CHAPTER II

THE SEVERAL WORLDS

Thematology is of great importance in comparative literature. Theme is a recurrent element in a work of art. It is related to the subject matter and is exposed through images and symbols. S.S. Prawer suggests that in the study of themes, situations and motifs one must be aware of individual variations on the one hand and wider cross-connections on the other. (Study of Comparative Literature 66). It would be interesting to view the novels of Buck and Markandaya from the thematic point, observing the similarities in situations, human responses, economic and social factors. This would reveal the extend of influence exerted on these writers by the situations and circumstances around them. To use Weisstein’s terms “stoff-motif-geschichte”, which covers the thematic range in a work, not only presents simply situational themes but can also be seen “as a cultural code or a reservoir of cultural meanings which are tapped by different regions or periods or even individuals in different ways” (Chellappan 113).

Theme is exposed by the relationship between form and content. The sagas have a formal structure of their own as they follow age old conventions which forms the context of the narrative. As a creative artist through
innumerable anecdotes the novelist depicts characters and events. Themes thus revealed are related to the persons and places of action. They acquire a multiplicity of meanings based on the contexts. This explains the popularity of certain themes during particular periods and the failure of some others.

We find that Pearl S Buck and Kamala Markandaya, as women writers concentrate on similar thematic concerns in their fictional material. They exhibit a unique attraction for themes that deal with cultural conflicts, human relationships and natural calamities. Poverty and hunger, national issues, conflict of tradition and modernity and the East-West dichotomy figure repeatedly in their novels. It reveals their mental makeup and humanitarian vision. It is interesting to note how the same theme is treated by different writers.

Pearl S Buck’s themes cover social, economic, and historical matters. Her interest in intellectual movements give her books a special significance taking the reader deep into the problems. She was touched by the poverty, the ravages of nature, hunger, suffering and the plight of unwanted children. All these found their way into her novels and Pearl succeeded in giving them universality. Along with this her humanitarian concerns also increased. Her novels on Chinese life and culture were an eye-opener for the western world.
Her thematic representations of American life exposed the materialism and affluence of technological achievements.

Kamala Markandaya deals with the theme of hunger and national freedom. Her Indianness keeps her well rooted in the problems of the people of India. Poverty, both rural and urban, and the western influence attracted her literary sensibilities. As she herself says her novels are ‘literature of concern’ and so her themes deal with social realism. Her fictional concerns like Buck’s are social, economic, cultural and historical. Her novels help to smoothen the conflict between the traditional values and the westernised modern values. Universal brotherhood and humanism find a place in her novels.

As social novelists, they portray the economic, political and spiritual aspects of society. As an immigrant writer Markandaya reveals the traits of the dominant culture and the ethnic sub-culture through her themes which are essentially Indian. Buck though not an immigrant writer is similarly placed and reveals the same bifocal vision. Their stories unravel the strains of the two cultures as the authors are placed in their new milieu. Hence their common impulse is to examine issues arising out of the dilemma of biculturalism, the search for identity, the need for self-assertion and the loss of indigenous culture. The humane undercurrent that runs through their themes makes them different from other writers of similar issues.
Both Kamala Marakandaya and Pearl S Buck are preoccupied with the social problems around them. Hunger, starvation, poverty and natural calamities that man suffers, find their way into their novels. Throughout her fictional career, Markandaya is concerned about the deplorable condition of the working class. Buck stressed equality for all through social revolution where “The change which we should all seek is thus a change from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from unorganized life to organized life, from bigotry to toleration, from blind fatalism to a sense of human destiny” (Kapadia M. 375). Markandaya and Buck portray rural life at its best as is evident from the realistic picture drawn and the minute descriptions of flood, famine, drought, starvation, superstition and struggle for existence. Hunger is a widespread phenomenon in India and China as seen in their novels.

The novels of Kamala which deal with the theme of hunger and starvation are Nectar in a Sieve and A Handful of Rice. As Shiv K. Kumar says it is the life experience of:

...the teeming millions of this country who have to face periodic outbursts of hunger and famine and encounter all the evil consequences flowing from such calamities...Characters in these novels like nomads, go in search of food and employment
to distant parts of India only to have nostalgic memories of their home town ("Some Indian Writers of English Fiction" 283).

