

**CHAPTER - IV**

A SILENCE OF DESIRE.

### A SILENCE OF DESIRE.

Kamaia Markandaya's third novel, A SILENCE OF DESIRE, was published in 1960. This novel being a subtle study of husband-wife relationship, is of psychological interest too. A.V. Krishna Rao observes: "...Markandaya's diagrammatical representation of the contemporary consciousness shows up a new dimension of sensibility in that the fictional focus is on the psychological adjustment of an urban middle class family." <sup>1</sup>

Apart from the study of psycho-social adjustment between a wife and husband, this novel also presents an opportunity to study the middle class family in an Indian city, K.R.Chandrashekhara remarks :

"A SILENCE OF DESIRE has a purely personal and domestic Indian setting ; yet, even in this novel, the heroine's husband is a typical middle-class Indian whose attitude towards life is illustrative of the Western influence on India." <sup>2</sup>

Prof. H.M. Williams finds this novel as :

"... a subtle study of the reality of religious faith and of the opposition

between men's modern quest for scientific 'truth' and technological certainty and the sense of mystery and the inexplicable in the human condition." 3

Thus apart from its psychological interest, this novel presents ample opportunities to make a sociological study of it.

Dandekar, a senior clerk in the service of government of India, is happily married to Sarojini. They are leading a happy life with their three children. Sarojini is a traditional housewife. On the other hand, Dandekar has modern outlook. One evening after returning from his office, to his surprise Dandekar finds his wife absent. She returns later and offers some lame excuse for her absence. Though he appears convinced at that moment he grows suspicious. One day he follows her and finds out that she goes out to visit a Swamy. Sarojini later reveals to him that she has developed a tumour and she goes to the Swamy for a faith healing. When forced by Dandekar to visit a hospital, she says that she has no faith in the hospitals as her mother and grand mother had died while undergoing operation for a similar disease. Dandekar fails to prevent her from visiting the Swamy. He even visits the Swamy and requests him to stop sarojini from visiting him. But Swamy refuses to do so. Dandekar

faces financial problems and loses peace and interest in work. He starts visiting prostitutes. By the advice of his colleagues he puts his problem before his boss Chart, who in turn orders Ghose to make an enquiry about the genuineness of the Swamy. Ghose, the modern-viewed officer recommends expulsion of the Swamy from the town as he is a fake one. In the meantime however the swamy himself leaves the town. Sarojini returns to Dandekar and agrees to undergo operation. After the successful operation, Dandekar is back to his normal and happy life once again.

A SILENCE OF DESIRE is a story of an urban middle-class family. Dandekar is a senior clerk in the service of government of India. His "... two worlds were his office and his home, and he had been fortunate so far in that one could usually balance the other."<sup>4</sup> He is a good and affectionate husband never forcing his ideas on his wife. He is also a very good father, always thinking about the future of his children. Being a very disciplined worker, he never applies for leave unnecessarily in the office. He leads a very happy married life with Sarojini. Sarojini, just like Malini in A HANDFUL OF RICE, is a paragon of virtue.

"She was a good wife, Sarojini, good with the children, an excellent cook, an efficient manager of household a

woman who still gave him pleasure after fifteen years of marriage, less from the warmth of her response than from her unfailing acquiescence to his demand." (6)

Sarojini "was unquestioning, and she was a good listener." (10) Also she "was a sensible woman in all the practical matters of life." (21) Dandekar is very much satisfied by Sarojini's management of household. "...although he was always tired by the end of the day, there was the thought of a well-cooked meal, his wife's welcome, the children, his home to spur him on." (29) P.P.Mehta very aptly remarks :

"The domestic bliss of Dandekar's family, happy in their mutual confidence, is also a typical picture of harmony in lower middle class life which still exists in the India of today."<sup>5</sup>

This relationship, full of mutual love and trust, recalls the same kind of relationship between Nathan and Rukmani in *NECTAR IN A SIEVE*. But the roots of love start shaking the moment Dandekar loses trust in his wife. Sarojini's regular absence from home and her lame excuses arise suspicion in him. He feels there is a love affair between

Sarojini and some other man. Though a man of modern outlook, his roots being in the traditional ground, he wants to "find out where Sarojini was going or die in the attempt." (49) And "the desire to find out with whom she was consorting was consuming him like a fire." (49) But when he comes to know that it is the Swamy to whom Sarojini goes for a faith healing of her tumour, Dandekar feels ashamed of himself. Sarojini, who has never complained against her husband in the fifteen years of marriage, feels infuriated at having been called a 'whore' and shoots back to her husband.

