagan, Nagaraj, Balu, and all others are performed only after consulting the astrologers. Even the captain's wife in *A Tiger For Malgudi* tells her husband that his horoscope better matches with the tiger's because he is always talking

about the animal. Married life is considered very solemn. People like Daisy in *The Painter of Signs* are exceptions. But she has her own reasons. Daisy attaches no sentiments to married life. She rebels against her parents and domestic orthodoxies. Bhardwaj says:

A girl's running away from the family, her bringing up and education at a missionary organisation, her acceptance of social work and her living, all by herself without male supervision and support, are some of those phenomena which would not be tolerated in an orthodox Hindu family; nor a girl of such a family would have ventured thus. (2002:175)

Obviously she considers marriage an impediment in her way to self-fulfillment. According to her, there is nothing extraordinary for a man and a woman beginning to live under the same roof. A home in her view is only a retreat from sun and rain, and for sleeping, resting and depositing one's trunk. She approves of the relationship between a man and woman on equal footing, but not the imperatives, liabilities and interdependence customarily attached to a Hindu marriage. In fact, Daisy is a peculiarly modern young woman for whom the concept of independent individuality is the supreme value in life. Moreover, her dedication to work is her solemn and profound commitment to life. In this respect she is the replica of Bharati in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. Raman's experience with Daisy, that woman of strong conviction and indomitable will, has made him self-analytical and brought him to the conviction that, "man woman relationship was not inevitable and that there were other more important things to do in life than marrying" (45).

In *Kanthapura*, Rao has created Moorthy, a man of revolutionary ideas for that time. Moorthy is a true Gandhi-man who does not believe in caste, creed and early marriage and who is not against widow remarriage. The narrator in *Kanthapura* tells about Moorthy and his comrades. "Only they say, too, one should not marry early, one should allow widows to take husbands and a Brahmin might marry a pariah and a pariah a Brahmin"(13). Marriages in Indian society is not an easy job, and the families have to face a lot of problems such as dowry, caste, creed, horoscope matching etc. In

Kanthapura at the time of the marriage of Purnayya's twelve-year-old daughter the family encounters a similar problem. The proposal was deemed suitable because of the handsome amount of one thousand rupees in cash, five acres of the wetland beneath the Settur Canal and above all, marvellously matching horoscopes. The life after marriage is also not easy. Kamamma's minor widowed daughter Ratna is asked to behave like a widow and take off her earrings, nose rings, etc. But she refuses and says that merely seeing a man for a day at the age of ten years could not be called a marriage. As wealth and financial status play a dominant role in Indian marriages, Moorthy's mother legitimately expects that Venkata Narayana would surely offer one of his daughters for marriage and that it would be a grand marriage.

At the same time a foreigner's attitude to home and family comes in sharp contrast to the Indian cultural tradition. For example, in *Nectar in a Sieve*, Dr. Kenny has his own views on marriage, which are wholly unIndian. He considers wife, children and home as encumbrances and chains. Naturally he frees himself from these bonds and feels relieved without them, as he is free to pursue his wishes. On the other hand, Rukmani's idea of home is quite different from Kenny's. Home to her is an enclosure of kinship and family a bond of affection. Rukmani is exasperated to hear that Kenny's wife has left him. She cannot believe that such broken homes are a common feature in the West.

The parents in the villages wanted as many sons as possible. The birth of a daughter was not welcome. A childless woman was even considered an ill omen. Irawaddy was born as an unwelcome child to her parents. The simple reason was that she was a girl child. Even Rukmani, her mother, expressed deep disappointment the moment she was born: "I turned away and despite myself, the tears came, tears of weakness and disappointment; for what woman wants a girl for her first-born?"(14). Nathan also paid little attention to her in the initial days of her birth. He had wanted a son to continue his line and walk beside him on the land, not an infant who would take with her a dowry and leave nothing but a memory behind. For Ira's marriage, a dowry of one hundred rupees was offered and at last a boy was found who rose up to their expectations. At last the wedding day came. Rukmani was in the forefront to dress and present the bride for the

ceremony: “We went with Ira to the river and when she was freshly bathed put on her the red saree I had worn at my own wedding” (36). But, a childless woman was an unwanted woman. So Ira’s husband brought her back to her parents five years after her wedding because she was barren. Though Nathan himself had waited seven years for a son, he does not blame the man.

Gender Relations

Woman always occupies a lower position in the family. She is often subordinate to the men in the family and her opinions do not find any place in family decisions. If she is a daughter-in-law, she is often harassed by the mother-in-law and even by the other female members. It is interesting to observe the gender relations seen in the novels of Anand, Narayan and Markandaya. In the Anand’s *Gauri*, Gauri’s travails begin soon after her marriage. She is constantly bullied and ill treated by her husband’s aunt Kesari and abused and beaten by her strong-limbed and weak-minded husband Panchi. Gauri soon realises that she is an unwanted burden on the family’s meagre resources. Once again poverty and hunger subsume all personal and familial relationships and Gauri is sold against her will to a rich banker in Hoshiarpur. When Laxmi, Gauri’s mother had to choose between her cow that feeds the family and her daughter whom the family has to feed, she chooses the cow!

People call women ‘Mata’, ‘Devi’, and ‘Laxmi’ and claim that society has always given due respect to them. Sita and Savitri are archetypes of the ideal wife and they are considered to be the role models for the Indian women. Sita was a very loving, chaste and devoted wife who was very faithful to her husband Sri Rama. Savitri too was a loving and faithful wife who, through her prayers, brought her husband Satyavan back to life after his death. Society hopes that Indian women would be like Sita and Savitri. The duty of the virtuous wife is to stand by her husband, even if he errs. It is she who is responsible for bringing him on to the right path and that too with devotion, tact, and diplomacy. She is always ready to sacrifice her life for the sake of her husband. She is so much devoted to her husband that she identifies herself with him. She is not a separate being; rather her personality melts with her husband’s.

But at the same time, they are beaten, set ablaze or turned out of the house. Anand's *Gauri* eloquently exposes the hypocrisy of the society. It not only voices a strong protest against the ill treatment of women but also explores through the example of Gauri what the Indian woman should do for her emancipation. Men are more privileged than women. That is why Rukmani in *The Road* asks: "Oh why, oh, why were the men tribe so privileged?" (100). In *The Big Heart*, Janaki says, "No one knows what a woman suffers. How much she has to bear silently and without protest the abuse and the condemnation" (84). Often the ill treatment of women is organised by women themselves as in the case of Gauri. If Kesaro and the midwife Rakhi had not aroused suspicion in Panchi by questioning the purity of Gauri, she would not have been deserted by him. Hence the greatest enemy of woman is her own fellow women. Hence the first step towards the emancipation of women should be taken by women themselves.

Generally, women always obey their husbands and suffer their ill treatment without any complaint. In *The Dark Room*, Janamma acts according to the convention: "As for me, I have never opposed my husband or argued with him at any time...what he does is right. It is a wife's duty to feel so"(45). But there are very strong willed women too, like Narayan's Daisy and Bharati, who will not stoop to anyone. Bharati right from the beginning to the end, carries out Gandhi's mission and becomes a real guide to Sriram in the freedom struggle. Savitri, a middle class woman in *The Dark Room* finds herself burdened by the immense weight of her past, her caste, her religion and her role as wife and mother. She leaves her husband to commit suicide by drowning in the river. But she is saved by the low caste Mari and Ponni who give her shelter for a couple days. Later she revolts against her husband to assert her individuality. She bursts out:

I am a human being You men will never grant that. For you we are playthings when you feel like hugging, and slaves at other times. Don't think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose. (73)

Education improves the lot of women. It gives them confidence to stick to their post and not yield unnecessarily before men. Narayan shows us such educated women like Daisy, Bharati and Rosie. Even though Rosie belongs to a class, which has been

looked down upon as a low community, her education has enhanced in her the awareness of her individuality, and it pits her against a society, which is still very orthodox and has certain well-defined attitudes towards women. Daisy who is also educated refuses to pay obeisance to her future in-laws, and Raman too, under Daisy's influence, considers it odd to fall at anybody's feet. She has revolted against her father and made her future husband sign a marriage contract so that she would get ample time to fulfil her mission on family planning. She attaches no sentiments to married life. She considers marriage an obstacle to her work. Her attitude to marriage has already been discussed.

Like the untouchables, the womenfolk in Indian society have more or less had the same status of being slaves to their masters. That they are wholly dependent on the men folk for their daily bread has been revealed through Savitri who wails: "What despicable creations of god are we that we can't exist without a support?" (123). But western influence and industrialisation in modern times have considerably changed their lot and brought about a change in outlook. The efforts made by social reformers have awakened them to their rights and liberties. They have learnt to stand on their own legs and occupy a position of high rank at par with men folk in every walk of life. Shantabai in *The Dark Room* who struggles herself free from her drunkard husband and comes all the way from Bangalore to Malgudi to work as trainee officer in the Insurance Bank, stands in complete contrast to the docile Savitri. Similarly, Shanti in *Mr. Sampath* who has lost her husband, whom she did not know, has taken to acting in the film company.

Janamma in *The Dark Room* quotes her own grandmother who slaved cheerfully for her husband who kept concubines at home and her aunt who was beaten everyday by her husband and never uttered a word of protest for fifty years. These instances sum up the picture of a Hindu housewife and her secondary role in society. On the other hand, the cook in *The Dark Room* has no moral hesitation when he says: "Only once has my wife tried to interfere and then I nearly broke her bones. Women must be taught their place" (37). Even the temple priest recommends the use of violence against Savitri. It is Manu and the later moralists who have made the woman what she is today – weak and utterly helpless. That a woman should have no freedom is so deeply embedded in the mind of

both Ramani and Savitri. In *My Days*, Narayan writes: “Man assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notion of her independence, her individuality, stature and strength”(119). Narayan moves with the passage of time. He candidly confesses:

I suppose, I have moved along with the times. This girl in my new novel, Daisy in *The Painter of Signs* is quite different; not only is she not dependent on men, she actually has no use for them as an integral part of her life. (Krishnan, 1975:9)

From the suffering helpless Savitri (*The Dark Room*) to Bharati (*Waiting for the Mahatma*) and then to Daisy (*The Painter of Signs*) Narayan has shown the rise of individuality in woman. Rosie obviously is a new age of woman who has the opportunity to be released from the conventional confinement to join colleges and universities to acquire a formal education, a right so far denied to women. Rosie is a master’s degree holder although she is a *devadasi*.

In *Kanthapura*, Ratna, the daughter of Kamamma, the elder sister of Rangamma, is a widow. It is suggested in the novel that Ratna is in love with Moorthy and he with her, but both are still not too conscious of it. She has earned the ire of the orthodox people for not dressing or behaving like one. She:

...not only went about the streets alone like a boy, but even wore her hair to the left like a concubine, and she still kept her bangles and her nose-rings and earrings and when she was asked why she behaved as though she hadn’t lost her husband, she said that was nobody’s business, and that if these sniffing old country hens thought that seeing a man for a day, and this when one is ten years of age, could be called a marriage they had better eat mud. (48-49)

Nectar in a Sieve presents the marriage between Rukmani and Nathan as an ideal one. The marriages of Kali and Janaki are happy enough but Kunthi’s is not. No matter what the form of marriage and age of the bride, some marriages turn out very well; some breakup, and most follow a mediocre monotony of compromise. Rukmani’s marriage is

not without crisis. But it is something richer than the compromise that saves it. Kunthi's husband leaves her and goes to live with another woman. "Kunthi is not a spiteful woman; she keeps Nathan's secret until driven against the wall by her children's hunger" (Parameswaran, 1998: 60). She distances herself from Rukmani. Her visits to their house grew less frequent and until at last they were meeting as strangers. She did not want Rukmani to be present when her first child was being born. Perhaps she feared that she would blurt out her relationship with Nathan in her pain. But the infidelity of Nathan does not destroy the marriage of Rukmani and Nathan. Rukmani is shocked to learn about the infidelity of Nathan. "Disbelief first, disillusionment, anger, reproach, pain. To find out, after so many years, in such a cruel way" (86). But Rukmani forgives him. She accepts her lot and cares for her husband and children. She is an epitome of the archetypal Indian wife who regards her husband as her god and her children as gifts from heaven. It should be remembered that Sita and Savitri were the role models for the Indian women.

Though not of the calibre of Rukmani or Ira, Nalini in *A Handful of Rice* survives the pressure of their deteriorating financial position and the brutality of her husband. Her gentleness and sensibility enable her to guide Ravi from the clutches of the underworld. In spite of his fury and fretfulness, her tender and loving approach restores peace in the family. "She was constant, a rock to which he could cling and keep his head level when his views and values began their mad dance" (118). Her first-born child's death shatters her. But she knows "life has to be lived and other children have to be looked after"(43). She exhibits great power of endurance, patience and inexhaustible love.

The women of India reflect the society they live in. Surveying the history and vicissitudes of the status of Indian women one can observe that women once enjoyed considerable honour, freedom and privileges in both private and public fields. But with the centuries rolling by, the situation changed adversely for women. Medieval forms of victimisation like child marriage and *sati* were replaced by female infanticide and more recently by female foeticide. The average Indian woman has now begun to stir out of stoical acceptance of her tradition-bound roles, yet the air of freedom which touches the women is like the kite which though flying is yet, being stringed into the manipulative

and manoeuvring hands of their men. The traditional patriarchal Indian society confines woman to the taboo-ridden path. Rukmani exemplifies the large class of underprivileged rural women whose backs are bent with ill-rewarded labour.

That the life of an Indian woman runs an unpredictable course becomes evident when we witness the fate of Ira. The docile girl who accepts the man of her parents' choice as her husband is soon sent back accused of being barren, "a failure, a woman who cannot even bear a child"(54). There are other women also in the novels of these writers who stand apart due to their unique nature. There is Munoo's mother (*Coolie*) who dies of exhaustion while doing a man's work, Gangu's wife (*Two Leaves and a Bud*) who shares the lot of her husband and belongs to the proletarian class. There is Sushila, Krishnas's wife (*The English Teacher*), Savitri, Ramani's wife (*The Dark Room*), wife of Natraj (*The Man-eater of Malgudi*) and the wife of Srinivas (*Mr.Sampath*) who are loving, simple, modest, gentle, and obedient. They are religious and traditional in their ways. In a true sense, they are the upholders of the ancient Indian way of life. Their only anxiety is the welfare of their husband and children. Parikh is right when he observes: "Indian womanhood has to be explored, experienced, and understood in all its vicissitudes, multiplicities, contradictions and complexities" (1989:41).

Religion, Gods and Priests

The villagers are very religious and are firm believers in gods and goddesses. In all Indian villages, the religious, social and economic lives are integrated. The priest's role in the society is very important. He holds a place of respect. His job is generally religious and spiritual, though his services are necessary in many economic functions. Every important event in the life of a Hindu begins with a puja for which the priest's services are absolutely necessary. When sowing, harvesting or threshing begins; *puja* (act of worship) is performed. Most of the *pujas* are done by the families themselves but for important ones, the priest's services are necessary. In Brahmin households there is elaborate *puja* every day. But for *sradhhas*, marriages, thread ceremonies, funeral functions or other important religious functions a priest is required. Every caste Hindu

household, Brahmin or non-Brahmin has a family priest who guides and assists in the performance of above functions. The Brahmins do not work as priests of Harijan castes.

The priests were not paid annually and they were not occupied full time nor did they earn a good income. Therefore most of the Brahmin families did not adopt the profession. They always sought the favour and patronage of the landlords, moneylenders and the rich people in the village. The number of priests' families declined and it appears that in the near future, the priests will become scarce in the villages and people will have to run to distant villages to arrange a priest for a special function or cease to employ a priest in the religious functions. The priests who are in charge of the temples help them to offer worship to the deities. In the novels of Anand, Narayan and others, true to the real situation, there are genuine or good priests and also bad or fake priests. Very often the villagers fail to distinguish between the two. Anand, Narayan and Rao portray the fake priests and pundits who exploit the poor villagers.

In *Untouchable* Pandit Kali Nath, the licentious priest typifies gluttony, hypocrisy and falsehood. At the public well he cogitates on the rice he ate a day ago, which caused him constipation. He thinks of the *jilebis* and the tastes of the various kinds of foodstuffs he ate such as rice, pudding, and so on. Next we find him standing in front of the temple and shouting "Polluted! Polluted!" and accusing Sohini. In fact it was he who had invited Sohini for work and molested her. This again shows his hypocritical behavior. Pandit Kalinath's cowardly, amorous attempt to molest Sohini appears all the more offensive because of his accusing her and her brother of defying him at the temple, when the attempt is foiled. This brings into sharp focus the hypocrisy, the double standards, and the perfidy underlying the façade of purity and spirituality.

Just as in *Untouchable*, in *The Road* too we find a lecherous and hypocritical priest. Pandit Suraj Mani in this novel reminds us of Pandit Kali Nath. Suraj Mani moves about carrying with him a little earth to avoid pollution by treading on what has been 'soiled' by the untouchables. At the same time he accepts the mangoes plucked by the untouchables saying, "Sweet is the fruit of Lambardar Dhooli Singh's grove" (82). This

points to his cunning and hypocrisy. These priests are black-marketers of their religion for their own selfish ends.

Swami Vivekananda has said: “Priestcraft is the bane of India...Do you think our religion is worth the name? Ours is ‘Don’t touchism’, only ‘Touch me not” (1983:41). According to Hindu religious belief and scripture, God is everywhere, in the dead (stone idol) and the living, in animals, plants and trees but not in the untouchables! They could not see, worship or touch Hindu gods in Hindu temples, because if they entered the temple it would be ‘polluted’. Bakha wished to see God and when he tried to enter the temple the caste Hindus fell upon him.

The priestly classes have attempted every thing possible to maintain their supremacy. They have gone to the extent of making the will of God almost irrelevant while performing sacrificial rituals to win him over. Making himself unchallenged and superior even to Gods, by virtue of his being a ‘Brahmin’, the priest has subjugated all others belonging to the lower strata of society, brainwashed them to accept the writings as divinely ordained and lulled them into eternal passivity, in the fond worship of God. The doctrine of *karma* has cast its deep imprint on the thoughts and behaviour of the people and their whole attitude to life. The *Bhagavad Gita* and the theory of *karma* propounded strongly in it have remained a prime inspiration for millions of Indians for long. Anand rejects the concept of *karma* as a pernicious belief among Indians. Actually, the caste system and *karma* theory are complementary doctrines, both in a sense equally satanic devices to subject a part of the community to eternal subjugation and humiliation. It is monstrous to think that men like Bakha suffer in the world inevitably because of their *karma*, that is, they must have done some bad deeds in their previous births.

Anand believes that man is the master of his destiny and he refuses to believe in fatalism. On the other hand, Anand is vehemently opposed to superstition, tyranny, bigotry class, caste, capitalism, exploitation, overpopulation and the worn-out customs and traditions. In *The Village*, Nandgir, the village Mahanta who is the custodian of the Sikh religion smokes charas, drinks ground hemp; and leads a life of lechery and fornication; and yet he is a religious guru. He takes advantage of the ignorance of the

people. While the religious pundits and sadhus in saffron cloth are welcome to the houses and are treated with utmost reverence with their food bowls filled to the brim, the low caste men are driven out with all kinds of abuses heaped upon them. Bakha, in *Untouchable*, has a bitter experience when a caste Hindu woman flings a loaf of bread from a distance as if he were not a human being at all. Such inhuman treatment to low caste men is not uncommon in the Hindu society.

In *The Village* it is religious intolerance which makes Gujri indignant about the Maulvi's entrance into the barn through the kitchen and makes her lift the shoes, which the Maulvi has left at the door, by means of a stick and throw them into the courtyard. It is the same social attitude, which provokes a Hindu merchant who has a booth at the fair next to the Mohammedan stall in which Lalu enters, to shout at him: "Sardarji, have you left your senses that you are eating at a Mohammedan shop? But probably they have left you, since the hour of twelve o'clock has struck" (80).

Similarly, Narayan too has a gallery of priests and pundits in his novels. He also points out the Hindu way of worship and the different types of priests seen in the villages. Narayan's is a realistic portrayal. Some elders of the village in the novel *The Painter of Signs* point out:

"God gives us children. How can we reject His gift? The chieftain argues: "There is an old shrine in a cave over there where barren women can go and pray, and bear children. How would you explain it?" Daisy simply answered, "You should ask the priest of that temple". (68)

The coming of a new child in the family is still regarded as the gift of the Almighty, and not as man's own doing. Barren women also seek the blessings of the priest by paying him lonely visits in the cave to get their sterility exorcised. At the same time there are good and pious priests also who are often advisors. In *The Financial Expert* the priest advises Margayya how to obtain wealth, and the ritual performed by Margayya seemingly bears the fruit promised. Many of Narayan's characters, dependant as they are on God, appear to be mere puppets. To them everything on earth is pre-

ordained, and they are absolutely helpless. For the most part, they remain captives of circumstances in their lives. Narayan has faith in *karma* and rebirth. His characters accept their sufferings with a sense of rare resignation, much to the enjoyment of the high castes. In Malgudi we find such people who pray before the image of Natraj, or take a coconut and camphor to a temple. Many people call a priest for curing a man of his madness or to celebrate the completion of a religious poem by organising functions in the temple. People consult astrologers to study the conjunction of planets and to fix an auspicious date for an inauguration ceremony or a fast for appeasing the Rain-God.

As per the Hindu *Shastras* (scriptures), there are several ceremonies associated with each important event in life, from cradle to grave. The first ceremony performed is *Namakaramam* or the naming ceremony of the newborn child. In *The Vendor of Sweets* this is described elaborately. Next is the *Aksharabhyasam* or the school going ceremony. People regard *Vijayadasami* day as an auspicious day for sending children to school. In *The Financial Expert* Margayya performs this with great pomp and splendour. Another important custom mentioned in *The Vendor of Sweets* is the tonsure ceremony. Jagan's cousin says he went to the Tirupati Hills for a Tonsure Ceremony with the Judge's family. Even grownups and women offer their hair to lord Venkateswar. Tonsure is a symbolic act of total surrender to God. Many of the sadhus and miracle mongers cheat the gullible masses who, for their lack of scientific knowledge and rational approach to the problems fall an easy prey. It is not that only the illiterate and the gullible are the victims, even the literate and educated who have greater responsibility to mould the lives of their brethren, are reluctant to challenge the so-called god men. At the mention of the temple priest, the teacher in *The Painters of Signs* looks terribly afraid, and says, very much to the advantage of the priest:

We have learnt to leave him alone. It's not safe to make an enemy of him. He can be helpful. He has all sorts of powers. Lives on nothing, says he. Nourishes himself from air. It is not good to argue with him. He is a quarrelsome man and commands powers. (73)

As we find in *A Tiger for Malgudi*, the yogis were supposed to have many extraordinary powers. “One could become invisible, levitate, transmute metals, travel in space, control animals, live on air, and so on and so forth” (9). In *The Guide*, the villagers consider the ex-convict Raju to be a *yogi* with supernatural powers. The *Shastras*, ‘scriptures’ supposed to be God given, have been a powerful weapon in the hands of the priests who are bent upon crushing the ignorant village folk under the weight of social customs and traditions. They have, in a sense, looted and driven the gullible masses to their miserable lot. In *Waiting for the Mahatma* the priest places two coins on the chest of the dead person. He remarks that it is to pay for the passage to the other world. But actually as Kanni says: “It goes the way of the other coins, that is, into a priest’s money box” (121).