Similarly Pearl’s *The Good Earth* is an excellent portrayal of the rural peasants’ struggle for survival. As independent onlookers who witnessed the socio-economic values of village life their novels are a vital record of poverty and starvation caused by inhuman exploitation.

*Nectar in a Sieve* tells us about the toils, anguish and suffering of the peasant’s life. Nature forms the backdrop of this rural India presented by Kamala Markandaya. The poor peasant, who depends on nature for his existence, is at times battered by its vagaries. This results in hunger, starvation and death. In its treatment of peasant life, and the yearning for the soil, the novel maybe compared with Pearl S. Buck’s *The Good Earth*, Alan Paton’s *Cry, The Beloved Country*, John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* and Bhabani Bhattacharya’s *So Many Hungers*.

The venue of the novel is a South Indian village. The theme of hunger reveals the degradation to which human beings are driven. Added to this is the havoc of industrialization. If it is natural calamities that cause starvation, industrialization brings about a decay of traditional values, mutilates nature and upsets the rural economy, which in turn destroys the peasants’ life. It “is a story of the faceless peasant who stands silhouetted in the unending twilight.
of Indian agrarian bankruptcy” (Uma Paramerswaran Representative Indo-English Novelists 54). Happily married, Nathan and his wife, suddenly find themselves to be victims of industrialization and the eccentricities of nature. By portraying the sufferings of this peasant family, the sufferings of the rural peasant in colonial India is picturised by the novelist.

The family has to endure poverty, famine, the divorce of their daughter and her degradation into a prostitute, death of sons and finally Nathan’s death. Nathan, the poor peasant, could not afford luxuries, for his family, but they never went hungry when Nature blessed them sufficiently. But extremities like excessive rain and drought destroy his crops leading them to hunger, starvation and conflict, forcing them to feed on:

...soft ripe fruit of the prickly pear, a sweet potato or two, blackened and half-rotten, thrown away by some prosperous hand.....for these they must have ranged widely...a desperate competition that made enemies of friends and put an end to humanity (Nectar 87).

Hunger and starvation due to floods, drought and feudalism is movingly depicted by Markandaya. Rukmani and her sons are forced to eat even grass:

For hunger is a curious thing: at first it is with you all the time...and you buy a moment’s respite...you think of food
many times a day each time a terrible sickness assails you, and because you know this, you try to avoid the thought, but you cannot, it is with you (187).

Yet even in the face of this poverty basic human ties are not forgotten. This sustains them in adversity. The calamities of Nature, return of Ira, death of a son and the migration of the others are accepted by Rukmani and Nathan with the same intensity as when they were blessed by Nature and their daughter’s marriage and the good times they had. Nidhi Srivastava expresses explicitly the real situation, which makes Rukmani, Nathan and Ira ideal sufferers and nurturers:

...Nectar in a Sieve (1954), is the fictional epic on Indian life, which reveals the havoc of hunger, the evils of industrialization, the tension between tradition and modernity and Nature both in its pink petals and red claws, form the matrix of human existence in rural India. (13-14)

The zenith of Pearl S Buck’s literary career began with The Good Earth. It helped the ordinary reader to a greater appreciation of the reality of Chinese rural life. It is the story of the desperate struggle of a poverty-stricken Chinese peasant farmer Wang Lung. The story traces the life of Wang Lung from his marriage day to his old age. While choosing a wife, he buys a slave
from the House of Hwang, the most prosperous family in the land. O-lan, who becomes his wife is the most memorable and powerful character in the novel.

Poverty, hunger and the resultant suffering are the predominant themes of the novel represented mainly through O-lan. This depiction of a Chinese family, through poverty and affluence is based upon a common pattern, the repeating of history within a generation. The novel can be divided into four sections depending on the suffering and fortunes of Wang Lung. In the first section, he prospers acquiring land through hard work. The only unpleasant incident is the birth of a daughter who is retarded. The second half shows the country devastated by a drought and the resulting famine drove them to the city in the South where the revolution was taking place. Wang Lung and the peasants are unaware of this political change. Though by an ironical twist of fate, this revolutionary uprising in fact helps Wang-lung to restore his fortunes. Once again Wang Lung prospers and the (symbolic) climax is when Wang Lung is able to purchase the decaying mansion of the Hwang family. And finally natural calamities and political turmoil ruin him. His farms are destroyed by floods and his house is made a base of the revolutionary army.