(Sarojini) "Sick-your brain must have been sick, to have believed what you did-to have followed me as if I were a common harlot with whom you consorted but were not sure of."

(Dandekar): 'I was mad !... 'I went mad because I loved you. Is that a crime? Is it possible to love without jealousy ?'

(Sarojini): 'And without trust.'.....'  
Is that love ? Is it ? " (62)

Markandaya very able shows how a little spark of doubt can burn down the love and trust, between a loving husband and

wife, to ashes. Dandekar, quite common to a middle-class husband, is of possessive nature. He wants not only Sarojini's body, but the whole of her - both her body and mind. The following conversation between Dandekar and his boss Chari brings out the two different ideas and values existing in middle-class and the upper class people, about a wife. When Dandekar puts his problem to Chari, he asks whether she has left him.

(Dandekar): "She's still with me, 'but it's only the shell. All that's real is left with the Swamy.... I want my world back, my children happy, my floors swept

("Chari: 'Is that important too?")

(Dandekar): "Yes, yes, yes, '....' In the world I'm in it's important, all the small things are important and I know it's small and petty but I'm a small and petty man .... I can not change myself."(139-140)

For Dandekar, life was going very peacefully and happily until it took a different turn. He had never thought over or realised the existence of his wife, who until then had come to him when he needed and did what he wished. But now he realises :

"My wife is a part of me now - I didn't realise it in all the years it has been happening. but I know now that without her I'm not the whole. Being incomplete won't kill me - I know that - but it'll take away most of everything that life means to me."(140)

Dandekar's realisation appears to have its roots in the traditional belief that man and woman are the two halves of a one whole being, both of whom can not exist completely without the other. Dandekar is no doubt a practical man. He cares for the money, the silver and the gold, all of which carry lot of importance in the materialistic world. He wanted to get back all the valuable things that his wife had given to the Swamy. But at the same time he wanted back his happiness - more than the gold and silver;

"I wanted these things and I fought for them because they meant a great deal to me '.....' That is a fragment of the truth. But I also fought for other things - my wife, myself, my children, and these are the other fragments. ..."(159)

When Sarojini returns to him and agrees to



undergo operation, Dandekar wins the fight. He also wins back his peaceful and happy life. Thus Markandaya has very vividly given a description of husband-wife relationship in a urban middle-class family. Marital problems arising out of social or economical causes are not unknown to middle class families. Perhaps what Dandekar thinks applies to all the middle-class couples: "We are being driven.... we are straddling a tiger that we can not dismount."(105)

Markandaya gives a very descriptive picture of the nature of traditional Hindu women and the opinion of different section of people about them. Sastri, Dandekar's colleague, "held the benign belief that wives were faithful, virtuous creatures, prepared like their classical sisters to follow their husbands barefoot into the jungle, if necessary....."(18) Joseph and Mahadevan were against this belief. Dandekar, though modern in outlook, firmly believed in traditional values when it came to the question of women's faithfulness. He believed that "Hindu women of our class simply don't have love affairs."(120) He says; "Our women are not like that, '...'. They don't flaunt themselves in front of men either before marriage or after. They're brought up differently."(18) Though he think that "...a housewife was not physically chained to the house."(13), he believes that "Hindu wives ... married for life, did not look to another man."(39) "A married woman did not have men friends who

were not known to the husband, the family. "(25) Sarojini remarks to the extent that "Our whole society rests on the virtue of our women, they are the foundation. "(20) Such a traditional image of women forces the parents to keep a close watch on their daughters. Dandekar says; "... it was only human nature for girls like our Ramabai to whisper and giggle when they see youngmen, there's nothing in it. "(22) He has confidence because "... a well-brought-up girl from a respectable family isn't likely to to any way there is not much opportunity. "(22) But these remarks from Dandekar do not mean that he does not take care of his daughter. He warns his daughter that she "should never go out with people whom your mother (Sarojini) and I (Dandekar) don't know. "(99) Sarojini murmurs in her sleep that "If Ramabai loses her good name she'll never marry well. (100) Dandekar goes to the extent of saying "... a soiled woman is no good to anyone, not even to her children..."(52) Such traditional image of Hindu women is the most prevalent one in urban middle-class families of India. Markandaya thus gives many aspects of the 'Sati Savitri' image of the Hindu women.