The village folk in times of difficulty turn to gods or goddesses who they believe will relieve them of their difficulties. When Swami (*Swami and Friends*) ran away from home to the outskirts of the Mempi forest he was terrified to see black shapes in the darkness. Helpless, he prayed to all the gods that he knew to take him out of that place. He promised them offerings: “Two coconuts every Saturday to the elephant-faced Ganapathi; a vow to roll bare bodied in dust, beg and take alms to the Lord of Tirupathi” (160). Similarly, when Natraj and his friends pray to Vishnu to save the elephant, it was miraculously saved. When Margayya did not have a child for twelve years, he was made to pray to God, and when the child was born, “...he carried the alms and the sovereigns equal to the weight of the child to the Tirupati Hills and deposited them all in the treasure box in the shrine” (132). Later on in life, Margayya carries out a forty-day ordeal of fasting and praying to goddess Laxmi in order to propitiate her to acquire wealth. Margayya makes preparations for the Laxmi Pooja with ashes from a red lotus and ghee made out of a gray cow. He knows that Laxmi the goddess of wealth showers her blessings in the shape of gold, silver and coins. He worships the goddess and gets rich soon with the purchase of the book *Domestic Harmony* from Dr. Pal.

Often, the Brahmin priests were gifted with a cow. In *The Painter of Signs*, Laxmi Raman’s widowed aunt, speaks about her past:

My father was a priest and officiated at birthdays, funerals and all kinds of religious functions and brought home his fee in the form of rice and vegetables and coconut and sugarcane. Occasionally, he also brought in a cow, which, as you know, when gifted to a Brahmin, helps a dead man's soul to ford a difficult river in the next world. (19)

People were in awe of the priests. In *The Bachelor of Arts* Chandran's mother allows the flower thief to go the moment she notices that he is a *sanyasi*, thinking that it would bring some calamity:

"Is he a *sanyasi*?" Mother asked, and noticed the colour of the thief's loincloth. "Ah, leave him alone, let him go". She was seized with fear now. The curse of a holy man might fall on the family. "You can go, sir," she said respectfully. (43)

Renunciation is not only a change of clothes, but also a transformation of the self. Narayan brings out the futility of Chandran's stance. "His dress and appearance, his shaven pate and the ochre loincloth, declared him now and henceforth to be a *Sanyasi*"(107). As if by wearing ochre robe, any one can become a *sanyasi*. India abounds with such pseudo-*sanyasis*. The credulous village people follow Velan (*The Guide*) blindly and Raju finds himself in a new role, that of a sage. Though frightened at first, with his innate tact he adapts himself very quickly. "He must play the role that Velan had given him" (30). He feels he is attaining the stature of a saint (15). Raju is one of the countless frauds posing as *sadhus* and living on the credulous people as parasites. Sainthood is reduced to a matter merely of external appearance when Raju thinks of growing a beard to increase his spiritual status. "Raju soon realised that his spiritual status would be enhanced if he grew a beard and long hair to fall on his nape" (47). It is again a swami, in *A Tiger for Malgudi* who, through his supernatural power, paralysed the hand of Alfonso while he was trying to shoot the tiger by putting in his mind the idea of drinking wine before shooting.

In *The English Teacher* the priestly man plays a vital role in helping Krishnan to communicate with his dead wife, but in *The Financial Expert*, the initiator is the

mysterious priest who guides Margayya in the quest for wealth but who remains in the background. The priest in *The Financial Expert* also performs a *puja* for the child who is crippled with a dreadful disease from his childhood who becomes much better after that. He has been performing the same *puja*, which had enabled young Markandeya to win over Yama. To Margayya the single-minded prayer creates a sense of awe. His mind is seized with fear because he thinks that the priest is perhaps a sorcerer or a black magician or an alchemist. He has, perhaps, hidden human bodies in his shack and extracts from the corpse black ointment with which he acquired extraordinary powers. He is also afraid that he may be asked to cut the throat of his son Balu. The Indian priest believes in rituals and in the *Shastras*. He tells Margayya: “Take the blackened lotus petal, mix it with ghee, and put a dot to fit on your forehead after the prayer, every day, exactly between your eyebrows”(48). This is the priest’s prescription for Margayya to propitiate Goddess Laxmi the goddess of wealth. Priests are seen to be very essential at every auspicious function. In *The Painter of Signs*, the lawyer gives a grand inauguration to his practice as a lawyer and invites a group of priests to perform rituals and chant mantras to secure success in this profession.

There are also Swamis, like the one summoned by Krishnan’s mother-in-law, in *The English Teacher*, to cure her daughter’s illness. This Swami believes in the power of mantras. When he comes, he utters some mantras with his eyes closed then takes a pinch of sacred ash and rubs it on her forehead, and ties to her arm a talisman strung in yellow thread. He takes money and other things given to him and mutters while leaving “May God help you to see the end of your anxieties” (93). In addition to the above-mentioned mysterious priests, there are also simple priests or *sanyasis* in Narayan’s novels. They are satisfied with worshipping idols of God and serving Him to their capacity. Simple-minded priests figure in *The Man Eater of Malgudi*. They work in the temple of Radha-Krishna. They are satisfied with keeping themselves engaged in decorating the gods and the goddesses, lighting oil lamps and placing offerings at their feet. In other words, they believe in the physical existence of gods and are accordingly trying to please them.

There are also pundits who are very learned. They are men of letters who pass most of their time in discussing the scriptures and other philosophical sources and hence serving others through knowledge. In the Hindu society, for everything a time is fixed with the help of an almanac so that it should bring the desired result. This system is also used to forecast the future of mankind. There is another class of god men who are victims of circumstances. Had the circumstances not victimised them, they would not have become god men. Raju, Jagan and Chandran are such god men. The circumstances have compelled Raju to assume the role of a god man. He has no way out. It is the pious and humble nature of Velan that converts Raju into a saint. Had he not come into contact with a saintly man like Velan, he would have become a different person. But Jagan and Chandran renounce the world and become *sanyasis* out of frustration. Chandran, after wandering for eight months as a *sanyasi*, returns home. The effect of his infatuation being over, he develops a new philosophy of love and marries a different girl of his parents' choice and he likes her very much.

In *The Dark Room* is a priest who engages Savitri, after she makes an abortive attempt to commit suicide and is brought by Mari to his house, to clean and sweep the temple. This sharp-tongued priest aptly finds his equal in Ponni. "That woman may have the worst tongue in the village but I am equal to it" (46), he claims. But how can this hard-hearted priest be like Ponni and Mari who feel unhappy at the other's unhappiness and who extend their help to them? This priest claims his right over the poor and innocent people and expects them to do his work without paying wages to them as he does with Mari. A priest like him is always ready to spend his entire fortune on lawyers and to drag a man to court to teach him a lesson but cannot part with even a single penny for the poor and needy. If the above priest lacks priestly qualities, the priest in *Waiting for the Mahatma* who performs rituals after the death of Sriram's grand mother, wants to extort as much money as possible in the name of sending the dead soul to Heaven peacefully. Another class of fake priests deceives the faith of simple people by helping their barren wives to conceive within thirty days of their visit to the temple. About such a priest, in *The Painter of Signs*, the teacher says that it is not good to argue about him as he is a quarrelsome person and is very powerful. Even Daisy seems to be afraid of him.

Most of Narayan's characters believe in many gods following the common practice in Hindu society. These gods are worshipped in their physical forms: human and non-human. The idol worship or worshipping of pictures of gods is very common in the Indian rural society. The people also believe in sacred things and sacred places. Raman's aunt and Sriram's grandmother go to Benares in their last days to end their life. Raman's aunt says:

A visit to Kasi is the end. I may live for ten days or ten years or twenty, it is immaterial how long one lives after this stage. It is the ambition of everyone of my generation to conclude this existence at Kasi, to be finally dissolved in the Ganges. That is the most auspicious end to one's life. (152)

When Jagan learns that his son, Mali, eats beef, he shudders with repulsion because the cow is a sacred animal for a Hindu. Similarly Sriram's grandmother does not want to sit on a canvas chair presented to her by her grandson because she thinks that it is made of leather, probably of the cowhide, and hence she cannot pollute herself by sitting on it.

The village folk often go to the temple for worship or offer prayers and *puja* at home. In *Swami and Friends*, Swami offers prayer to god, when his paper boat and his cargo are wrecked in the gutter, either for saving the life of an ant, or if dead, for its smooth passage to heaven. He believes that through prayers, pebbles will be converted into coins. But Ponni's desire in *The Dark Room* for getting a child was not fulfilled even after she prayed and promised offerings to gods. But the solution to her husband's problem of getting a job for Savitri was solved through prayers. Margayya became rich within no time by propitiating the goddess of wealth and he also obtained a son when he prayed and gave offerings. Natraj's deep prayer, which exhorted his whole being for saving the elephant, Kumar, was responded. Jagan offers coconuts to lord Ganesh when he receives a letter from his son Mali who had gone to America. All the lady characters, with a few exceptions, have staunch faith in the prayer to god. The sacred thread ceremony was very important to the Brahmins. But nowadays its importance is reduced and some use the thread to hang their bunch of keys, as does the old man, the landlord of

Srinivas in *Mr.Sampath*. The tuft of hair by which a priest or a pundit might be recognised has nowadays become outdated. Even Brahmins do not have tufts on their heads. This may be because the orthodox caste system is decaying. But in Narayan's novels pundits and priests wear the tuft.

In the novels of Narayan one finds people giving the names of gods and goddesses to their children so that they should attain their qualities. When Chandran meets the beautiful Malathi he imagines her name to be Lakshmi because he cannot give a lesser name to such a paragon of beauty. In *The Painter of Signs*, Raman's aunt's name is Lakshmi. She tells Raman:

We were a well-fed lot in our home. I was especially fortunate as I had the name of Goddess of Wealth, Laxmi, and no one dared say, "Go away Lakshmi" as it might be inauspicious. It was always good to say, "Oh, Lakshmi, welcome to our house," and I was invited ungrudgingly into any of the hundred houses in our village. (20)

Lakshmi is the goddess propitiated in *The Financial Expert* as Lord Krishna is in *The Man Eater of Malgudi*, Shiva and Parvati in *Mr. Sampath* and Narada in *The World of Nagaraj*. As there is a presiding deity in every Indian village, so there are presiding deities or saints in Narayan's novels. Since Jagan is a rich businessman, he worships Goddess Lakshmi in the morning so that his business should further prosper. In every shop we can find the framed picture of goddess Lakshmi, hanging on the wall, with a garland round the frame. In the beginning of the novel, Narayan describes Jagan worshipping the Goddess of wealth:

Jagan sat under the framed picture of the Goddess Lakshmi hanging on the wall, and offered prayer first thing in the day by reverently placing a string of jasmine on top of the frame. He also lit an incense stick and stuck in a crevice in the wall. (13)

In *The Man Eater of Malgudi* Natraj accepts that by the grace of Goddess Lakshmi whose framed picture is hanging on the wall of his press, he has been doing well in his business. He says: "I hung up a framed picture of Goddess Lakshmi, poised on her lotus, holding aloft the bounties of earth in her four hands and through her grace I did not do badly" (11). According to Hindu mythology, Saraswati is the spouse of Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe. She is worshipped chiefly as the Goddess of Learning and Enlightenment. It is the general belief that there is always a rivalry between the goddess of learning and the goddess of wealth. It is very rarely that these two goddesses bestow their boon in combination on men. Every Indian interested in learning and knowledge seeks the help of Saraswati. She is so associated with learning that even books and other reading materials are treated as the form of the goddess. When he hears that his son tore up his textbooks, a shocked Jagan says: "Could you not stop him? Did you not tell him that books must be treated respectfully, being a form of Goddess Saraswati? How could this boy ever pass his B.A.?" (37).

There are also other goddesses who help mankind. Muthu, the owner of the teashop, who helps Natraj, says that there is not a single accident on the narrow and twisting roads because the goddess of the nearby shrine protects them. Protection is generally associated with the goddesses Durga and Kali because they kill demons and protect the Gods. In *Mr. Sampath*, Srinivas recalls as a part of Malgudi history, that Ram had crossed Malgudi on his way to Sri Lanka in search of his wife Sita. In *Mr. Sampath* the old man whom Srinivas approaches for a rented house says: "I have never seen a single house in our country without a picture of Krishna, Laxmi and Saraswati in it" (15). In *The Man Eater of Malgudi* the poet's book is launched on the occasion of the spring festival at the Lord Krishna Temple. In *The Painter of Signs*, Raman's aunt prays to Lord Krishna to save Raman from the siren (Daisy). Shiva represents disintegration. He is a destroyer who is easy to please. In *Mr. Sampath* Shiva has been represented as a destroyer. The image and the *linga* of Shiva are worshipped. In *Kanthapura* Moorthy unearths a *linga* and starts worship.

In *The Painter of Signs* the teacher in the village tells Daisy how the people spend their time in the monsoon season by going to the main hall of the temple: “When it rains the main hall of the temple is filled with people. A pundit comes and reads the *Ramayana* for forty days” (66). There is no undertaking in the Hindu society to be started without first honouring and worshipping Lord Ganapati. He is called ‘*Vighneshwar*’ or ‘the remover of impediments’. Raman’s aunt in *The Painter of Signs* visits the shrine of Ganesha every evening and listens to the Pundit’s discourse on the epic. The other Gods we come across in Narayan’s novels are Vishnu, Radha, Sita, Hanuman, Yama, Kamadeva, Brahma, Kubera, and Venkatesha etc. Although people’s life-style is changing fast in the villages they still gather in the temple and listen to the discourses of the pundit.

The priest has also been portrayed as a hypocrite and as a greedy man extracting huge amounts of money from the gullible masses. Ganapaty Sastrigal in *The Bachelor of Arts*, after retiring from government service settles down as a general adviser, an officiating priest for rituals and a match maker. It is interesting to note that he confined his activities only to a few rich families in the town. They know that they are cheating the masses and yet they do it in the name of god and religion.

Rao does not speak of such a variety of gods and goddesses, as does Narayan. In *Kanthapura* Rao speaks of the presiding deity of the village—Kenamma who is a powerful goddess who came from the Heavens:

She [Kenamma] killed a demon ages, ages ago, a demon that had come to ask our young sons as food and our young women as wives. Kenamma came from the Heavens...and she waged such a battle and she fought so many a night that the blood soaked and soaked into the earth, and that is why the Kenamma Hill is all red.... Tell me, how could this happen, if it were not for Kenamma and her battle? Thank heaven, not only did she slay the demon, but she even settled down among us, and this much I shall say, never has she failed us in our grief. (2)

The Goddess is very powerful and cures illness. Siddanna's wife Sati asks her neighbour Satamma:

What goddess sanctified the neighbouring region, and when Satamma said it was our Kenchamma, Sati tore a rag from her sari fringe and put into it a three-piece bit and a little rice and an areca nut, and hung it securely to the roof. And of course, she woke up the next morning to find no fever at all. (72-73)

The Kanthpurians ascribe all their problems to the will of Goddess Kenchamma, so much so that they invoke her grace and benediction to destroy the English in India. Himavathy was believed to be the daughter of Kenchamma, the goddess of the hill, and the promontory near the village was thought to be the 'abode of Siva'. Several myths have also been associated with river Himavathy, the daughter of Kenchamma. The Kanthapurians offer goddess Kenchamma 'saree' and 'gold-drink' to ward off the malevolent influences. During ploughing time, the villagers wait for the 'Rohini' star to "yoke their bulls to the plough" (151). Ploughing is considered to be fruitful only if the omen of the Eagle—the vehicle of Goddess Kenchamma, shows itself. The villagers light bonfires and sing and dance in Kenchamma's honour. They sing: "Kenchamma. Kenchamma. Goddess, benign and bounteous, Mother of earth, blood of life, harvest Queen rain-crowned, Kechamma, Kenchamma, Goddess, benign and Bounteous" (10).

The founding of the Kanthapurishwari temple is very interesting:

In fact, it did not exist more than three years ago, and to tell you the truth, that's where all the trouble began. Corner House Narasamma's son, Moorthy — our Moorthy as we always called him — was going through our backyard one day and, seeing a half sunk linga, said, "why not unearth it and wash it and consecrate it?" "Why not!" said we all, and as it was the holidays and all the city boys were in the village, they began to put up a little wall and a tile roof to protect the god. (15)

There is priest in Kanthapura also. Young Bhatta, who "began his life with a loincloth at his waist, and a copper pot in his hand"(8) is transformed into a rich

landowner who has no scruples about buying up the fields of freedom fighters when they are auctioned after the 'no-tax' campaign. He hoards the money he is paid at religious ceremonies, and soon starts lending it out. Thus the Brahmin, whose duty it is to lead the people along the right path, has slipped into being an avaricious moneylender. He is not worried about religion but money. He is so busy going to town on legal business that "it was so difficult to get him for an obsequial dinner or a marriage ceremony" (30). When things get hot in Kanthapura he goes to Benares on a pilgrimage. Later he sells all his lands in Kanthapura and settles down at Kashi because "in Kashi, for every hymn and hiccup you get a rupee"(259).

The novel is replete with rituals especially in relation to the celebration of festivals like '*Sankara Jayanthi*', '*Rama festival*', '*Krishna festival*', '*Deepavali*' etc. "*Karthik* is the month of the gods, and as they pass by the Potters' Street and the Weavers' Street, lights are lit to see them pass by" (118). Fasting, as an important ritual, is undertaken by the villagers to gain divine grace and appease the gods. Moorthy undergoes fasts several times. Ratna offers "ten coconuts and a *kumkum* worship" (95). The novel shows the dynamic power of a living religious convention. Religion seems to sustain the spirit of the people of Kanthapura. The political activity of the inhabitants of Kanthapura gains power from their religious faith. In the novel, Gandhi is considered as a god who came to save India. The sage Valmiki goes to heaven and informs Brahma that on earth, men have come from across the ocean and trampled their wisdom and persecuted them:

When the sage was still partaking of the pleasures Brahma offered him in hospitality, there was born in a family in Gujarat a son such as the world has never beheld. As soon as he came forth, the four wide walls began to shine like the kingdom of the Sun, and hardly was he in the cradle when he began to lisp the language of wisdom. (16)

In the novels of Markandaya also we find people very religious. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani prays when the rains do not come:

That year the rains failed...a week went by, two. We stared at the cruel sky, calm, blue, indifferent to our need. We threw ourselves on the earth and we prayed. I took a pumpkin and a few grains of rice to my Goddess, and I wept at her feet. I thought she looked at me with compassion and I went away comforted, but no rain came. (72)

The false priests were so common in the villages that not only the novelists under our consideration but other Indian novelists also have spoken of these fraudulent priests. Khurana observes: “There are lakhs of so-called ‘God men’ performing so-called ‘miracles’ to impress people. A magician uses tricks to entertain. These God men also do the same — but to exploit” (1986:9).

Bhattacharya portrays the arrogance and hypocrisy of the higher castes. The ritual of a milk bath for the idols is not a novel feature introduced by him but is prevalent in many temples of India. Bhattacharya in *He Who Rides A Tiger* satirises the blind religious faith of the ignorant masses who will grudge to feed famished destitutes but fill whole-heartedly the alms bowls of the sadhus, dressed in saffron cloth, and misguided devotees who will turn a deaf ear to the cries of children dying of hunger but donate buckets of milk for bathing of the idol in the temple.

In *He Who Rides A Tiger*, Kalo, by force of circumstances, becomes a rebel. He transforms himself into Mangal Adhikari, the Brahmin priest; like Raju in *The Guide*, and by a clever trick performs the miracle of making an image of Shio rise out of the soil under an old banyan tree. He soon becomes a prosperous priest of the new temple and is idolised by the same rich and powerful people who had despised and persecuted him when he was wretchedly poor. Kalo is sarcastic when he says that sins committed in one’s life may have to be expiated in another through sufferings. He knows that the real evildoers seem untouched by Karma. They eat well, utter the name of ‘Shio’ and ‘Rama’ and live peacefully and comfortably.

The sentiments expressed by the Indian novelists are underlined by the words of Sanal Edamarku, which is worth quoting:

Keeping people away from material realities and pressing them too hard around delusional beliefs like astrology, auspicious times, palmistry, demonology, reincarnation, extra-sensory perception, telepathy, prayers, *pujas*, *mantras*, pilgrimages etc. are a cunning way to ward off from social revolt. The forces representing the status quo want them to get addicted to such beliefs. So, deliberate efforts are made towards this end. Secondly it is a source of income for thousands of astrologers, palmists and spiritual leaders without doing any productive work. (1985:29)

Caste and Untouchability

Brahmanoasay mukhama sit
 Bahu rajanayah kruta:
 Uru tadasay yadvaishya
 Padabhayam Sudro ajayat.
 (*Purusasukta Rigveda, X 90,12*).

The above quoted hymn describes the four classes as having come of the different limbs of the body of creator i.e., the *Brahmanan* came out of mouth, the *Kshatriya* came from arms, the *Vaisya* from thighs and the *Sudra* from the feet. The original purpose of this division was to establish the organic relation between the classes. The main aim of this division was to provide work and bread to all, according to their mental and physical capacities, and skill. Originally the *varnas* were based on character and profession and not on birth. Mahabharata defines Brahmana as one, “who possesses virtues like truth, charity, fortitude, good conduct, gentleness, austerity and compassion” (Mahadevan, 1986:72). Manu also says: “A Sudra becomes Brahmana and a Brahmana becomes Sudra by conduct” (Butlet, 1967:97). The concept was evolved to keep the social fabric in a harmonious condition. Subsequently, the caste system became a rigid and dividing force, and class by birth became prominent. The concept of untouchability developed with the passage of time, which, according to Gandhi, is the greatest blot on Hinduism.

The theory that all people were divided into four classes is one of the most important aspects of the Hindu religion, laying emphasis on the performance of social duties and obligations according to carefully formulated codes of behaviour so as to keep the Brahmins on a higher plane in the society of all times. Of the four classes, it is the first and the last that attract attention of the scholars. For, the Brahmins controlled the religious institutions while the Sudras constituted the bulk of the populace.

The literature of the Hindu religion was mostly written by the priestly class; and naturally, therefore, they presumably advanced their own class interests. "The statement a 'Sudra is the servant of another to be slain at will', would have led to social anarchy, whereas the emphasis was always on social order" (Embree, 1966:75). The origin of the class structure was supposed to be divine and not human. "No priestly class in any other civilisation perhaps has made such claims for its sanctity, as did the Brahmins; but neither has any other received such willing recognition of that sanctity" (Embree, 1966: 75).

The caste system in Indian villages, originally based on occupations, became rigid in the course of thousands of years. The village structure and the economic and social relations among different castes living in individual or clusters of villages were so balanced and harmonised that they withstood outside pressure and survived for centuries. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was no tendency in the caste system for further rigidification. Rather there were distant waves in the atmosphere for relaxation. English education had penetrated into the villages though in a very limited scale. Gandhi's messages for removal of untouchability were being circulated in the villages by sincere, Khadi-clad, congress workers. Moorthy and his comrades in *Kanthapura* were such men.

Among the Brahmins there were many sub-castes. Brahmins of higher sub-castes did not marry in lower sub castes and did not take cooked food in such families. The intra caste relationship was more rigid in different non-Brahmin castes than in Brahmin castes. Marriages in all castes were strictly within the caste. For consideration of different social problems arising within the caste and irregularities committed by individual families,

regular caste meetings were convened and there were heated discussions and specific decisions were taken. Any family disobeying the decisions and directions was excommunicated. Moorthy was thus excommunicated for visiting a pariah's house. On occasions of caste meetings of different artisan castes, regular feasts were arranged and different families made contributions for them. The untouchable castes formed a separate group in the village.

Landless agricultural labourers, Dhobies, Chamars and Panas had caste professions, the first of washing, the second of toddy tapping from date palm trees and the third of basket weaving, drum beating and hide collection, but they also worked mainly as agricultural labourers. Each individual untouchable cast considered the other caste in the group as untouchable and refrained from inter-dining and inter-marriage with them. In every village they lived in separate sites at the outskirts and the entire group of castes was untouchable to the caste Hindus. But their functions were essential and without them, it was not possible for the caste Hindus to manage their day-to-day life and business. They formed the main source of labour for agriculture, they did the washing and chopping of fuel, drumming etc. They took cooked food in all types of caste Hindu families and were invited by them on their social functions but sat separately. The question of any caste Hindu person taking any type of food in the houses of the untouchable caste people did not arise. In *Kanthapura* Moorthy was excommunicated for visiting the house of an untouchable in the course of his campaign and for having taken a sip of milk, which they offered him. The caste Hindu people in the village did not take any type of liquor but the untouchable males had no inhibition to take toddy tapped from date palm. Similarly bidies and cigarettes were not generally smoked by the caste Hindu people. Smoking was a taboo for the Brahmins but permissible for the non-Brahmins.

