East-West Encounter as a Predominant Concept in Select Novels of Kamala Markandaya

S. Seetha Lakshmi

(14PEN015)

Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore – 641 043

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's Degree in English

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Signature of the

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Supervisor

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Chapter I

Introduction

Indian English literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language as well as in their native or co-native language, which could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is frequently referred to as Indo-Anglican literature. Indian writing in English, which has commended unstained admiration in both home and abroad, is now in its full swing. Indian novelists are being conferred on not only national but also international awards. It has carved out a new track, a new vision that is replete with an unanswering faith and hope, myth and tradition, custom and rite and our great country has enshrined in her bosom from the time immemorial. M. F. Patel in the book *Indian Writing in English* states that "though one can writers in India to a century back, Indian writing has come into force only in the last couple of decades" (28).

If one dives into the works of the Indian stalwarts of English fiction, it is revealed that their works are not an imitation of English literary pattern but highly original and intensely Indian in both theme and spirit. The works of R. K. Narayan, Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, etc., are still read and re-read with love and admiration. All of them have collectively tried to portray as well as expose the realistic picture of Indian society. Their indelible imprint on the pages of history is so powerful and stable that it cannot be erased and darkened so easily. The diasporic writers such as V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Gosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kamala Markandaya and many other talented emerging writers share a diasporic consciousness and represent an extraordinary diversity of ethnicities, language and religious traditions.

Being an accomplished author, Markandaya has ten novels to her credit. She leaves India in 1948 and lives in England ever since. Majority of her novels are about India and its people. She writes such kind of novels because she has missed her homeland. So she tries to stay in touch with India by writing about it. Kamala Markandaya sometimes writes her novels for the foreign audience so that people will have a profound knowledge of India and its cultures and traditions. When one starts to read the novels of Kamala Markandaya, it is understood that there is a profound knowledge about diasporic realities.

The meaning of Diaspora, as normally defined, comes from the Greek roots *dia* and *speirein*, meaning 'to scatter about.' The term diaspora is a scattering of the seed in the wind, the fruits of which are a new creation and a fight to survive. Every diasporic moment holds a historical significance, as it carries within itself the kernel of nation's history. It is a journey towards self-realization, self-recognition, self-knowledge and self-definition. There is an element of creativity present in the diasporic writings and this creation stands as a compensation for the many losses. The term Diaspora carries the connotation of forced resettlement due to expulsion, slavery, racism, refugees or war especially nationalist conflict.

Narayana Jayaram in the book *The Indian Diaspora: Dynamics of Migration* states that "Indian Diaspora is not a discipline by itself but only an area of specialized study utilizing the data, concepts, methods and theories of many disciplines"(19). The Indian Diaspora is spread across many regions in the world on every continent representing different regions, languages, cultures and faiths. The common thread that binds them together is the consciousness of their Indian origin and their attachment to

India. Some migrations occurred to avoid conflict and warfare. Other diasporas are created as a consequence of political decisions, such as the end of colonialism.

V. S. Naipaul stands tall amongst all Indian Diasporic writers. He seems to epitomize the term 'Indian Diaspora.' His grandparents are part of those indentured labourers, who are sent to serve as plantation workers in Trinidad during the rule of British Empire. Though born in the small town of Chaguanas on the island of Trinidad, Naipaul lives in England, which is considered as an act of self-imposed exile. The sense of 'Homelessness' comes naturally to him and it is this concern that he deals with in most of his writings.

The writings of V.S. Naipaul draw upon an experience totally based on layered levels of alienation and exile that his works become paradigmatic of the whole genre. Cross-culturalism lies at the heart of any diaspora and Naipual is also no exception to that. A Caribbean writer with Indian origin who lives in England is the prime example of cross-cultural influence. The diaspora must involve a cross-cultural or cross-civilization passage. It is only such a crossing that results in the unique consciousness of the diasporic. Even if voluntary, the passage must involve some significant tension between the source and the target cultures. It is through this displacement and ambivalence that, what is considered the diasporic, is engendered.

In 1961, V. S. Naipaul publishes one of his most acclaimed novels, *A House for Mr. Biswas.* The title character of the novel, Mr. Mohun Biswas is modelled upon his father Seepersad Naipaul. Throughout the novel there are elements connecting to the memories of Naipaul's childhood. Mr. Biswas in his struggle to break free from the clutches of the extended Tulsi family, becomes almost a tragic character. Naipaul in

shaping Mr. Biswas's life rasied the level of the novel to something similar to that of a tragedy. Mr. Biswas's search for a new house is a search for belonging, that he is not the 'other', to possess a place in an alien land.

Naipaul's *Half a Life* (2001) is another story of estrangement and inner exile. Willie Chandran, the protagonist of the novel has to re-invent himself in proper order. The novelist says that, "He had to re-learn everything he knew" (58). Willie's problems arise out of his cultural displacement. He cannot have that sense of belongingness anywhere because of his sense of alienation. This sense of alienation is evident in his speech when he leaves Ana, "I can't live your life any more. I want to live my own" (136).

Willie, as a young man, is embarrassed by the failures of his father. So when he arrives London in 1950, he is determined to remake himself through study and literature. His experience as a colonial in the metropolis are a chain of disappointments. As a wanderer, twice displaced – from London and from his ancestoral home, Willie occupies his own half-and-half world. Thus it can be said that Willie, like any other member of a diasporic population, leads his life in a way bearing marks of displacement and searching for belongingness. Thus Naipaul has portrayed this diasporic consciousness through his novels.

Another great name which comes in to mind when talking about Diasporic writing is, Salman Rushdie. Though born on 19th June, 1947 in Bombay his parents moved to Pakistan, a move which he never accepts whole-heartedly. Thus he belongs to three countries and yet to none. Again, a sense of displacement hovers over the works of him. His debut novel *Grimus* (1975), deals with the plight of alienation and a sense of

estrangement. The central character, Flapping Eagle acts like an immigrant, who has newly arrived in a country which is distinct from his native land with a different culture as well. He tries to assimilate wholly into the culture and values of the host country. But for Rushdie, wholesale assimilation is not the end result; rather, he recommends that the migrant negotiate the culture and values of both 'native' and 'adopted' homes, strategically drawing upon each to create a new, hybrid identity. While Flapping Eagle's problem was rootlessness, Rushdie's was of multiple roots. This is evident in his next two writings, *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Shame* (1983).

In *Midnight's Children*, the protagonist Saleem Sinai journeys through India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and yet there is no certain place for him to settle down. Thus relocation is the root problem here. The characters of the novel are part of an eternal quest, the quest for some 'imaginary homeland.' Thus it echoes the fact that every diasporic literature is in reality a longing for that long lost homeland with which they want to establish a connection. *Shame* deals with the story of an expatriate. The shamelessness and greed of the ruling elite are presented here. The speaker acts as an outsider and has some advantages like the long geographical sight with which he describes everything.

Amitav Ghosh, another writer of the Indian diaspora, is also noteworthy. Though born in Calcutta on 11th July, 1956, currently lives in New York. In 2008, he publishes *Sea of Poppies* (2008), the first part of the famous Ibis trilogy, which deals with the colonial period of India and the novel has the descriptions related to the first wave of migration of those indentured labourers. This novel refers to the labour diaspora with its mercantile history. The diasporic consciousness evolves among workers and they are

addressed 'girmitia' noticeably.The very word comes from the root of agreement. They were labourers by agreement. The controlling theme running through the many strands of plot is the question of identity. The issue of identity is at the heart of diasporic consciousness. Thus the novel outlines the consciousness of diasporic writer bringing back the picture of nation at one particular episode of history through the portrayal of indentured labourers. Ghosh's vision thus takes shape in the historical records of the first generation of workers who left their native land never to return again, to settle in a foreign country where they would never again find their true selves.

Jhumpa Lahiri, in the novels showcases the crisis of identity and belongingness. Lahiri, a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, is born on 11th July, 1967 in London and later her family moves to the United States. The novel, *The Namesake* (2003) deals with the life of Gogol Ganguli, the American-born son of Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli. The unwelcoming American society takes Gogol as its victim and he tries much to break free from the shackles of Indian traditions in order to be accepted by the American World.

Gogol is an ABCD – an American Born Confused Desi, who doesn't have the answer to the question: Where are you from? The clash of cultures results in the submission of loyalty to both India and America – Indian at home and American in public. He is torn and storm tossed between India and America, between tradition and his individual self and being a second generation settler in America, he feels himself alien. But towards the end of the novel he realizes his heritage and the value of his Indian land.

In Lahiri's latest novel, *The Lowlands* (2013), she portrays the same sense of dislocation, through the story of two brothers, Subhas and Udayan . The bond between them is broken when Udayan gets involved in the Naxalite movement. Subhas goes to the

United States to pursue higher studies. Udayan is killed in a police encounter and Subhas marries Gouri, the young, pregnant wife of Udayan. Gauri, while living in Rhode Island never recovers from the guilt of marrying her husband's brother and for deserting the place where her husband died. Their daughter, Bela, shows nostalgia for the native language as she passes a group of Bangladeshi construction workers at the end of her street in Brooklyn. The sense of not existing engulfs her.

Recently, Indians living in foreign countries speak out their inner voice, the psychological struggle they undergo living in a place where they feel the thought process, culture, language and society differ to that of theirs including colour of skin. One could find the feeling of insecurity, separation, loss of identity, compromise, adjustment and struggle between two and more cultures in many of the diasporic writings. The diasporic writers try conveying their feelings through their writings; take solace in writing and win accolades for their work.

It is East-West encounter that is the recurrent theme in Markandaya's novels and this is because of her sustained interest in the complex issues involved in the Indo-British relationship and her perception perhaps is conditioned by her bicultural existence.

Kamala Markandaya deals with epoch making events that bring about a sea-change in the socio-economic scenario of the Indian society. She uses the English language. She uses the medium of her novels as an instrument to alleviate the social imbalance and injustice in the Indian society. Markandaya's novels are a microcosm of India. They centre on the dictum that art must have a social purpose and she depicts the life of a man or a woman in relation to society and to destiny. As a novelist, she is

sharply conscious of the contemporary socio-economic realities, as they affect the lives of millions of Indians and add to their misery and indignity.

A continuous struggle between man and fate explains very well the human situation in Markandaya's novels. Man is ranged against impersonal forces. Even evil characters are looked upon as creatures of circumstances that they are far more pitied than blamed. Fate is the common enemy of all in a just vision of human life. The hopeful dreams of man are mercilessly shattered by the cruel hands of reality. These observations, may very well serve to highlight Markandaya's social concern and her outlook on the overpowering forces of reality. In her novels, Markandaya displays flair of virtuosity that orders and patterns her feelings and ideas, resulting in the production of truly enjoyable works of art. She has a clear understanding and a thorough grasp over all the finer aspects of fiction writing.

Kamala Purnaiya Taylor is born in a well-to-do Brahmin family of Mysore on 16th May, 1924. She happens to travel a lot, which gives her a good training. She goes to England and Europe and acquires considerable knowledge of Western civilization. Her travelling proves to be very useful to her when she starts to write under her pen name Kamala Markandaya. Kamala Markandaya is awarded the National Association of Independent Schools Award (USA) in 1967 and the Asian Prize in 1974. She is often called as one of the crispest and most warmly persons of Indian writers. It is easy to find in her work exceptional intensity and depth even among her highly talented contemporary novelists.

Markandaya has written ten novels: *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1956), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The*

Coffer Dams (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) and *Pleasure* City (1982). Shortly after her death, her daughter finds a typewritten copy of her novel and she publishes it posthumously with the title *The Catalyst: Alias Bombay Tiger* (2008). Her first three novels are set wholly in India while her fourth and sixth novels namely *Possession* and *The Coffer Dams* are set in both England and India

To understand Kamala Markandaya's concept of life and concern for society, one must have a bird's eye-view of all her novels. She is a novelist who shows concern over the sufferings of the society by writing her novels with pain at heart and trouble in thought. The main themes of her novels are hunger, poverty, love and sex and East-West cultural encounter, through which the personality and the attitude of the author are revealed. She is an impressive explorer of human consciousness and the convolutions of intimate interpersonal relationships caught in the whirlpool of disparate and divergent cultures.

Like most writers of the Indian diaspora, Markandaya too is preoccupied with the conflict between East and West, culture tradition and modernity. In her fiction, she also ruminates on the contemporary Indian scene, both rural and urban, and explores its economic, socio-cultural, and spiritual aspects. Her fiction evinces a much broader range and offers a great variety of settings, characters and effects, despite the fact that quintessentially her themes boil down to intercultural encounters and capturing of women in diverse life-roles.

Markandaya comes into prominence in 1954 with the publication of her first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* which explores the English Industrialism and its sinister

consequences that forcibly alters the lifestyle of Indian villagers. A tannery, which is at the centre of the novel, stands for all that, is evil in capitalism and the imperial West, whereas a medical missionary, Dr. Kennington, popularly known as Kenny, balances the picture with his medical services and altruism. In contrast to the thriving tannery, Kenny has to struggle to keep the hospital going. He tries his best to jolt the villagers out of apathy, ignorance, superstitiousness and fatalism.