The discussions that are held in the office of Dandekar, dissecting and analysing the image of Hindu women show the superiority of male over female. For people like Joseph and Mahadevan, women are play-things. For Sastri, Dandekar and the like, women are mere pure images, who should never lose their traditionality.

them woman exists as a fulfiller of needs and giver of comforts. Dandekar "in all his life . . . had never cooked a meal. . . . Men never did, unless they were cooks, and even cooks wouldn't cook in their own homes. "(98)

Kinship is an important element attached to any Indian family. With the existing uncles, aunts, cousins etc., a whole new lot of relatives is acquired the moment a marriage takes place. Though except Rajam Sarojini's cousin, no other relatives are found visiting Sarojini's house, the middle-class families usually have to entertain a lot of relatives. It is a wonder that Dandekar and Sarojini are never bothered by their relatives. Even it appears they are not at all acquainted with their neighbours - the families who live in the upper seven floors. Perhaps it reflects on the life of the urban middle-class, who live 'water tight compartment life', not knowing one another. About the innumerable number of relatives attached to Indians, Ghose, Chari's deputy, remarks;" It has become an international joke, the number of aunts and cousins Indians had whose funeral it was imperative for them to attend."(45) This brings to mind a similar remark made by an English woman in A HANDFUL OF RICE, when Ravi tells her that he could not deliver her dress in time due to Apu's death.

India is a wonderland for the foreigners, because of her Sadhus, snakes, magicians etc. India is

full of traditions, customs and old beliefs. Though the times have changed a lot, most of the old beliefs and values have not lost their existence.

"In this country the body had long taken second place forced into that position by a harshness of circumstances which it would hardly have weathered without the sustenance of the spirit; by a harshness of climate, in which a consideration for the body would have been the purest painful folly; and by the teachings of a religion, itself perhaps shaped by these which sought in turn the eye inward and find there the core of being."(140)

The tradition and the beliefs are so deeprooted in the minds that no waves of modernity can take out them. Sarojini, and the people like her had this strong faith in the Swamy and his faith healing. Such people are not even afraid to cross the river even when it is in spate.

"They think Swamy gives them some kind of protection."

"(85) Sarojini doesn't want to lose her faith by reasoning with Dandekar, a modern out-looked man. When Dandekar asks her as to why she did not tell him of her problem and her visits to the Swamy, she tells :

"You would have sent me to a hospital, instead called me superstitious, a fool, because I have beliefs that you can not share. You wouldn't have let me be - no ! You would have reasoned with me until I lost my faith, because faith and reason don't go together, and without faith I shall not be healed."(67).

Even Dandekar, a believer in materialistic values, behaves completely different when he is sitting with the Swamy. The man's identity that exists in a materialistic world is completely lost in the world of Swamy. While waiting for Sarojini, on the road, Dandekar was "careless of the curious glances his respectability earned him."(55) But while he stood before the Swamy. "No one had even stirred; they were simply unaware of his presence."(57) Sastri, who had asked Dandekar to find out whether the Swamy is genuine or not, is himself not ready to dare call him a charlatan.

"The genuine ones never take money. If he has done he's a -- 'Sastri stopped, aware of a faint tremor somewhere warning him to be careful. One never knew what power these men might have, there were certainly

plenty of people who would vouch for it."(94)

About Sarojini's return to her home, when the Swamy leaves the town, Rama Jha remarks :

"Sarojini's return home with the silver gifts she has been giving to the Swamy is symbolic of acceptance of life as it is without rancour, without anger, like Rukmani (of NECTAR IN A SILVER) and Mira, strong and wise in her acceptance." <sup>6</sup>

But what Rama Jha misses to note here is that in fact, Sarojini has learnt the virtue of acceptance from the Swamy only. Markandaya doesn't give her opinion about the genuineness of the Swamy. But as A.V. Krishna Rao observes :