The caste Hindus did not allow their wells to be used by the untouchables. In *Untouchable* we find Sohini, Bakha's sister and other women of the lower caste begging for water at the well. The higher castes did not allow the untouchables to enter their houses, or use their mats for sitting. The untouchables could not enter the temples or participate in social and religious functions on equal basis. Bakha and Sohini were chased

out of the temple as they were untouchables. Persons from caste Hindu families washed their clothes if they touched untouchable persons. Several forces have worked to relax these practices and fuse the Indian society into a cohesive one, reducing its divisive characteristics and caste barriers. Gandhi focused attention on the plight of the untouchables and the baneful effects of the practices of untouchability. The removal of the practice was the most important social programme of the national movement before independence. The practice was made illegal under the Constitution.

To uplift the untouchable classes, reservations of seats in legislatures, services and educational institutions were made. Special facilities like scholarships, exemption from payment of fee in educational institutions, free hostel accommodation, etc. were provided to the untouchables to come up in the social ladder. There have, however, been some changes in the villages. Now educated persons of other castes attend social functions of educated persons of untouchable castes if he is a colleague, neighbour or friend. The caste prejudice among educated people is thin. There is inter-dining and social interaction. The progress of English education, westernisation, publicity and propaganda has succeeded in eroding these caste barriers much during the last sixty years. Smoking *bidis* and cigarettes is not a taboo to any caste in the villages now. Poultry rearing is being done by many Caste Hindu families and eating of eggs has become common. But now the date palm toddy is not much in use. Liquor of other varieties has entered the village points, mostly in illicit manner.

Indian saints have preached brotherhood, and the feeling is certainly noticed amongst the Indians but limited to their caste brethren. The Kshatriyas are looked down upon by the Brahmins; the Vaishyas by the Kshatriyas and the Brahmins. The sudras are treated worse than animals. This inhuman treatment to lower caste people is prevalent even today in villages. Moral code of conduct is restricted to one's caste as is rightly presented in the case of the low caste Bhakka in *Untouchable*. Ambedkar rightly observes: "Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound. There is no sympathy to the deserving. There is no appreciation of the meritorious" (1936:23).

But there are brave young people in the villages who want to break the shackles of the caste system. Anand has such a rebel in his novel *The Village*. Lalu the protagonist is a little headstrong and impetuous by nature, Lalu one day eats in a Muslim cook shop in protest against his own caste-ridden society, and gets his hair, which is the symbol of Sikhism, cut in a hair-cutting saloon in the town. In reaction, his villagers, who are all Sikhs, at once swoop down upon him, blacken his face, seat him on the back of a donkey and parade him through the village. Though the rebellious boy yields to a force much stronger than his, his progressive spirit is not thereby subdued or bent. Anand's novels contain other characters who are progressive and think against the caste system. The poet in *Untouchable* harangues not only about the prospect of the emergence of a 'casteless' society but also a 'classless society', in which all distinctions get obliterated and individual freedom is fully realised. He says:

We must destroy caste; we must destroy the inequality of birth and unalterable vocations. We must recognise an equality of rights, privileges and opportunities for everyone...[We must accept] the machine, which clears dung without anyone having to handle it—flush system. Then the sweepers can be free from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of casteless and classless society. (132)

Ananta in *The Big Heart* is a man of action. He is a revolutionary urging change both in his personal and public life. On the personal level, he chooses to live with Janaki, a young widow, breaking the conventional norms of caste and religion. He looks after her with tender care even as she is dying of consumption. The Ananta-Janaki relationship meets with serious social disapproval of the caste-brotherhood, but exemplifies the self-sustaining love that needs no social or institutional scaffolding.

The sufferings of the untouchables are quite well portrayed in Anand's *The Road*. In this novel the temporal locale of the text is shifted to post-independence India. Anand was a personal witness to the discrimination and humiliation to which Harijans were subjected in a remote village of Haryana. As Anand himself explains:

Well, it was a kind of shock to me when I went to live in Haryana, to find that the outcastes not only in South India, but also in the mixed north were still consigned to the limbo of oblivion. There was something tragic-comic to me in the fact that the caste Hindus would not touch the stones quarried by the untouchables to make the road, because the stones had been touched by the untouchables. (Cawasjee, 1973:52)

The high caste Hindus are unwilling to let go the ossified caste-structures, since they enjoy a privileged position in this orthodox dispensation. In the novel *The Road*, this section is represented by the landlord—Thakur Singh, and the priest—Suraj Mani. It is important for them to keep the untouchables poor, because it is wealth and not caste that determines the social status in the changing world of materialistic values. If the road brings prosperity to the men of lower castes, it must be restricted. But there are also good people in the villages. Dhooli Singh in *The Village* is one example. When their huts are burned, the homeless harijans are sheltered in Dhooli Singh's field. The *Sarkar* supports the chamar workers and even the priest and landlord are forced to relent, as the general tide is not in their favour. However, the attitude of the high caste boys does not change; they still treat the untouchables as dirt. Bhikhu knows that he has the physical strength to hit back, but he decides to quit and find a break elsewhere. He takes the road he has helped to build, and starts his journey to Delhi “where no one knew who he was and where there would be no caste or outcaste” (110).

Just as the caste system has been in India since time immemorial, attempts to abolish it have also been there from that time onwards. Right from the days of the *Upanishads* thinkers have spoken against the caste system. Buddha preached against it 2500 years ago. In the nineteenth century, there were four major movements with the main aim, among other things, being to abolish the caste system. They were: “Brahmo Samaj”, “Arya Samaj”, “Rama Krishna Movement”, and “The Theosophical Movement”. In the twentieth century, the Gandhian protest against the caste system became an equally powerful force. The famous fast undertaken by Gandhi in 1932 to prevent the

establishment of separate electorates for the untouchables was the climax of protests against caste system in India.

To Anand, casteism is an age-old lie made by the powerful and wicked in society to uphold discrimination. His prime concern as a social critic is to remove the caste system as it damages social cohesion by giving certain sections of society an unfair advantage over others permanently. Casteism is a hydra-headed evil contagion like smallpox. It is a heinous crime. It poisons and destroys the dignity of a man. Hence it must be rejected. Anand started his career as a novelist by presenting the evils of the caste system. Besides *Untouchable*; *The Road* and *The Big Heart* also project caste system from different perspectives as the greatest malady of Indian society.

In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Buta is a barber by birth, but the ignominy traditionally attached to his low caste is rarely thought of, and he is greeted as Buta Ram by the poor coolies of high-caste origin, as he is a Sardar in position and as he is not reduced to penury like them. Though Munoo in *Coolie* and Gangu in *Two Leaves and a Bud* are Kshatriyas by birth, their belonging to the wealthless class compels them to greet and obey people like Buta of the barber caste. The two novels may be regarded as proletarian novels as their heroes belong to the unpropertied class who must sell their labour in order to exist.

The Big Heart deals with one aspect of casteism that has not received a significant consideration in either of the two novels, *Untouchable* and *The Road*, which is snobbishness. The caste snobbery among the upper-castes makes their social life filled with unnecessary hardships. The 'superior' sub-castes within a caste treat the 'lower' sub-castes as 'untouchables'. To dispel this 'untouchability' from the public eye, the lower sub-castes do anything on earth to cultivate friendship with superior sub-castes. Lala Murli Dhar's ridiculous insistence that Gokul Chand should attend the marriage of his grandson is only due to his desire to assimilate his family with the 'superior' caste of Kaseras through friendship and social inter-mingling. His proud feeling that his family has attained a 'superior caste status' makes him turn his back on his community of coppersmiths without actually establishing deep and intimate connections with the

‘superior’ Kaseras’ community. He insists on the presence of Gokul Chand at any cost, at Nikha’s marriage to Kausalaya; but he does not care to invite the members of his own brotherhood for the ceremony.

Gokul Chand’s fear of being expelled from his *Kaseras* community for attending the marriage of a *thathiar* and Lala Murli Dhar’s ambition to attain the caste of *kaseras*, and the problems that accompany it, are basically due to the perpetuation of the caste system that could be avoided only if society were willing to abandon the old caste and sub-caste divisions. Though the scavengers were Hindus and also worshipped Hindu Gods and Goddesses, they were however not allowed to live in Hindu colonies; they could not worship in the Hindu temples; they could not get water from Hindu wells and their children were not allowed to study in the schools with the children of Hindus. All the doors were closed for them except the doors of the latrines. The untouchables lived isolated from the mainstream in secluded areas. They had an animal like existence. Even for the most essential things like water they had to depend on the other castes. The scarcity of water had made the surroundings of the outcastes’ colony so filthy that the idea of sanitation and hygiene even if forcibly injected would have had no relevance to the ground reality. As seen in the novel *Untouchable*, untouchable women had to:

Collect at the foot of the caste-Hindu’s well and depend on the bounty of some of their superiors to pour water into their pitchers...the outcastes had to wait for a chance to bring some caste Hindu to the well, for luck to decide that he was kind, for Fate to ordain that he had time to get their pitchers filled with water. (26)

Bakha in *Untouchable* is illiterate and although he wishes to go to school and study, no school will accept him, as he is an untouchable. When Bakha meets the schoolboys of rich upper class families his desire for learning flares up:

And he had wept and cried to be allowed to go to school. But then his father had told him that schools were meant for the babus, not for the bhangis [lowly sweepers]. He hadn’t quite understood the reason for that, then. Later, at the British barracks he realised why his father had not sent him to school. He was

sweeper's son and could never be a babu. Later still, he realised that there was no school, which would admit him because the parents of other children would not allow their sons to be contaminated by the touch of a sweeper's son. (44)

What Anand makes strikingly clear is that even though the cleaning of latrines is Bakha's profession, he handles it with a great deal of dexterity and cleanliness. When Bakha does his work, he works at the latrines 'happy and contented'. Anand says, "Though his job was dirty, he remained comparatively clean. He did not even soil his sleeves handling the commodes, sweeping and scrubbing them" (18-19). What are remarkable are Bakha's heightened sensitiveness to cleanliness as well as his self-respect. Anand purposely portrays the dirty habits of the upper-caste Hindus in order to show that notwithstanding their claims to be clean, they in their habits are many times dirtier than the untouchables. For example, the woman, to whom Bakha had gone for chapattis, abuses Bakha as 'eater of your masters' just because he had sat at the doorstep of the woman's house and had as such defiled it. On the contrary, she displays her dirtier habits by asking her child to ease himself in the drain and afterwards to rub himself clean on the ground in the absence of some one to give him water.

The caste Hindus employ abuses for the people of lower castes while they use decent language for the people of their own caste or class. Since the untouchables were considered thick-skinned, devoid of finer sensibilities, and closer to animals, they were thought to deserve a thrashing. Tulasidas's provocative lines in *Ram Charit Manas* that "a drum, a yokel, an untouchable, an animal, and a woman—all deserve thrashing" (V, 58) confirm this discredited belief. Hence, an upper-caste Hindu of some significance who refrained from using physical violence or abuses against the untouchable was considered a weakling. Range Gowda in Kanthapura, being the Patel of the village, cannot reconcile to the practice of non-violence in dealing with low-class elements. Range Gowda threatens Bade Khan, the policeman that he would not be at peace with himself till "that dog has eaten filth"(81). Even Havildar Charat Singh in *Untouchable* employs abuses against Bakha by calling him "scoundrel of a sweeper's son" (17) even if it is all in a tone of love and affection. The fact that Bakha is prepared to be a sweeper all his life for the

sake of this Havildar shows that he knows the abuses to be no more than harmless expressions. The condition of the untouchables was really pathetic. Forster in his preface to the novel *Untouchable* says:

The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound for ever, born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolation of his religion. (8)

Untouchable depicts graphically the hardships and humiliations that *Panchamas* suffer. It exposes the ugly deformity of the Hindu society. The novelist does it just by narrating the life of Bakha, an untouchable boy. When Bakha touches a high caste Hindu accidentally, the Hindu becomes furious and abuses Bakha. "Swine, dog, why didn't you shout and warn me of your approach! Don't you know, you brute, that you must not touch me?" (53). His crime is that he forgot to announce his approach as he moved on the road. Bakha pleads and apologises but the man gives Bakha a sharp slap. This is the worst moment in his life. Some time later, when Bakha peeps into a temple, a sudden cry "polluted! polluted!" rends the air. The priests and the worshipers rush out. "Get off the steps; scavenger! Off with you! You have defiled our whole service. You have defiled our temple!" (69). Then Bakha sees his sister Sohini following the priest. She tells him that Pandit Kalinath had tried to molest her and when she resisted, began to cry, "polluted! polluted!"

In *The Road* Pandit Suraj Mani does not allow the untouchables to worship in the temples. Sajnu, the son of Thakur Singh the landlord, physically bars the way of Bhiku and his mother Laxmi when they want to go to the temple for worship. They also try to declare Dhooli Singh an outcaste, though he is actually a sympathiser of the outcastes: "To be sure we will declare him outcaste any how..."(34). In *The Confessions of A Lover*, Krishna Chander and his aunt Devki are also excommunicated for mixing with the Muhammadans who are also considered semi-untouchables. Devki, owing to her excommunication, commits suicide. Krishna Chander says: "Our caste brotherhood excommunicated my aunt for giving food to the Muslim step mother of my friend. And

my aunt ...committed suicide" (97). In *The Bubble*, Anand criticises the Brahmins for drinking cow urine and feeling contempt for the untouchables: "Our Brahmins drink cow urine as a nectar before the ceremonies and yet feel tainted if the shadow of an untouchable falls on them" (38).

The untouchables had to beg for food as a reward for their work. The food, which is the left-over of the other castes, is thrown to the untouchables. The practice of the untouchables feeding themselves on the left-overs of food of upper-caste people has been quite common in the past and is still prevalent in far-flung rural areas. Bakha thus begs:

"Bread for the sweeper, Mother. Bread for the sweeper...the sweeper has come for the bread, Mother! The sweeper has come for the bread," he shouted a little louder. But it was of no avail. He penetrated further into the alley and standing near a point where the doors of four houses were near each other, he shouted his call: "Bread for the sweeper, mother; bread for the sweeper." (76-77)

The caste Hindu is armed with the feeling of six thousand years of social and class superiority—a feeling which refuses to accept the fact that the untouchable is a human being, but insists on treating him like a sub-human creature, to be ignored or bullied or exploited as the occasion demands. "It is this that makes the temple priest Pandit Kalinath treat Sohini, Bakha's sister like a juicy morsel of girlhood to be molested with impunity" (Purohit, 1998:87). On the other hand, six thousand years of suppression have left deep marks upon the untouchable's life and psychology. He is caught in a vicious circle from which there is no escape. Compelled to clean dung and live as mere dung, he has to depend for water on the mercy of the caste Hindus and for food on left-overs given by them. Bakha resents his lot and mortified by it, wants to protest against it, but the servility of centuries, which is ingrained in him, paralyses him even when he vaguely thinks of retaliation. When he accidentally touches and pollutes a man on the street, a crowd gathers around him. Then:

His first impulse was to run, just to shoot across the throng, away, away, faraway from the torment. But then he realised that he was surrounded by a barrier, not a

physical barrier, because one push from his hefty shoulders would have been enough to unbalance the skeleton like bodies of the onlookers but a moral one. (54)

Similarly when, at the temple, Sohini tells Bakha about her molestation by the priest, his first reaction is, "I will go and kill him"(71). Next moment however, he feels the cells of his body lapse back chilled.

The strangling tentacles of the caste system are found in the novels of Narayan also. In *The Bachelor of Arts* the rigidity of the caste system prevalent in the society troubles Chandran's mind. He fears that perhaps his parents would not allow him to marry the girl he loves. He blows out the lamp and sits in his chair completely absorbed in the thoughts:

Suppose, though unmarried, she belonged to some other caste? A marriage would not be tolerated even between sub-sects of the same caste. If India was to attain salvation these watertight divisions must go — Community, Caste. Sects, Sub-sects and still further divisions. (56)

In the caste-ridden Hindu society, arranged marriages are the only possibility. They hold a belief that marriages are made in heaven, and that it is all settled already, the husband of every girl and the wife of every man. It is nobody's choice. However irrational it may appear, the belief still holds water and the practice continues even today. It is really disgraceful that even today the system of *Chaturvarnya* is being upheld in one form or the other. The lower castes are looked down upon with disgust. Save Chandran, Raman and others of the younger generation, Narayan's characters refuse to come out of the caste barrier. Raju's mother (*The Guide*) is first sympathetic towards Rosie, but changes her attitude when she learns that Rosie belongs to the *devadasi* class. Even Jagan, (*The Vendor of Sweets*) that fanatic preserver of Gandhian principles, is reluctant to accept a non-Hindu girl as his daughter-in-law. Raman's aunt (*Painter of Signs*) does not favour Daisy to be Raman's wife as she belongs to another religion and in protest she goes on a pilgrimage. Narayan correctly portrays the perverted mentality of the Hindus.

There is no denying the fact that the picture as portrayed by Narayan is widely seen even today; marriages are arranged within the castes, and the lower caste people are harassed in the way or the other, and are looked down upon by the high castes in the society. There are a very few persons like Marco (*The Guide*) who does not stick to his caste as he accepts Rosie, of a dancing class, as his wife. But their marriage ends on a very sad note.

The village society is divided into castes and sub-castes. Each caste tends to live in a separate part or street of the village with the untouchables entirely separate from the rest as we have seen in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. In this way a large section of the Indian population was kept away from the mainstream of life. And since the Hindu religion demanded that the untouchables should not be allowed to acquire property, it was but natural that they had to live somehow completely at the mercy of the so-called high caste people.

There are other novelists of the modern period who underline the sufferings of the untouchables. Roy in her Booker Prize novel, *The God of Small Things*, portrays the untouchables of the village called Ayemaman in Kerala and exposes the pitiable condition they found themselves in even after independence. In *The God of Small Things*, Velutha, like Bakha, is not allowed to enter the house of the upper class. He and his fellow low-caste people were not allowed to touch anything that the upper class touched. Roy observes:

Mammachi told Estha and Rahel that she could remember a time in her girlhood, when paravans [untouchables] were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a paravan's footprint. In Mammachi's time, paravans, like other untouchables, weren't allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed". (73-74)

In *The God of Small Things*, on the lower strata of the society are the Paravans, the Pelayas and the Pulayas who are considered to be untouchables. When the British came to Malabar a number of Paravans, Pelayas and Pulayas were converted to Christianity and joined the Churches to escape the scourge of untouchability. As added incentive they were given a little food and money. They were known as 'Rice Christians'. It didn't take them long to realise that their progression was from bad to worse. They were made to have separate churches, with separate services, and separate priests. After independence they found they were not entitled to any Government benefits like job reservation or bank loans at low interest rates, because officially, on paper, they were Christians. "It was like having to sweep away your foot prints with out a broom. Or worse, not being allowed to leave footprints at all" (73-74). But it must be noted that Christians were among the pioneers who tried to alleviate the condition of the untouchables. Punnyan Kunju, the father-in-law of Mammachi, had founded a school for the untouchables. Velutha is a good example of the modern untouchable who was educated and gainfully employed thanks to modern education, but socially remained an outcaste. Chiefly because of education and encouragement we find a change in Velutha's behaviour:

There was an unwarranted assurance. In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offered suggestions without being asked. Or the quite way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel. (76)

When Velutha returned to Ayemenem after four years Mammachi rehired him in the factory, although the workers were of the view that "paravans are not meant to be carpenters" (78). Society would not allow people of lower strata to come up in life — firstly, by depriving them of education and secondly by denying them job opportunities. Roy underlines this agony of untouchables in her masterpiece. They were also demanding that untouchables no longer be addressed by their caste names. They demanded not to be addressed as Achoo Parayan or Kelan Paravan, or Kuttan Pulayan, but just as Achoo, or Kelan, or Kuttan (69).

Rao also could not avoid speaking of the evils of the caste system. In *Kanthapura* we find Moorthy and his followers opposing the caste system. The village folk at first could not digest what Moorthy preached. Mixing with the low castes was even beyond their wildest dreams and Moorthy has to face great opposition too. Some oppose Moorthy's campaigns and schemes. The Swami does not approve of his mixing with the low-caste people and instantly excommunicates him. The caste feeling was so strong in Kanthapura that when Narasamma comes to know that her son Moorthy is mixing with pariahs, she would not serve him food in the kitchen:

When the food is cooked, she lays a leaf in the main hall, and does not even put a glass of water for the libations. And she goes to the veranda, where Moorthy is reading and says, "The leaf is laid". "I am coming". And Moorthy sits by the kitchen threshold and eats like a servant, in mouthfuls, slowly and without a word.
(64)

When Narasamma passes away, Moorthy takes food at Rangamma's place. And Rangamma, too, gave him food at the kitchen door as Narasamma had done. Although Rangamma is disappointing and rigid in the beginning, later she deservedly becomes the leader when Moorthy gets jailed and all people admire her for her natural goodness, generosity, intelligence and dedication to the cause.

When policeman Bade Khan comes to stay in the village, due to the existing rigid cast segmentation, he could not stay either in the potters' street or in the Sudras' street, or in the Brahmins' street. So he went to Patwari Nanjundia who too refused to help him and suggested that he should go to the Patel Range Gowda.

Rao in *Kanthapura* shows the effect of Gandhi's call to eradicate untouchability. The greatest crisis in Moorthy's life occurred when in the course of his campaigning Moorthy goes to the pariah quarters to find Rachanna. As he is not at home, his wife welcomes him and asks him to come inside. Moorthy cannot decide for sometime whether to go inside the house of the untouchable or not. Rachanna's wife quickly sweeps the corner and spreads a wattle mat for him and places before him a little milk in

a shining brass tumbler. Moorthy, with many a trembling prayer, touches the tumbler and brings it to his lips and taking somehow one sip, lays it aside. Thus, Gandhi's fight for social equality and untouchability succeeds in Kanthapura.

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, except an occasional reference to Muslims and cobblers, there is little mention of caste. It appears Markandaya makes particular reference to the Muslim women with an intention to express her dislike for the *purdah* system. But Markandaya gives a detailed description of the class system, which is the dominant factor of social stratification. In the village, the landlords are at the top of the social hierarchy. The landless farmers, the labourers, etc., belong to the lower class. Even though Nathan has tilled the land for thirty years, he is told that the land would be given to another tenant if he fails to make the payment. He thinks "money is not every thing" (95) but for the rich people money is everything. The rich traders like Biswas turn even the times of scarcity into a season for profiteering.