The prosperity which Wang Lung enjoys in the early years of his life is short lived. The entire countryside is annihilated by a killing famine, which reduces Wang Lung and his neighbours to poverty and near starvation. The
drought destroyed the crops and when their food is exhausted they ate the roots of plants, the cobs of the corn, their supply of seeds and whatever they could feed on. This reminds one of Nathan and his family feeding on roots and grass for survival. Wang even dug up earth called “goddess of mercy earth”(59) from a certain spot in one of his fields to feed his children. This earth could provide slight nourishment but could not sustain life.

Hunger made the people sink into cannibalism. Wang’s neighbour Ching who was now a mere shadow of a human being whispered that “we have eaten the beasts that ploughed our fields and the grass and the bark of trees. What now remains for food?... In the village they are eating human flesh”(55). When O-ian smothers the daughter born to her, we are forced to face the brutality of female infanticide. Wang wraps the body in a piece of broken mat and lays it next to an old grave. “He had scarcely put the burden down before a famished, wolfish dog hovered almost at once behind him” (58). Both of them were so famished that Wang could not chase, nor the dog run away and he knew that when he turns away, it would feed on the infant corpse. These gruesome happenings filled him with such fear and despair that he decides to flee the land with his family. So like Nathan and his family, they also leave their land and their possessions, driven by famine.
The Good Earth is a document of human nature describing a whole way of life. It was created out of the imagination of Pearl Buck "who had lived and thought in the Chinese pattern without losing the detachment of her western perspective." (Canby 9). The people that Buck presents in The Good Earth are universal symbols. These men and women have toiled through the ages to make a living out of the soil. It is the story of honest hardworking people who realize the value of land and through it try to relieve themselves from poverty. Although the saga of the Wang Lung family is representative of the respective period and country, its universality of theme like Nectar in a Sieve renders it timeless.

Ravi the angry young man of Kamala Markandaya's A Handful of Rice fights against social injustice and as a consequence faces a series of trials and tribulations. As the title suggests his life is a struggle for a handful of rice. The emotional insecurity imposes moral stress on Ravi who gives in to the temptation for petty thieving at times. But in the last scene, he proves to be a man who still retains a few morals because he is not able to hurl the stone at the glass windows of the shop along with the mob. Starvation and poverty continues to be Ravi's lot even in the city. "because the world of A Handful of Rice is all around us all the time in our daily lives- average individuals like you and me ground down by an unjust society into world-weariness"(Uma
Parameswaran *Kamala Markandaya* 141). In Buck’s novel also, poverty and hunger drives the villager to the city.

Finding himself with the teeming jobless he realizes the chasm between the rich and the poor growing wider. He decries this economic disparity with its inequities of life. He too had dreams of the comforts he would provide his wife and children. But he is unable to provide even food or stand the cost of medicines. After Apu’s death the burden of the entire house rests on his shoulders and though he works he does not prosper. At this juncture the realization that the jackets which he had done for rupees seven is sold at an exorbitant rate at the shop enrages him and “Of all his emotions, disgust was uppermost. To be ground down like that. To allow oneself to be. To lie down and take whatever they cared to give to believe that such a state was unalterable” (*Handful* 82). Due to this disparity the city becomes forbidding because “In this jungle one had to fight, fiercely, with whatever weapons one had. Or go under” (198). He is unable to be a rebel though he is aware of the injustice in the society.