Nectar in a Sieve centres around Rukmani, an Indian peasant woman, and her family – her husband Nathan, their daughter and six sons. Married to a tenant farmer, Rukmani devotes herself to Nathan and together they engage in a constant battle against poverty and hardship. Western life encroaches on their life when a tannery moves into the village. Being so dependent on the land puts Nathan and his family at the mercy of nature's destructiveness.

Nathan and his family lose their land and eventually leave the village. They travel to a city and find themselves living as beggars. Soon Nathan dies in city, out of starvation. Nowhere to go, Rukmani returns to her own village. In the end, she lives with her son, her daughter Irawaddy who works as a prostitute to feed herself and her illegitimate son, and a 10-year-old orphan boy, Puli, stricken with leprosy whom she meets when she lives as a beggar in the city.

In Markandaya's second novel, *Some Inner Fury* (1955) she gives a very vivid and graphic account of the East-West clash in the backdrop of national struggle for freedom by projecting three wonderful female figures – Mirabai, Roshan and Premala who exhibit rare and unique virtues of love and loyalty, friendship and understanding. These females, being educated, assert their selves and individualities.

Through the novel, Markandaya projects a national image and patriotic consciousness in myriad forms by presenting the peculiar sensibility of the modern educated and the progressive Indian women. In fact, like the author, her woman character, Roshan has a cosmopolitan outlook and seems to be the truly liberated woman of modern India. Mira and Roshan, like Markandaya, have close affinity and sympathy with the individual westerners and like the author again they participate in the political struggle against Britain. Both of them love the Western values, yet they have a deep love for their motherland. Roshan sacrifices her parents, her husband and aristocratic life at the altar of national loyalty and does not hesitate to go to jail.

Through the novel, Markandaya reveals her full consent for Quit India Movement and presents people fully immersed in independence movement by boycotting the foreign goods. Towards the end, the tension and conflict reach climax when Mira, the heroine, deserts Richards her English lover, to join the procession of political agitators. The novel concludes on a melodramatic note having bloodshed, violence and procession.

The next novel, *A Silence of Desire*, dramatizes the turmoils in the life of a government clerk, Dandeker. His routine is shattered one day when he finds his wife missing. Furthermore, he also realizes later that the reason she gives for her absence is not true. He suspects his wife of infidelity. He follows her and finds out something which is a more painful thing to bear than what he has initially suspected his wife of. His structured life then goes through turbulence, as his personal problem begins to affect his work, and even his character undergoes a change.

The author uses the family to show the upheaval that happens in the Indian society after the British left. The spirituality and faith of the traditional Indian housewife

collide with the scientific and rational mindset of her British-trained husband. There is even some reference to the conflict between north and south Indian civil servants because of their varying approach to problems and fellow workers.

The novel *Possession* is set in England and India, raises issues of ownership. In this, a swami encourages and inspires Valmiki, a shepherd boy, who paints Hindu God and Goddess on rocks. Caroline Bell, a British lady, claims that he is her oriental discovery and transports him to England as an exotic object for exhibition. He becomes famous overnight. Though delighted with his fame, he never gives up his values. The suffering of even animals affect him deeply. But under Caroline's influence, the fame-drunk Valmiki becomes callous towards his dying mother and does not go to see her. After sometime Valmiki realizes his native pull and so returns to his roots to continue to paint.

Caroline, self-styled cultured patron, makes all possible efforts to retain her prized possession. She produces fake letters from the Swami whom Valmiki thinks as his wellwisher and inspiration. This energizes the dull Valmiki and he starts to paint well again. Caroline, inorder to possess him, spoils his love relationship with younger women. Finally, Valmiki severs all his ties with Caroline and returns to his caves with the help of Anasuya, who is in England. The independence which he gains signifies his oral and artistic salvation. Caroline could never admit defeat and there is an assumption that Valmiki will eventully return to her. By trying to possess Valmiki, she reduces him to a mere commodity. The human values are totally lost. The Swami, on the other hand, makes no attempt to retain Valmiki, as it is neither victory nor defeat as Valmiki is a non-entity for him.

There is an endless conflict in the novel between possession and detachment, materialism and spiritualism, represented by Caroline, Valmiki and Swami. Caroline views Valmiki's art only as commodities that could fetch fame and money. She could never understand the spiritual urge behind his art. At another level, Caroline's self-will, dominance and possessiveness represent colonialism and of India struggling to free itself. The post-colonial love-hate relationship is seen in Anasuya's attitude towards them. She admires and resents the hardwork and confidence. Thus it is a powerful novel dealing with the psychological issues of ownership in relationship.

Markandaya's next novel *A Handful of Rice* (1966) is jolt to awaken the society to the plight of the rural people. Ravi, the protagonist of the novel, is caught in the maelstrom of change, in the transition from the tradition-bound rural society to the machine-ridden, materialistic urban milieu. The novel deals with hunger and poverty and the consequent degeneration of human values. Ravi, like any other modern man, is given to money and machine, hypocrisy and corruption and thus suffers from melancholy and mal-adjustment, emotional and psychological instability. Skepticism is increased due to extreme paucity of faith for Sharma in the book *Love Peacock as a Novelist* states that, "Man ceases to have faith even in his own self" (30).

The novel begins and ends with Ravi's struggle with hunger. Living in abject poverty, famished Ravi cannot hear the voice of his own conscience. His drunken state makes him forget his morality and misery in life. Prompted by his conscience and moral values, Ravi flees from the countryside and its impoverished conditions to take refuge in the city but the city disowns him. It dispels and discards him. He is disillusioned. Like *Nectar in a Sieve,* the theme of poverty and hunger in a ruthless society is of concern in

this novel too. In the suffocating urban milieu, Ravi has the terror of losing his identity in an indifferent society which similar to death.

The noble qualities of Ravi dry up under the crushing pressure of violent hunger. On the contrary, when his belly is full, he meditates as a sensible person. The novel ends with the depiction of a violent, hungry and unruly mob intends in looting grain. Ravi also joins him. In this context, K. Venkata Reddy in the book, *A Tryst with Conscience* makes an apt observation stating "an attempted act of violence marks both the beginning and the end" (211).

In her sixth novel, *The Coffer Dams* (1969), Markandaya delineates the theme of East-West encounter in the form of a clash between the human values of India and the technological views of the West. The novel revolves round a dam under construction by a British Engineering firm 'Clinton-Mackendrick Co' to channelise a turbulent river. Here, Markandaya highlights the character of a woman Helen, the young wife of Harward Clinton, the British engineer. The inhuman behaviour of her husband towards the Indian tribals repels her from him. She develops great feeling of love and compassion for the poor Indian workers and takes great interest in Indian values and customs, cultures and traditions. More specifically, she is fascinated by an Indian tribesman named Bashiam for his honesty and integrity, sincerity and devotion to work. She respects every human being when compared to Clinton and the other English officials who seem inhuman in their treatment towards the Indian tribesman. Their behavior is more or less like the inanimate machines.

In fact, Helen, belongs, by heart, more to the humane East than to the brutal West and therefore she does not keep away from the Indians. She is overwhelmed by their

overflowing warmth, courtesy and hospitality. She wants to sow the seeds of revolt in the hearts of Indians against the inhumanity of the Britishers because she only thinks of them as human beings. Helen seems to be the mouthpiece of the author in voicing her views against the injustice of the English people. She takes so much side of Indians who are filled with human feelings and feels perhaps that she was born in India in her previous life.

In Markandaya's next novel, *The Nowhere Man* (1972), she delineates the problem of identity of elderly Indian immigrants. The protagonists, Vasantha and her husband Srinivas find it not only difficult but also impossible to create their own identity in England, the land of their adoption. The theme of racial rancour and hatred figures more prominently in *The Nowhere Man* than in any other novel of Markandaya. Vasantha, who embodies the Indian traditional values and virtues of patience, tolerance, love and fellow feeling; dies of despair and frustration in this atmosphere of racial antagonism, leaving her husband in a state of shock. The novel depicts mainly the tragedy of Srinivas, the lonely man in an alien land. Old and alone, Srinivas is befriended by an English widow, Mrs. Pickering who looks after him and protects him and develops intimacy with him but she is unable to take Vasantha's place as she is a typical Indian housewife – calm with intense spiritual love.

When Fred Fletcher, an arrogant Englishmen, tells Srinivas that he has got no right to live in England and torments him by abusing and slandering him. Srinivas accepts all this humiliation stoically because he has nowhere to go. At this moment, Mrs. Fletcher, the good and kindly mother of Fred, apologises to Srinivas and remarks that he too has all rights as her son, to stay there. Mrs. Fletcher, though a white woman, is full of

love and understanding and tries help the good and gentle- hearted Indian, Srinivas, whom her son has been tormenting. In this novel, women are shown in a better light than their counterparts. The novelist makes one to hear the distinct voice of a woman for the cause of mankind.

In the eighth novel *Two Virgins* (1977) Kamala Markandaya portrays the encroachment by the modern western values on the traditional beliefs and old established relationships within the family and the village. Markandaya presents the story of two virgins, Lalitha and Saroja, in this novel. The need for individual freedom is the central concern of this novel. The female characters, so deeply rooted in the Indian culture, struggle to be free and pure human beings.

Greatly fascinated by the westernized outlook of Mr. Gupta, a film director, Lalitha, the heroine, displays her revolt against all the conventional ideals and values of traditional Hindu society. Lalitha is more beautiful and charming and ambitious than Saroja, her sister, therefore she becomes an easy prey to the temptations of Mr. Gupta. She had gone to the city in search of her identity, a name and fame by becoming a film star. Her quest proves hollow. In the city, she loses completely whatever she has in her village – identity, a home, a name and fame for her beauty. To her, it is utter disgust and shock. Out of frustration, she even tries to commit suicide. She is so much shocked that she leaves her house and village, which fail to restore her lost name and identity. In fact, she has nowhere to go. The author seems to suggest in the novel that a woman can experience safety and security in her home where she is deeply rooted. Once she becomes a victim to the lust of a male like Mr. Gupta, she is uprooted from her home and village

and becomes a nowhere woman, losing her identity. Her ambition displays the uprooting of human values and culture in Indian society.

Markandaya's ninth novel, *The Golden Honeycomb* is a richly satisfying novel. The novel, a saga of princely life in India, portrays the life of a Maharajah who is merely a puppet in the hands of the British. The novel is written with a political background and is fully charged with the feelings of patriotism and nationalism. However, Rabi the illegitimate son of Maharajah, becomes a revolutionary, since his education is supervised by his mother, Mohini and by his grandmother who instill in him the patriotic feelings. Under their influence from head to toe, Rabi is not able to tolerate his father bowing to the English Viceroy.

Prof. A. N. Dwivedi in the book "*The Golden Honeycomb*: *A Critical Appraisal*" calls *The Golden Honeycomb* as Markandaya's "magnum opus" (175) as the novel covers a span of fifty years and several generations of people that one may even call it an epic. One comes across a series of violent events, pitiable strikes and baffling agitations. Rabindranath, the hero is the chief personality to infuse violence by supporting the public agitations against undue levies and treaties. Meanwhile, the novelist also mentions the Non-violence Movement of Gandhiji in the forms of dharnas and satyagrahas, which are the peaceful expressions of inner restlessness and violence of the people. In the final phase of the story, the people grow violent and aggressive for freedom and it is their bold struggle that results in uprooting the Britishers.

In her last novel *Pleasure City* (1982), Markandaya strives to bridge the gulf between two cultures of the East and the West, by developing love and intimacy between Rikki, a poor and rustic Indian boy and Tully, an English officer. As Dr. Kenny, the

missionary in *Nectar in a Sieve* establishes a hospital where the poor Indians may get the treatment for their ailments, Mrs. Bridie in the *Pleasure City* runs a school for educating the fishermen's children. She is a kind of female missionary ever extending her helping hand to the people of the fishing colony and always sharing their joys and sorrows. Like some great persons, this English lady is a person of simple living and high thinking. Her noble and sublime thoughts associate her not to a particular community, but to the entire humanity. Her character reminds us of Helen in the *Coffer Dams* for her respect of human beings. She lives and dies for the sake of mankind. Markandaya enhances the dignity of human life by creating such an elevated female figure in her fiction.

M. Mukherjee in the book *"The Twice Born India"* states that, "The most popular and much sought after and explored theme is East-West encounter" (42). East and West never meet. Each has its specific and distinct features of philosophy, culture and way of life. Despite this fact, in the novels of Markandaya, the West is presented as something dangerous and harmful, wielding its evil power on East which is known for its purity and austerity. The novelist marries an Englishman and chooses to live with him in a country which is not her own, is familiar with the East-West tussle and the resultant identity crisis. Greenberg Allen in the book, *The British Image of India* points out that, "English writers who base their stories on India, also believe that there is a basic difference between the East and the West" (30).

Markandaya depicts with discernment the impact that the West has had on the Indian mind during the British regime. Two centuries of British rule has exposed the Indians to a culture that is alien to theirs. A dialectic between the values of the East and of the West become, therefore, a natural corollary to this cross cultural encounter. One of

the reasons for the recurring East-West theme in the works of many Indo-English writers can be traced to their endeavour to address themselves to a western audience and of their desire to define and interpret the East for its benefit and in the process rediscover their country and their own special identity. The conflict between the East and the West is presented on the individual level and between industry and agriculture as the product of both the Western and the Eastern cultures.