Gandhism and Independence movement

Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest living influence on India and its people in the beginning of the twentieth century. He stood for the downtrodden, especially the untouchables, whom he called the People of God or 'Harijans'. While trying to win independence for India, he made all efforts to uplift the untouchables. Unnithan in his book *Gandhi in Free India* calls him a dual revolutionary. "He was a dual revolutionary because he wanted to change not only the goals but also the means" (1979:121). Gandhi features in many Indian novels. Anand wrote his first novel *Untouchable* with Gandhi's sanction. In Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* Gandhi is a character. Rao's *Kanthapura* is a Gandhian epic. As Nehru says Gandhi was:

Like a powerful current of fresh air...like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scale from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds. (1972:358)

Gandhi always spoke for the untouchables. His solidarity with the untouchables is clear from this statement in *Untouchable*:

I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should wish to be reborn as an untouchable... Therefore, I pray that, if I should be born again, I should be so, not as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Sudra, but as an outcaste, as an untouchable. (164)

In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, when Gandhi comes to Malgudi he visits the Harijan colony. When it was known that Gandhi would visit the colony:

The authorities did everything to transform the place. All the stench mysteriously vanished; the garbage and offal that lay about, and flesh and hide put out to sun-dry on the roofs, disappeared. All that night municipal and other employees kept working, with the aid of petrol lamps... Gandhi noticed all the hectic activity, but out of a sense of charity refrained from commenting on it. (33-34)

Gandhi regarded untouchability as the greatest crime and a blot on Hinduism. He fought against so many social evils regarding women such as infant marriage, barriers to widow marriage, dowry system, heavy expenditure in marriages, purdah system etc. The removal of untouchability is Gandhi's remarkable contribution to the service of humanity. Gandhi considered this evil not only cruel but an inhuman institution as it was below human dignity and was a heinous crime. Gandhi stood strongly for the abolition of untouchability. He criticised the Indians for denying the untouchables their rights. In *Untouchable* he addresses the people thus: "As we all know, while we are asking for freedom from the grip of the foreign nation, we have ourselves for centuries, trampled underfoot millions of human beings without feeling the slightest remorse for our iniquity" (162).

Gandhi wanted everything to be opened to the untouchables:

All public wells, temples, roads, schools, sanatoriums, must be declared open to the untouchables. And if you all profess to love me, give me a direct proof of your love by carrying on propaganda against the observance of untouchability. Do this, but let there be no compulsion or brute forces in securing this end. Peaceful persuasion is the only means. (166)

Dissenting voices about Gandhi can also be heard in the novels. About the teachings of the Gandhi-men Achamma, in *Kanthapura*, says, “We shall be dead before the world is polluted. We shall have closed our eyes” (19). In *The Sword and the Sickle* after their abortive expedition to Allahabad, as the comrades and peasants travel by train back to Rajgaurh along with the Count, they join him in the criticism of Gandhi. They criticise Gandhi’s rejection of the machine, his propaganda for charkha and condemnation of ‘destructive machine age’, which sounds similar to Lalu’s father Nihal Singh’s preference of bullock cart over train. The sharpest attack comes from Prof. Verma:

The Mahatma knows that the spinning wheel is a good slogan, though he knows that all the yarn necessary for the needs of the country cannot be provided by hand spinning. So he shuts a corner of his left eye behind his glasses and winks at the factory-wallahs to go ahead with their plans. (212)

Though Lalu is no conscious disciple of Gandhi, he approaches Gandhi with the hope that he would lead the Kisan movement to victory, as in Champaran and Kheda, but receives only advice. The advice consists of values, which should be practised, and a course of action to be followed. The first step in the action is for the peasants to conquer fear. This advice, which is practical enough to appeal to the peasants, is accepted with unprecedented success. They do not mind going to jail under Lalu’s leadership. Lalu was a soldier who had been used to violent action but does not indulge in any violent action after meeting Gandhi except slap the chaprasi who was belabouring the innocent peasant. This was perhaps a situation where violence was justified.

Granny, Sriram's grandmother, in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, considered Gandhi as one who "preached dangerously, who tried to bring untouchables into temples and who involved people in difficulties with the people" (141). A villager said to Sriram, "men of khadi are troublemakers" (79). Gorpad, an ardent follower of Mahatma and a terrorist, feared, "Mahatma will not let me be violent even in thought" (50). The carter, in the same novel, thought, "these politicians, Gandhi-folk, they won't leave anyone in peace" (71). These responses and voices mirrored the Gandhian consciousness in the colonial and the post-colonial India. Again, there are businessmen who impartially contribute money to Gandhi's Harijan fund as well as the war fund. The contractor who worshipped a portrait of Gandhi, which he hung on his wall and gave five thousand to the Harijan fund; contributes the same amount to the war fund too. Bowing his head shyly he says to Sriram, "I'm impartial; when the governor himself comes and appeals how can we refuse? After all we are all business men" (108).

There are also ardent followers of Gandhi like Bharati and Gorpad who would lay down their lives for Bapuji; again, there are men like Jagadish who pervert Gandhi's preaching to suit their own purposes. In *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan is portrayed as a fanatic observer of all the externals of Gandhism. He spins and produces yarn for his own clothes, scrupulously observes dietary restrictions, (twenty drops of honey in hot water ... is the natural way taking in all the sugar we need). Jagan himself says: "I don't drink more than four ounces of water a day, and that must be boiled at night and cooled in mud jug open to the sky"(109). He uses only those sandals, which are made of hide of a cow that has died a natural death. As Jagan sits in his sweetmart reading the *Bhagavad Gita*, he has one ear perpetually cocked at the frying noises in the kitchen, and one ear permanently glued to the front stall where customers and beggars crowd. He keeps double account and treats parts of sale produce as 'free cash'. And unashamedly he declares: "If Gandhi had said some where, 'pay your sales tax uncomplainingly,' he would have followed his advice, but Gandhi had made no reference to the sales tax anywhere to Jagan's knowledge" (117).

Tara Malhotra has drawn a realistic picture of Jagan. She writes: “Jagan is a bundle of contradictions, a professed Gandhian whose high-minded Gandhian principles are soon found to be a smoke-screen” (1969:53). Jagan could not pass his B. A. from sheer incapacity, but he is never tired of declaring unashamedly that it was his love for his country, which made him give up college and throw himself heading into struggle for political emancipation—under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Almost like Jagan, Natesh in *Waiting for the Mahatma* is a great opportunist whose Gandhism is only skin deep. As the Municipal Chairman, he prefers the Gandhian cause to serve his personal ends. In fact his Gandhian principles are confined merely to his wearing of Khaddar and putting photographs of national leaders on the walls of his drawing room. Gandhi is depicted in *Waiting for the Mahatma* not as a great political leader but as a great soul, a fine man integrated through and through, with never a false note in his speech, action or thought. Mahatma Gandhi, no doubt, had a soft corner for the untouchables. On his visit to Malgudi, he came to the house of the municipal chairman and there he beckoned a sweeper boy to come and sit on the divan much to the worry and anger of the Municipal Committee Chairman: “Oh lord, all the world’s gutters are on this boy, and he is to leave a permanent stain on that Kashmir counterpane” (31). There are five characters in the novel who are representatives of different types of politicians — Bharati, the true Gandhian disciple; Sriram, the man of mixed motives in need of a leader always; Jagadish, a believer in violence and sabotage; Natesh, the typical politician too common in our country; and Granny, the affectionate old woman in love with conventions. In spite of Gandhi’s teaching of *ahimsa* and non-violence, he had some followers who could not grasp his principles. In *Waiting for the Mahatma*:

In association with Jagadish and under his expert guidance, Sriram did a variety of jobs which he hoped would help the country in its struggle for freedom; he set fire to the records in half a dozen of law courts in different villages; he derailed a couple of trains and paralysed the work in various schools; he exploded a crude bomb which tore off the main door of an agricultural research station, tarred out ‘V’ for victory and wrote over the emblem “Quit India”. (113)

There was a wrong notion that Gandhi was against industries. Though Gandiji was opposed to large-scale industries, he allowed large-scale industries, to a limited extent:

What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour saving machinery. Men go on saving labour till thousands are without work, to be thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all; I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of few but in the hands of all. (Saiyidain, 1970:60)

Gandhi was also not against modernisation, but he was against the exploitation of man by man:

I am socialist enough to say such facilities should be nationalised or state-controlled. They ought only to be working under most attractive and ideal conditions, not for the profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive. (Suda, 1972:176)

He was an advocate of the small village industries keeping in view the abundance of human resources. He adopted the small-scale industries to absorb the maximum human labour. He felt that “much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life” (Hajela, 1985:58). Through Sarvodaya he wanted to establish a world free from exploitation, slavery and suppression. “Sarvodaya literally means the rise, the good of all including the good of the enemy and the evildoer” (Iyengar, 1984:260).

Gandhi could influence all sorts of people. In *Swami and Friends* the Non-cooperation Movement led by Gandhi spreads throughout the country. It also starts in Malgudi, Swami and his school friends lead a crowd to Board High School and there they break window panes, damage school furniture and interfere in the proper functioning of the school. Swami is caught and punished by the headmaster and has to leave the Albert

Mission School. Malgudi does not remain untouched by the political upsurge even in the thirties. The broken windowpanes show the ravages caused by the strike in the school. Again a public meeting is organised by Swami and his friends to protest against the arrest of Gouri Shankar, a prominent political leader of Bombay. Swami listens to the 'plight of Indian peasants' and boycotts English goods and appeals to wear home spun "Khaddar". The cry 'Gandhi Ji Ki Jai' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' pierces the air. There were people who believed that Gandhi would become the sole ruler of India. Sriram says: "I hope when Mahatma Gandhi becomes the Emperor of India, he will make it a penal offence to make or play this instrument. This is also a British gift. I suppose," he told himself (85). The common people think that Gandhi will become the king. For them the political movement is to replace a white king with a brown one.

The average Indian is not a heroic character at all, and Sriram, who represents the average Indian, is an unheroic hero. Gandhi has the magic touch — he lifts Indians out of dust and makes them into men. Gandhi visits Malgudi and Sriram, through his meetings with Bharati, awakens from his "age-old somnolence" (14). The awakening is however, to the beauty of Bharati, not to any comprehension of Gandhi's ideology of non-violence and *Satyagraha*. The Mahatma speaks to Sriram "dispelling his notions":

Before you aspire to drive the British from your country, you must drive every vestige of violence from your system. Remember that it is not going to be a fight with sticks and knives or guns but only with love. Until you are sure you have an overpowering love at heart for your enemy, don't think of driving him out. You must think of him as a friend who must leave you. (51)

It has been argued by some scholars that the action of *Kanthapura* covers precisely the period of about fourteen months from January 1930 to March 1931. Jha is of the opinion that "the period covered in the novel is between Gandhi's Dandi March in 1930 and Gandhi-Irvin Pact in 1931" (1983:34). *Kanthapura* is a true account of Gandhi's ideals and principles and their impact on an Indian village. Iyengar has rightly called the novel a *Gandhi Purana*. To cite Iyengar: "*Kanthapura* is thus remarkable in

many ways: the theme is the impact of Gandhi's name and ideas on an obscure Indian village, any one almost out of the seven lakh Indian villages....” (1984:390)

Narasimhaiah, has also commented about *Kanthapura* in his Introduction to the novel:

It pictures vividly, truthfully and touchingly the story of resurgence of India under Gandhi's leadership: its religious character, its economic and social concerns, its political ideas precisely in the way Gandhi tried to spiritualise politics, the capacity for sacrifice of a people in response to the call of one like Gandhi.... (ix)

Moorthy is a true devotee of Gandhi and propagates his ideas by inspiring the people of Kanthapura to wear cloth spun and woven by their own hands and to give work to the workless:

Because millions and millions of yards of foreign cloth come to this country, and every thing foreign makes us poor and pollutes us. To wear cloth spun and woven with your own God-given hands is sacred, says the Mahatma. And it gives work to the workless. (24)

He distributes free spinning wheels to the people of Kanthapura to spin and weave. Rao has shown the boys like Dore, Puttu, Chandru, Ramu, Pandit, Venkleshia, Srinivas, Kittu and Seenu discarding foreign clothes. Like Gian Talwar of *A Bend in the Ganges* and Sriram of *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Moorthy also discards his foreign clothes by throwing them into the bonfire. “And he wandered about the fields and the lanes and the canals and when he came back to the college, that evening, he threw his foreign clothes and his foreign books into the bonfire, and walked out, a Gandhi-man” (49).

Inspired and influenced by the ideology of Gandhi, Moorthy starts preaching Gandhian philosophies of non-violence, love of mankind and abolition of untouchability. When Range Gowda wants to teach Puttayya a lesson for unjustly drawing all the canal-

water to his fields, Moorthy advises him on Gandhian principle of non-violence and love for the enemy. Again when Range Gowda wishes to settle score with Bade Khan, the policeman appointed by the British Government to watch the political activities of the freedom fighters in Kanthapura, Moorthy dissuades him from doing any violence. Like Gandhi, Moorthy believes in equality and fraternity, and is against all sorts of discrimination. For him, the Brahmins and the pariahs are all alike and are the creation of the same God: "Brothers, and this too ye shall remember, whether Brahmin or bangle-seller, pariah or a priest, we are all one, as the mustard seed in sack of mustard seeds, equal in shape and hue and all" (170).

The national freedom movement sweeping all over the country led by Mahatma Gandhi and other congress leaders has influenced the people of Kanthapura also. The house of Rangamma has become the centre of congressmen's activities. Besides books on the independence movement, spinning wheels were also brought from the congress office. Moorthy and other young boys are seen busy in campaigning for the swadeshi 'spinning-wheels'. They go to the Sudras', Potters' and Weavers' quarters to announce that spinning wheels are being distributed free of cost and during the first month the cotton also will be given free of cost by the Congress. When Moorthy is sentenced to three months' rigorous imprisonment by the 'red-men's' judges the entire Kanthapura becomes sad and gloomy. On the pronouncement of judgment, the whole afternoon no man leaves the court's veranda and not even a mosquito moves in all Kanthapura.

In the novel, the story of Mahatma Gandhi's birth is narrated in a mythical style by Jayaramachar. It is quite reminiscent of the manner in which the incarnations of Rama and Krishna are described in the Puranas. Gandhi is introduced to the village audience as a hallowed figure of divine powers whose birth was not that of an ordinary child but of God coming down to earth at a moment of national crisis for the eradication of evil and the restoration of good, in a country which has ever been loved by the supreme creator-Brahma. The seed of Gandhism is sown in the hearts of the villagers at the very outset through the Harikatha recited by Jayaramachar. But fantasy soon gives place to realism. Gandhi has further been compared to Lord Shiva. The Kanthapurians invoke the grace of

Brahma, the creator, by apprising him of the tyrannous rule of the British. They beseech Brahma to send them one of his Gods so that he may incarnate on Earth and retrieve India from the demonic grip of the British rulers. Brahma pronounces: "Siva himself with forthwith goes and incarnate on the Earth and free my beloved daughter from her enforced slavery...The messengers of Heaven shall fly to Kailash and Siva be informed of it" (22-23).

Rao has compared Gandhi to Lord Krishna in the novel: "You remember how Krishna, when he was but a babe of four, had begun to fight against demons and had killed the serpent Kali. So too our Mohandas began to fight against the enemies of the country" (16). Gandhi is also compared to Raja Harishchandra, Rao writes: "Like Harishchandra, before he finished his vow, the gods will come down and dissolve his vow, and the Britishers will leave India and we shall be free, and we shall pay less tax and there will be no policemen" (172). Ayyappa Paniker feels that "the divine or the supernatural is deeply involved in the human and the natural predicament in *Kanthapura*" (Panikar, 1981:109). Not a single individual is left unaffected by the whirlwind of the Gandhian revolution, most of them turning into active followers of Moorthy including even the women like Rangamma and Ratna and a few still holding their attitudes of hostility and indifference.

The night before the day the Mahatma is to make salt at the sea, the people of Kanthapura cannot sleep in their eager wait for his success. In the morning at five when the Mahatma has to make salt, all the people of Kanthapura – men, women, boys and girl–find themselves in the river crying out "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" and taking a dip in the river in token of their co-operation with the Mahatma. And the following morning they hear about Gandhi's success – about how he had taken a handful of salt after his ablutions and brought it home; and then how "everybody went to the sea to prepare salt, and cartloads and cartloads of it began to be brought back and distributed from house to house with music and clapping of hands" (174). After this comes the sad news to the village that the Mahatma has been arrested. The people of Kanthapura are stunned. Moorthy advises them to go on fast for the day, and hold meetings.

Rangamma is a widow with no children but the childlessness instead of warping her mind, has broadened it. Her heart is as big as the house of which Waterfall Venkamma is jealous. She is like a mother to the young men who are interested in Gandhi-work. She is probably not the only literate woman in Kanthapura but certainly the only one who purchases and reads papers and magazines, and through which she has acquired a fund of general information about astronomy, aeroplanes, the life of people in Russia and so on (48).

Moorthy has convinced several people of Kanthapura – Brahmins, pariahs and others, to take to spinning. The poor, particularly women, have taken to spinning willingly, even eagerly. Moorthy, being a devotee of Gandhi and having spiritual awareness, tries to improve the social status of Harijans. He collects some subscription from them, thus giving them a sense of self-respect. The women of the village have a very high opinion of Gandhi and Moorthy. Nanjamma says:

“No sister, I do not imagine the Mahatma like a man or a god, but like the Sahyadri Mountains, blue, high, wide, and the rock of the evening that catches the light of the setting sun”...And what shall we call Moorthy?” said Radhamma. “Why, the Small Mountain,” said Rangamma, and we all said, “that is it”. (176)

The followers of Moorthy have firm faith in him. They remain non-violent and loyal to the pledge given to the Mahatma. But under the blows of lathis and continuous humiliations they lose their patience in some cases and make counter-attacks. Rachi is a simple Satyagrahi but a time comes when she loses her patience and sets fire to the whole village saying, “if the rice is to be lost let it be lost in the ashes” (252). Rangamma inspires the Satyagrahis to face the oppression of police boldly and preaches that no one can hurt the immortal soul: “No, sister, the sword can split asunder the body, but never the soul”(153).

Kanthapura is really a village epic and a Gandhi *purana*. In the novel we are told of all the major political activities of the Congress during the thirties, that is, the Dandi march of Gandhi and his followers in 1930 to inaugurate the Civil Disobedience

Movement (170-173), the response of the villagers to the Movement by way of launching Satyagraha (182-201), observing non-cooperation by not paying taxes and showing disloyalty to the Government (206-209), the formation of the Congress Committee in the far-flung villages and their constructive programmes (100-111). Nehru's social programmes (256-257), the decision of Gandhi to attend the second Round Table Conference (255-257) and, above all, Gandhi's all-pervading influence on the nation, which runs through the entire story.

We also find here the various social programmes of the Congress during the period — emphasis on the removal of untouchability (57-66), spinning as a step towards self-dependence (28-33), propaganda and demonstration against drinking (182-200), and the like. While showing these, the Satyagraha of the Congress volunteers (182-200), fasts by Gandhi's followers (90-99), police atrocities on the Congress demonstrators (182-200; 224-253), are also very vividly depicted. What makes this novel a distinctive success is that these pictures have not remained mere pictures showing the freedom struggle on the surface alone, but they have all combined together to reveal the true spirit of the age of Gandhi — the spirit that strove to win freedom both politically in the common sense and morally in the Gandhian sense. In Rao's novel, the village is destroyed but it attains a symbolic victory. The gain is collective whereas the loss is individual. Narayan's novel ends with the death of Gandhi, which symbolises the loss at the national level. The marriage of Sriram and Bharati also takes place in the end.

An anti-British movement started in India along with the Independence movement and the coming of Gandhi into the limelight. This nationalistic sentiment permeated into the villages and had its effect on the villagers. The sentiment is seen in the novels of Anand, Narayan and Rao. In Anand, John de la Havre in *Two Leaves and a Bud* and Nihal Singh in *The Village* express this strong feeling. John de la Havre is a compassionate revolutionary who dispassionately attacks the British official policy of colonisation, and condemns the evils unleashed under the guise of the civilising mission. He repeatedly states: "Yes, why not let the natives run their own show? It is their country and we have really no right in it" (21). But even a peaceful demonstration of the coolies

is interpreted by the authorities as a mutiny and is put down with the help of the Royal Air Force.

In *The Village*, the nature of colonial power and its destructive effect on the village community is increasingly felt. The British government is criticised for its indifference to the suffering of poor peasants and for contriving with the scheming feudal lords. The elder generation of peasants like Nihal Singh and Harnam Singh consider the *Angrezi Sarkar* solely responsible for their suffering. Nihal Singh complains: “They destroyed the Sikhraj and favoured thieves like Harban Singh who betrayed our race and killed the righteous” (8). But surprisingly Lalu for all his perceptiveness is enamoured of the ways of the white men — their cleanliness, intelligence and technological advancement; and is unaware of the palpable designs of colonial power structures that empower the European minority and enslave the native population.

The founding of the Indian National Congress is interesting:

The Indian National Congress became instrumental in rousing national consciousness in the hearts of the Indians. The National Congress was brought into being under the guidance of the British Polity. It was a secret plan, pre-arranged, as an intended safety valve, safeguarding the British rule against the rising forces of popular unrest in India. The formation of the Indian National Congress was a hesitant but an organised effort towards national movement. (Pathan, 1989:128)

Gandhi’s immeasurably charismatic personality and political vision inspired patriotism and anti-colonialism, which spread like legends that “multiplied and permeated through the Indian consciousness. They meant different things to different groups of men, castes, class and ideologies” (Narasimhaiah, 1967:63).

In *Swami and Friends*, Mani and Swami listen to Gauri Shankar, a Gandhian in Khaddar, who addresses them and they decide “to boycott English goods, especially of Lancashire and Manchester cloth” (94) and resolve to wear “Khaddar, the rough home-

spun”(94) and organised an evening “bonfire of foreign cloth” (95), in the wake of the Swadeshi movement led by Gandhi. *The Bachelor of Arts* displays Chandran’s protest against any sort of injustice, untruth, slavery, imperialism and distortion of Indian history by the British colonial rule. Krishnan in *The English Teacher* is worried about English teaching in India and feels that teaching English to Indian students is like feeding them “on literary garbage” (171) and the fate of English teachers in India is like “the paid servants of the department of garbage” (171). In *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan is “a disciple of Gandhi” (Walsh, 146) and a devoted follower who “long after Gandhi’s death continues to spin charka everyday” (Sundaram, 1982:151).

In *Kanthapura*, Moorthy the Gandhian, gives leadership to anti-British activities. The policeman Bade Khan’s indifferent attitude towards the villagers and the coming of more police to suppress the village freedom activities strengthen Moorthy’s domain of works. Even the Patel Range Gowde, the elders of potters and weavers and pariah colonies agree with him to undertake religious and social activities in the village to promote national struggle at the same time. People start a Congress committee in the line of Karwar Congress Committee. Moorthy, Patel Range Gowda Rangamma, Rachanna and Seenu – all become members of it. Moorthy’s influence upon the villagers is deep rooted. More of women than men are attracted by his social activities. Picketing of toddy either at the fields or at the shops, burning of foreign cloth, opposing of British laws, etc. lead to almost all the people of Kanthapura getting involved in the national movement. When Moorthy, Range Gowde and others are in jail again, the Satyagraha continues in the village under the leadership of Rangamma and Ratna. The government auctions the lion’s share of the lands of Kanthapura to the rich people from outside, forcing most of the villagers to other villages like Kashipura, Malur and Ramapura. Thus by fate they are forced to sacrifice their lands and assets for the liberation of their mother nation.

Education

In the villages, the number of girls going to school is found to be less than that of the boys. The number of students finishing their school final examination is also low. Due to the compulsory education programme this condition has improved. All have now

realised the importance of education. It is their education that helps Rosie (*The Guide*), Bharati (*The Painter of Signs*), and Daisy (*Waiting for the Mahatma*). Even Gauri (*Gauri*) benefits from her education. As Gauri takes the road to the town, she seems to have made a correct assessment of her era. The road she takes is a road to progress, free from the stumbling blocks of old myths. Gauri could hold her own only through the education and qualification in nursing she has obtained, and which ensures for her an employment. The solution Gauri finds for her predicament is the solution Anand offers for the predicament of Indian woman: education can free her from the clutches of superstition, and employment can give her economic independence, and together these can ensure for her a life of dignity and freedom.

The educational system came under severe criticism as it was completely dominated by materialistic considerations. In *The English Teacher*, Krishna thinks that the existing educational system has made the people good for nothing. He:

... could no longer stuff Shakespeare and Elizabethan metre and Romantic poetry for the hundredth time into young minds and feed them on the dead mutton of literary analysis and theories and histories, while what they needed was lessons in the fullest use of the mind. This education had reduced us to a nation of morons; we were strangers to our own culture, and camp followers of another culture, feeding on leaving and garbage. (205)

Narayan favoured a 'leave alone' system adopted by the Headmaster in *The English Teacher*, which he felt, would transform children into wholesome human beings. This type of education is in fact, a revival of the old Indian tradition of open-air schools run by saintly teachers with specific emphasis on inculcating moral values among the students.