The novel begins and ends with the hero’s struggle to procure food. In the very first chapter we find Ravi drunk and his words to Apu highlights the theme of hunger that runs through the novel: “I’m not only drunk... I’m hungry. I want a meal” (6). And even when Jayamma wounds him he only
replies “I was hungry”(9) and that he drank to forget his sorrow. It was the same hunger which forced him to leave his village where life was tossed between “genteel poverty and acute poverty…starvation” (12). Poverty even made him abandon his decency at times. Later on, the burden of a joint family weakens him still further. Added to this he realizes that the price of rice is increasing day by day and that even one meal a day is a luxury. Like in The Good Earth and Nectar in a Sieve here too we realise that floods, droughts, bad monsoons and men themselves are responsible for the suffering and starvation of the poor. As the prices keep spiraling upwards, Ravi sold household articles, acquired a loan on the security of his sewing machine for which he even contemplated “putting everyone on starvation rations until he had paid off the loan” (196). The answer to all this was “Bad harvest” (205) a refrain Ravi has been hearing from childhood. And finally when the price of grain shot skyward, Ravi is frustrated and he realizes that he can never keep pace or even strike a balance between what he earned and the ever increasing prices.

These and numerous other happenings in A Handful of Rice, Nectar in a Sieve and The Good Earth convey “the continuity of human experience” and render “into universal terms immemorial human attitudes”(Adams 125). It is this similarity to truth and our own individual lives that make these novels stir deep patterns of recognition within the mind and heart of its readers. The
portrayal of the ebb and flow of life, not just seasonally but also as a cycle of both family and humanity, is the portrayal of life as it is; true and believable. Natural calamity playing havoc with the social and economic conditions of a nation and its repercussions on the individual and family, is ably analysed by these novelists, belonging to different geographical locations.

The encounter of the East and the West is a prominent theme in Indian Writing in English. The growth of English education and the contact with the British resulted in a new class of intellectuals. This led to the spread of nationalism. With the appearance of Gandhiji, the revolutionary movement gained momentum. Jayita Sengupta asserts:

Whatever might be the discrepancies in the East-West encounter, the author [Markandaya] confirms in her works that the colonial rule has undoubtedly left a stamp on the Indian soil. Yet the influence has foiled to demolish the Indian identity. Her novels account for such an incompatible interaction through various themes (The Quest 21).

As a post-independence writer Markandaya presents the freedom struggle positively as a patriotic Indian would. She presents the violence and the loyalty which was an integral part of the nationalist struggle. It is also delineated as an extreme extension of the East-West dichotomy.
Markandaya’s *Some Inner Fury*, *The Nowhere Man* and *The Golden Honeycomb* portray the national struggle at different levels. Buck too retells Chinese history from the inside, chronicling the sequence of events from the Taiping Rebellion to the Boxer Uprising which brought about the collapse of the old order. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and the subsequent Japanese invasion of China forcing the Chinese to live as prisoners in their own country was a thematic concern of the novelist. *The Imperial Woman*, *Letter From Peking* and *Dragon Seed* are the novels of Buck that come under this thematic group.

The first novel to portray a negative aspect of the non-violent movement is Kamala Markandaya’s *Some Inner Fury*. It is a novel of violence and destruction. The nationalist theme assumes several dimensions in the novel. Set in the background of the Quit India movement of 1942, it deals with the upsurge of the nationalist movement and the question of racial prejudice. Lending credence to the cultural dichotomy is the love of Mira and Richard. It is a relationship beyond race and culture and is closely linked to the political theme of the novel. According to Gobinda Prasad Sharma’s *Nationalism in Indo-Anglian Fiction* the author’s attitude to the movement is politically neutral throughout (247).
The story revolves around an affluent aristocratic family to which belong Mirabai and Kitswamy. Govind is their adopted brother. While Kit upholds the British and is proud of the imperial rule, Govind is anti-British. As tradition demands Kit is married to Premala, who tries her best to adjust to her husband’s westernised life. Meanwhile the violent protests against the British, turn disastrous and the fire that breaks out in the school consumes Premala. Kit is murdered while trying to save Premala. Govind who is accused of the murder is extricated by the word of Mira against the word of Hickey, the missionary. The mob supports Govind and Hickey and Richard get isolated. Along with this the love of Richard and Mira breaks up, symbolically conveying that “the twain shall never meet”. In the cause of the nation Mira chooses her country over her English lover proving her loyalty to the people over her personal desires. The political situation prevalent in the country is responsible for their estrangement: “For us there was no other way, the forces that pulled us apart were too strong” (Some 285).