Kamala Markandaya reflects her own experience through the awareness of her fictional characters. She compares and contrasts both the cultures. The British contact is conducive to the growth of a new angle of vision but political disagreement and cultural pride keep the two apart. The conflict finds its expressions mainly in three dimensions – social, political and cultural. The two novels that are taken for study are *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Possession*. These novels have one thing in common – both the novels deal with the East-West encounter. This concept is not only prevalent in these novels but almost in all Markandaya's novels.

In the first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*, Dr Kenny, a westerner, leaves his family and his country to serve the poor and the suffering in India. He is sympathetic and generous missionary, who serves India with a zeal, devotion and selflessness. He is a gentleman to the core and free from any feeling of racial superiority. He is frank, sincere and genuinely interested in the people for whom he works. It is to him that Rukmani and, later, her daughter Ira, go for treatment of their childless condition. He is extremely reserved, never speaks about his family or his worries. The building of the hospital is his life's work and he accomplishes it through untiring effort and with some assistance from Nathan's son, Selvam. Primarily he is a good foreign missionary doing his best for a

backward country without ostentation or pride. He is also a neutral observer of life in India and provides the novelist with an opportunity to project an image of the country as seen by a sympathetic outsider. However, he, too, fails to understand the soul of India, its spiritual culture, and is often impatient of the Indian's attitude of passive acceptance. To him people must cry out and revolt against injustice and oppression. When Rukmani hopes for a better time, he angrily shouts at her that the better time will never come unless they cry for it. He loves Indians and works for them, but he also hates them. It is a love-hate relationship, for on another occasion, he angrily asks Rukmani to go away, for he does not want to be entangled in her philosophy.

The second novel, *Possession*, depicts the theme of East-West encounter through human relationships along with the theme of politics. Amar Nath Prasad and Nagendra Kumar Singh in the book *Introduction to Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya* write, "A symbolic novel, it again concerns the tug-of-war between the contradistinctive values of East and West" (8). In this novel, the novelist depicts how the western culture has the tendency to exploit the innocent and the poor for their selfish gains. Caroline Bell, an English lady, tries to possess a poor Indian village boy, Valmiki who is talented in painting. She exports him to England as a pride possession to earn money and fame through his skill of painting and drawing.

As the novel, Possession is a conflict between Indian spiritualism and the western materialism, the Swami symbolizes the spiritual values of India. When Val is alienated from his country and his spiritual roots, his talents become dormant. He is inspired to paint only when he establishes his contact with the Swami. Val then returns to India and refuses to go with Caroline which is symbolic of India's Independence and consequent

freedom from the clutches of the British. Here the author wants to emphasize the fact that the British rulers exploit the Indians and try to possess them both physically and mentally but ultimately they fail and leave India.

Though both the novels have the similar theme of East-West encounter, it is presented on two different levels. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, the encounter is positive as well as negative. Sometimes it proves to be good and the other times evil. This is because Dr. Kenny sometimes helps Rukmani and does good but during the other times he does not understand the Eastern culture and gets angry when Rukmani silently bears all the sufferings. Its understood that the West cannot totally understand the East. Whereas in *Possession*, Caroline possesses Valmiki and she does not allow him to do things on his own. She always has her influence on him and cuts off all the things that would separate him from her. As a result of her cautiousness, she reduces him to a mere object that fetches her fame and money.

K. Sudhir Arora in the book, *Multicultural Consciousness in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya* states that "Rukmani feels uprootedness when the tannery, a villain of industrialization, swallows up the land ensuing in the displacement of her family"(195). In *Possession*, it is Caroline who uproots the talented artist Valmiki from his soil for the material possessions. He feels uncomfortable and fails to adjust in the new environment. Rukmani and Valmiki, displace themselves, understand that they cannot adjust in the new land and thus return to their home. Thus both the novels begin and end in the same place.

Chapter 1 "Introduction" deals with the introduction of what the body of Indian writing means. It talks about the various writers who have excelled in the Indian Writing.

A brief outline of what is Diaspora is given as the chosen author belongs to the Diasporic writers. Some of the famous Diasporic writers such as V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpalahiri are mentioned. It also covers a brief biography and the outlines of the novels of Markandaya. The two novels *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Possession* are taken for study and are discussed. Finally it gives the summation of the succeeding chapters.

Chapter 2 "The Impact of Modernization in Rukmani's Life" deals with the study of *Nectar in a Sieve.* It is discussed from the East-West encounter point of view. The character Rukmani belongs to the East whereas Dr. Kenny belongs to the West. Throughout the novel both the characters meet and it is through them that the novelist brings out the differences between the two counties. It quotes instances from the text to make the topic clear to understand. A detailed description is given as to how Westernization and Urbanization create a great impact on the Indian citizens which are both positive as well as negative as it turns out to be positive for Rukmani's son, Selvam, but Rukmani and Nathan suffer a lot due to the tannery that is opened.

Chapter 3 "The Westernized Life of Valmiki" deals with *Possession* and its study. It shows how the West tries to get hold of the East. Here, Caroline belongs to the West and Valmiki belongs to the East. Caroline tries to have Valmiki for herself as a pride possssion and considers him as a mere object rather than treating him as a human being. She never allows Valmiki to stay in touch with things that binds him with his motherland. He is left to suffer in the alien land. Instances from the text is also quoted as a proof. It discusses how the Westerners think Indians as pride possession and hence wish to possess them forever.

Chapter 4 "Conclusion" depicts how the East-West relationship in Markandaya's novels emanates from India's contact with Britain either directly or indirectly. The chapter shows how her novels imply social and economic background, physical features, dress and behavior in person. The chapter concludes emphatically that it is necessary to advocate a compromise between the diverse values of India and Britain.

Markandaya's handling of the British and the Indians deserve a brief comment. She shows deep intimacy with the British which can be seen from her numerous detailed and vivid portraits. She does unmask their hypocrisy and arrogance and related faults in a bold and fort right manner, but does so as someone who deeply loves. Her partiality towards her own people is obvious, but she does not overlook the limitations and weakness. Though true to life in every way, her novels are not simple documentaries; they imaginatively recreate life and manners so that her characters and situations not only stand by themselves in their own right, but also illuminate the culture and way of life of a people of both the countries. Markandaya has created a body of contact literature par excellence.

To conclude, Kamala Markandaya, influenced by then western culture, strongly believes in the power of science to improve the material conditions and promote progress and equality among all men and women. She has totally adopted western ways of life and outlook and she means that the two diametrically opposite cultures, namely the oriental and the occidental, will be able to travel in the same direction with a little understanding of each other.

Chapter II

The Impact of Modernization in Rukmani's Life

In Markandaya's novels the themes include life in villages and cities, husband-wife relations, social conflicts and lure for modernization. One of the most remarkable characteristics of her novels is that, at no place does she repeat herself. East-West encounter is the major theme of all her novels. Having been born and brought up in India, her presentation of the East-West conflict, tension and culture is characterized by the first hand experience. This East-West conflict is presented on different levels, namely the political, the social, the human, the technological, the cultural and the artistic. Jaydipsinh K. Dodiya in the book *East-West Encounter in Markandaya's Novels* quotes the words of R. M. Verma who states about her novels that,

> They are bi-cultural world of Kamala Markandaya without any partiality or favour either for the West or for the East. She brings out the various points of weakness and strength of both the cultures. She looks at the West through the eyes of the East and looks at the East through the eyes of the West. She ties to bring about a reconciliation of the two (56).

The East-West confrontation represented by India's contact with Britain is what figures prominently in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. She treats the tensions and the points of contacts between people belonging to two races and two views of life from different points of view by bringing them together in different relationships and situations. The author's mixed sensibility, resulting from her intimate understanding of both 'Oriental' and 'Occidental' values of life, gives her a rare advantage. Balachandra Rajan in the book *Commonwealth Literature: Unity in Diversity in a Common Culture*

points out that, ". . . the presence of two cultures in one's mind forms a wider and therefore a saner basis on which to originate the quest for identity and that the discordance between these cultures can be creative as well as merely confusing" (107-108). Her mixed allegiance makes her to view with serenity the challenge of contrasting cultures. Like a double-faced Janus, she can look to both ways of life with keen discernment and dispassionate objectivity. Her treatment of their relationships is therefore realistic and unbiased. She portrays her Englishmen and women not as mere types of individuals but as individuals infused with vitality of their own.

Markandaya's first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1955), is a woeful tale of the trials and tribulations of a peasant couple, Nathan and Rukmani, of a South Indian village. Through their contact with the English medical missionary, Dr. Kennington, affectionately called as Kenny by the villagers, the author brings out the opposite view-points of the simple and fatalist creatures of the soil, who endure their miseries with calm resignation. The enlightened Englishman who has been nourished on the noble ideals of liberalism, has no patience with the passivity of the starving and the suffering villagers for the amelioration of whose miseries he works indefatigably.

The title of this novel, taken from Coloridge's Sonnet "Work without Hope", is quite appropriate. Work without hope draws 'nectar in a sieve'; and hope without an object cannot live. It is symbolic of hard struggle. It is a portrayal of patience in the face of suffering, of labour even when there is no hope. A series of miseries and hardships, both natural and man-made that Rukmani and Nathan undergo, underscare the significance of the title. Rukmani's indomitable spirit, drawing Nectar in a Sieve, justifies the title of the novel.

Nectar in a Sieve is not only Rukmani's autobiography, it is also an interesting human document of the process of modernization of the Indian village. In a first person narrative, Rukmani the narrative protagonist reminisces about the past. She is a child of transition between the autonomous village life of the old and the new village with its rapid industrialization. The female protagonist, Rukmani's father is the village headman, a position that once carried much power and prestige but which now, with changing times, has lost both. As a result, Rukmani's wedding is not half as colourful as her sister's had been. Married at the age of 12, Rukmani becomes a mother at 13, and mother of six children at 24. She is old at 40. This phenomenon has been metaphorically defined by Uma Parameswaran in the book *A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelists*, ". . . that tropical flowers in their natural state blossom early, wither soon and yet retain a clinging fragrance"(93). The story begins when the narrator falls into a mood of recollection, and it ends when the experiences of a whole conscious life have passed through her mind's eye.

The novel is divided into three parts. In the first part, Rukmani narrates her life-story beginning with her marriage, in such a way as to depict the agony of the Indian peasant. They put in their utmost efforts to survive not only the vagaries of nature but also the disturbances caused by the tannery, which has been recently set up in their village. The meaning of 'tannery' is reduced to its root verb 'tan' which refers to the conversion of raw hide into leather by soaking it in liquid containing tannic acid and then making it brown by exposure to the sun. The opening of the tanning industry in the village disrupts the tranquil village life. As a result, the family life of Rukmani as well as the community life is 'tanned' by being soaked in the acidity of industrialization and

exposed to civilization. The tannery provides employment to many. Even two of Rukmani's sons are into it, but ultimately are thrown out of it and one of her sons is killed in a wrangle with the tannery watchmen. The most tragic thing that shatters Nathan is that Ira, their daughter, starts trading her body to maintain herself and her youngest brother, Kuti. Thus, the tannery gives rise to a number of sinister consequences. The villagers are exploited with no adequate wages, and the time-honoured peasant-code is destroyed with no substitute. With the installation of the tannery, the tradition-bound agrarian society disintegrates on the physical, emotional and moral plane.

The human emotions like love and friendship which existed among the members of the community have started to disappear. As helpless witnesses to these losses, they are too conservative to take up new jobs. They leave the village only when they are turned out of their land. As the villagers are fatalists by nature, they accept their exploitation. But the younger generation is not as fatalistic as the older had been. Selvam's eyes smoulder with anger and hatred when he comes to know that his father has been evicted from the land. He asks him, "You have accepted it? You have made no protest". But Nathan's concept is totally different; his simple reply to his son is, "What option have I, my son?" (136).

Markandaya has delineated the difference between the Eastern and Western philosophies through the juxtaposed attitudes of Rukmani and Dr. Kenny. According to Rukmani, "Want is our companion from birth to death, familiar as the seasons or the earth, varying only in degree. What profit to bewail that which has always been and cannot change?" (113). Dr. Kenny admonishes Rukmani stating that, "You must cry out if you want help. It is no use whatsoever to suffer in silence. Who will succor the

drowning man if he does not clamour for his life? There is no grandeur in want or in endurance" (113). But Dr. Kenny's advice fails to make any impact on Rukmani. As a typical traditional Hindu woman, Rukmani is a symbol of endurance, sacrifice, and mute acquiescence, drawing sustenance though meekness, unrequited suffering and unflinching faith in the so-called providential succor. All these pieces of advice fail to bring about a change in Rukmani's outlook.