In most of the villages there were only primary and secondary schools. Only very few villages could boast of a high school. The *Pyol* School was a common phenomenon in the village. It was held on the broad verandah of the village headman's house where all the classes were held at the same time. In *The Guide*, the *Pyol* School was on the

verandah of an old house in Kabir Lane. The master reclined on a cushion in the corner, flourishing a cane at twenty boys. The pupils would start fighting, scratching, yelling and peeping into the house as soon as the master's back was turned. The master's interest in the boys was confined to his obtaining his fee of one rupee a month and anything else in kind that they cared to bring him. Raju's father sent him considerable quantities of jaggery, rice and vegetables. The boys made considerable progress under him and Raju himself learnt to read and write before the master took him off to the Board School. The old master himself took them to the Board School, seated them in their new class and blessed them.

Naturally, the pupils did not like going to school. Raju in *The Guide* did not like his school much. In *Swami and Friends*, Swaminathan was subject to Monday blues and he:

... considered Monday especially unpleasant in the calendar. After the delicious freedom of Saturday and Sunday it was difficult to get into the Monday mood of work and discipline. He shuddered at the very thought of school: that dismal yellow building, the fire-eyed Vedanayagam, his class teacher and the headmaster with his thin long cane. (1)

Change

Industrialisation played almost a revolutionary role in the lives of the Indian people. It made the Indian economy more united, cohesive and organic. It raised the tone of economic life in India. Further, it gave birth to modern towns and cities and produced two important classes of the contemporary society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The dumping of cheap British and non-British machine-made goods into India and the advancement in transportation which made it possible for these goods to reach the interior villages forced thousands of village artisans to unemployment. The newly started factories did not care to absorb the village artisans and so they found no source of survival. Anand considers the machine as an indispensable vehicle for socio-economic transformation. In *The Big Heart* Ananta says: "I tell you the machine is in our midst

already, there! And we have got to decide to go and work it rather than sulk” (89). The *thathiars* or the traditional coppersmiths of the village near Amristar in *The Big Heart* lost their traditional jobs because of the setting up of a new plant for copper works by two rich copper smiths. A few were engaged in the plant as workers; still the bulk of the coppersmiths remained jobless. Among the village folk, Lalu in *The Village* stands out distinctly with his independent ideas, rational thinking, and radical views. Lalu subscribes to the need for change and modernisation. His values, therefore, are in contrast to the traditional values of the village.

The onrush of industrialisation upset the traditional village life and ushered in new ideas and outlooks, social and economic, which we call modern. *Nectar in a Sieve* explores how the march of progress, on the one hand, commercialised village life, produced a population of wage slaves and raised their standard of living, and on the other hand, uprooted the tenant farmers from their age old attachment to land, left them dispossessed and caused their eviction and displacement. The establishment of a tannery in the village ushers in a new era in the life of the village community. The age-old agrarian society is suddenly awakened to a new reality and social relations. The tannery slowly pollutes the serene atmosphere of the village with its stench.

The age-old economic and social authority in the village begins to disintegrate and crumble under the onslaught of industrialisation. For example, the land, which the peasants like Nathan used to cultivate are taken away from them and are sold to the factory owners. The peasants are now left with no income and they cannot keep the wolf away from their doors. The tannery also opens up opportunities for alternative occupation. Those who work in the tannery instead of working in the fields, acquire financial stability. The new situation has taken toll of Rukmani’s family. The financial crisis due to drought and flood compel their sons to seek alternative employment. Arjun and Thambi are compelled to join the tannery and later migrate to Ceylon. Murugan is sent away to the city as a domestic help. Raja is killed and Selvam stays behind in the village, but does not take up the traditional occupation of farming.

Srivastava has noted how the tannery has corrupted the moral and ethical values of the village people: “The tannery represents a world of immorality, greed and corruption invading another which is moral, happy and pure” (1979:115). The villagers now want to make money by any means. Evils like theft and prostitution increase. Kunti and Ira turn to prostitution in *Nectar in a Sieve*.

The tannery also takes its toll on the village environment. Along with the stench, it creates noise pollution, destroying the serene and quiet ambience of the village. It expands and claims more and more land. It changes the face of her village beyond recognition and alters the lives of its inhabitants in myriad ways. All relationships are counted in terms of money that has made people narrow-minded, selfish and self-centred. Nathan is cruelly evicted from the land he has been cultivating for thirty years. The water of the river contains the stinking waste material of the tannery and the productivity of the land decreases. Kuti, the youngest child dies of starvation. Similarly, Rukmani’s daughter Ira represents the new generation who substantially differs from her mother. With the tannery comes the end of Ira’s carefree days. Other families too are affected, like the family of Janaki, the hapless Kannan and others.

The main urban contact of the villagers is with the town. Most of the villagers, small, marginal and even large farmers, artisans and labourers who are poor have no contact with the town. They were born in the village, lived there and died there. The circle of their movement was at best ten to twelve miles around. They visited their relatives, fairs or markets only within that circle. Margayya, though very rich, was reluctant to travel to Madras, even on getting the news of his son’s death. The movement of people was generally on foot. Women of richer families used bullock carts especially on ceremonial occasions. In *The Village*, the household of Sardar Harbans Singh travel to the town in a bullock cart. So also Lalu and Gughi go to town to see the fair by scrambling on to the top of a straw laden cart going to town. Most of the goods from one village to another were transported as head loads. A few large farm families owned the bullock carts and it was used for the transportation of goods in large quantities. In the novel *The Village* goods are sent to the town of Manabad in bullock carts. Again, in

Kanthapura goods are carried by bullock carts. The bulls of Rama Chetty and Subba Chetty are famous in *Kanthapura*.

The people had invariably no contact with the town and availed very little of the modern amenities like the post office, dispensary or school. The traders had contacts with the town. There were no wholesale shops in the villages. The traders visited the town and brought back grocery and other articles in bullock carts. Trucks were used only for big construction works in the past. In *The Guide*, trucks are seen arriving with loads of earth for the construction of the railway. The smaller shopkeepers in the village bought goods from the bigger shopkeepers and carried on their business. In *The Guide*, Raju's father goes to the town in his own *jutka* (horsecart) to buy articles for his shops. There were other businessmen who bought agricultural products like rice and coconuts from the village and sold them in the town. Moneylenders also went to the town to visit the law courts. In *Kanthapura* the priest Bhatta, who is also a moneylender, "was always going to the city"(30) to meet the lawyer and to do other business.

There were people from the villages who served in the town as clerks, lawyers and teachers. Besides, there were students studying in high schools and colleges in the town. The buses from the villages were fully packed and uncomfortable. In *The Maneater of Malgudi* we get a sample of the travel by bus. The bus in which Natraj travelled to town was overcrowded. Most of the factory labourers from the villages, working in factories in the town, lived in wretched slums there, continuing their rural habits of living, but acquiring some of the vices of the city and catching diseases to which they were not exposed to in their villages. In *Coolie* the life of Munoo in the city is an example. The poor labourers of the villages living in the city slums or working as domestic servants in the houses of wealthy people were not able to adopt the city manners and culture.

The village communication system has greatly developed. For the transportation of goods between the towns and villages the trucks have replaced the bullock carts. Many young men migrate to the towns in search of work. There is a two-way flow of goods and services between the towns and villages. The railway facilities have also increased and

this too has helped the villagers. The village of Nandpur in *The Village* is an example. Goods can be sent from the village to the town in no time. Along with the modernistic forces of education, health and hygiene, rationality, political consciousness and individualism, the evils of urbanisation such as drinking, smoking, crime and juvenile delinquencies have entered into the villages. In *Nectar in a Sieve* we find “all noise and crowds everywhere, and rude young hooligans idling in the street and dirty bazaars and uncouth behaviour, and no man thinks of another but schemes only for his money” (66). Many undesirable ways of foreign societies are percolating into the villages through the towns and cities. Several cinema houses have been established in all urban and semi-urban places and they are crowded every evening

Many economic measures to improve the condition of the people were introduced from the fifties onwards. The credit structure in the villages has also been completely transformed during these years. Earlier moneylenders were the main source of credit. Though, co-operative credit societies were formed and working in different places, their existence was not felt. The villagers took loans when they were a must. In *The Financial Expert* “The Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank” functions well in Malgudi. The protagonist of the novel Margayya sits under a banyan tree in front of the bank helping the villagers who wanted to take loans from the Co-operative Bank.

CHAPTER V

The Village as a Conceptual/Mental Space.

Belief in God has sustained mankind for millennia. It has fulfilled man's psychological necessities. Indian culture and civilisation has such a distinct root in the past that there is no dearth of gods and goddesses. As Frazer says, "But perhaps no country in the world has been so prolific of human gods as India"(1963:126). Protection is the main idea behind the conception of God. "The majority of Indians are Hindus and thirty three thousand gods are spoken of in the Sacred Texts of Hindus"(Pillai, 1958:v). With so many gods and goddesses in their background, Indian people cannot think of their existence without them. The Indian villagers are firm believers in Gods and Goddesses. Most of Narayan's characters believe in many gods, following the common practice of the Hindu society. Narayan's characters are more religious than the characters of Anand or Markandaya. Gods are believed to have physical forms: human and non-human. Idol worship or worshipping the picture of gods, which is very common, is the result of such beliefs. The characters of his novels also believe in sacred things and sacred places. For example, in *The Painter of Signs*, Raman's aunt and Sriram's granny in *Waiting for the Mahatma* go to Benares during their last days to end their life. There is a double benefit in staying at Benares. They can bathe in the holy river Ganges thrice a day and pray in the temple. It is believed that such an act dissolves their sins and hence eases their passage to heaven after their death. Raman's aunt says: "It is the ambition of everyone of my generation to conclude this existence at Kasi, to be finally dissolved in the Ganges. That is the most auspicious end of one's life" (152). The concept of God, the supreme power behind the creation and regulation of the universe, is best expressed in *The Painter of Signs* by the Town Hall Professor sitting cross-legged on the parapet delivering a spiritual message to the small circle of listeners. He says: "So why worry about anything? God is in all this. He is one and indivisible. He is in yesterday, tomorrow and today. If you think it over properly, you will never sigh for anything coming or going" (25). In *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan, a real devotee, reads the *Bhagavad Gita* and worships God whenever he feels worried.

Most Indians read scriptures like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* etc. daily and they also give offerings to the Gods; Narayan's characters, who are very religious and God-fearing, offer prayers to God and beg His boon for their well being. True to the nature of the rural folk, they offer prayers at home and visit temples daily. Srinivas in *Mr. Sampath* worships a small image of Natraj, which was given to him by his grandmother when he was a boy. He never starts his day's work without spending a few minutes before this image. "He often sat before it, contemplated its proportion and addressed it" (18). In *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, Natraj's prayer, which exhorted his whole being for saving the elephant, Kumar, was responded to. Jagan, in *The Vendor of Sweets*, offers coconuts to Lord Ganesha, when he receives a letter from his son Mali. The women in Narayan's novels offer prayers to the gods and promise offerings when they are in difficulties. We find childless couples, offering prayers to God for a son. In *The Financial Expert*, Maragayya prays for a son and takes a vow to give his weight in silver rupees to the Lord of Tirupati, if a male child is born. After the birth of Balu, Maragayya and his wife wear saffron-dyed clothes and carry their son in their arms and beg for alms. He remembers "how he carried the alms and the sovereigns equal to the weight of the child to the Tirupati Hills and deposited them all in the treasure box of the shrine" (132). The same Margayya in his later years carries out a forty-day ordeal of fasting and praying to Goddess Laxmi in order to propitiate her to acquire wealth. In *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan and his wife are taken to the God on Badri Hill to receive blessings for the birth of a child:

As if in fulfilment of the coconut seller's prophesy Mali was born. The very minute he was delivered in the village home of his mother, he was weighed on scale pan, even before the midwife could clean him up properly, and an equivalent weight in gold, silver and corn was made up to be delivered to the God on Badri Hill, according to the solemn vow made during their visit. (179)

People of Malgudi also believe in the illumination of the mind through prayers or mantras. Such types of prayers are offered to the Sun God. Natraj in *The Man-eater of Malgudi* says: "When the east glowed I sat for a moment on the sand reciting a prayer to

the Sun to illuminate my mind”(5). In an hour of distress, every Indian prays to God to bring him out of difficulty. Not only that, whatever happens in his life, he attributes it to God’s will. In *Swami and Friends*, Ebenezer’s saying in the class that God would readily help those that prayed to Him had the desired effect on Swami. He secured a small card box, placed in it a couple of pebbles and covered them with fine sand and leaves. He carried the box to the pooja room in which a few framed pictures of the gods hung on the wall. Swami stood before the gods and with great piety, prayed to them to convert the pebbles into two three-pie coins. With closed eyes he muttered: “Oh, Shri Rama! Thou hast slain Ravana though he had ten heads, can’t you give me six pies?” (70). Swami is afraid of the gods and he does nothing that may insult them. To his shock, when he found that the pebbles, the leaves and the sand were still there without any expected change even after ten minutes, he was filled with rage. He wanted to abuse the Gods, but at the same time he was terribly afraid, lest he would incur the wrath of Gods. Nonsensical ideas then entered his mind:

He paused and doubted if the Gods would approve of even this. He was afraid that it might offend them. He might get on without money, but it was dangerous to incur the wrath of Gods; they might make him fail in his examinations, or kill father, mother, granny or the baby. (71)

With a feeling of regret, Swaminathan picked up the box, the sand, the leaves and the pebbles that were crushed, crumpled and kicked a minute ago in wild rage, and buried the box reverentially. Again, Swami offers prayers to God, for saving the life of an ant. Once he ran away from his school and walked far into the dense growth of trees. It was soon night and he was afraid. It appeared to his mind that a huge monster was crouching with its immense black legs wide apart and its shadowy arms joined over its head. Swami prayed to all the gods that he knew, to take him out of that place. He promised them offerings, two coconuts every Saturday to the elephant-faced Ganpati, a vow to roll bare bodied in the dust, beg and take the alms to the lord of Tirupati.

The religious beliefs of the villagers influenced every facet of their lives, including their daily chores and schedules. In *The Guide*, his father saw to that Raju woke

up early in the morning and said his prayers before venturing out. He woke him up at daybreak when the cockerel made its shattering cry. Raju says:

I washed myself at the well smeared holy ash on my forehead, stood before the framed pictures of Gods hanging high up on the wall, and recited all kinds of sacred verse in a loud, ringing tone. After watching my performance for a while my father slipped away to the backyard to milk the buffalo. (11)

Along with the faith in Gods and prayers India is also a land of strange and extraordinary beliefs. It is quite interesting to observe the different types of beliefs of the rural folk, which Narayan and others portray in their novels. But some of these beliefs seem to be superstitious in nature. When many persons share or learn a belief and exhibit some commitment to it, it is called a belief system. James T. Borheck defines the belief system as “a set of related ideas (learned or shared), which has some permanence and to which individuals and/or group exhibits some commitment” (1975:5). Louis P. Pojman writes about how beliefs are created:

Beliefs are things that occur in mind, not something we choose. The person who possesses a belief is more instinctive and less meditative. But what he perceives through instinct has some valid rational ground. (1986:191)

About the rationality of religious belief Alstair McKinnon writes:

The foundations of religious belief are necessarily true and they are intended and accepted by the believer as such. For him these foundations are self-evident truths, which he cannot even conceive as doubtful. It is, therefore, clear that the foundations of belief are certain and that belief itself is not irrational. (1970:95)

Although there is no watertight division between beliefs and superstitions, there is some difference between the two. What is belief for one set of people may be superstition for others. Superstition is defined in terms of beliefs. *The Oxford Dictionary* defines it as “irrational or unfounded belief in general”. What may be rational for us at one place or at

a particular point of time may be irrational for other persons, or at another place or at another point of time. This line of thought leads to the conclusion that superstition is relative to time and place. Superstition may have several other definitions, like the irrational fear of the unknown, or a practice, ritual or belief based on mysterious and misdirected reverence, but an easily understandable and acceptable definition would be customary practice, belief or opinion with no apparently rational basis and carried on from generation to generation without its significance being questioned. This definition of superstition includes both belief and superstition. Beliefs and superstitions are universal, but India, with its deep religious background and age-old customs and traditions, abounds in them. But there are some beliefs, which completely lack rational justification. There need not be any hesitation in calling them superstitions. There may be superstitious beliefs and superstitious customs and practices. Both beliefs and customs or traditions may be outdated because whatever was perceived or proved useful at a particular time or place may not be perceived or proved useful if time and place change.

There are again some beliefs and even superstitions connected with the Gods. In *The Financial Expert* when the priest offered some milk to Margayya, the latter pushed aside the tumbler with his left hand. The priest warned Margayya not to refuse milk when offered, as milk is considered to be Goddess Lakshmi Devi. According to the priest, those who insulted the goddess would be punished by her. Again, in *The English Teacher*, Krishnan tells his daughter that they should first wash and then only touch books “Because it is [book] Goddess Saraswati and we must never touch her without washing” (124). Perhaps this is a method to inculcate respect for knowledge and learning. Again, it was a universal belief among the Hindus that to become rich one has to propitiate Goddess Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. When she throws a glance on someone, he becomes rich, he becomes prosperous, he is treated by the world as an eminent man, and his words are treated as something of importance. Similarly Saraswathi was the Goddess of learning and those who wished to acquire knowledge tried to obtain Her blessings. They believed:

... when Saraswathi favours a man, the other Goddess withdraws her favours. There is a rivalry between the two – between the patronage of the spouse of Vishnu and the spouse of Brahma. Some persons have the good fortune to be claimed by both; some on the contrary have the misfortune to be abandoned by both. (40)

This belief perhaps gained ground because very often in the society, a very rich man is not a very learned man and vice versa. Still another belief was that Shiva's two eyes represent the Sun and the Moon and the third eye represents Fire. He opens his third eye when he wants to destroy. But 'fire' is not only the symbol of destruction but also of life-giving force. Shiva destroys in order to create something better. In *Mr. Sampath*, we find that Shiva:

... one day, opening his eyes, he realises that passion is stirring within him, and looking about for the cause he sees Kama, the Lord of Love, aiming his shaft at him. At this, enraged, he opens his third eye in the forehead and reduces Kama to ashes. (101)

The villagers of Kanthapura have great faith in their Goddess. The old woman's faith in the Goddess is unshakeable as is evident from the following account:

Then there was cholera. We gave a sari and a gold trinket to the goddess, and the goddess never touched those that are to live; as for the old ones, they would have died one way or the other anyway. Of course, you will tell me that young Sankamma, Barber Channav's wife, died of it. But then it was not for nothing her child was born ten months and four days after he was dead. Ten months and four days, I tell you! Such whores always die untimely. Ramappa and Subbanna, you see, they got it in town and our goddess could do nothing. She is the Goddess of Kanthapura, not of Talassana. They ought to have stayed in Talassana and gone to Goddess Talassanamma to offer their prayers. (3)

The people of Kanthapura believe the myth about Kenchamma. They believe that in the past Kenchamma came down from the Heavens to rescue the people of Kanthapura. “She [Kenchamma] killed a demon ages, ages ago, a demon that had come to ask our young sons as food and our young women as wives” (2). They believe that Kenchamma will also save them from the British. Like Goddess Ganga, Kenchamma will come down from the Heavens to rescue the Kanthapurians from the draconian rule of the white men, the *phirangis*. Likewise the villagers believe that Gandhi was born on the request of sage Valmiki to Lord Brahma. Like Ravana, the British had come to kidnap “our political freedom, our ‘Swaraja’” (258). Gandhi’s visit to England to attend the Round Table Conference in 1931 is described in terms of the Indian mythical tradition. It is like Rama’s visit to Lanka to save Sita from the hands of Ravana. Sita is the ‘Swaraja’ and Ravana ‘the British’. The people of Kanthapura have no doubts about the myth in connection with the death of Ramakrishnayya. They believe that it was not an ordinary night:

And that night, sister, as on no other night, no cow would give its milk, and all the night a steady rain kept pattering on the tiles, and the calves pranced about their mothers and groaned. Lord may such be the path of our outgoing soul. (145)

The scriptural belief that the birth of a son is necessary for the salvation of the father is pointed out with perfection in many Indian novels, especially in Bhattacharya’s *Music for Mohini*:

Our ancestors in heaven are joyful when a son is born to the house on earth. The family name will be carried for one more span or life on earth, and at the funeral anniversary of the departed, sacrificial water should be poured. (140)

It was perhaps of this belief that Nathan and Rukmai were disappointed when a daughter was born to them first. Markandaya illustrates the reaction of the parents when a girl child is born. She is not at all welcome. The parents and relatives turn their heads away and even hate to have a look at the newly born girl child. They believe that a girl child will only bring them woe:

Irawaddy was born as an unwelcome child to her parents. The simple reason was that she was a girl child. Even her mother expressed deep disappointment the moment she was born: “I turned away and despite myself, the tears came, tears of weakness and disappointment; for what woman wants a girl for her first-born?” (14)

Nathan also paid very little attention to her in the initial days of her birth. But when their first son was born Nathan was happier than words could describe. He invited everybody to the feast on the tenth day from birth of the child. In the village, much more than in the city, a childless woman or a widow is believed to be an ill-fated one who brings bad luck. And so she is not allowed to participate in any auspicious function. She has to cut her hair and wear a white sari. She could wear no ornaments. Ratna in *Kanthapura* was such a widow.

Another belief that remained deep-rooted in the minds of the village folk was the belief in their *kismet* or fate. They had firm faith in *karma* also. In *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Gangu strongly believes in his fate. He blames his *kismet* for all the miseries that happen to him. Gangu says: “I suppose it was in our kismet. But at the time it was like a prison and here it is slightly worse” (193). So also the central split in *The Big Heart* is between those who believe in fate and those who show defiance to such a concept. The fatalists like Bhago and Ananta’s stepmother Karmo (as in the case of Laxmi in *Coolie*), emphasising their belief in *karma* would humbly say: “We belong to suffering, sister. We belong to suffering! This life is not worth living! All we can do is to do some good deeds and prepare for the next”(101). But on the other hand, for Ananta and his friends, the doctrine of fate is nonsensical. Ananta considers fatalism as a self-destructive, fiendish belief, a serious obstacle to human progress:

“Fate! Fate! Fate doesn’t dictate anything. I beg you to stop this kind of talk, ohe brothers, all of you, students, Maulvis and Pandits!” shrieked Ananta, desperate with anger with anger and futility. “Ohe, come to your senses and let us call all our brotherhood together and resolve upon some course for our betterment. Men

make of their own deeds, they make of their own character, good or bad, and they shape of their own destiny! So come and make your own fate.” (210)

Most of the characters of Narayan believe in fate and *karma*. It is fate, which makes Raju, in *The Guide*, a martyr. “He drew his finger across his brow and said, ‘whatever is written here will happen. How can we ever help it?’” (20). Natraj in *The Man Eater of Malgudi* believes that man is a mere puppet in the hands of fate, and that he has actually nothing in his hands to change his lot. Mari in *The Dark Room* also thinks that he should have left Savitri to her fate. Even if he had not saved her from being drowned, she would have been saved if fate had wished so. These are just a few examples, but the supremacy of fate is inextricably woven into the very texture of Narayan’s novels. According to the theory of *karma*, one’s lot is pre-ordained, and it being a result of the sins one has committed in one’s previous birth, one has to discharge one’s duties ungrudgingly. This has resulted in total submission to one’s fate. For fear of punishment in hell, all have got to put up with insults and cruelties heaped upon them. Hence no wonder that a poor peasant like Velan should have great faith in Raju whom he considers a Godman. The concept of the previous birth is also enunciated in *A Tiger for Malgudi*. Whatever spiritual transformation Raja undergoes is only due to the achievements of his previous birth. He would have been, perhaps, the brother of his master in his previous birth. Raman in *The painter of Signs* thinks that Daisy, in her previous birth, must have been Queen Victoria or in a still earlier incarnation, Rani Jhansi, the warrior queen of Indian history. Like the villagers in the novels of Narayan, Anand and Rao, Markandaya’s villagers also believe in fate. Nathan and Rukmani are firm believers in fate. In the town Nathan fell ill and could not survive it. Before succumbing to illness he tries to console himself saying that a man would never escape his destiny. The thought that he would live in his children gives him some relief.