"... Markandaya seems to suggest, through the Dwarf, that there is, no need to decry the Swamy's influence if it is uplifting to the poor and the decrepit. The solution lies not in spiritual impoverishment but in the balancing of scientific education and the physical well-being of the people." <sup>7</sup>

Meenakshi Mukherjee sees the Swamy as a part of the society itself. She writes:

"The Swamy functions not as an individual who lives his own life, but as a public figure - a fulfilment of certain needs of society. He satisfies the needs of the people who want an object of faith. And the insistence finally appears to be not on the spiritual but on the social function of the Swamy." <sup>8</sup>

Thus carrying on both the functions - practical and spiritual, the Swamy becomes an integral part of at least a section of the society and as such his shifting becomes a difficult problem to the officers. Though to ease their problem the Swamy himself leaves the town, he also leaves behind him an unshiftable mark of faith in the hearts of his devotees. Even today in India, there are thousands of such Swamis, who are catering to the practical and spiritual needs of the poor and the devotees respectively. Thus the Swamy, the character portrayed by Markandaya, doesn't appear to be fictitious but a true representative of the Swamis like him.

Markandaya also sketches some of the other beliefs deeprooted in the traditional Indian minds.

Sarojini, like any other traditional Hindu woman, worships tulasi as God. But to Dandekar, "It was a plant; ... but it was a symbol of God, whom one worshipped, and it was necessary that God should have symbols, since no man had the power or the temerity to visualise him." (5) Coloured pictures of Gods and Goddesses are a part of the traditional Hindu house. Dandekar's house too possesses them. These pictures "were a part of his wife's and his own background, familiar and reassuring." (10) Dandekar is a man of modern outlook, but yet, "There were many things he believed in, things that were beyond reason, and there were things to which in common prudence he never offered testament either of belief or disbelief." (32) That is why when Wilson, an English officer, expresses disbelief in Horoscopes, Dandekar asks :

"Do you think, sir, that in the universe which in a whole is god's sight, any part could exist without influencing the others? oceans rise and fall by the moon....Are the human lives so worthless than the stars will not

Rajam, Dandekar's cousin, believes in the influence of evil eye. She tells Dandekar about the nose-screw, her Aunt Sita wore, on which her neighbour had cast her evil eye. When Dandekar falls ill she suspects some evil eye on him. Hence she says "I shall burn camphor in your name



every day until the evil eye is lifted from you..."(133). The belief in the 'karma-phala' (fruit of action) is very much inherent in the blood of Hindus. Dandekar thinks that "the pundits were after all right when they said that one was born to suffer past sins... if one has sinned one must pay "(61) Thus we can see that Markandaya gives a very descriptive picture of the various beliefs, faiths grounded deep in to the traditional HINDU minds. The beliefs are more deeprooted, as we observe in the novel and also in the daily life, in the Hindu women. Probably this is because of the higher percentage of illiteracy prevalent in the women. But though more illiterate and full of beliefs, Hindu women cannot be ignored as unintelligent impractical lot. Markandaya gives one instance to show this in this novel. Dandekar observes Sarojin's system of remembering important dates;

"Her system was similar to Rajam's and, indeed, common to all the women he knew, contemptuous of calendar dates, as men were contemptuous of them for it, they used feast days, birth days, and their children's illnesses as stepping-stones to arrive at the answer; and infuriatingly, they were invariably right. "(15)

Markandaya presents a vivid description of the

economic life of the urban middle class families. Dandekar, who earns Rs. 120/- per month leads a happy and content life. Until Sarojini caught with the tumour, his family had no economic problems.