The extent of passive endurance and fatalism of the couple, Nathan and Rukmani, is revealed when Ira's husband brings her back to her father's house. Nathan says, "I do not blame him. He is justified, for a man needs children. He has been patient" (50). Though his heart bleeds yet he cannot reproach his son-in-law. This incident depicts the contempt with which a barren woman is treated in India. Social evils are caused by cruel customs. Ira is rejected by her husband because she is barren and in the village the blame falls squarely on the wife.

Rukmani gets her daughter Ira treated by Dr. Kenny and when she is cured of her barrenness she comes to know that her husband has taken another woman. The extent of Rukmani's misery can well be imagined, but she tells her daughter, "you must not blame him" (61). Far from rationalizing and struggling to overcome the pitiable plight in which she and her family are plunged, she accepts her hopeless lot as God's will. No doubt, Rukmani has been influenced by her traditional beliefs, yet her exposure to the Western way of life has taught her to accept the possibility of actively fighting evil.

The second part of the novel projects the plight of the couple struggling to accommodate themselves in the city. Rukmani and Nathan, who are simple by nature and industrious by habit, and hope at every turn, that life will be better but their destiny does

not leave them alone and foils their attempt at improving their lot. The city also rejects them as they are not smart enough to fit into its hectic atmosphere. They lose their belongings in the temple, break stones to earn their living, and finally become destitute. Emaciated and old, Nathan dies one day of exposure and exhaustion. Heartbroken due to the treatment the city has meted out to her, Rukmani returns to her own village hoping that her village would offer some comfort to her distressed soul. It is thus a story of rural peasant that rejects the city or the city that rejects the simple peasant.

The third part shows how Rukmani survives all these calamities. From the very beginning of the novel, one can easily notice Rukmani's total surrender of her interests and independence to her husband and children. After Nathan's death, a time comes when she has nobody to support her, but even at that time she is able to survive without the least doubt in mind or spirit, and this is all due to her inner strength. This strength is spiritual in essence and it holds the family together rather than let it fall apart. It also sublimates the extramarital relationship that seem to exist between her and Dr. Kenny. She is absolutely faithful to her husband in thought, word and deed. Her relationship with Dr. Kenny is on a different plane rather than what the society thinks.

Rukmani looks up to Dr. Kenny as her well wisher and he stands as a father figure to her when she is in utter distress. Dr. Kenny attends on her dying mother and treats her so that she may conceive. Her sense of gratitude to him increases when he makes Selvam his assistant. But it is not as much the feelings of gratitude and sympathy as mutual admiration and friendship that bind them. When Kenny tells Rukmani that his wife has left him and his sons have been taught to forget him, Rukmani thinks that it is perhaps due to his long absence that his wife has left him. Though Rukmani has not uttered a

word, Kenny reads her thoughts and comments, "You think it is my fault. Do not deny it, your face speaks plainly enough for me" (108). Such is the kind of understanding that exists between the two. Kenny has strong admiration for this simple village woman and for her strong instincts.

Rukmani is a typical representative of Indian womanhood, an embodiment of fortitude and perseverance. She suffers calmly and never gives in. She very well adaptable to the changing situations around her. Her sacrifices for her family should not be mistaken for lack of courage. She proves herself equal to the situation when the time demands. A series of misfortunes succeed only in bending her body, not her spirit. She vindicates human nature and glorifies the innate heroism of the soul by bearing with fortitude the calamities brought about by nature as well as by man.

Through the enactment of Rukmani's drama, the novelist highlights some of the traditional modes of Indian family life. Jaydipsinh K. Dodiya in the book *East-West Encounter in Markandaya's Novels* quotes the words of R.M. Verma who states that, "Generally her novels reflect her strong penchant for Indian values as against the spiritual impoverishment of the English society, but Indians are not spared. Actually her good men and women come from both the cultures" (57).

Markandaya describes how marriage is generally arranged in India by the parents and describes how the performance of the marriage ceremony is with a mixture of religion, music, crowded gathering of relations, friends, and feasting. She also highlights the dowry that the bride's father gives according to the status of the bridegroom; *Nectar in a Sieve* also shows how the birth of a daughter in India is not considered an occasion for rejoicing. The sons would continue Nathan's vocation whereas the daughter would

take dowry and leave only a memory behind. This attitude arises partly out of the rigours of the dowry system and partly due to the traditional view that a son is his father's property.

Nectar in a Sieve portrays a picture of the agonies of industrialization and modernization which ruins the age-old village structure. Markandaya is aware of the tensions and conflicts caused by the technological invasion and urbanization on the traditional and agrarian community of India. Her sincere and objective delineation of the uprootedness of Indian villages on account of the alarming growth of industrial civilization derives its vigour from her perspective awareness of the historical and social change that have been occurring in modern Indian society. Modernity always appears in her novels as the worst epidemic in modern India. She censures the very process of modernization which is devoid of concern for human values. The novel, *Nectar in a Sieve,* is set in an anonymous village of South India.

The quiet and peaceful life of the peasant family is first and foremost affected by the undesirable advent of industrialization. The novelist indicates how the unwanted arrival of the tannery, an offspring of modernization, in the village where Nathan and Rukmani live, brings greater hardships and more adversity in the life of the villagers. Samaraes C. Sanyal in the book *Indianness in the Major Indian-English Novels* says:

> Nectar in a Sieve is the story of a South Indian village where life has not changed for a thousand years. Now industry and modern technology invade the village in the shape of a tannery and sinister consequences issue from this impact. Rukmani, the peasant woman, looks with horror how the age-old rustic life is shattered by the intrusion of industrialization. (90)

The foundations of an industrialized society are laid by the owner of the tannery based on the principles of exploitation of labour and commercialization of life. Rukmani becomes aware of this perceptible force of modernization which, she knows, will actually jeopardize the blissful and the harmonious life of the village. Before the encroachment of the tannery upon the village, the villagers lead an innocent life and certainly there is an intrinsic harmony within the family and society. Joan F. Adkins in the book *Kamala Markandaya: Indo-Anglican Conflict as Unity* says:

> Markandaya portrays the advent of industrialization, the tannery becomes the symbol of evil – the evil of materialism. The self-contained agronomy is transformed to a competitive, monetary culture – from tilling to bargaining – with concomitant effects of selfishness, deception and greed. Moreover, the family, traditionally the spiritual representation of unity and preservation of unity and preservation of life, ultimately disintegrates as sons leave the toil of the land for easy money in the factory (93).

Rukmani is not prepared to accept the tannery industry and the town people because they have caused ecological vicissitudes in the village atmosphere. The tannery disturbs the tranquil atmosphere of the countryside with its noise, foul smell and crowds. The tannery not only disrupts the ecology but also the economy of the village in a harsh manner. The entire business and trade structure of the village community collapses due to the establishment of the tannery. There is unreasonable and rash competition. As a result, prices go up sky-high, inflation grips the poor and the desperate villagers. The businessmen of the village raise their prices in order to exploit the situation. Rukmani resents the encroachment by the tannery and all that it epitomizes. To her, the tannery

exemplifies city, modernization, exploitation of the poor labourers and finally the uprooting or the complete destruction of the village community.

Markandaya's indication of the crude effect of industrialization through the imagery is shown in a most compelling manner. The original fertile nature of the land is transfigured into an image of strangulation of the life forces. Though the villagers know that the land does not provide fruitful production due to the vagaries of nature, yet they have not lost the hope of survival. As long as they have their land they are sure of their own identity. Since the tannery now consumes more and more land, the hope of their survival through their traditional means is practically destroyed.

The imagery of strangulation is particularly forceful: clear, soft, green fields are replaced by loads of bricks; and the cool silences of village life are now filled with noise, dusty men and the clamour of their work. In this context, the words of Rukmani deserves to be mentioned: "It has spread like weeds in an untended garden, strangling whatever life grew in its way. It changed the face of our village beyond recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants in a myriad ways" (134). The botanical imagery is significant because it underscores the psychological impact as well.

The tannery is the root cause of the absolute disintegration of Rukmani's family. When the entire family is on the verge of destitution and starvation, Rukmani's two sons join the tannery despite their mother's strong opposition. Those who have belonged to the earth so far begin to have a sense of belonging to the machine. The tannery is obviously responsible for their turning away from their traditional job of cultivation of the land. It has also developed in them a craving for money.

The tannery is quite responsible for the moral debasement of Ira, the only daughter of Rukmani and Nathan. She is forced to take to prostitution in order to save Kuti from starvation. But ironically, she does not realize that she will have to bear somebody else's burden when she sells her body to the people of the town. Rukmani laments that Ira has ruined herself at the hands of the throngs that the tannery attracted.

Unable to get work in the tannery and at the same time finding it very difficult to adapt himself to the hereditary work in the fields in the wake of the changing atmosphere, Murugan, the third son of Rukmani and Nathan, leaves the village for the city in search of a job. There he gets married without the sanction of the elders. Since his marriage is not a traditional marriage, he deserts his wife and children and begins to live with another woman without any compunction. No doubt, the breakdown of such well-established traditions affect the lives of the villagers.

The tannery, again, represents the values of a mercenary society in which human life is meaningless or cheaper than monetary strength. After claiming two of Rukmani's sons who fall victims to its captivating maneuvers, the tannery claims her another son, Raja, thereby revealing itself as a "monstrous pit of death"(113) states Bhagwat S. Goyal in the book *Culture and Commitment: Aspect of Indian Literature in English.* Rukmani becomes quite pathetic and her condition is heartbreaking when the dead body of Raja is brought home by the tannery officials. The tannery officials tell Rukmani without any qualm that Raja was caught in the act of stealing calf-skin and when he attempted to escape he was knocked down by a lathi. They even tell her that the tannery is not responsible for the untimely death of Raja and therefore she should not claim compensation for her dead son. Describing the cruel nature of the heartless tannery

officials, Bhagwat S. Goyal in his book *Culture and Commitment: Aspect of Indian Literature in English* says:

> No human feelings flows from these officials' hearts, which are as deadened as a lump of wood. Tannery has killed a boy in his prime and they have come only to tell Rukmani that she should not think of claiming compensation. At a time when the sorrowing mother is cruelly stuck by the ghastly absurdity of death, the only concern of these robot-like monsters is to disclaim all their moral and financial responsibility for Raja's death. One of them even suggests with a domestic invidiousness that perhaps it is all for the good of the family, since there are so many mouths to feed. The stupefied mother, for whom values like love and fidelity mean much more than money is struck dumb with a sense of total incomprehension (113).

The tannery not only plays havoc with the family of Rukmani and Nathan but it brings destruction to other families also. Unable to compete with other business people, Janaki's family has to quit the village in order to earn their livelihood somewhere else. Kunthi, who welcomes the advent of industrialization in the beginning, has now become a victim of its destructive forces.

Finally, the establishment of the tannery has led to the complete dispossession of the family of Nathan and Rukmani. The land which they have been perseveringly cultivating for nearly three decades has been purchased by the tannery owners at a high price from the landlord. The family of Nathan suffers the cruelest blow when they are asked to move out of the land. Nathan sadly articulates his as well as his wife's fears,

"Where do we go? What shall we do?"(133). The peasant is very much attached to his land even if he is merely a tenant. Land, whether it is his own or the property of somebody else, always gives him hope. Therefore the ordeal of being uprooted from his land becomes a horrible and nightmarish experience to him.

The entire family of Nathan has to undergo a harrowing experience because they do not know that under the existing socio-economic system even the village does not belong to the villagers but to those who own the land there. After the land is forcibly taken away, Nathan feels as though his being becomes desperate. The emphatic words of Rukmani in connection with the evils of industrialization deserves to be mentioned here:

> Somehow I had always felt the tannery would eventually be our undoing. I had known it since the day carts had come with their loads of bricks and noisy dusty men. It had changed the phase of our village beyond our recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants in myriad ways. My son had left because it frowned upon them. One of them had been destroyed by its ruthlessness. And there were others its touch had scathed (135-36).

Rukmani becomes a pathetic woman when her land is forcibly taken away from her. While feeling extremely sorry for her present and desperate condition she says, "This hut with all its memories was to be taken from us, for it stood on land that belonged to another. And the land itself by which we lived. It is a cruel thing, I thought" (137). After eviction from the land and the familiar rural community, Nathan and Rukmani are forced to migrate to the sterile and unsympathetic urban society. Owing to their futile attempt at finding one of their sons, both Nathan and Rukmani are driven to an unprofitable occupation of breaking stones in a quarry. Unable to cope with work and the new

environment, Nathan dies. Rukmani returns to her village. To quote Samares C. Sanyal from his book *Indianness in the Major Indian-English Novels,* "The author points out indirectly how disintegrating values of modern life ruin the pristine simplicity of human soul. The death of Nathan in utter poverty establishes the fact that it is better to have faith and suffer and die than live on vacillating between different set of values" (91).

Markandaya makes it clear that Rukmani and Nathan, epitomizing the whole of the Indian agrarian order, happen to be the desperate victims of three predominant evils namely nature, zamindari system and industrialization. She meticulously brings out the distinction between man as a victim of nature and as a victim of modern industrialization. Though the peasants who earn their livelihood, farming cannot very often be sure of a rich harvest every year, yet they can be hopeful of retaining their identity because to them the farm symbolizes hope. But man as a victim of modern technology is assaulted by agents of implacable and unrelenting factors. Since these are quite different from the forces already found in his unsophisticated society, they seem to be something beyond his comprehension.