In the novels we find the faith and belief of the innocent villagers cruelly exploited by some elements. For example, Vasu in *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, exploits the people’s belief in sacred birds like *Garuda*, which is believed to be the messenger of God Vishnu. People stop on the road to salute it when it circles in the sky. Keeping in

mind such a belief of the people, he stuffs this bird and sells it at about fifty rupees. Like the sacred bird, peepal and banyan trees are also considered sacred. It is generally associated with the divine and that is why people worship them. They are found in the villages and often stones are put under these sacred trees and people worship them as gods. Wherever there is a temple or other religious spot, these trees are certainly found. In *The Guide*, in Mangala village there is a large platform under the *peepal* tree at whose root a number of stone figures are embedded and often anointed and worshipped.

The villagers are usually vegetarians and they believe that it a sin to eat meat, especially beef. Jagan, the vendor of sweets is extremely happy when he receives a letter from his son Mali, who is staying in America. But when he learns that he eats beef, his whole being shudders with revulsion because the cow is a sacred animal for a Hindu, and eating beef is prohibited. Similarly, Sriram's granny does not want to sit on a canvas chair presented to her by her grandson because she thinks it is made of leather, probably cowhide, and hence she does not want to pollute herself by sitting on it. We have another instance of superstition in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. Sriram's Granny, declared dead by a doctor, was taken to the funeral pyre. The priest performed all the required rituals for Granny's soul to rest in peace and the funeral pyre was lit. But suddenly the big toe of the left foot of the lady was seen moving. Sriram immediately flung a pail of water on it and put it out. The toe was wagging. Surely Granny was not dead. She was reviving little by little. When the doctor suggested that she should be taken back home, the priest interrupted:

How can you suggest such a thing? No one who has been carried here can ever step into the town bounds again. Don't you know it will...the whole town will be wiped out by fire or plague. It is every inauspicious. Do anything you like, but she can't come back into the town. (124)

No one from the assembly had the courage to contradict the priest. It was shocking to find that the poor lady had to be taken to a small abandoned tollgate station. After that she went off to Benaras to await her death, to the final fire and to the final ablution in the sacred Ganges. The same priest in *Waiting for the Mahatma* makes it a

point to see that the ignorant, uneducated village folk would remain superstitious and God fearing, the base on which the entire priesthood in a sense depends. This has been a selfish motive for all these years on the part of the priest – to exploit to his advantage the gullible masses of the society. If at all anybody with a rational approach comes forward, he is very tactfully handled and easily outwitted. On Kanni's objection to the priest for demanding more coins at the time of rituals the priest softens him by saying:

Our elders have decreed that the Dear Departed should have two silver coins on his or her chest from the hand of the nearest and the dearest. It is said to smooth out the passage of the soul into further regions. I am only repeating what the *shastras* say. (121)

In some people, beliefs are so deep rooted that it is impossible to remove them. Even when Raju in *The Guide* makes a clean breast of all that happened to Velan, he refuses to believe that Raju is a fraud. Again, there are some women characters in Narayan like Swami's grandmother in *Swami and Friends*, Srinivas's Granny in *Waiting for the Mahatma* and Raman's aunt in *The Painter of Signs*, who uphold the old values of Hindu life. These women are irrational and superstitious in their outlook and opposed to any change in social conventions.

Beliefs, superstitions and age-old conventions sway the minds of the people of Kanthapura as they do in any other village of India. Adherence to superstition is very evident in the blind beliefs and practices of the labourers of the Skeffington Coffee Estate. When cholera breaks out the labourers are given quinine as a remedy. But they are averse to taking it and instead they hang a little rice and areca nut tied in a cloth piece over the roof of the hut, believing it to be a surer remedy for malaria than the modern medicine.

In *Nectar in a Sieve* the villagers assert, "Cobras are Sacred" (26) and hence, insist they should not be killed. Probably the belief rose from the fact that cobras were useful to the farmers as they consumed pests like rats, which destroyed the crops. But Nathan, though illiterate, does not believe that. Markandaya clearly disapproves of the

superstitious practices of the rural people. On the failure of rains, Rukmani throws herself on the ground, prays, offers a pumpkin and a few grains of rice to the goddess, but no rains come. The living conditions of the rural people are almost primitive. Nathan's house is a small thatched mud hut near a paddy field in the vicinity of a couple of similar huts. A garland of mango leaves is hung across its doorway to herald happiness and good fortune. Lack of education and ignorance often breed fear and superstition. Though literate Rukmani also seeks the power of the stone *lingam* to fight her sterility. In her despair she crosses the social taboo in consulting a foreign male doctor. But then science triumphs, as she begets sons one after another, although she has scarcely any means to feed them.

Bhattacharya also describes the superstitions, beliefs and practices seen in society. To the village folk, the agreement of horoscopes is very important in fixing a marriage. In his *Music for Mohini*, the faith and trust in horoscopes and the part played by the matchmakers are graphically described. People are so insistent about the matching of horoscopes that some girls may not get married at all. The life of Sudha wins our sympathy, as she remains unmarried owing to the reading in her horoscope that some stars are believed to have been in malefic conjunction as the white shadow of Saturn approaches her stellar lines.

Astrology plays a very important role in Narayan's novels. It is perhaps due to the fact that Narayan himself suffered a lot because the position of Mars was not suitable in his horoscope for his marriage. According to the belief, Mars in the seventh house of one's horoscope kills the life-partner provided that the other partner's horoscope also does not have the same flaw. His wife died a few years after their marriage. Narayan dwells on beliefs, superstitions and rituals in his novels more than any other Indian novelist. A large number of his characters seem to have weird beliefs and appear superstitious to different extents. People in villages and towns have an unshakable belief in horoscopes. No marriage would take place unless the horoscopes agreed completely. The best example of the victim of horoscope is Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts* who had an infatuation for Malathi. Chandran is unable to marry the girl whom he loved

because the horoscopes did not agree. When the horoscopes did not agree people believed that God had disposed what man had proposed. When it was found that the horoscopes of Chandran and Malathi did not match, Malathi's father writes to Chandran's father:

Since I have great faith in horoscopy, and since I have known from experience that the marriage of couples ill-matched in the stars often leads to misfortune and even tragedy, I have to seek a bride groom elsewhere...no one can have a greater regret at missing an alliance with your family than I. However, we can only propose. He, on the Tirupathi Hills [The Lord Venkatesvara] alone knows what is best for us. (86)

If Chandran is a victim of the faith in horoscope and astrology, Margayya, the financial expert, finds it convenient to bribe the astrologer to recast the horoscopes. Margayya in *The Financial Expert* wanted his son to marry the daughter of a rich estate owner. But there too the horoscopes did not agree and the astrologer would not settle for any bribe and change his conclusion. But Margayya was not as pious as Malathi's father. So with the help of Dr. Pal, he found an astrologer who would do whatever they wanted, if they bribed him properly and thus the crisis was resolved. The two types of astrologers that existed in the villages are also portrayed here.

Horoscopes are examined for other purposes too. The priest in *The Financial Expert* tells Margayya to bring his horoscope in order to prescribe the suitable rituals, performing which he could become wealthy. So also, astrologers are consulted on all important matters, whether it is a marriage, the naming of a child, the opening of a shop, or to know the course of one's future. Chandran's marriage with the girl of his parents' choice is performed on an auspicious date in consultation with an astrologer. The lawyer in *The Painter of Signs* consults the astrologers regarding the inauguration of his professional career as a lawyer. His astrologer advises him to have the letters of the signboard slanted to the left because he believes that left slant is auspicious for the lawyer's ruling star.

The villagers are obsessed with omens. In *The Village*, not only Lalu's old mother Gujri, who is foolish enough to believe that it is a good omen to meet a sweeper or a black dog before one begins one's journey, but also the entire village community is in the grip of such superstitious beliefs. Superstition is the religion of feeble minds; it retards progress; it eclipses and spoils the true aspects of religion. Through Lalu, Anand ridicules people who justify superstitions. In *The Village*, when Lalu gets ready to go with his brother and father in search of a loan for his elder brother's marriage, his mother asks them to wait a moment, as she wants to do something auspicious:

“Wait, my son”, Gujri cried, “I will go to the well and meet you with a pitcher of water on my head so that your visit may be auspicious”. “God suits the burden to the strength”, said Lalu cryptically, and headed towards the door. “Wait, wait, my son”, Gujri cried out impatiently. But luckily Kesari was just entering with a brass jug full of Ganges water, which was given to devotees at the monastery. “Acha, now you can go.” Gujri says. (127)

It is also believed that while starting on a journey if one meets a man bearing a pot of foaming toddy, it is a good omen. Sastrigal in *The Bachelor of Arts* has an experience of such an omen when he is coming to match the horoscope of Chandran and Malathi. But unfortunately his belief deceives him. Malathi's and Chandran's horoscopes do not match. Raman in *The Painter of Signs* regards the number three as a bad omen. He justifies his belief by giving an example of the three witches in *Macbeth*. So, the three women workers who came to meet Daisy are ominous for Raman and his dream of marrying Daisy is shattered. The shopkeeper in *Waiting for the Mahatma* thinks it inauspicious to give back coins on a Friday. The priest in the same novel advises Sriram after his granny's 'temporary' death to put two silver coins on her chest so that it would smooth the passage of the soul into the further regions. Such beliefs have got no rational basis in the modern world and hence they are treated as baseless and intriguing.

Superstitious beliefs are still honoured in India, as every new generation of Indian society submissively adjusts to the older generation and its irrational values and traditions. It is unfortunate that superstition is still an integral part of the general Indian

set up. The risk involved in rebelling against superstition is enormous and so every one in this country dances to the old tune, leaving India a land of incorrigible superstitions. A person like Lalu who has the courage to challenge superstitious practices is treated as an outcast by the society.

The superstitious beliefs in *Two Leaves and a Bud* originate from the ignorance of the common people. A good instance of the ignorance and superstitions that is prevalent among the coolies is, when the women see aeroplanes for the first time and think that there are evil spirits in it. But there are also wise people like Gangu who believe that the class-ridden society is not the making of the Almighty:

God never meant that to happen, for He does not like some persons to have a comfortable living and the others to suffer from dire poverty. He has created land enough to maintain all men, and yet many die of hunger, and most live under a heavy burden of poverty all their lives, as if the earth were made for a few and not for all men! (247-48)

A villager performs a number of rituals in his life. These rituals may be related to birth, marriage, cremation, inauguration, agriculture etc. The trunk of the banana tree, sugarcane stems and the strings of mango leaves are commonly used on auspicious occasions. The mango, the plantain, the *peepal* etc. are the primeval trees. Hence they are of immense significance for the celebration of an auspicious occasion. So also, the beating of the drum and the blowing of the pipe or the *conch* (shell) signify an important auspicious occasion. The following lines from *The Bachelor of Arts* describe the celebration of marriage:

When he [Chandran] reached the Modern Indian Lodge he saw that the entrance or the opposite house was decorated with plantain stems and festoons of mango leaves. These were marks of an auspicious event. Chandran's body trembled. The drummer, sitting on the *pyol* in front of the house, beat the drum with all the vigour in his arms; the piper was working a crescendo in *Kalayani raga*. (91)

There are certain traditional rituals connected with propitiating the Gods. After reading Margayya's horoscope the priest prescribes the rituals, the special diet and offerings as laid down in the *Shastras*. He is to search beyond the banks of the Sarayu outside the town for a ruined temple with a pond beside it, find the red lotus there and then having crushed its petals to a paste, mix it with ghee made from a particular type of cow's milk and put a dot on his forehead exactly between his eyes, each day after prayers. These are traditional rituals. Cow's ghee is considered sacred and the red lotus symbolises knowledge. A room in his house has to be swept and rats and cockroaches chased out, cobwebs cleaned away, garnished, strings of mango leaves tied across the doorways and a picture of Lakshmi the four-armed goddess who presides over wealth, distinction and enterprise, placed on a pedestal. He is to sit before the image for some forty days with a certain Sanskrit syllable inscribed on a piece of deer skin tied round his neck, repeating his mantras a thousand times a day.

Among such practices and rituals, caste-system and untouchability get a frequent mention in Narayan's novels. Srinivas's wife in *Mr. Sampath* does not like hotel food. Srinivas knows the reason of her dislikes. It is because of her religious upbringing, the fear of pollution of touch by another caste that she does not want to take hotel food. Only when Srinivas assures her that the food has been brought from a Brahmin hotel, does she consent to eat. So is the case of Savitri in *The Dark Room* who refuses to eat in the house of Mari and Ponni, the low caste couple. Raju's mother in *The Guide* is first sympathetic towards Rosie, but she changes her attitude completely when she learns that Rosie belongs to the group of temple dancers and is a *devadasi*. It is difficult for Jagan (*The Vendor of Sweets*) to accept a non-Hindu girl as his daughter-in-law. Raman's aunt in *The Painter of Signs* decides to go on a pilgrimage when she learns that Raman is going to marry a Christian girl. It is also equally true that Chandran (*The Bachelor of Arts*), Mali (*The Vendor of Sweets*), Raman (*The Painter of Signs*) and Raju (*The Guide*) give a jolt to the established customs of the Hindu society.

It is believed that the sacred thread ceremony (*Upanayan Samskara*) gives a second birth to Brahmins and other 'twice-borns' (*dwijas*). But nowadays its importance

is reduced to merely a string to hang the keys, as does the old man, the landlord of Srinivas, in *Mr. Sampath*. The other traditional symbol by which a priest or a pundit might be recognised is the tuft that he wears on his head. But nowadays such practices are out-dated. Even Brahmins do not have tufts on their heads because the orthodox caste system is decaying. But in Narayan's novels whenever a pundit or priest-like character appears, he wears the tuft and sometimes the caste-mark also. The arrogance and hypocrisy of the higher caste people is markedly portrayed by Bhattacharya also. The ritual of milk bath for the idols is not a novel feature introduced by him. But it is prevalent in many temples in India. It is supposed that such donors of milk will have their sins expiated and 'Punyam' or merit will accrue to them. Bhattacharya appears to have a sound knowledge of the Indian customs and rites as quoted in the scriptures. In *He Who Rides A Tiger*, the novelist says:

The chanting of the Name was meant to propel the departing soul skyward. Without that and the complicated ritual, which followed, the departing soul would remain earthbound. The rice and coppers scattered on the street as well as the funeral feasts would earn a goodly measure of merit for the soul of this Brahmin and ensure its warm reception at the portals of heaven. (53)

There seems to be some beliefs, which may fall into the category of folk beliefs connected to folk tales. They appear to be forms of 'knowledge' that have their own value in being explanations of the environment in which a folk finds itself. We may not be able to dismiss all of them on the basis of rationality. In *A Tiger for Malgudi*, we are told that tigers originally had no stripes. The stripes were created later on their skin. The first tiger was like a lion, endowed with a tawny, shining coat of pure gold but he offended some forest spirit, which branded his back with hot coal. Thus were created the black stripes. The coachman in *Swami and Friends* tells Swaminathan that with the help of some special metal pot and some special herbs, he is able to convert copper coins into silver. He could even convert copper into gold, but it is difficult to find out herbs required for this purpose. Alchemy was a common practice in the Middle Ages. There is a marked difference in the outlooks of Swami and Rajam. Swami is brought up in an orthodox

Hindu family, steeped in superstitions and blind beliefs. He is set in contrast to the character of Rajam, the son of the Superintendent of Police. He rebukes Swami in no uncertain terms when the latter narrates how the coachman cheats him: “We Brahmins deserve that and more,’ said Rajam, ‘in our house my father does not care for new-moon days and there are no annual ceremonies for the dead” (109).

In *The Dark Room*, Kamala and Sumati do not dare to look into the cook’s eye because the belief was that a person who looked into the cook’s eye at a certain moment would be turned into stone. They were told that the milestones on the roadside were once human beings who had dared to look into the cook’s eye. In the village society, there exists a lot of strange practices. For example, there is a common practice in the society that if a person utters or listens to a foul word or sees an unpleasant thing, he unconsciously utters the name of Shiva or Narayan or Rama or Krishna to dissolve the sin, which he thinks, he has committed. At the end of the novel *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, people suspect that Natraj was the man who killed Vasu. So, they even hate his press: “That Press! Lord Shiva! An accursed spot! Keep away from it” (236).

The villagers believe in ghosts and evil spirits. It was perhaps their lack of education and ignorance that reinforced their belief in ghosts and other spirits. They believe that cremation grounds and dark places are the abodes of ghosts and evil spirits and they refrain from going near such places at night. Stories are always afloat in the villages of someone or other having seen ghosts and evil spirits. They imagined that there was a regular ghost world in the villages at night. Besides ghosts, the village goddess was also imagined to be moving along the village streets at night. There was a time when ghosts, devils, evil spirits and evil eyes had the sanction of the society; but in modern times, as scientific awareness has grown, these are treated as hallucinations and mere superstitions. Although, in modern India, there are not many people who believe in ghosts, devils and spirits, the India in which Narayan was brought up was rampant with such beliefs. Supernatural beings figure mostly in the early novels of Narayan. In his first novel *Swami and Friends*, Swami has an experience of the devil at the ghostly hours of the night, when he was caught near the forest after running away from his school. When

the night fell suddenly, different shapes started to appear like ghosts in the darkness of the night and Swami was terrified. Similarly, in *The Dark Room*, Mari, when he returns from one of his nocturnal visits, sees an apparition, whom he thinks, is Mohini, the Temptress Devil, who waylaid lonely wayfarers and sucked their blood. He watches it with fascination and horror. But on closer examination it turns out to be a woman-Savitri-who was trying to commit suicide. Again in Narayan, at the beginning of *The Financial Expert*, the night watchman notices that the ghost of the famous Registrar of the co-operative society, who had spent all his money in the construction of the co-operative bank, has been watching everything going on in the bank in a sad mood from within a teak frame suspended on the central landing:

He was said to be responsible for occasional poltergeist phenomena, the rattling of paperweights, flying ledgers, and sounds like the brisk opening of folios, the banging of fists on a table, and so on evidenced by successive night watchmen. This could be easily understood, for the ghost of the Registrar had many reasons to feel sad and frustrated. (1)

In *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, people believe that dogs bark at night because ghosts are visible to them. But neither Natraj nor Vasu has seen a ghost. In *A Tiger for Malgudi*, the villagers believe that the devil takes away animals; they are even prepared to perform propitiatory ceremonies in their village. But the fact was that the man-eater was reducing the number of their cattle. The stories, which are told about ghosts and demons, gods and goddesses, hell and heaven, have a great bearing upon the tender mind of a child. William Walsh rightly observes: "Our minds are trained to accept without surprise characters of godly or demoniac proportion with actions and reactions set in limitless worlds progressing through an incalculable time-scale" (1983:16).

Ramteke speaks about the gullibility of the Indians:

Fear plays an important role in the life of a Hindu. He is afraid of ghosts, demons and gods. The fear has made the Hindu mentally weak, and incapable of pursuing an independent line of thinking with courage and determination, since it has been

artificially created by brainwashing from childhood. As a result, he simply does not have the courage to verify the truth. He accepts the things as they are, simply because it are written in the so-called holy *shastras* or because some saints or yogis have been reported to have said so. (1998:91)

It was believed that if one came into contact with ghosts or evil spirits they would enter the body of that person and would possess him. In order to free the victim from the influence of the ghost or evil spirit, the services of the priests or holy men specialised in exorcising ghosts were made use of. Though, in the Indian society, exorcism was common, it had only a psychological effect. In *The English Teacher* when Susila fell sick, which ultimately caused her death, her mother was convinced that the Evil Eye had fallen on her. She was definite that if Susila had not been allowed to go into the lavatory, she would not have fallen sick. She invited a man to exorcise the effect of the Evil Eye. He uttered some mantras with closed eyes, took a pinch of sacred ash and rubbed it on her forehead, and tied to her arm a talisman strung in yellow thread. When Swamiji left, he uttered, “May God help you to see the end of your anxieties” (93). The end of the anxieties was not the recovery of the patient from her illness but the end of her life itself. Similarly, in *Mr. Sampath*, Ravi’s mother calls a group of men to exorcise her son’s madness:

In front of him were set out trays of Saffron and flowers, huge twigs of *margosa* leaves and a camphor flare. A wild looking man with huge beads around his neck, clad in red-silk, his forehead dabbed with vermilion, officiated at the ceremony. He looked very much like Shiva in make-up. The air choked with incense burning in a holder. (204)

Even from their infancy, children were told stories of heaven and hell and people became engrossed with the idea. It was believed that the wicked would go to hell, which was a place of torture, and the good to heaven, which was a paradise where God and angels were. The human mind created heaven and hell because it was essential for establishing order in society. Such concepts helped people in refraining from acts, which

were not morally sanctioned by the society. In *Swami and Friends*, Rajam gives a hair-raising account of the torture in hell if one fosters enmity among friends:

According to Rajam, it was written in the *Vedas* that a person who fostered enmity should be locked up in a small room, after his death. He would be made to stand, stark naked, on a pedestal of red-hot iron. There were beehives all around with bees as big as lemons. If the sinner stepped down from the pedestal, he would have to put his foot on immense scorpions and centipedes that crawled about in the room in hundreds – (A shudder went through the company). The sinner would have to stand thus for a month, without food or sleep. At the end of a month he would be transferred to another place, a very narrow bridge over a lake of boiling oil. The bridge was so narrow that he would be able to keep only one foot on it at a time. Even on the narrow bridge there were plenty of wasp nests and cactus, and he would be goaded from behind to move on. He would have to balance on one foot, and then on another, for ages and ages, to keep himself from falling into a steaming lake below, and move on indefinitely. (46)

Because of their strong belief in ghosts and spirits, people ascribed many types of diseases particularly of children to the actions of evil spirits. The people of the villages believe that diseases like small pox, cholera and malaria are caused by goddesses and evil spirits. The goddesses were to be propitiated to cure persons affected by the diseases and to prevent the diseases from spreading. For this they used the services of ordinary *tantriks*. The spread of schools and colleges, market centres, various means of communications, various political and social activities, rural electrification and the launch of industrial units, small or big, have facilitated the frequent movement of people to different places. The beliefs in ghosts and spirits among adults and the spread of ghost stories among children have been greatly reduced in modern times. The old environment is changing and young people are beginning to question beliefs and practices for which there are no evident reasons.

In Narayan's *Malgudi* we find that such things like castes, beliefs, practices and astrology are still respected, but not always obeyed. *Malgudi* has an oral history that goes

back to epic times. The people believe that Rama would have passed that way, on his way to Sri Lanka and his lotus feet would have touched the path of Malgudi. The town's past is involved with the past of India, it is a land crossed and re-crossed by legendary and historical personages such as Rama, Sita, other gods and goddesses, *rakshasas* and *asuras*, *apsaras*, *gurus* and *sadhus*. Many of Narayan's novels have got a mythic structure. Myths are used to explain various things. Rogerson dwells on the use of myth:

Myth also attempts to explain things. The things so explained can be many and various, including the origin, nature and functioning of the world, the origin of social organisation social habits and customs, religious beliefs and practices. (1974:175)

The Man-eater of Malgudi follows an obvious mythic pattern: the conflict of Good and Evil, which essentially results in the initial suffering of the good and the final destruction of the evil. The idea of mythical demon is used in *The Man-eater of Malgudi*. Vasu, the modern *Bhasmasura*, is presented as the *rakshasa* fairly early in the novel. It can be said that belief is the very foundation of myth and in due course of time it gives rise to superstition when people do not understand the underlying philosophy behind certain customs and practices.