"... they had prospered. Three children, no debts, a steady job, a fair pile of savings that his wife regularly and methodically converted into gold-bangles, a necklace, ear-rings and brooches - less for ornamentation than for the security it represented. Gold was stable. On what else should townspeople rely ? Land was certainly the preferable alterantive, but land in town was too dear to buy."(6)

As Dandekar could not buy either land or a house, because of the high costs, he preferred to shift to the ground floor from the seventh floor. Because he knew it would be less troublesome for his wife to carry water, Dandekar never spent any amount on unnecessary or luxury things. "He walked to and fro from the office and saved the bus fares, which in a month accumulated to very nearly six rupees. "(10) Out of this savings he used to buy little presents for his wife and children at the end of the month. He even employed a servant girl, as "it gave him real and considerable pleasure to think he could do as

much for his wife. "(6) Thus though disciplined in his budget, Dandekar was very much considerate of his family. He was "a man who has never known either riches or poverty, and so has never learned to be casual over money-"(102) " ... even minor borrowing was against his nature; "(91). But when Sarojini starts visiting the Swamy to get healed her tumour, the problems begin. Sarojini gives away grains, cash, silver utensils and even the gold-chain of her child- purchased after spending a year's hard saving to the Swamy. Dandekar fails to adjust his family budget. His moments of weaknesses take him to the prostitutes. These visits start costing him a lot. But though he passes through a lot of financial problems, he never thinks of going to a money-lender, because "he came from a decent family and a respectable class, had been thrifty all his life except in the last few months, and even now in the straits he was in he had never once considered going to a baniya " (138) But Chari, his boss, misunderstands Dandekar when he approaches him for help regarding Sarojini. What Chari says to Dandekar is the realistic portrayal of the economic life of lower middle-class families in the cities. "You're in debt. Up to the neck. The moneylenders are squeezing you and you want me to help. "(138) When Dandekar had no other go, he thinks of selling the silver ash-tray, gifted to him by an English officer. But later he finds that Sarojini has given that too to the Swamy. Dandekar sells his watch to pay down the bills and also to make possible a modest

Deepavali. In fact in the previous years Dandekar used to put by a reasonable sum for this festival. In spite of his difficulties Dandekar is not ready to sell the silver lamps, put before tulasi, as he "can not take what belongs to tulasi, to God. "(103) Dandekar has to think of his family. He says, "... I have a sick wife, and two daughters whose dowries I have yet to provide, and a son to be settled in life. "(112) There is a lot of difference in the spiritual and the materialistic world. About the silver, jewellery and the other things that Sarojini has given to the Swamy, Dandekar tells the Swamy:

"They don't matter at all now, when I am sitting here with you. But they will, later, and that later is reality to me, in which I must live ... you see, we can not afford to give away so much. "(109-110)

But in fact at the end, Dandekar doesn't care much about these things, as his wife returns to him and he regains his happy life.

Thus in this novel, the economical problems that an urban middle-class family faces, their ideas and values etc., can be observed. Markandaya also gives a glimpse of the trend of the roadside vendors in a town. There is the bangle-man, who "was attempting to extract an exorbitant

price for a pair of glass bangles". In the process of bargaining, "Dandekar raised his absolutely final offer. The man lowered his rock-bottom price." (11) Rajam, who has to pull on for a month on a petty pension, tells Dandekar, about the market places: "... if you wait until everyone has gone everything is much cheaper, sometimes you even get something for nothing ..."(42)

The Swamy, when not in town, lives in a village "... a small village no different from any other with its squares of green paddy, its palms, its thrifty patches of bean and pumpkin vine, of brinjal and ladies' finger."(86) This village appears no different from the village portrayed in *NECTAR IN A SIEVE*, before the construction of the tannery. perhaps this village has not yet come under the clutches of industrialisation. The Swamy there, in that village "was found on the dungwashed porch of a mud-walled hut."(86) As modernity has not yet entered this village, it has no connecting roads. Dandekar "was a second-generation city dweller, with the unconscious creed that no two points could exist that were not linked by mechanical means."(82) The village, representing the illiterate, innocent and poverty stricken farmers or agricultural labourers, has kept itself apart from the city. The city dwellers think themselves of a class superior than the villagers. For the city people, who are engulfed in an ever busy life, sitting idle means something impossible. When a villager says that the Swamy was not doing anything but sitting simply, it came to