Many critics of the novel see it as the presentation of the conflict between traditional life and modern industrialization. Shiv K. Kumar in the article "Tradition and Change in the novels of Kamala Markandaya" considers that Rukmani, devoted wife of Nathan, a tenant farmer, living a simple and harmonious life in her little village "suddenly finds within this Garden of Eden a serpent in the form of a tannery that begins to rear its ugly head, devouring green open spaces, polluting the clear, wholesome atmosphere, and tempting simple, gullible peasants into greed, ambition and immorality" (86).

In the novel, the West or the goodness offered by modernity is represented by Dr. Kennington, an English medical missionary. Affectionately called Kenny by the villagers, Dr. Kennington is basically a philanthropist and known for his benevolent nature. He is undoubtedly a refined and enlightened missionary who has been fostered on the noble ideas of liberalism. He is essentially a humanitarian and out of pity and love for the poverty-stricken and suffering people of India, he has sacrificed his conjugal happiness and pleasures of home.

Dr. Kenny renders service to the rural folk and helps them tirelessly and devotedly to overcome their miseries. He also cures Rukmani and her daughter Ira of their barrenness with his medical knowledge. As a dedicated missionary he serves the people who work in the tannery, which stands for modern science, technology and industry. In order to serve the miserable folk better, Dr. Kennington builds a modern hospital which is his life's ambition and he accomplishes it through indefatigable effort. Rukmani's son, Selvan, also assists Kenny in the process of the construction of the hospital.

Dr. Kennington has been described as, "tall and gaunt, with a pale skin and sunken eyes the colour of a kingfisher's wing, neither blue nor green" (21). Out of his pity for the poverty-stricken and suffering people of India he has left his country, wife and children and come to stay among the people who are not his men and in a country which is not his own. He is extremely reticent, and never speaks about his family or his worries. He works among the people of the tannery, treating and healing their bodies during long hours. Though he looks strange and grim outwardly, he hides the springs of deep sympathy and tenderness. He has in his heart a great solicitude for Indian people

and love for their children. Though sometimes he gets disgusted with the follies, poverty and silent ungrudging humility of Indians, yet his heart bleeds for them and always goes out to them in their sorrows and miseries. He has identified himself with the Indians so much that he does not feel himself an alien among them. He does not even think that he is living in a country which is not his own. Talking to Rukmani he says, "My country. Sometimes I do not know which is my country. Until today I had thought perhaps it was this" (109).

Kenny does not look at Indian villagers and their problems from the view-point of his own ruling and exploiting compatriots. He earnestly feels for them and is deeply moved by their sufferings. Very often he exhorts them to agitate for better conditions of life. When Rukmani expresses the hope that times will be better, he, with his face grim and long and his eyes burning in his pallid face, shouts at her.

Kenny tries to give a jolt to the fatalism of the mute peasants by protesting scornfully, "Acquiescent imbeciles, do you think spiritual grace comes from being in want, or from suffering ? What thoughts have you when your belly is empty or your body is sick. Tell me they are noble ones and I will call you a liar" (116). Kenny is genuinely interested in the people for whom he works. His disgust at their inscrutable ways is born out of his love for them. He admires Indian women for their fidelity to their husbands. He praises Rukmani for her sound instincts about man-woman relationship.

Kenny gets a hospital constructed out of his love for Indians. Cut off from his own people and family, his wife having deserted him, he often feels forlorn, yet he is prepared to endure every kind of hardship for the work which he has taken in his hand and which is dear to his soul. His services are perhaps amply rewarded for he is very

much loved, admired and adored by the villagers. He belongs to the tribe of kind-hearted and sympathetic English medical officers.

In the novel, Rukmani and Kenny stand for different cultures typically representative of the East and the West. Rukmani stands for blind faith, whereas Kenny is rational. Kenny always tries to help the suffering people, but sometimes he loses his patience. His heart bleeds for them and always goes out to them in their sorrows and miseries. He is eager to help Rukmani when he knows her problem. Instead of going to him, Rukmani pulls all her faith in God. Her mother on her deathbed has given her a small stone lingam, a symbol of fertility. She remarks, "I slunk away, frightened of I know not what. I placed even more faith in the charm my mother had given me, wearing is constantly between my breasts" (20).

Faith and medicine go hand in hand among the traditional Indian women. When Rukmani's faith fails to achieve the desired result, she goes to Dr. Kenny for medicine. Cured of her barrenness, within a year she bears a son. When Ira is confronted with the same problem, without a second thought she takes her to Dr. Kenny for treatment. Thus a gradual change on modernization is taking place in Rukmani's mind also, but in no way it substitutes her unfailing faith in God.

Rukmani is thus portrayed as a typical Indian woman full of mute and acquiescent suffering, and the novelist shows her clashing with the Western point of view in her encounter with the English doctor, who is totally against the fatalistic attitude which is characteristic of the East. Nathan and Rukmani have complete intimacy with the soil and when the rains fail they are not ignorant of the consequences. Despite this they have blind faith in God. Rukmani says, "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).

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani cannot understand the sudden tangible force of industrialization and therefore she decries the technological invasion. Though Markandaya uses Rukmani to attack the intrusion of modern technology, she makes use of another character namely Dr. Kennington to build a hospital with more or less all modern facilities to cure the diseases of the villagers. If Rukmani happens to be the symbol of tradition, Kenny is certainly the symbol of modernity in its positive aspects. Though Rukmani hates the disruptive nature of technology she cannot help supporting the establishment of a modern clinic run by a Westerner.

Despite Rukmani's son, Raja being swallowed up by the tannery, her other son, Selvam, actively participates in the construction of the hospital in the village. If the tannery stands for destruction, the hospital built by Dr. Kenny stands for preservation of life. What Markandaya tries to say in her novel is summed up by Hari Jaisingh in the book, *India between Dream and Reality* who remarks, "A rich tradition can well be an integral part of modernity. Both can co-exist and supplement each other. It is a matter of adjustment. Modernization can be adopted to an extent desirable, depending on the need and receptivity of a society" (33).

In *Nectar in a Sieve,* both Nathan and Rukmani, symbolizing the East, suffer a lot when natural calamities like floods and droughts shatter their whole family. Ultimately their valued possession, their land, is taken away for establishing a tannery. Through the character of Dr. Kenny from the West, Markandaya tries to awake the East. Dr. Kenny, loves the Indian people but when he sees their passive acceptance of life, he feels

disgusted. He plainly tells Rukmani, "I go when I am tired of your follies and stupidity, your external shameful poverty. I can only take you people in small doses" (71). In this world of Dr. Kenny, there is an underline feeling of sadness and pain over the miseries of poor and innocent people. No doubt, he consoles Rukmani in her sorrows but he also scolds her for her passiveness when she feels content with a little rice and hopes that time will be better. He shouts at her,

> Times are better, times are better. Times will not be better for many months. Meanwhile you will suffer and die, you meek suffering fools. Why do you keep this ghastly silence? Why don't you demand – cry out for help – do something? There is nothing in this country. Oh God, there is nothing (46).

Though disgusted by the passivity of the Indians yet his love for the people is portrayed when he goes to Rukmani's home. He is offered to sit on a mat which Rukmani spread on the floor. Though he is not used to sitting on the floor, yet he does not complain. Seeing him seated on the floor, Rukmani says, "he was not accustomed to sitting cross-legged on the floor, for his knees instead of resting on the mat sprang up aslant like the horns of a bull, and I was uncomfortable for him, and distressed that I had nothing else offer" (34).

Dr. Kenny dislikes the Indian philosophy of fasting for the purification of soul. When Rukmani tells him about the Indian priests fasting and inflicting on themselves severe punishments, he exclaims with disgust, "My God, I do not understand you. I never will. Go, before I am too entangled in your philosophies" (120). Thus the talk between

Dr. Kenny and Rukmani reflects the clear perspective of the Eastern and Western outlook of life.

Kenny can be interpreted as a symbol of progressive enlightenment who shows the need for constructive programmes for rural reform and social service. He is a pure-hearted person and he likes and admires Rukmani's innocence and purity of mind. At the same time, he is ill at ease with Rukmani's and Nathan's docile nature, their fatalistic tendency, their slow-to-change attitude and their carelessness regarding their personal hygiene and lack of education and information and their various superstitions.

Kenny knows that social security is unknown to the Indian peasants and he wants something to be done about this. This is why he tells Rukmani that they should plan their future when they have strength. But Rukmani says, "How can we? It is not within our means" (131). Kenny's reply to this shows the difference between the two attitudes, "Yes, I know. I do not know why I asked ; it was needless. There is no provision at all neither for old nor young nor sick. They accept it; they have no opinion" (131). Rukmani's stoic answer is tinged with unconscious irony, "Do not concern yourself … we are in God's hands" (131). This sums up their grim and helpless situation, their tragedy of falling a prey to the vagaries of nature and chance. Economic insecurity and blind adherence to superstitions have taught them to suffer these calamities with passive endurance.

Still, between Rukmani and Kenny there exists an emotional and intuitive kinship. When Rukmani comes to know that Kenny has returned, she buys a garland of flowers and flies to him as a beloved would to a lover. Here, the garland can be interpreted as a symbol of ideal adoration of Kenny who is not less than a God to her.

Markandaya also points out that the people of the East are passive and submissive whereas the people of the West are active and conscious of their rights. At this stage, she also brings out the strong points of the culture of the East. In the East, marriage is a sacrament whereas in the West, marriage is simply a contract. Dr. Kenny tells Rukmani, "My wife has left me. My sons have been taught to forget me" (111).

Markandaya succeeds in portraying rural India's serenity, despair and tyranny. The writer gives a moving account of the kind of starvation, insecurity and privation which her characters experience. They know that they have to live from harvest to harvest, toiling, praying and starving at other times. But what is hard for them to bear is forcible eviction from the land, which they have been tilling for generations without ever having been able to call it their own. Rukmani's bitterness at being dispossessed of the land is poignantly conveyed in her utter, despairing cry:

> This home my husband had built for me with his own hands in the time he was waiting for me ; brought me to it with a pride which I, used to better living had so very nearly crushed. In it we had lain together, and our children had been born. This hut with all its memories was to be taken from us (135).

Markandaya knows that hardships and sufferings are the only lot of the poor peasants. The picture of the peasant's life has been portrayed faithfully and vividly. Rukmani and Nathan, representing the Indian agrarian class, are depicted as helpess victims of three evils: Nature, industrial economy and the zamindari system. The peasant has some chance of retaining his identity ('while there was land there was hope'), but as a victim of modern industrial society, he is confronted by inexorable forces which are

outside his comprehension. Yet, they face each trial and tribulation with promethean courage.

The novel is a realistic chronicle of Rukmani's family in particular and the sufferings of the peasants in general due to modernization. Kamala Markandaya draws our attention to the fact that notwithstanding the apparent pessimism and despair, there is an undercurrent of optimism and confidence in the Indian characters. *Nectar in a Sieve* is a tragic story portraying the themes of suffering, starvation and death, but the story ends on a positive note of quiet strength and resolution. Rukmani has returned home after her wanderings during which she has lost Nathan. Her son, Selvam, on whom the whole responsibility of supporting the family falls, consoles his mother, "Do not worry, we shall manage" (189). Rukmani is undeniably a strong and optimistic Indian woman as she does not lose hope and courage after the death of her sole companion, Nathan. She recollects herself and returns to her native village to start life afresh with tremendous hope.

In *Nectar in a Sieve,* the emphasis is on the external world of social values rather than on individuals with their sensitive selves. Despite the fact that there is a lack of psychological depth and complexity, the characters have largeness and an optical grandeur. Rukmani is an individual as well as a type, a replica of Indian womanhood. The main characters stand as symbols, as representatives of social groups, or traditional types, Nathan and Rukmani are representatives of the uprooted peasants; Kenny stands for the finer tradition of the West; thambi and Arjun as indentured labourers; and Puli as a symbol of the triumph of the rural world over the urban. To sum up, her characters emerge either as reflectors of social change or as symbols of a particular phase of Indian life.

Markandaya, as a writer who understands the complexities of present life, is fully aware of the inescapable demands of modernization. She, as a woman with historical consciousness, feels that change is quite inevitable. Since the entire world is rapidly changing in response to various requirements and necessities arising out of modern science and technology, every society ought to wake up from the slumbering state and try to fit into the stream of meaningful modern life.

Chapter III

Valmiki's Journey towards True Freedom

Possession shows the plight of the artist Val who, enticed into the glittering world of alien values, experiences the resulting conflict between licentious freedom and responsible liberalism in a baffling novelty of atmosphere. The novel dramatizes the search for true identity of Valmiki, nature's own gift to the world of art in the traditional South India.

The clash between the East and the West – between their respective cultures, values, traditions, convictions and, most important of all, between human beings who personify their virtually irreconcilable worlds remains the focus of attention throughout this novel. One is forced to admit that one of the greatest achievements of the novel is the manner in which the author dexterously, realistically and impartially handles its major theme – the love-hate relationship between the East and the West, represented by the Swami and Lady Caroline respectively, and the diametrically dissimilar values and convictions which the two embody and personify.