Many characters of Narayan are in a dilemma. On the one hand, they find it difficult to fully forego age-old beliefs, but on the other hand, they are unable to get along with it too. For example, in *The Bachelor of Arts*, Chandran renounces the earthly world out of sheer reluctance to its irrational and ridiculous nature of social customs, but finally returns to his family, marries in the same old traditional way and settles down in life. Again, In *The Dark Room*, Savitri's high caste creates a deeply psychological barrier between herself and Mari and Ponni of the lower caste, who rescue her from drowning. She too in her attempt to assert her individuality leaves her husband, though in the end she has no other alternative left but to accept defeat in life. She returns home to her unrepentant husband. Though the characters make certain attempts to go against the prevailing social customs and traditions, they simply cannot shake them off. They cannot

stand the collective force of the society as a whole. The result is, they accept defeat, remorse follows, and they find happiness in submission.

In Anand's novels, one finds quite a number of very interesting beliefs and superstitions in vogue among the villagers. For example, in the novel *Gauri*, the husband suspects that the difficulties in his life are due to the ill luck that his wife has brought with her. Gauri and her husband are thrown out of their ancestral home following a family feud and they fail to make a home of their own on account of a terrible famine that breaks out in the village. Kesaro's secret attachment to Panchi causes hatred in her against Gauri. So she cunningly calls the famine, drought and poverty that have accompanied Panchi's marriage, as God's curse for his marrying the unlucky woman, Gauri. The poor Panchi believes Kesaro:

The idea of Gauri's bad stars continued to possess him, because the circumstances which were said to have been created by her arrival continued to grow worse: the drought seemed to become permanent; the rains would not come; more birds were found dead with the heat in the field; the wells were drying up completely; and cattle was dwindling through the owners taking their cows, buffaloes and bullocks away to villages further down the valley towards Hoshiarpur town to sell them to the slaughter house. (97-98)

Thus superstition victimises Gauri. Panchi who is at the beginning proud of Gauri's comely and innocent appearance and her 'cow-like meekness', forms a completely different picture of her under the influence of the superstition planted in him by Kesaro. He says: "She has ruined me. My aunt Kesaro is right when she says that this bride is the incarnation of Kali, the black goddess who destroys all before her, who brings famine in her breath and lays bare whole villages" (33). Here, Anand tells us how superstitions influence the ignorant villagers. They are so innocent and gullible that they believe anything without thinking about the rationale behind it. Anand's usual protest against the belief in *karma* also is voiced in this novel. The villagers accept all their misfortunes as part of their *karma*. But Panchi, as in the case of all other Anand protagonists, does not believe in *karma*. His explanation of *karma* as a euphemism for

exploitation reflects the author's own mind. Gauri like all village women believes in *karma*. But the education she has received by coming into contact with the enlightened Dr. Mahindra makes her realise the foolishness of believing in it. "Education", Gauri said quoting the big *Daktar*, 'education will make us master fate'" (240). Thus Anand makes us realise the importance of education in eradicating the social evils that torment the village society. The villagers are blinded by superstition and they mistake superstition for religion. To such people, Kesaro's telling them that from the day Gauri set foot in their house, they have had bad luck, is bound to sound sensible. When she returns home with the hope of getting affection and happiness, again superstition drags her to greater misery. Her uncle, Amru, bluntly tells Laxmi about her: "Her husband has turned her out. This unlucky girl must have brought him troubles, as she brought difficulties to us" (107). This also shows how quickly people become prey to superstitious beliefs. Amru, affected by superstition thinks that misfortune will overtake them, because of Gauri's stay there. Accusing Gauri as inauspicious, simply shows how superstition has deprived people of their senses. It is deplorable that the villagers, instead of fighting against superstition, indirectly work for the strengthening of it by following many meaningless rituals involving a lot of their hard earned money. On the other hand, in Anand's trilogy we find the people taking a strong stand against superstition. When the human suffering has reached unprecedented heights and the stage is all set for a revolution, the peasants do not take their suffering as their *kismet* but get ready to organise themselves into groups in order to oppose the unjust government. Again, what was a necessity yesterday need not be so today. But people still stick on to the necessities of the past even though they have become unnecessary today. Young Lalu in *The Village* is able to see these things in their correct perspective.

As Lalu is fully aware that these are obsolete conventions, when he goes to the town, he enters the shop of a Muhammadan, who is considered as a low caste, and from where a palatable smell is spreading. He orders an earthen saucer of curry and satisfies his hunger. Then unaware of the sacrilege he is committing, he enters "King George V Haircutting and Shaving Saloon" and has his hair shorn. In the eyes of the Sikh community this is a great sacrilege but Lalu becomes aware of it only when he reaches

the village and the priest and others pounce upon him for his disrespect to the religious conventions.

As already seen, some people even went to the extent of considering Gandhi as an incarnation of different Gods. Bakha, in *Untouchable*, remembers how people say that no sword could cut the Mahatma's body, no bullet could pierce his skin, and no fire could scorch him. Bakha hears a 'rustic' ask a 'Babu' if Gandhi will be able to overthrow the government. His reply is, "He has the *shakti* [power] to change the whole world. The British Government is nothing" (116). And Bakha does not disbelieve what he has heard!

In Anand, we find a number of beliefs connected with the untouchables. For example, the belief that something, which an untouchable had touched, would pollute one of higher caste was so strong that the higher caste people accepted things given by the untouchable only after 'purifying' it. When Bakha buys some *jelebis*, he being an untouchable, to avoid pollution by touch, the confectioner throws the packet of *jelebis*, like a cricket ball, for the untouchable to catch. Bakha then places four-nickel coins on a shoe-board near which the confectioner's assistant has been standing, ready with some water to sprinkle and remove the pollution. But, at the same time, a high caste man who hates even going near an untouchable is so happy to touch a foul smelling bull and pay respects to the dirty animal. Bakha saw:

A huge, big-humped, small-horned, spotted old brahminee bull was ruminating with half closed eyes near him. The stink from its mouth as it belched strangely unlike any odour, which had assaulted Bakha's nostrils that day, was nauseating. And the liquid dung which the bull had excreted and which Bakha knew it was his duty to sweep off, sickened him. But presently he saw a well-dressed, wrinkled old Hindu, wearing like a rich man, a muslin scarf over his left shoulder, advance to the place where the bull was enjoying its siesta and touch the animal with his forefingers. (60)

Thus Anand opens our eyes and makes us see clearly how wicked a practice untouchability is. A low caste human being is believed to be lower than a dirty bull.

Immediately Bakha realises the wickedness of the society in which he is placed; which considers touching a human being like him as a malediction and touching a dirty bull like the one he has seen just then as a benediction. Anand is vehemently opposed to the worn out customs and traditions. A close reading of the novels of Anand will reveal a lot of interesting beliefs and superstitions that exist in the village society, and then one becomes shockingly aware of the depth to which these practices have penetrated in the village community.

Thus the Indian villager of the first half of the twentieth century was a bundle of strange beliefs and customs. Although he had his own strong reasons for holding on to his beliefs, which he guarded as sacred relics, his modern and sophisticated counterpart of the twenty-first century, who stands in the floodlight of scientific discoveries and advancements may daub them as mere superstitions. But to the villager of the past his beliefs were the pivot of his life on which everything moved. Many of his beliefs might have been superstitions in the eyes of the modern world. But there is only a thin veil that separates the two. He had arrived at this system of beliefs in the course of many decades and through many generations and many of these beliefs were time tested. The rituals, which accompanied these sets of beliefs, lend colour and vitality to the otherwise monotonous and pallid life of the villager. Hence, the villager found joy in the age-old belief systems that existed in the village and he held them fast and close to his heart.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, an attempt was made to present the Indian fictional villages in the light of sociological definitions and analysis. At the outset, an in-depth study of the real village was conducted and the results categorised. Armed with such knowledge, a path was cut into the fictional village and its precincts carefully examined. The study thus made also revealed the life of the inhabitants of this rurality. Thus, two types of villages were encountered; one the actual, historical village described in the texts of history, economics, sociology, and so on. The other was what may be termed a 'literary' village, seen primarily in Indian English fiction. In any attempt to correlate the two, there arises an interesting question regarding the historicity of the 'literary' villages. This question of historicity is essentially a two-pronged one. The first part of the question is whether the representations of the village in the novels analysed provide a historically verifiable picture of actual Indian villages. And, the second part is whether the novels themselves can be viewed as historical documents that faithfully depict the truth of the Indian villages. To answer this question we must understand that there are different types of historicity; and here, in connection with the villages, there are principally two types of historicity possible. One is empirical historicity and the other experiential historicity. Empirical historicity relies on scientific or statistical study while experiential historicity is based on human experience, not only that of the writers but also that of the larger populace. The former is to be ascertained and confirmed in terms of the fidelity of the representations to actual sociological, economic and political phenomena, real events, persons, etcetera; while the latter can be established in terms of the faithfulness of the representations to the lived realities and experiences of the people in the villages, their trials and tribulations, their fears and anxieties, and the forces that govern and direct their lives.

In this treatise the real village is viewed from three perspectives namely, physical, social and conceptual. To study and analyse the characteristics of each perspective, texts of different disciplines such as sociology, political science, economics, religion, and

history were extensively made use of. These volumes so consulted provided ample information about the origins of the villages, their layout and population, family structures prevalent in them, their economic systems, and their systems of social structuring. In addition, details on conceptual areas such as religion, belief systems and other factors of a real Indian village were also gathered. It was found that though India is a land of villages, it is difficult to point out a single village as a typical village. This is due to the fact that one village is slightly or substantially different from another village in many respects. From the multidisciplinary texts it was also possible to gauge the changes the village had undergone and also determine the multidimensional impact of the change. It was also found that mainly three factors were responsible for the change that the villages underwent; namely industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation. However, in spite of the apparent changes, the villages also remained basically the same in many respects. The houses, buildings, roads and other things changed but landmarks like rivers, forests, and hills and certain life practices and attitudes remained substantially the same. All this has been included in the first chapter titled, "The Indian Village: A Multi-dimensional Space". It may also be pertinent to say here that the most recent changes experienced by the villages have been stimulated by the processes of liberalisation and globalisation.

Bearing in mind the results of the sociological study of the real villages, the fictional villages, as they appear in the novels of Anand, Narayan, Rao and Markandaya, were approached. Most of the novels of these writers are in fact village novels and these fictional villages were analysed in the light of the pertinent information from the selected works of these authors. The same parameters that were used to study the real villages were also used in analysing the villages in the novels. Thus, in the second, third and fourth chapters, the village was analysed as physical, social and conceptual entities respectively. The village was at first considered as a physical or real space. Here, in the second chapter, the layout of the village and the lanes, the design and construction of the houses and roads, and such physical features were examined. In addition, the population of the villages, the location of the temples, other landmarks, and so on were studied. In the third chapter, the village was viewed as a social or lived space. It was found that the

four writers, while mentioning the different basic aspects of the village society gave emphasis to certain particularities. For example, while Anand is eloquent on trade union activities and revolution, Rao and Markandaya are silent on that aspect. This chapter sheds light on social and family customs. While discussing the economic system prevailing in the villages, mention is also made about the ruthlessness of the *zamindars* and the landowners, the exploitation of the moneylenders and the resultant rural poverty. Industrialisation and the consequent migration of the villagers, and the repercussions of urbanisation and modernisation, all have been elaborately charted out in this section. Another important aspect of this chapter is the study made on the religious beliefs of the villagers. Religious beliefs have become the woof and warp of the life of the Indian villagers and so elaborate comments have been included on religion, Gods, Goddesses and the high priests. This has invariably led to a discussion on the evils of the caste system and untouchability. The first half of the twentieth century was a turbulent period with the storms of nationalism, the independence struggle, and anti-colonial and anti-imperialistic movements making their presence felt on the political scene. Gandhi appeared as a silver lining on the big, dark cloud that had gathered. All these find expression in the third chapter.

The fourth chapter dwells on the analysis of the rituals, the beliefs systems, the knowledge systems and other conceptual practices of the village community. The belief of the villagers in their fate and karma is exemplified in this chapter together with their trust in horoscopes and omens. It is also evident from this section that the villagers have immense faith in prayers and in the scriptures. Another point extensively discussed is the belief of the gullible villagers in superstitions. A short sketch at the end of the last chapter on the changes that the villages have undergone tries to give information about the changing rural scenes.

As mentioned earlier, two types of historicities have been identified—empirical historicity and experiential historicity. This work can thus be analysed using these two paradigms. Empirical historicity lies in the fact that the villages in the novels bear a general resemblance to the real villages and have many of the characteristics of the real

villages. Novels may bear general correspondences to historical epochs and to actual events and phenomena. The novelist is a witness to the events and conditions of his times and he may give occasional expression to those happenings. But it must be borne in mind that these novelists do not describe a village that actually existed at any point in the course of time and hence these villages, as such, are not found in any text of history. So also, their portrayal of a real event may not be historically accurate. Moreover, the villages in the novels are not identifiable villages that exist anywhere in India. In other words, the villages seen in the novels are representative villages created by the Indian writers in English. Hence they are not historical villages as such, in the sense, that none of the villages described in the novels existed in actuality, anywhere in India. However, the authors with their first hand knowledge of the Indian villages, brought together a number of features from the different real villages and created their fictional villages that sometimes feel truer than a faithful depiction of actual villages. The fictional villages have been depicted as they evolved in the minds of their creators. The personal experience of the novelist might have contributed to the nature of the village and he might have also fashioned the village to suit the requirements of his story. Hence these novels cannot be taken as real historic documents of the Indian villages.

At the same time, the study also reveals that the villages described in the novels and the narrations of life in them do resemble the larger experiential patterns of actual villages and the life therein. Experiential historicity concerns the life experiences of the people living in the villages. Such experiential history, which the fictional texts give, may be found in few texts of history or sociology. It is presented and highlighted primarily in fictional texts. The duty of fiction is not to replicate empirical history, but to present faithfully a quintessence of the experience of the villagers – their fears and sorrows, their pains and sufferings, their joys and tribulations. For example, only experiential historicity can reproduce the injustice and misery that the untouchables suffered in India. The humiliation and anguish of Bakha and Sohini can be effectively portrayed only in this manner. No empirical historicity can reproduce the human degradation and anguish of the coolies in the Assam tea plantations and in the factories and slums of Bombay as revealed in the novels *Two Leaves and a Bud* and *Coolie* respectively. Only experiential historicity

can be resorted to in successfully depicting the tragic fate of Nathan and Rukmani and the consequences of industrialisation. Such experiential historicity is probably equal, if not more, in value to empirical historicity due to the fact that it explicates the thoughts, feelings, beliefs and passions of the people. And that is the intrinsic worth of these novels.

Another dimension of experiential history is seen in the fact that these writers who never lived in secluded ivory towers took certain firm positions, stands and attitudes in the political, social, religious, and economic arenas, with regard to the life in the villages. This to a great extent depended on the ideological beliefs and approaches of the authors, which in turn represented certain denominations within the larger attitudinal sphere of Indian society of the times. Thus the writers also gave a clear view of the political and social attitudes that influenced the general approaches and attitudes to village life. These attitudes and positions were not exclusively of the authors alone, but on the other hand, it emanated from their social responsibility. In fact, it was the *vox populi*.

So, it may be said that these novels remain fictional historic texts or documents parallel to actual historical documents. They provide exhaustive insights about the villages and the life in the villages. The intrinsic value of these novels lies in the fact that they are chronicles of rural life with an amply magnified experiential dimension, that brings out the different contours of the villages and the life therein. Thus, the reader has the experience of fiction becoming history through them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbas, Khwaja Ahmad. *Tomorrow Is Ours*. Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1943.
- . *Inquilab*. Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1955.
- Agnihotri, G. N. *Indian Life And Problems In The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan*. Meerut: Shalabh Book House, 1984.
- Ahmed, Qeyamuddin. "Some Norms and Social and Economic Behaviour." *The Indian Histoical Review*. 8. 1-2 (1982): 31-34.
- Ahuja, Ram. *Society in India*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 1999.
- Allen, W. *Reading A Novel*. London: Phonix House, 1949.
- Altekar, A.S. *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1962.
- Ambedkar, B. R. *Annihilation of Caste*. Jalandhar: Bheem Patrika Publications, 1936.
- Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*. New Delhi: Arnold Publishers, 1935.
- . *Coolie*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1936.
- . *Two Leaves and A Bud*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937.
- . *The Sword and the Sickle*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1942.
- . *The Big Heart*. London: Hutchinson's International Authors, 1945.
- . *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Preface to the 2nd edition, 1951.
- . *Apology For Heroism – A Brief Autobiography of Ideas*. Bombay: Kutub Publishers Ltd. 1957.
- . *Gauri*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1960.
- . *The Road*. Bombay: Kutub Popular, 1961.
- . *Apology for Heroism*. Bombay: Kutub-Popular, 1967.
- . *The Village*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1976.

- - -. "Why I Write." *Indo-English Literature: A Collection of Essays*. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1977.
- - -. "The Sources of Protest in My Novels." *The Literary Criterion*. 4.18 (1983): 1-13.
- Attwood, D.W., and B.S. Bhaskar. *Who Shares? Cooperatives and Rural Development*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Attwood, D.W., et al. *Raising Cane: The Political Economy of Sugar in Western India*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.
- Ayappan, A., and Balaratnam, L. *Society in India*. Madras: Book Center, 1956.
- Badal, R.K. *R. K. Narayan: A Study*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1976.
- Bailey, F.G. *Tribe, Caste and Nation*. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Bandyopadhyay, S., and D.Von Eschen. "Villagers' Failure to Cooperate: Does it Matter? What Accounts for it? Some Evidences from West Bengal, India." *Social Change in A North Indian Village*. Ed. Barnabas, A.P. New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1969.
- Barnabas, A.P. *Social Change in A North Indian Village*. New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1969.
- Basu, Romen. *The Tamarind Tree*. Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1978.
- Berry, Margaret, *Mulk Raj Anand: The Man and the Novelist*. Amsterdam: Oriental Press. 1971.
- Bhagavad Gita*. Trans. and comm. Swami Swarupananda. Calcutta: Advaita Ashram Publication Depot, 1996.
- Bhardwaj, S.P. "The Painter of Signs: An Analysis". *Perspectives on R.K.Narayan*. Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002.
- Bhatnagar, A.K. *Kamala Markandaya: A Thematic Study*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 1995.
- Bhatnagar, K.C. *Realism in Major Indo-English Fiction*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1980.

- Bhattacharya, Bhabani. *He Who Rides a Tiger*. Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1955.
- - -. *So Many Hungers*. London: A. H. Allen, 1966.
- - -. *A Goddess Named Gold*. New Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1967.
- - -. *Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1977.
- Bhattacharya, P.C. *Indo-Anglian Literature and the Works of Raja Rao* Delhi: Atma Ram & Sons, 1983.
- Bidyadhar, Misra. *Village Life in India*. New Delhi: Ajanta Publications (India), 1988.
- Biswas, Dipti Kumar. *Sociology of Major Bengali Novels*. Gurgaon: The Academic Press, 1974.
- Blunt, E.A. *The caste system of North India*. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.
- Borheck, James T. *Sociology of Belief*. London: A Wiley Publication, 1975.
- Bose, N.K. *Gandhi: The Man and His Mission*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1966.
- - -. and Patavardhan. P.H. *Gandhi and Indian Politics*. Bombay: Lalvani Publishing House, 1967.
- - -. *The Structure of Hindu Society*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1975.
- Butlet, G. Trans. and comm. *Manusmriti : Sacred Books of the East*. Vol.25. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1967.
- Caudwell, et al. *The Causes of Demographic Change: Experimental Research in South India*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.
- Chanana, Dev Raj. *Slavery in Ancient India*. New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1960.
- Chandah, "The Mahatma in Modern Indo-English Fiction", *The Indian P.E.N.* 42.2 (1976): 27-29.
- Chattopadhyaya, D. "Village Communities." *Rural Sociology in India*. Ed. A.R. Desai. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969, rpt. 2006.

- Choudhary, Abhay Kant. *Early Medieval Villages in North Eastern India*. Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1971.
- Clare, Tullis. "Review of *The Sword and the Sickle*." *Time and Tide*. 33.17 (1942): 18-29.
- Connell, John, and Bipiab Das Gupta. *Migration From Rural Areas*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Cormack, Margaret. *She Who Rides A Peacock: Indian Students and Social Change*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1961.
- Cowasiee, Saros. "Mulik Raj Anand: Princes and Proletarians." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. July 1968:23-27.
- . "Mulik Raj Anand and His Critics." *Banasthali Patrika*. 12 Jan. 1969: 7-8.
- . "Mulik Raj Anand: A Profile". *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 4 May 1969: 21-23.
- . "Mulik Raj Anand: The Early Struggles of Novelist." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. June 1972: 37-42.
- . "Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud*." *Indian Literature*. 16. 3 - 4 (1973): 36-41.
- . *Author to Critic: The Letters of Mulik Raj Anand to Saros Cowasjee*. Ed. Saros Cowasjee, Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1973.
- . "Anand's Literary Creed." *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*, 1.1 (1973): 34-39.
- . "Mulik Raj Anand's *The Sword and the Sickle*." *World Literature Written in English*. 14. 2 (1975):21-24.
- . *Coolie: An Assessment*. New Delhi: Oxford University. Press, 1976.
- . "Mulik Raj Anand's *Untouchable*: An Appraisal." *Indo-English Literature: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. K.K.Sharma, Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1977.
- . *So Many Freedoms: A Study of the Major Fiction of Mulik Raj Anand*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977.

- D'Souza, Victor. "Education in Social Structure and Democracy in India." *Social Determinants of Educability in India*. Ed. S.P. Ruhela. New Delhi: Jain Publications, 1985.
- Dandekar, Hemalata. "Gobar-Gas Plants: How Appropriate Are They?" *Delhi: Economic and Political Weekly*. 15.20 (1980): 36-38.
- Darling, Malcom. *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*. Bombay: OUP, 1947.
- Das, Bijay Kumar. *Kamala Markandaya's A Handful of Rice*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1987.
- Datta, Dvijadas. *Landlordism in India*. Bombay: Taraporevala Sons, 1931.
- Desai, A.R. *Rural Sociology in India*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969 rpt. 2006.
- Desai, I.P. "Joint Family in India: An Analysis." *Sociological Bulletin*. 5.2 (1956): 27-30.
- - -. *Some Aspects of Family in Mahuva*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964.
- Desai, Neera. *Women in Modern India*. Bombay: Vora Publications, 1957.
- Dev, Som. *The Guide: A Critical Appreciation*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1982.
- Devi, C. Annalatha, "Desperation and Aspiration: Hetrogenous Phases in Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve and A Handful Rice." *Kamala Markandaya: A Critical Spectrum*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. New Delhi: Atlanta Publishers and Distributors, 2002
- Dhawan, R.K. *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1992.
- Dube, S.C. *Indian Village*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955.
- - -. *India's Changing Villages*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1958.
- - -. *Tradition and Development*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1990.
- Dubios, A.J.A. *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*. London: Clovendon Press, 1906.