Dandekar," with something of a shock, that perhaps it was his firm grounding in a city that made him assume that one must always be doing something. "(87) The villagers always try to cheer you up, but the city people want only the bare facts. Dandekar thinks; "the country people were the worst, telling you not what you wanted to know but what they thought you might like to hear. "(84) When the villagers are capable of doing physical tasks, the city dwellers have their brains to put into work to. Dandekar thought while he watched, "a file of peasants...carrying loads, and their feet were bare. Well he tried to console himself, perhaps they can not do what I do; but here under the wide open sky letters and figures lost all meaning, like sounds in the distance. it was the earth, one's capacity to bear it, that was something of value."(83) Tradition and beliefs are found much more deeprooted in the villagers than in the city people. When Chari was conducting an enquiry regarding the genuineness of the Swamy."... a pledge of support was delivered, signed mostly bythe villagers ,... whereas the grievances had come mainly from townsmen."(143)

Shifting, cutting away one from one's roots, is a problem discussed at length in NECTAR IN A SIEVE. The mental turmoil undergone bythe farmers, like Nathan, when they are evicted from their lands. can only be understood by those who have some love for the land or who have got their roots deep in the soil. In this novel under study,

the novelist refers to the shifting of the homeless loafers and beggars from the platforms and benches in the station by the Railway police. Even administrative officers do the shifting of unwanted people in the city. But as such people, the loafers and beggars etc., don't have any roots they don't feel any suffering. Even the Swamy left the town before taking any action to shift him from the town. It might be because the spiritual people don't have any roots in any particular place. They don't have any kind of attachment. Chari, the officer, thinks

"Even peasants bedded deep in the soil. Tell them that the wretched little plot they scratched for a living was wanted for some land scheme or other any they would go, pots and pans in a bundle on the back of a scraggy donkey, their defeated shoulders showing what they felt like, although after sustained haranguing they had agreed it was for their own good." (141)

But Chari, being an officer and a complete townsman, fails to understand the sorrows and sufferings of the peasants, who in fact become ready to shift not because of any harangue but because of pressure and threats, as can be seen in NECTAR IN A SIEVE. These difference in the life-style, thinking and values draw up a steel curtain

between the villages and the townsmen, which has made a new class pattern in the Indian society i.e. of the rural class and the urban class. Markandaya succeeds in bringing out the differences prevalent in the Indian society in this regard.

Markandaya points out to another division found in the Indian society - the Northerners and the Southerners. The Northerners - represented by Ghose and the doctor who operates on Sarojini - think of the Southerners as people fully under the grip of superstition. Sastri admits that the Northerners have got the brawn and the brashness "but when they want brain, they've got to come to South, to you (Dandekar) and me and Chari". (137) Markandaya sketches the physical differences between the two. Ghose "with his long nose and passionate eyes his height, his intense Northern ways, could hardly go unnoticed in a crowd of short, dark mild-eyed and mild-mannered Southerners." (144) Both have got contempt for each other.

The newlycreated divisions - that of the officers and the clerks, are also portrayed in this novel.

The clerks are not entitled to the privileges enjoyed by the officers. "...only officers can afford luxuries like telephones, and a call to make sure the servants bring up your meal piping hot. (43) Again :



"A clerk must ask if he wanted to leave half an hour early, quake if he arrived half an hour late, produce a doctor's certificate if he were ill, supply whys and wherefores for every reclaimed minute of the time he has sold for a wage. An officer was free from these petty slaveries."(71)

The clerks can not afford the bills of the private doctors. The private doctor, who was called in when Dandekar was ill, "knew he had been called in because the patient had not been able to totter as far as the government hospital where payment in this income bracket was nominal."(126) The General Hospital catered to the needs of all the poor and that was why it "was filled before they finished building it."(149)

Markandaya, apart from these class factors, makes a very brief note on the caste factor. She focusses on the Hindu tradition and belief. She refers to the worship of God, goddesses, tulasi, and also to the faith of traditional Hindus in Swamys and the like. She also gives the opinion of the non-Hindus about the practices of Hindus :

"...some of the clerks...Indian Christians, converts, zealous to mark

the difference between the worship of God and idolatry. Cows, snakes, plants, ranked as idols; paintings, prints, and statues did not."(5)

Markandaya usually never touches the caste factor in her novels. The detailed descriptions of traditional Hindu practices and beliefs etc., provided in this novel serve only as a support to focus on the faith of Sarojini - which is the factor in fight with the reasoning of Dandekar.