The novel is one of the most forceful artistic explorations of the distortion of India's national character in the British embrace and of her consequent urge to be free. The central character through whom this 'distortion' is probed, analyzed and discussed is Valmiki, a goatherd blessed with unusual artistic talents who, when Lady Caroline Bell first meets him, is a fourteen-year-old illiterate village simpleton. As soon as Lady Caroline comes in contact with him, she spots his talent and wastes no time in taking possession of his body, talent, personality, values and soul, as it is. She breezes through the formalities of getting permission from his parents and 'buys' him for five thousand

rupees, a fact which aptly exemplifies her possessive and dictatorial instincts. He assumes the role of a creation of Caroline and she assiduously and single mindedly fashions and shapes him. Finally, he becomes the living representation of the very image that Caroline has conjured up in her mind, probably as soon as she has first set eyes on him when he was a simple, though prodigiously talented, goatherd 'in rags, smelling a little of his goats.'

The fictional plot of *Possession* is mainly centered on the cultural opposition of East and West. The basic cultural conflict is quite pervasive in Markandaya's fiction as it became embedded in the personality of the nation after the historical phase of the British colonial rule in India. But in *Possession,* Val's search for an identity achieves meaning against the backdrop of the intercultural situation, when he is suddenly thrust into a totally alien country, England, and a different set of values. His attempt to resolve the two worlds in relation to his own artistic genius is used by Markandaya to give an almost stylised version of the difference between East and West.

Possession, in fact, serves to heighten Kipling's familiar line of "East is East, and West is West; and never the twain shall meet!" It is noteworthy that this rather pessimistic view about the inter-racial divisions is further explored in her most recent novel *Pleasure City*, where the friendship of Rikki and Tully is a mirror to a possible meeting-ground between the races-mutual understanding that should surpass man-made barriers of language, class and creed. However, when Markandaya writes *Possession* in 1963 she is not entirely hopeful even of an effort in this direction because the cultural chasm was so vast and wide. East and West represent two value systems, which cannot be apparently reconciled. Markandaya stresses the cultural hiatus repeatedly in this novel

as, "Undiluted East had always been too much for the West; and soulful East always came lap-dog fashion to the West, mutely asking to be not too little and not too much, but just right". (110)

Markandaya uses the background to portray humanity in a particular situation – the plight of Val when he is forcibly adopted and 'possessed' by a well-to-do, assertive English woman, Caroline, for the commercial exploitation of his artistic genius. Markandaya's interest is in the telling of this story of human interest rather than in merely representing East and West as two points which cannot meet. The situation of Val is the main focus of the novel which is highlighted mainly through a definite differentiation of the cultural polarities.

The polarities work through the essential unbridgeable differences between Valmiki's nature which has been moulded unconsciously by the Swami's influence, and Caroline's nature, moulded in a furnace of aggressive drive and energy over the years and by a cultural background so vastly different from Val's. Forces of separation are built in through such metaphoric agents as the Swami. Thus the powers which stand opposed in *Possession* are not only East *versus* West but also spiritualism *versus* materialism, tradition *versus* self.

Markandaya uses the woman journalist Anasuya as the narrator and she confines the point of view to Anasuya's range of vision. Thus Anasuya is the central intelligence in the novel. She is an observer-narrator in the novel. The novel opens with Anasuya's first meeting with Caroline and this meeting presents the clash, not only of personalities, but also of cultures. Anasuya's comments about Caroline as, "She was supremely confident, born and brought up to be so, with as little thought of fallibility as a colonial in

the first flush of empire, as a missionary in the full armour of his mission, dogged by a none of the hesitancies that handicap lesser breeds" (15). Hereafter, the relationship between Anasuya and Caroline develops on the lines of the England-India relationship and Markandaya makes a stylized representation of the polarities which they represent in their relationship.

Anasuya feels that there can be no reasonable relationship between the East and the West but "merely a straddling of one stranger by another with little out of it for either" (70). Anasuya is the one who leads Caroline into the interiors of Indian rural existence, leads her out again, and then back to it at the end. She plays a minor role in the development of the plot, but her impressions and view-point form the commentary of the novel. She works out, in part, the destiny of Val, and, as she herself confesses, that she is responsible for what happens to Val in England. She is not able to present the interior of Val's mind no doubt, but she perceives.

Characterization is worked through the East-West contrast. Val's dilemma of resolving the worlds of Western and Eastern thought in his own life against the background of the East-West conflict, forms the issue of the book. The central issue again is the main character's journey through these dilemmas and often irreconcilable sets of values to self-awareness, or the sense of identity. Val's journey through negative freedom and an escape from responsibility to a realization of where his responsibilities lie forms the main movement of the novel.

Valmiki represents the age-old rustic community whose members are ignorant of social sophistication. Val is at first the passive peasant boy, crude and unshaped, his goatherd life well seen in his shyness, rags, and goat-smell. He is however, not accepted

in his society because he does not conform to the accepted patterns of behaviour in that particular community. Societies are dominated by some behaviour patterns, and non-conformity to these patterns entail alienation. Val appears to be an idiot to his community for he does not perform the daily chores that his class of people do and chooses to idle away his time in wasteful activities, such as painting and drawing on rocks and caves. Thus, Val is an example of the victim of social taboos.

W. J. Harvey in his *Character and the Novel* (1965) speaks of such social patterns of behaviour. He further says that, paradoxically, these conventions can be a condition of our every freedom. Val makes an escape from conformity in his flight with Caroline. When Val escapes from his supposedly constricting atmosphere at home and moves to England, he is only confronted with another set of social mores. He passes through the complex situation of exchanging his personal and artistic integrity for an indulgence of desire and fancy which assures him material prosperity. Eventually he returns to his village but with a more mature state of mind because he has passed through the bitterness of experience; he can now function more fully and effectively through total activity of the spontaneous, integrated personality even within the very circle of conventions.

The community is a limiting factor to an individual's freedom. The Western emphasis on individualism makes it easier for individuals to choose freedom in the face of social restrictions; but in the Eastern society tradition demands that society or the group larger than the individual be given prior importance. At the beginning, Val is not able to think for himself. He allows himself to be led, and he is led by Caroline. In fact, at this point, he surrenders his personal freedom to Caroline who, thereafter, forcibly possesses him and deprives him of the power to think for himself. Val makes his escape

from his restricting native atmosphere and imagines that the English woman would offer him a better life. Caroline takes on a major responsibility by this act of hers but she renounces her responsibility for a spirit of possession. Anasuya warns Caroline when the latter decides to take Val away. She says, "It'll be entirely your responsibility" (11).

Val, at this stage, is innocent and simple. Hearing that Caroline was going to sponsor him, "He went over to Caroline, who had been watching us intently all this time, took her hand and gently, briefly laid his cheek against it the way a dog will sometimes thrust its muzzles into your palm" (12). In the need for security, Val entrusts himself to the only person who seems to offer him some security, though he does not know that Caroline intends to ruthlessly exploit his innocent genius. At this point Caroline's attentions are preferable to the simpleton's fare with which he has so far been fed.

Val's movement – both physical and mental, moral and spiritual, forms the structure of the plot. At first an innocent rustic who cannot see beyond his situation, goes to England and is almost miraculously transformed into a sophisticated fop whose artistic genius gets warped in the company of his sponsor and patron. The sudden taste of luxury and attention goes to Val's head and he begins to indulge in it as a mode of escape from his own self. His final return is to his Swami who had once initiated him into the spiritual mode of life. This claims his artistic genius. Within the restrictions of his village life, he grows to realize his native freedom.

The transportation of Val is presented through the sympathetic vision of Anasuya who also moves into the English circle and discovers how Caroline transforms the rustic into a sophisticated person. Against the background of the English upper class life, Val appears rather out of place in the beginning but Anasuya sees him fitting himself into the

role he is assigned to play – the role of a posh artist. He becomes culturally and psychologically conditioned by the West. What happens is that Val adjusts himself to the external fripperies of London life and of Caroline's, but essentially, he is Indian in spirit and his artistic inspiration gets warped all of a sudden. Anasuya observes the utter dissolution of his artistic talent two years later; the sterility and waste of genius is apparent. His inspiration is crushed in the artificiality of London.

The primary factors for Val's failure in London are, first of all, the destructive domination of Caroline, seeking to control his movements and directing his life. Secondly, Val finds that he has a moral license which he would not have enjoyed in India. He enters into a passionate exploitation of Ellie, seeking her love first and then giving her a child with no sense of responsibility. His utterly irresponsible behaviour towards Ellie fills him finally with self-revulsion.

The exuberance with which Val relishes his freedom at first is more an evasion of his responsibilities than a positive commitment to art. Finally, he abdicates his responsibility in relation to Ellie and their child because it is easier to be apathetic, to be indifferent and selfish rather than fulfil his commitment to her. This is his ultimate degradation; on hearing of this the new beloved, Annabel, deserts him saying,

> "You ran away," she said again with a kind of cold vengeance. You got her into trouble and you got out quick before the whiff of suicide could offend your nostrils and curl up those holy eastern sentiments of yours about the sanctity of life. Well, so much for them. So much for defency. More bloody fool I to have thought you had any because.... you wouldn't even know what decency means. (207)

What Val imagines of freedom is that, it is merely a form of escapism. It is to be distinguished, at this stage, between liberty and licentiousness in order to understand freedom. A. V. Krishna Rao and K. Madhavi Menon in the book *Kamala Markandaya: A Critical study of her Novel, 1954-1982* quotes the words of Upadhyay as "Freedom is not a gift or a boon, but it is an achievement which is self-realisation born of relentless struggle with our own baser self" (66). A spontaneous activity in maturity and full realisation of one's personality alone can lead to positive freedom. At this stage, Val does not have the maturity to face life with full understanding of the nature of freedom. He uses his liberties to indulge in a pleasure-loving life.

Caroline supplies Val with all the material facilities she thinks he needs, but his work is almost at a dead end. With her materialistic outlook and possessive attitude, Caroline cannot understand how the spring of inspiration in Val can dry up. Caroline says "You see, he has everything he needs, and nothing has come of it" (46). While Caroline believes that she has given him the freedom to express his artistic talent, she robs him of his inspiration. What Anasuya gives in reply to Caroline's uncertainty as to whether Val's inspiration would revive, is in part the truth. She says, "I don't know how talent works … does anyone? But some people work best when they have a little peace, and some people only work when they're pushed, when they're under pressure." (47).

The phrase 'under pressure' is important. Freedom in the positive sense can function even in restrictive conditions because real freedom is to function with full realization of the total, integrated personality and is not an escape from circumstances. Would Val's artistic genius flourish only under the pressure of circumstances as in his native wilderness or does it require freedom from the authoritarian pressure of Caroline?

Though the escape with Caroline is not made of his own will, Val begins indulging in pleasure-loving idleness. Thus without the maturity to understand himself, he cannot function effectively. With the proper frame of mind, he can function anywhere, not only in the comfort of a London home with all the equipment at hand but also under the 'gross, disgusting' conditions in his village. Caroline tells Anasuya: "I wanted him to be free to work as he wanted, and never anything else" (47). But Val lacks the maturity, at this stage, to use his opportunity and at the same time to realize his responsibility as a creative artist. Moreover, Caroline's exercise of emotional and mental control over him consciously and unconsciously is a compulsion under which Val obviously cannot work.

Val has yet to be free in the true sense. A. V. Krishna Rao and K. Madhavi Menon in the book *Kamala Markandaya: A Critical study of her Novel, 1954-1982* quotes the words of J.Filella who says, "Freedom is commitment without compulsion. Freedom is a spontaneous giving of oneself to a task or to the pursuit of a goal thought to be worthwhile" (60). Val is tied down by this intercultural connection with Caroline. Thus, being dominated by Caroline and given a license that is not really congenial to artistic success, Val fails to prosper in London. His movement is from abundance and light to abundance and darkness. The first abundance is original creative strength in India and the second is his materialistic grandeur in England.

Ellie is the first agent in Val's temporary rejuvenation – Ellie, the defrauded remnant of the ravages of the cruel World War II becomes a temporary motivating force in the revival of Val's art. Val, however, violates Ellie's honour; and the pregnant Ellie is summarily disposed off by Caroline. With this Val abandons his moral responsibility to

her. Infatuated with the glamour of his London circle and Caroline's parties, he finds it easier to forsake Ellie and the unborn child. At the end, he repents:

> I did not do everything I could. I meant to go after Ellie and see that she was all right. I meant to, I talked about it a lot and I worried endlessly but in fact I did nothing because it was easier not to. Can you understand that? It's the easiest thing in the world to let that happen, it only becomes impossible afterwards, afterwards it is the unforgiveable. How could you? How could I? Well I did because I wanted the whole thing to end without blooding me (207).

As a result of Ellie's departure, Valmiki is once again completely possessed by Caroline and thus his artistic sense is cramped, the deterioration continues. Next, Val begins living an immoral existence with Caroline. This is followed by a secret liaison with Annabel who finally extricates herself from him. When Val is forced to come to terms with his guilt about Ellie, his only remaining sense of identity is his attachment to Minou the monkey.