- Dumond, Louis. "The Village community from Munro to Maine Contributions to Indian Sociology." *Sociological Bulletin*. 9.1 (1966): 31-34.
- Dumont, L., and Pocock, D. *Contributions of Indian Sociology*. Dacca: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Dutt, Ramesh Chandra. *Civilisation and Ancient India*. London, 1899.
- Edamaruku, Sanal. "Hoax." *Illustrated Weekly of India*. Sept (1985): 29.
- Edgell, Rickword. "Three Views on Coolie." *Kakatiya journal of English Studies*. 2.1 (1977): 20-26.
- Edward, Burra. "Three views on Coolie." *Kakatiya Journal of English Studies*. 2.1 (1977): 47-54.
- Embree, A.T. "The Hindu Tradition." *Readings in Oriental Thought*. Ed. William Theodore De Bary. New York: Modern Library Book, 1966.
- Fischer, Louis. *The Life Of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi: Harper and Brothers, 1950.
- Fisher, Marlene, "Interview with Mulk Raj Anand: May 19, 1973 Khandala." *World Literature in English*, 13.1 April 1974: 17-21.
- Forster, E. M. Preface. *Two Leaves and A Bud*. By Mulk Raj Anand. Delhi: Arnold Publishers, 1951.
- . Preface. *Untouchable*. By Mulk Raj Anand. Delhi: Arnold Publishers, 1970.
- Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough*. London: Macmillan, 1963.
- Frykenberg, Eric Robert. *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1979.
- Gadgil, D.R. *The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times*. London: Oxford University Press, 1948.
- Gandhi, M.K. "Harijan." 4 April 1936. Rpt. in *India of My Dreams*. Ahmedabad: Navajeevan Publishing House, 1975.
- Ganguli, Dwarakanath. *Slavery in British Dominion*. Calcutta: Jijnasa, 1972.

- Ganguli, S. *Gandhi-Theory and Practice: Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance*. Simla: Institute of Advanced Studies, 1954.
- George, C. J. *Mulk-Raj Anand: His Art and Concerns*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1994.
- Ghurye, G.S. *Caste and Race in India*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969.
- Gist, N.P. "Cast Differentials in South India." *American Sociological Review*. 19.1 (1954): 126-198.
- Gore, M.S. *Urbanisation and Family Change*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1968.
- - -. *Immigrants and Neighbourhoods: Two Aspects of Life in a Metropolitan City*. Bombay: Tate Institute of Social Sciences, 1970.
- Gough, E. Kathleen. "The Social Structure of a Tanjore Village." *Rural Sociology in India*. Ed. A.R. Desai. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969, rpt. 2006.
- Gould, H. *Caste Adaptation in Modernising Indian Society*. New Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1988.
- Gowda, Anniah, H.H., "Mulk Raj Anand." *The Literary Half-Yearly*. 6.1 Jan. 1965: 17-22.
- Grierson, Geoge. A. *Bihar Peasant Life*. London: Trubner and Co., 1885.
- Griffiths, P. *The British Impact on India*. London: Macdonald, 1952.
- Gupta, Balarama, G.S., "Anand's Big Heart: A Study." *The Banasthali Patrika*. 13 July 1969: 9-11.
- Gupta, Dipankar. *Social Stratification*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Habib, Ifran. *The Agrarian System Of Mughal India*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963.
- Hajela, T. N. *History of Economic Thought*. Agra: Shivelal Agarwal & Co. 1985.
- Hall, Stuart and Gay. *Question of Cultural Identity*. New Delhi: Sage, 1996.
- Hartmann, Paul, et al. *The Mass Media and Village Life: An Indian Study*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989.

Hindustan Times. 4 December 1996: 8.

Hindustan Times. 13 May 1997: 7.

Hindustan Times, 9 May 1998: 5.

Hindustan Times. 26 December 1998: 7.

Hindustan Times, 12 June 1999: 6.

Holmstrom, Lakshmi. *The Novels of R.K.Narayan*. Calcutta: A writers Workshop Publications, 1973.

Hutton, J.H. *Caste in India*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

I.C.S.S.R. Report. 1.161(1974): 21-30.

Irawati, Karve. "The Indian Village." *Rural Sociology in India*. Ed. A.R. Desai. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969, rpt. 2006.

Isvaran, Manjeri S. *Venkataramani: Writer and Thinker - An Appreciation*. Madras: The People's Printing and Publishing House, 1932.

- - -. and S. Venkataramani. *Writer and Thinker*. Madras: People's Printing and Publishing House, 1973.

Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa. *Indian writing in English*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1984.

Jain, N. K. "Kamala Markandaya: *Nectar in a Sieve*." *Major Indian Novels: An Evaluation*. Ed. N. S. Pradhan. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1985.

Jannuzi, Tomasson F. *Agrarian Crisis in India: The Case of Bihar*. New Delhi: Sangam Books, 1974.

- - -. *India in Transition*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1990.

Jayaraman, R. *Caste and Class: Dynamics of Inequality in Indian Society*. Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981.

Jha, Hetukar. "Electoral Behaviour and social values in India." *Journal of Social and Economic Studies*. 9.2 (1981): 37-44.

- - -. *Colonial context of Higher Education in India*. New Delhi: Usha Publications, 1985.
- - -. *Social Structures of Indian Villages*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991.
- Jha, Rama. *Gandhian Thought And Life*. New Delhi: Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1970.
- - -. *Gandhian Thought and Indo-Anglian Novelists*. New Delhi: Chanakya Publishers, 1983.
- Jha, Rekha. *The Novels of Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Praver Jhabvala*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1990.
- Johnson, Kirk. *Television and Social Change in Rural India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000.
- Joseph, Margaret. P. *Kamala Markandaya*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1980.
- Kain, Geoffery. Ed. *R.K. Narayan: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1993.
- Kalinnkova, Elena J. *Indian English Literature: A Perspective*. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1982.
- Kane. *History of Dharmashatras*. London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1930.
- Kapadia, K. M. "The Family in Transition." *Sociological Bulletin*. 8.27 (1959): 18-27.
- - -. *Marriage and Family in India*. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Karim, Nazmal. "Some Aspects of Popular Beliefs among Muslims of Bengal." *Eastern Anthropologist*. 9.1 (1955): 29-41.
- Karve, Irawati. *Kinship Organisation in India*. Pune: Deccan College Monograph, 1953.
- Kolenda, P. *Caste in Contemporary India*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1997.
- Khurana, Anand. "Godmen Or Conmen"?. *Nagpur Times: Sunday Magazine*. 26 Jan. (1986): 9.
- Kripalani, J.B. "The Gandhian Way." *The Visva Bharati Quarterly*. 2.1 (1937): 39-45.
- - -. *Gandhian Thought*. New Delhi: Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, 1961.

- Krishnan, S. "A Day with Narayan." *Span*. Apr. 1975: 9-12.
- Krishnaswami, S. *Glimpses of Women in India*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1983.
- Kuber, W.N. *A Critical Study of the Social and Political Thoughts of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar*. Delhi: The community Project Administration Publication Division, 1969.
- Kuppuswamy, B. *Population and Society in India*. Bombay: Popular, 1962.
- - -. *Social Change in India*. Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt.Ltd., 2000.
- Lewis Oscar. *Village Life in Northern India*. New York: Vintage Books, 1965.
- Lindsay, Jack. "Mulk Raj Anand." *Times Literary Supplementary*. 16 Aug.1957: 21-30.
- Madan, T.N. "The Hindu Joint Family." *Man*. 62 (1962): 145-149.
- Madhavikutty. "Mookam Vidooram." *Bhashaposhini* (Malayalam). Sept. 1998: 44 (Own translation).
- Mahadevan T.M.P. *Outlines of Hinduism*. Calcutta: Advaita Ashram Publication Depot, 1986.
- Majumdar, R.C. et al. *An Advanced History of India*. London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1967.
- - -. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, 11 vols. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1969.
- Malaviya, H.D. "Village Communities in India: A Historical Outline." *Rural Sociology in India*. Ed. A.R. Desai. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969, rpt. 2006.
- Malgonkar, Manohar. *An Introduction to The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*. Bombay: B.H.U.1945.
- - -. *A Bend in the Ganges*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965.
- Malhotra, Tara. "Old Places, Old Faces, and Old Times: A Critical Study of R.K.Narayan's Latest Fiction." *Banasthali Patrika* 12 Jan. 1969: 56-68.

- Mandelbaum, David. *Society in India*. Vols. I&II. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.
- Manorama, Pandit. "Review of Mulk Raj Anand's *The Road*." *World Literature Written in English*. 14.2 Nov. 1975: 34-45.
- Manpower Profile*, India. Institute of Applied Manpower Research, 6th edition. (1998): 35-44.
- Markandaya, Kamala. *Nector in A Seive*. New Delhi: Jaico Publishing House, 1955.
- . *Some Inner Fury*. New York: Signet, 1955.
- . *Possession*. London: Putnam and Company, 1963.
- . *The Coffer Dams*. New Delhi: Jaico Publishing House, 1969.
- . *A Handful of Rice*. New Delhi: Hind Pocket Books Pvt. Ltd., 1971.
- Mayer, A.C. *Caste and Kinship in Central India*. Berkeley: University of Callifornia Press, 1960.
- Mazumdar, R.C. *History of Freedom Movement in India*. Calcutta: Firma Mukhopadhyaya, 1963.
- McKinnon, Alstair. *Falsification and Belief*. Paris: Mouton, 1970.
- Mehta, P.P. *R.K.Narayan: A Study*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1978.
- . *Indo-Anglian Fiction: An Assessment*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1979.
- Mellor, Andrew. *India Since Partition*. London: Trustile Press, 1951.
- Mishra, B. "Despair and Delight in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand." *Perspectives on Indian English Literature*. Ed. B. Mishra. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1983.
- Misra, Bidyadhar. *Village Life in India*. New Delhi: Ajanta Publications (India), 1998.
- Mukherjee, Nirmal. "Some Aspects of Literary Development of R.K.Narayan." *Banasthali Patrika* 13 August 1969: 76-88.

- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *The Twice Born Fiction*. New Delhi: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1971.
- Mukherjee, Ram Krishna. *The Rise and fall of the East India Company*. London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1958.
- . *Social structure and values*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1965.
- . *The Sociologist and Social Change in India Today*. Delhi: Prentice Hall of India, 1965.
- Murphy, Garden. *In the Minds of Man*. New York: Vintage Books, 1953.
- Nagarajan, K. *Athawar House*. Madras; Higginbothams, 1939.
- Nagpaul, Hans. *Modernisation and Urbanisation in India: Problems and Issues*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1996.
- Nagpur Times: Sunday Magazine. 26 Jan. 1986: 16.
- Naik, M.K.Ed. *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English*. Dharwar: Karnatak University, 1968.
- . *Raja Rao*. New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1972.
- . *Mulk Raj Anand*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1973.
- . *The Ironic Vision: A Study Of The Fiction Of R.K.Narayan*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1983.
- Nandi, Santibhushan, and D.S Tyagi. "Forms of Villages." *Rural Sociology in India*. Ed. A.R. Desai. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969, rpt. 2006.
- Narasimhaiah, C.D. "Raja Rao's Kantapura: An Analysis." *The Literary Criterion*. 7.2. (1966): 36-40.
- . *The Writer's Gandhi*. Patiala: Punjab University, 1967.
- . *Raja Rao*. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1972.
- . *Raja Rao. Indian Writer's Series*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1973.
- . Introduction. *Kanthapura*. By Raja Rao. Madras: OUP, 1980.

- Narasimhan, Shakuntala. "Shadows in the Countryside." *Indian Express*. 5 Apr.1987: 12.
- Narayan, R.K. *Swami and Friends*. . Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1935.
- . *The English Teacher*.Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1946.
- . *The Financial Expert*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1952.
- . *Waiting for the Mahatma*. . Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1955.
- . Mr. Sampath. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1956.
- . *The Guide*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1958.
- . *The Dark Room*. Bombay: Pearl Publication, 1960.
- . *The Man-eater of Malgudi*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1961.
- . *My Days*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publication, 1963.
- . *The Bachelor of Arts*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1965.
- . *The Vendor of Sweets*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1967.
- . The Painter of Signs. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1977.
- . A Tiger for Malgudi. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1980.
- . *Talkative Man*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1983.
- . *My Days: A Memoir*. Delhi: Oriental Paperbacks, 1986.
- . *Gods, Demons and Others*. New Delhi: Vision Books, 1991.
- Narayan, Shyamala. A. *Raja Rao: Man and his Works*. New Delhi: Sterling Pvt. Ltd., 1998.
- Nazmul, Karim. "Some Aspects of Popular Beliefs among Muslims of Bengal." *Eastern Anthropolpogist*. 9.1 (1955): 23-34.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal. *The Discovery of India*. Bombay: Macmillan, 1961; rpt, 1972.
- New Woman*. Dec. 1998: 16-19.
- Niranjan, Shiva. "The Nature and Extent of Gandhi's Impact on the Early Novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao." *Commonwealth Quarterly*. 3.2 (1988): 38-47.

- Niven, Alastair. "The Lalu Trilogy of Mulk Raj Anand." *Readings in Commonwealth Literature*. Ed. William Walsh. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.
- O'Donnell, Mike. *Sociology*. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, U.K. 1977.
- Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. Ed. H.W. Fowler. 5th ed. London: OUP, 1964.
- Pallan, Rajesh K. *Myths and Symbols in Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan*, Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 1994.
- - -. *Myths and Symbols in Raja Rao*. Delhi: Kath Association, 1998.
- Panicker, Ayyappa K. "Man and God in Indian and African Fiction: A Study Based in *Kanthapura*, *Arrow of God* and *Mookajji's Visions*." *Commonwealth Literature: Problems of Response*. Ed. C.D. Narasimhaiah. Madras: Macmillan, 1981.
- Parameswaran, Uma. *A Study of Representative Indo-Anglian Novelists*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1998.
- Parikh, Indira. J., and Pulin K Garg. *Indian Women: An Inner Dialogue*. New Delhi: Sage, 1989.
- Parnjpe, Makarand. Ed. *The Best of Raja Rao*. Delhi: Kath Association, 1998.
- Pathan, B. A. *Gandhian Myth in English Literature in India*. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1989.
- Patil, V.T. *Gandhi, Nehru And The Quit India Movement*. New Delhi: B.R.Publishing Corporation, 1984.
- Patnaik, N. *Caste and Social Change*. Hyderabad: National Institute of Community Development, 1969.
- Paul, Premila Raj. *The Novels of Mulk Raj Anan*. New Delhi: Sterling, 1983.
- Peak, H. "Attitude and Motivation." *Nebraska symposium on Motivation*. Vol.2. Ed. M. Jones. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955.
- Pillai, Govind Krishna. Preface. *Hindu Gods and Hidden Mysteries*. Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1958.

- Pojman, Louis P. *Religious Belief and the Will*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.
- Pousse, Michel. *R.K.Narayan: Romancter et te'moin*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992.
- Powell, Baden, B.H. *The Origin and Growth of Village Communities in India*. London: Swan Sonnenschein & co. Ltd., 1989.
- Prabhu, P.N. *Hindu Social Organisation*. Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1958.
- Prakash, Som. *Good Bye for the Present: R.K.Narayan and Inbetweenity*. Adelaide: CRNLE Publications, Flauders University, 1998.
- Prasad, Amarnath. "Mulk Raj Anand: The Lawyer of the Lowly and the Lost." *Studies in Indian English Fiction*. New Delhi; Sarup and Sons, 2001.
- Prasad, A.K. *The Village in Indo – Anglian Fiction*. Patna: Novelty & Co. 1994.
- Prasad, B.K. *Rural Development: Concept Approach and Strategy*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2003.
- Prasad, I. *A New History of India*. Allahabad: Indian Press, 1950.
- Prasad, Kali. *Social Integration Research: A studyof Inter-Caste Relationship*. Lucknow: Lucknow University, 1954.
- Prasad, N. *The Myth of Caste System*. Patna: Samajna, 1957.
- Prasada, G. *The Caste System*. Allahabad: Indian Press, 1910.
- - -. *Japasutram*. Madras: Ganesh & Co, 1971.
- Purohit, I.G. "Age-old Injustice and Exploitation of the Untouchables." *Indian Writing in English: Critical Exploration*. Madras: Emerald Publishers, 1998.
- Purusasukta Rigveda (X 90,12). Quoted in "Journey Through Hell" by Darshana Trivedi. *Studies in Indian English Fiction*. Ed. Amar Nath Prasad. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2001.
- Radhakrishnan, N. "The image of Gandhi in Indo-Anglian Novels." *Research and Criticism*. Ed. Radhakrishnan. Annamalai: Annamalai Research Scholars' Association, 1975.

- - -. *Indo Anglian Fiction: Major Trends and Themes*. Madras: Emerald Publishers, 1984.
- - -. *Mulk Raj Anand: A Revaluation*. New Delhi: Arnold Associates, 1995.
- Raizada, Harish. *R.K. Narayan: A Critical Study of His Works*. New Delhi: Young Asia Publications, 1969.
- Rajan, P.K. Ed. *Studies in Mulk Raj Anand*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1986.
- Ram, Atma. Ed. *Perspectives on R.K.Narayan*. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1981.
- Ramachandran, R. *Urbanisation and Urban Systems in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Ramteke, S.R. *R.K.Narayan and his Social Perspective*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1998.
- Ramu, G.N. *Family and Caste in Urban India*. Bombay: Vikas Publishing House, 1977.
- Rao, A. V. Krishna. *The Indo Anglian Novel and the Changing Tradition*. Mysore: Rao and Raghavan, 1972.
- - -. and K. Madhavi. *Kamala Markandaya: A Critical study of Her Novels, 1954-1982*. Delhi: B.R. Publishing house, 1997.
- Rao, M.S. *A Social Change in Malabar*. Bombay: Popular Book Depot., 1957.
- Rao, Raja. *The Serprnt and The Rope*. Delhi: Hind Pocket Books Pvt. Ltd., 1968.
- - -. *Kanthapura*. Madras: O.U.P., 1980.
- Rao, Shyamala. *Bhattacharya and his Fiction*. Bareilly: Student's Store, 1997.
- Reddy, K. Venkata. "A Tryst with Conscience: A Handful of Rice." *Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya*. Ed. Madhusudan Prasad. Ghaziabad: Vimal, 1984.
- Redfield, R. *Peasant Society and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956.
- Risley, Herbert. *The People of India*. London: M.Thackery & Co., 1915.
- Rogerson, J.W. *Myth in Old Testament*. New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1974.

- Ross, Aileen. *The Hindu Family in its Urban Setting*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. New Delhi: India Ink Pub. Co. Ltd., 1997.
- Roy, P.C. Trans. *The Mahabarata*. Rev. ed. I and XII; 60 passim. Calcutta: Advaita Ashram Publication Depot, 1956.
- Sachchidananda, G. *The Harijan Elite*, Faridabad: Thomson Press (India) Ltd., 1977.
- Saiyidain, K. G. *Significance of Gandhi as a man and Thinker*. Delhi: Publication Division; Govt. of India, 1970.
- Salzman, Philip. "The Electronic Trojan Horse: Television in the Globalisation of Para-Modern Cultures." Presented at the Plenary Session of 13th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Mexico City, 12 May 1993.
- Santokh, Anant. *The Changing Concept of Caste in India*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. 1972.
- Sanyal, S.C. *Indian Asceticism in R.K.Narayan and Other Indian English Novelists*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1994.
- Shah, A. B, and G.R. Rao. *Tradition and Modernity in India*. Bombay: Manakatlas, 1965.
- Shah, B.V. *Social Change and College Students of Gujarat*. Baroda: M.S. University, 1964.
- Shankar, Prem. *Indian Village Society in Transition*. Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1998.
- Sharad, Paul. *Raja Rao and Cultural Tradition*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1987.
- Sharma, A.N. *Bonded Labour*. Bombay: Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 1990.
- - -. *Gandhian Strain in the Indian English Novels*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2004.
- Sharma, K.K. Ed. *Perspectives on Mulk Raj Anand*. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1978.
- - -. *Perspectives on Raja Rao*. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1980.
- Shastri, Shakuntala Rao. *Women in Vedic Age*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1952.

- Silone, Ignazio. *Fontamara*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1934.
- Singh, K. *Rural Sociology*. Lucknow: Prakashan Kendra, 1990.
- Singh, Khushwant. *Train To Pakistan*. Bombay: Pearl Publications, 1967.
- Singh, Pramod Kumar. *Five Contemporary Indian Novelists*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1999.
- - -. *The Novels of R.K.Narayan: A Critical Evaluation*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1999.
- Singh, R.A. *Critical Essays on R.K Narayan's Novels*. Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2002.
- Singh, R.D, and S.C. Dube. "The Indian Village." *Journal of Asian Studies*. 16.1 (1956): 4 – 20
- Singh, R.S. *R.K.Narayan: The Guide—Some Aspects*. New Delhi: Doaba House, 1971.
- - -. *Raja Rao's Kanthapura: A Critical Study*. Delhi. Doaba House, 1973.
- - -. *Indian Novel In English*. New Delhi, Arnold Heinemann, 1977.
- Singh, Yogendra. *Modernisation of Indian Tradition*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1986.
- Sinha, K.N. Ed. *Indian Writing In English*. New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1979.
- Spate, O.H.K. "The Indian Village." *Rural Sociology in India*. Ed. A.R. Desai. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969, rpt. 2006.
- Spiro, M.E. *The Psychological Function of Witchcraft: The Barmese Case*. Honolulu: East West Centre, 1966.
- Srinivas M.N. *Caste in Modern India*. New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1964.
- - -. *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays*. Delhi: O.U.P., 1994.
- Srivastava, Ramesh. "Symbolism in Nectar in a Sieve." *Indian Scholar*. 2 (1979): 85-91.
- - -. "Kamala Markandaya's Style." *Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya*. New Delhi: Vimal Prakashan, 1984.
- - -. *The Novels of Kamala Markandaya: A Critical Study*. Amristar: Gurunanak University Publications, 1998.

- Suda, J. P., *A History of Political Thought*. Meerut: L. Nath & Co. 1972.
- Sundaram, P. S. "Ambivalence in R. K. Narayan." Ed. R. K. Dhawan, *Explorations in Modern Indo-English Fiction*. New Delhi: Bahri Publications, 1982.
- Swain S.P "Crisis of conscience: A Study of Kamala Markandaya's A Handful of Rice." *Kamala Markandaya: A Critical Spectrum*. Ed. M.K.Bhatnagar. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2002.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *Lectures and Addresses*. Ed. Anthony X. Soares. London: Macmillan and Co.Ltd.,1928.
- Thorner, Daniel. *Agrarian Structure*, Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1956.
- Tomasson, F. Jannuzi. *India in Transition*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1990.
- Torado, P.Michael. *Internal Migration in Developing Countries*. Geneva: Internatiional Labour Office, 1967.
- Tulsidas, Goswami. *Ram Charit Manas*, V, 58, 6. Calcutta: Advaita Ashram Publication Depot, 1965.
- Unnithan, T.K.N. *Gandhi in Free India*. Netherlands: F. B. Volters Groningen, 1979.
- Varma, R.M. *Major Themes in the Novels of R.K.Narayan*. New Delhi: Jainsons, 1993.
- Venkataramani, K.S., *Murugan the Tiller*. Madras: Sveteranya Ashram, 1928.
- Vidyalankar A. *Caraksamhita ka Sanskritic Anushilan*. Varanasi: Shanti Prakashan, 1964.
- Vijayasree, C. *Mulk Raj Anand: The Raj and the Writer*. Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1998.
- Vivekananda, Swami. *The Complete Works*. 8 vols. Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1971.
- - -. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*. Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, rpt. 1976.
- - -. *Caste, Culture and Socialism*. Published by Swami Ananyananda. Calcutta: Ashutosh Lithographic Co. rpt. 1983.
- Wade, Robert. *Village Republics: Economic Conditions for Collective Action in South India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

- Walsh, William. R. K. *Narayan: A Critical Appreciation*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1983.
- Williams, H.M. *Indo Anglian Literature 1800–1972: A Survey*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976.
- - -. *Studies in Modern Indian Fiction in English*. Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1978.
- Wiser, William, and Charlotte Wiser. *Behind Mud Walls*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.
- Yojana*. 1 May 1987: 32-33.
- Yojana*. Special Issue on “Could We Break Their Shackles.” 31 Aug. 1987: 36 – 48.
- Zaidi, S.M. Hafeez. *The Village Culture in Transition*. Hawaii: East West Centre Press, University of Honolulu, 1970.
- Zimmerman, C.C. *Family and Society*. Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1956.