Social change is brought in as a result of many factors. The major factor that is highlighted in this novel is the result of British Raj. The Britishers, who brought roads, railways and bridges in our country, also brought in scientific reasoning. Rajam asks Dandekar, "You've worked for, been trained by the British, you don't believe in anything much, do you ? "(113) It is this modern out look only, which makes Dandekar to think of tulasi as a symbol of god and not as a god. Modern thinking has also its own curses too. It has led people like Joseph into thinking about free love and extra-marital sex. A woman's image is not held as high as before. Mahadevan, who says that times are changing, asks "why should there be a divorce unless there is infidelity?"(18) Thus though the change has its plus points - as "they're digging wells and building roads and

railways"(60) under the community projects even in the villages, the same is also shaking the foundations of the traditional Indian family structure. Even the films are playing a major role in deterioration of the women's image, as "our government ... is allowing all this Western immorality to be shown in our country."(28)

Amidst all the superstitions and beliefs, the knowledge, ushered in from the Western countries, has made aware people, like Ghose, of an urgency to get improved with the help of science and technology. Ghose "wanted to be equal, he wanted his country to be equal of any in the West; and being equal excluded even a hint of medievalism."(148)

Markandaya depicts some urban social problems in this novel. Accomodation has become a major problem in the cities. The building in which Dandekar lives is a eight-storeyed building in which eight families live. The entire building has only one water tap and all the families which live on the top floors have to carry water from the ground floor only.

"Their tenement house was one of a block of greying, jerry-built structures that towered over the smaller, older houses in the narrow street. As the tenements had grown



eating up space, so the lanes that ran between the blocks contracted, until now they existed as the narrowest of alleys, barely allowing the ingress and egress of the tenants."(47)

Because of the space problem, the children have to play on the terrace of the building. Considering the accommodation problem in the cities, it appears Dandekar is lucky to have rented six rooms on the ground floor.

Unemployment problem in the cities, is just hinted at by the novelist. When Dandekar remains absent from his duty, he thinks; "Each year the universities turned out hundreds of graduates eager for jobs... and one must think of the children !"(66) Thus afraid of losing the job, Dandekar attends his office on the third day.

Prostitution, as can be observed in this novel, is also an important social evil in the cities. Dandekar having failed to get his desires satisfied with his wife, visits "those notorious streets where at upper windows you could glimpse the waiting women with their painted eyes and their hemmed nails."(96) Meena Shirwadkar observes:

The world of the prostitutes in A SILENCE OF DESIRE is in contrast to the world of the family, the one from

which Dandekar comes. 'The world of prostitutes' is one of morbid desires of sex and in juxtaposition to the world of spirit in which his wife moved." <sup>9</sup>

Just like prostitution, beggary is also the integral part of a city. "There are beggars everywhere; between office and home, "(30). Dandekar saw at least a score of them, daily. The beggars shower mechanical blessings on you if you pay them something. If not you would be followed with curses and threats. Charity is the refined form of beggary. Many people lived on the charity of the Swamy, who distributed them food - received by him from the devotees. When the officers started thinking of shifting the Swamy, they had first to think of hundreds of these destitutes, who depended for their living on the Swamy.

Thus we can see that Kamala Markandaya has successfully depicted the urban middle-class family, the social structure and social problems of urban India and the social change brought in India after the Independence. P.P.Mehta rightly observes that "The grip on the minutest details of city-life shown by our author is wonderful in its accurancy." <sup>10</sup> Markandaya it appears suggests through Ghose that the location of this novel could be any town in India. "...it's symbolic. What happens here is a

microcosm of all of India. You can't just dismiss it as a small town happening." (149) And really this novel stands symbolic of the post-Independence urban India.

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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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- 3) H.W. Williams, Indo-Anglian Literature 1800-1970 A Survey, New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1976, p-86.
- 4) A SILENCE OF DESIRE, London: The English Library Ltd., (Four Square Edition) 1966, p-45.  
(All subsequent references to the novel are indicated in parentheses within the text.)
- 5) P.P. Mehta, Indo-Anglian Fiction - An Assessment, Bareilly : Prakash Book Depot, 1968, p-274.
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9) Meena Shirwadkar. Image of Women in the Indo-Anglian Novel, New Delhi : Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1979, p-138.

10) P.P. Mehta. op. cit., p-274.

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