Primarily, Val's escape into the sophisticated London circle makes him, in effect, more and more restless. This results from a loss of identity by his being thrown into an inevitable culture-shock but also the end of security which he unconsciously seeks. This kind of threat to identity, as is seen in most fictions of the 20th century, is a recurrent factor in Markandaya. While Srinivas in *The Nowhere Man* (1972) can never return to India, Val can return to his spiritual sanctuary and the Swami, who would welcome him back.

The Swami's visit to London sparks off Val's righteous indignation about the forged letters. Val refuses to return to Caroline's flat. This incident rouses his moral responsibility to Ellie. Caroline moves half way towards Val in an effort to meet him across the chasms of cultural systems that suddenly loom large between them and she even makes him forget every responsibility – even that of Ellie's. Val is swept away again by the temptation of luxury and fame and his new-found physical intimacy with Caroline. This relationship, disapproved by Anasuya and Mrs. Peabody, also fails to give Val permanent happiness.

Caroline's is a possession of Val that she acquires with confidence, and Val, deep inside him, does not want to be possessed. His crisis is such that subordination to Caroline would give him the money he has begun to love and a gratification of his hedonistic taste for pleasure, while a return to the Swami means emptiness, though he is yet to realize that the emptiness is only material and there is an abundance of spiritual strength with the Swami. His relationship with Caroline is not one that feeds on responsibility that one individual has to another, but on egoistic pleasure. It is a bondage of physical relationship that he is to shake off.

Val's affair with the young Annabel gives him the release from Caroline's forcible possession. Annabel and Val desert Caroline because the latter's developing hostility to her new rival makes them uncomfortable. Even with Annabel, Val does not exhibit an inclination to make any commitment. It is left to Anasuya to wonder if this action of moving away from Caroline is merely a temporary infatuation or a permanent withdrawal. In fact, the Val-Annabel relationship, however weakly founded it is, is the source of Val's final defiance of Caroline's power over him though it is Caroline who

eliminates Annabel from Val's life. The final agent of Val's return to India and to his artistic responsibility is Annabel herself who is disgusted with Val's irresponsibility to Ellie. The pattern of freedom and responsibility in this novel can be seen as one of the artistic freedom and responsibility.

Anasuya, who feels that she is partly responsible for Val's journey to England, finally suggests that he should go to back to India even though he will not have financial resources as he will be cut off from Caroline. Val realizes his own inner degeneracy now, stirred mainly by his memory of Ellie. Though Val's realization that life with Caroline means nothing after all, as compared to the original life that the Swami had inspired him to, is not explicitly stated either by Val or the narrator. It underlies Val's final act of returning to India.

K. S. N. Rao in the article *Some Notes on the Plots of Kamala Markandaya's Novels* states that "Ultimately Val realises that wealth cannot bring inner peace and that Val's story shows the belief that creative talent is to be used for the divine if one is to achieve inner tranquility" (41). Ultimately, art is divine; and this is primarily a concept of Eastern origin and is the underlying theme in *Possession.* Val obtains serenity only after the final act of spiritual commitment.

Val returns to the original springs of inspiration. At the final stage, he regains both faith in himself and in his art. In England he panders to the tastes and expectations of the flatterers and admirers around him providing the attitudes and postures he was asked for whether or not they were natural to him. He sells himself to public success for a time but returns to true art which is indeed disinterested.

Val is an artist with a spiritual refinement and always wanting intellectual awareness. Val does not exercise his individual freedom but succumbs for a long while to the patronsing attitude of Caroline. He is caught in the trap of patronage, because he is reliant of his patrons for money and thereby liberty for his pleasure-pursuits. He escapes from his responsibilities. Markandaya rescues Val from Caroline's diabolism partly through the intervention of Anasuya, and ultimately through the power of the Swami who has instilled into him a deep-rooted spiritual heritage. Val returns to the final goal of art according to the Indian tradition and dedication unto the divine, as there is the spiritual figure, the Swami, to sustain him. He yearns for a freedom to do what he pleases; which cannot really bring him happiness, and he cannot, at this stage, distinguish between good and evil. Val would have run the same course and been ultimately destroyed by Caroline if it were not for the intervention of various other factors – the figure of Ellie which makes Annabel desert him, and Anasuya herself, who draws him back to India, and the Swami, his silent mentor.

It is true that only when Val is transferred back to the native ground, he slowly learns his responsibility to the divine and thereby to his own artistic self, not to his decadent one. He thus grows to a better maturity when he realizes that sacrifice and suffering can also bring happiness. As K. S. N. Rao in the article *Some Notes on the Plots of Kamala Markandaya's Novels* points out that, "Happiness is found in self-abnegation and non-possession" (41). Heir to so many lop-sided values, Val at last reaches a state where he makes his final choice to remain with the Swami.

The Swami represents the ultimate state of positive freedom where he lives in the world and carries out all his functions effectively. He is free from all bonds and performs

all duties with self-realization. Threatened by Caroline that Val would return to her, the Swami only says that there is no compulsion for Val to stay. He states, "Then he will be free to go. But he will never stay until he has an equal freedom to return" (232).There can be no compulsion laid on one individual by another. This Eastern ideal is represented through Swami. Compulsion is the beginning of corruption. Compulsion is an infringement of the other's freedom; this is what Caroline seeks to do.

Val's wilderness appears a wilderness only to Caroline, but for him it becomes and domain where he realizes his identity. The development of the plot and the growth of Val projects the ideal that even if he leaves it now and then, he would return. His return to his spiritual home brings also the utter disinterest in worldly affairs and goods.

Val thus emerges as a product of his culture – the culture of a nation deeply rooted in a spiritual identity. Examining the problem of identity in Markandaya's fiction, S. C. Harrex in the book *Fire and Offering*: *The English Language Novels of India, 1935-1970* states that "Val's expiation can best be achieved through the Swami's way of non-attachment and that this is, in fact, psychologically valid and consistent with novel's moral premises" (247).

Val, as a temporary expatriate, experiences the identity crisis and this again strikes the note of the ambiguity of identity which is a central aspect of the East-West theme. Though possessed by the West for a time, Val returns to his sense of native identity. His crisis is thus representative of the East being possessed by the West until Eastern cultural identity is itself under a threat. Markandaya seems to repeat the dictum that there is almost no meeting-point in this confrontation. Markandaya's employment of

capital 'W' and 'E' for West and East however detracts a little from the presentation and concrete realization of the human experience itself.

Val's crisis is portrayed against this intercultural background. Caroline's aggressiveness and Val's submissiveness represent the characteristics of their respective races. Caroline fails to understand the religious and functional value of Val's art and is unable to grasp Val's identification with India, which is symbolized by wilderness. Caroline's nature to 'possess' comes from her own native land where the Britishers wanted to possess colonial India.

As Iyengar in the book *Indian Writing in English* suggests that the plot of the novel shows that, "It is in giving that there is fulfilment, not in possessing" (443). Val's escape becomes meaningless when he achieves maturity. Given the freedom from restrictions of community and poverty to pursue his talents, Valmiki presents the truth that a life of license is not exactly the one suited for fulfilment of artistic visions. He achieves the maturity to face his situation in total freedom where freedom is the maturity to understand oneself and the life around. The way to freedom, then, is not through escape but by learning to live at a deeper level. Maturity is thus a prerequisite for freedom. Freedom, in the Indian sense, is awareness.

The Swami leads Val to this vision without compulsion. He tells him to see the truth and Val ultimately perceives the truth. True freedom is not license. The Swami teaches Val the freedom which is pure and untainted by private motives. Artistic freedom also involves a responsibility to one's self and to art. Back at this native place, there is no fame, but there is fulfilment and peace. J. Krishnamurti in the book *Freedom from the Known* calls freedom as, "A state of mind…not freedom from something but a sense of

freedom, a freedom to doubt and question everything and therefore so intense, active and vigorous that it throws away every form of dependence, slavery, conformity and acceptance. Such freedom implies being completely alone" (68-69). Val's final state is reminiscent of this kind of freedom. Whether he achieves it through effort or whether it is a natural outcome is never projected but left to the reader's imaginative perception.

The monkey Minou extends the meaning of the thematic pattern. The responsibility for Minou's welfare, as Val believes, is his. What he says about Minou is paralleled by the Caroline-Val relationship: "I bought her, I made room for another creature like her to be brought here, exiled from its climate for life. In the end it is my responsibility" (219). Caroline never experiences this guilt that Val feels for Minou. While Minou's exile from his roots results in death, Val, who is human, can make the choice to return to his own culture. The monkey emerges as one of the prominent symbols of the book, symbolizing the responsibility that Caroline should have for Val and that Val should have in general. Ellie is another symbol, representing the responsibility of society. Crushed by a Nazi boot, she is the proof of the inhumanity of the times. Ultimately it is the memory of her that stirs Val's hard crust of artificiality to make him realize his duties.

The Swami is a figure obviously pitted against the materialism of Caroline and the last scene is representative of the clash of values. He is the example of the individual who has achieved a measure of positive freedom when he can function effectively through full realization of the total, integrated personality. He can move about freely in the world without making bonds for himself, truly like a lily on water. The ascetic embodies the Hindu ideal of self-existence in detachment and yet taking active part in all

the activities of the world. The Gita teaches that work is inevitable till one attains freedom and that when it is attained, one has to work as the instrument of the divine. This is directly opposed to the philosophy of acquisition as a sequel to industrialism in the West. The Swami represents the Indian ideal of tolerance, because each individual is essentially free and cannot be controlled.

Caroline's art world represents the world of immorality, indolence and materialistic pleasure that tempts Val with its glitter-dust for a time. The wilderness to which Val returns is apparently tough, challenging locale in which his freedom is realized through duty and freedom nurtures fulfillment. Caroline's parties are full of colour-contrasts – brown skin against white clothes, light eyes against brown skin – suggesting the racial contrast. The cloying effect of Caroline's parties reflects the actual suppression of Val in the glittering atmosphere of vulgar luxury. The contrasting wilderness to which he returns, with its two strange guards and the empty hillsides on top of which is a flimsy tent, is significant. The Swami says: "Even this wasteland may have something to show, other than what you have seen" (228).

Thus, by comparing and contrasting Lady Caroline's instinct for possession with the Swami's spirit of renunciation and detachment, Markandaya once again picks up the theme of East-West relationship which she has first dealt with in *Some Inner Fury,* and to which she was to return in *Coffer Dams* and *The Nowhere Man.* The Swami and Caroline represent the two antithetical forces which act on Valmiki – the former almost unwittingly exerts spiritual and emotional pressures which Valmiki ultimately succumbs to, while the latter does her best to entice Valmiki with Western glamour, opulence and

fame, from the clutches of which Valmiki escapes, at least for the time being, at the end of the novel.

From the very beginning, the relationship between Lady Caroline and Valmiki is that of the possessor and the possessed, or the owner and the owned. That would explain why Caroline is ready to go to any extremes in order to make Valmiki, whom she autocratically treats not merely as a possession but virtually as her own creation, walk along the path she has chalked out for him. Consequently, when, after being uprooted from his native village, Valmiki stops painting altogether – that his only painting from this period is that of something which 'looked vaguely like a desert' is highly symbolic that he has lost his originality of painting colourful images which denotes that his life is not as colourful as it is in India.

Caroline gets her cook to write letters in tamil. She then pretends before Valmiki, who can neither read nor write, that they come from the Swami. The letters have the desired effect. One must mention at this point that during this arid phase Valmiki's main concern, which he expresses before Anasuya, is that, in spite of his initiation into Caroline's world and his obvious attempts at conforming to the rigid codes of her society, it is the Swami's opinion of him that he values first and foremost.

Possession brings to light the sharpened contrasts of culture in the depiction of an individual's crisis when forcibly caught in the clash of intercultural values while groping towards some kind of self-existence in freedom; it mirrors the growth to realization in the mind of Val as he resolves the complex dilemma of personal and artistic freedom and responsibility and returns to the traditional values of spirituality and duty which alone give him a true sense of freedom and identity.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

The basic idea of the East-West relationship in Markandaya's novels emanates from India's contact with Britain either directly or indirectly. The conflict between the two countries is presented on various levels: on the individual level, on the group level, on the cultural and the artistic levels, and also the on conflict between industry and agriculture. In this connection she portrays two ways of life, two sets of values, often locked in confrontation not in the sense of destruction but giving new vistas to a new relationship in which the twain can be brought together.

Although morally Markandaya often seems to favor those characters who ultimately choose to respond to life's crises and problems within the mode of realism rather than that of myth aesthetically, her attraction to characters conceived within the mythic mode counterbalances and outweighs her attraction to those characters who endorse the realistic mode. In this category fall Rukmani and her husband Nathan of *Nectar in a Sieve,* Valmiki and the Swami of *Possession.*

Realism is often equated in Markandaya's work with rationalism and materialism and the forces of change that are seen primarily as Western modes of thought and belief, whereas the mythic mode is usually the Eastern mode of being, which encompasses notions of spirituality, mysticism, and fateful resignation that are in direct conflict with the goals and beliefs of realism.

Markandaya's novels imply largely social and economic background, physical features, dress and behaviour in person. Markandaya has seen India at close quarters and has acquired an intimate view of its ideas, ideals and various modes of life. She is as well

acquainted with western ideals and mode of life. The major themes of the novels are the social, cultural, and economic clash of these two modes. During the bitterness, which had prevailed in the thirties and forties at the height of the freedom struggle, the writer's attitudes are mostly biased against the Britishers. Bitter memories associated with the British rule which overshadowed the pleasant experiences with individual Englishmen, disappear in the fifties.

The hold of traditions is gradually relaxing while a new culture is born of the clash between the East and the West and it is merging imperceptibly but decisively. The large audience of the educated class was question the age. The old social dogmas and society are being re-interpreted with their new found knowledge. The Indian novelist today works mainly against this background. Indian society has always been a group society in which the 'atomization of the West is still foreign'. The drama in these novels unfolds in the broad social content in which one life reflects another. One sees this in the tension between the new urbanized class and their village kinsmen; between minority groups and those who still seek to hold monolithic barriers; between the masses and those in public office; between the young and their middle aged parents and guardians.

Markandaya's acquaintance with Indian life is as authentic as her understanding of the Englishmen and their character. She spents a few years studying the life of South Indian peasants before marrying an Englishman and settling down in London. Culture being ingrained in the personality of the nation is visible not only in domestic habits or sartorial concerns but also in beliefs and convictions. Markandaya's major theme is the cultural clash of the two modes of life, she has seen so closely.

Markandaya has constantly been preoccupied by the East-West conflict of modes and convictions of which she herself is a living example. This clash between the Eastern and Western values leads to an inevitable quest for identity; which she has ably dwelt upon in most of her novels in different contexts and with varying flavour.

The postcolonial space allures the novelists to survey the identified as well as unidentified areas that remain unexplored because of the colonial rule that does not allow the colonized to prove the talent in any field and if the talent is made known, it is exploited for the maximum benefit of the colonialists. Markandaya exposes herself to this infinite postcolonial space and succeeds in registering her name in the list as a novelist with uncanny gift of giving expression to the woman who by virtue of her gender is considered a lifelong 'satellite' that moves round the 'planet' man.

The credit goes to Markandaya for voicing against this myth and for providing an authentic place – the place of the planet in the male oriented society. Her female protagonists show that they are not weaker in any way than their male counterparts. But when she does so, she never crosses the limit, as she is aware of the particular space where she has to work. She has lived both lives – the life of being a native due to her birth and bringing up in Indian tradition and the life of a diasporic writer as she settles in England after her marriage with Taylor. In both lives there is one thing that is common. That is her deep rootedness in Indian ethos and culture. No doubt, she lives in England but she never forgets India and her people and so pens the Indian feelings with Western words.

D. Ramakrishna in the article "Bhabani Bhattacharya's A Dream in Hawali: A Study in Postcolonial Spirituality" says, "Transference, displacement, and alienation

constitute the post colonial experience of not only of the Indians settled or born abroad, but also of the Indians in India due to the Western impact" (116). Kamala Markandaya's experience as an expatriate enables her to acquire a first-hand knowledge of the British policy of colonialism and imperialism. In order to have a first-hand knowledge of rural life, she lives in a South Indian village and observes minutely the life of villagers. Thus, her life is an epitome of the experiences of displacement resulting in alienation and rootlessness. Her protagonists reflect her own rootlessness. She is well-versed in the depiction of both kinds of displacement from rural to urban life and from native land to foreign land. The displaced protagonists face the reality of displacement and start searching for a place in imagination.

In her married life, Markandaya leads a diasporic life feeling rootlessness in the foreign land and making futile search for the roots in alien culture. She hangs between the two cultures – native and foreign. She lives in 'House' but longs for 'Home'. Rootlessness becomes an outcome of this bicultural paradigm. This is clearly reflected in her novels, as Anil Bhatnagar in the book *Kamala Markandaya: A Thematic Study* states, "a real slice of life is as long as a man has roots, he lives and dies if he is uprooted" (85). Rukmani, the protagonist in *Nectar in a Sieve* feels uprootedness when the tannery industrialist, swallows up the land ensuing in the displacement of her family.

Rukmani with her husband, Nathan moves to the city in the hope that she will lead a better life with her son Murugan but quiet contrary; she leads a beggarly life finally resulting in her shift from city to village after the death of her husband. In *Possession,* it is Caroline who uproots the talented artist Val from his soil for the material possessions. Val feels uncomfortable and fails to adjust in the new environment. The plant is uprooted

for its native place and is planted in the alien soil. Finally, he survives in securing his soil with the spiritual self-awakening by Swami.

Markandaya shoots the peak named 'East-West encounter' from her postcolonial camera. She shoots it from various angles – the political, the social, the human, the technological, the cultural and the artistic. The conflict in her novels is the consequence of her familiarity with the bicultural world – the native land where she is born as well as England, the foreign land where she leads her married life. While presenting these two worlds she remains neutral. Anil Bhatnagar in the book *Kamala Markandaya: A Thematic Study* opines, "She does not show favour either to the East or the West. Rather she brings to light the various points of weakness and strength of both the cultures. Through the eyes of the East she looks at the West and through the eyes of the West she looks at the East" (29).

In *Nectar in a Sieve,* the West is juxtaposed with the East through the character of Dr. Kennington. Though there is no direct encounter in all aspects, Markandaya portrays it at the social, economic, industrial, cultural and spiritual levels through the relationship between Dr. Kennington and Rukmani. Dr. Kennington alias Kenny is both a sympathetic observer of the Indian scene and a missionary. It can be said that through Kenny, Markandaya gives to the Western readers the image of India seen by a sympathetic outsider. Harish Raizada in the book *Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya* remarks that "Kenny's presence haunts the novel from the beginning to the end. Like the chorus in the Greek drama, he is both a participant and neutral observer in the action of the novel" (149).

The novel is centred around Rukmani's family and infact, she emerges from the novel as a gentle suffering soul and one can assimilate the national character from this particular family because their life which is interwoven with poverty, suffering and passive acceptance are the hallmark of Indian life.

The main importance of this novel is the Indo-Britain relationship. It is centered in the personal aspect in which all the clashes are brought out. The introduction of Kenny is helpful to project the western idea of service. He is a foreign missionary who came to India to uplift the suffering masses without ostentation or vanity. The difference between the two countries is highlighted in the world of spiritualism with the conversation between Rukmani and Kenny. They are poles apart and the Indian spiritual world is fundamentally different from that of the West. Rukmani is the symbol of passive acceptance and suffering and she is very much rooted in traditional beliefs. She believes that the soul can be cleansed by the passive acceptance of suffering.

The Western way of life on the other hand, is rooted in action. Kenny is the voice of modernity in the novel and Markandaya uses him to comment on several aspects of the Indian scene – lack of planning, large families, orthodox sexual mortality etc. Kenny watches all the sufferings of the poor people and help them in many ways. When Kenny meets Rukmani after the flood and enquires about their life and about the flood, Rukmani's reply is "We have a little rice. It will last until times are better" (43). He is very much shocked by her reply and retaliates immediately.

The Indians are influenced by the traditional beliefs of passive acceptance and suffering which are taught by the priests; they cannot merge with the western way of life because it is highly advanced. The western way of life is entirely different from that of

the East. There is also religion in the west, but it is not as much impressed as it is in the Indian way of life.

Compared to Indian marriages, marriages in western countries are not taken seriously. The Indian concept of marriage is that, both the husband and the wife should not part in their joys and sorrows. In the West, matrimonial relationship is not such that, both the partners should be loyal to each other and this is evident in the life of Kenny. Kenny is very much dejected in his married life because his wife has deserted him and also has asked her children to forget him. Kenny who is very much distressed and dejected by the Indian ways of life, admires the strong bond of matrimonial relationship between the Indian husband and wife and their family bondage. He says to Rukmani with admiration. "You have sound instincts." (108).

Markandaya shows that though the people disliked the entire western mass, they respected and had faith in characters like Kenny. Markandaya has introduced this character to highlight the Indian condition and the society not with contempt but with a sympathetic nod. *Nectar in a sieve* shows that the relationship between the East and West is friendly. Kenny represents the best in the English character, and the Indian response to him is also one of love, devotion and almost worship. So, the author through this novel concludes that the relationship between the East and West is always possible at the personal level.

In *Possession,* Markandaya portrays England as trying to 'possess' the soul of India and to patronize her art even after the granting of the Independence. Caroline has genuine respect for Val's art, but her desire is to wear him like a necklace of diamonds round her throat-for show. In English artistic circles, Val notices 'the over-sweetness, the

over-fervid kindness', the open tendency to patronize. At the cocktail party given in London by Caroline to introduce Val to artists, Val appears splendidly dressed in dazzling white, leading by a 'a tiny monkey wearing a scarlet hip-jacket and a gilt leather collar'. The symbolic significance of this scene is unmistakable. What the monkey is to Val, Val is to Caroline – a possession dressed up for show.

If India is no longer a glittering diamond on the British crown, at least Indian art is sought to be made an exotic *possession* by display. Annabel, Caroline's cousin, understands the latter's motive in having brought Val with her to London; it is by no means altruistic. She has acted the pioneer in the discovery of the art of India and she has drawn a dividend on the investment, not in terms of money, but by way of prestige and applause.

Markandaya makes it clear that this desire to 'discover' and to patronize an exotic art is not confined to England, but is a Western malady. In the opinion of Markandaya, there is no difference in kind between the desire for political possession and the vainglorious desire to patronize the art of another country. There are three aspects to study in the Britain-India relationship delineated in the novel. One is the aspect that is overt – that as in several other novels, Markandaya portrays the relationship between the two countries through two individual characters. The second aspect is that in the evolution of Markandaya's literary life, *Possession* marks the beginning of her own 'coming home to Britain'. The third is that Markandaya makes some significant comments on diaspora realities.

Lady Caroline Bell is an autocrat, typical of the British Raj in India. She does exactly what she wants to, and the others do exactly what she wants them to do. Within

minutes of seeing Val's crude paints and fine paintings, she decides to make him a successful artist. Nothing can stop her. She moves into the headman's house, and he goes elsewhere. She besieges Val's family with her proposal, day after day. The villagers serve her as they would a feudal lord. She fares needless to say, extremely well. Wherever the British go, as the whole of the East knows, they live on the fat of the land, though the British themselves have no inkling of it. Simply by taking it for granted, they have the hypnotized natives piling it on to their plates.

Caroline is overbearing to the very end. Caroline could, as she had always been able, position a splinter between a man and his conscience with which he has lately been at peace. Divide and rule. It is a formidable inherited skill. The author makes specific Britain-India parallels such as this throughout the novel. Caroline ends on a note of supreme confidence. There are other occasions when she puts on an air of confidence, the proverbial British stiff upper lip, in order to hide her pain or fears.

The end of the novel is hers, not the swami's because she feels that Val would return to him. His eyes are troubled at her prediction that Val will come back to her, though his lips deny his fears. Indeed, the two are very alike in many ways, and their aspiration to possess Val is only one of the many similarities. Towards the very end, in the cave, they see Val's recent work which Markandaya has made him do a lot within the two months that he has been in India, more than is humanly plausible. When the swami himself is troubled at the possibility of Val leaving some day, it is strange that Val should be so confident that he has found his anchor and home.

Markandaya accelerates the pace of Val's adjustments to life in England; he never does become literate, but he sure learns all about dining and drinking, and social graces.

There comes a stage where one possesses the land that has possessed one. Markandaya is in this phase where one is aware of the larger picture; those who have a social and political consciousness and conscience speak out. These form only a small minority. It is so much easier to ignore the world and go on with our jobs and our family and friends. To be fair to the majority of the diaspora, many members came away from India not just to grab at a materialistically better life but to get away from the hassle of the competition and the systemic corruption of working in India. Such individuals are not fighters. Their contributions to society lie elsewhere. But a few are. Life is not easy for them. Markandaya, in *Possession* has sharpened her expose of British faults.

It is quite apparent from the analysis of Markandaya's novels that the novelist has depicted the theme of East-West encounter very comprehensively. Her presentation of the East-West conflict arising out of socio-political and cultural situations is certainly marked by exceptional perception, keenness and understanding. The confrontation between the two has been objectively viewed on individual, group and political, cultural and artistic levels. As a neutral observer, the novelist examines the strengths and weaknesses of both the cultures.

While acclaiming the traditional, philosophical, religious and ethical values of India, Markandaya is not uncritical of its economic backwardness, fatalism and passive endurance. Despite her strong contempt for the heartless and soulless nature of the West, she is ready to acknowledge its scientific and technological advancement, and its rational and liberal outlook. Harish Raizada in the book *Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya* says, "She wants both the East and West to be complementary to each other so that the mechanized West may benefit from the ethical values of India and the spiritual India

from the modernization of the West" (69). She emphatically says that, India should be able to preserve her own soul and carve out her destiny on the basis of her spiritual and ethical values. She seems to advocate a compromise between the diverse values of the East and the West through her novels.

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