Uma Parameswaran feels that Kamala Markandaya represents the path of revolution as shown by Netaji Bose and the path of non-violence as practiced by Mahatma Gandhi. This is represented in the novel by Govind and Roshan respectively. Govind earns our sympathy while Roshan stands out as a compromising personality. Through her strong faith in the Gandhian concept of non-violence she leads the mob away from violent acts against the
oppressors. "The mob bears Govind away, leaving the white men, including Hickey and Richard, in the closed tight circle of solidarity" (Some 85).

Through Roshan's actions, Markandaya tells us about some of the landmarks of the nationalist movement: such as burning of foreign cloth, satyagraha, non-violence etc.

It must have been Kamala Markandaya's patriotic note that made her end the novel, with Mira giving up Richard after their very passionate relationship. The India-Britain relationship is developed through their love affair and turns cold as patriotic feelings come to the forefront. In the choice between her people and her love, the country proves to be stronger. Mira's loyalty to her nation is unquestionable and both Richard and Mira forsake each other for their countries. Realizing that they cannot stay together Mira consoles: "When the tail of the procession went through the door, I would join it, and Richard would stay behind. This was not a time for decision, for he knew he could not come with me, and I knew I could not stay: it was simply the time for parting" (Some 285).

As Pearl Buck herself declared in a monograph, the novel Dragon Seed (N.Y.1944), is the account of the calamities suffered by the farming families at the hands of the Japanese invasion. The plot closely follows historical events and the novel was published immediately after the
U.S. had entered the war. The Chinese were used to bandit attacks and raids by the war lords. With the coming of the Japanese, the farmers who lived near Nanking witnessed cruelty of the worst kind in the bombing attacks and scrupulous killing of the innocent, the young and the old. From these events Buck created her novel on wartime activities.

The novel tells of the calamities caused on China’s rural population. The story is set in a village west of Nanking, between the years 1937 to 1941. Like in *Some Inner Fury* where Markandaya tells us about the fate of one family during the nationalist struggle, *Dragon Seed* tells the story of the farmer Ling Tan and his family whose comfortable lives are demolished by the Japanese invaders. The struggle turns violent as in *Some Inner Fury* and takes a very gruesome turn as fathers and sons are imprisoned, mothers and daughters raped and killed.

The Chinese resisted in their own way. Every village had its own underground activities to resist oppression and defy the Japanese. They lacked the modern weapons and arms that the invaders possessed, yet they carried on a ceaseless campaign against the Japanese. Ling Tan’s sons joined the underground and he himself became the leader of the village in their fight against the Japanese. At the same time one of Ling’s cousins collaborated with the enemy.
The novel particularly condemns the rape of Nanking, which was one of the worst atrocities of the war. After attacking Nanking on December 13, 1937, they burned the city and raped the women, many of whom died due to injuries while others were deliberately killed. Pearl has used rape as the central motif. The novel begins with the rape and murder of an elderly grandmother who was unable to escape through a small hole in the wall. Orchid, Ling Tan’s eldest daughter-in-law dies after she is raped by four soldiers, and the fifth rapes her dead body. And the worst is when Ling Tan’s teenage son is raped by a group of Japanese soldiers. “Ultimately rape becomes a lurid emblem of Chinese powerlessness and Japanese brutality” (Conn A Cultural Biography 256).

A very powerful character in the campaign against the Japanese is the woman named Mayli. The novel ends with the emphasis that the guerilla warfare will continue. Peter Con feels that “Pearl believed that the Chinese people were creating a new Asian epic in their own struggle against aggression; Dragon Seed is her contribution to that collective work” (256).

The Golden Honeycomb by Kamala Markandaya primarily is a historical romance. Its theme deals with the independence struggle as well as the East-West dichotomy. It is a voluminous saga of princely life and traces the history of the India-British encounters over a fairly long period. The novel
ends with the attainment of independence. The theme depicts the conflict of the East and the West at the national level, suggesting the need for social and political reform.

The novel traces the life of three generations of princes in the state of Devapur. The Raja of Devapur is ousted and a distant relative Bawajiraj is installed as ruler. His wife Manjula, a capable woman, delivers a son, who from the moment of his birth is given over to English nurses and tutors and "has no notion that the British have taken from him his birthright" (Golden 34). The result is that he grows up as a westernised Indian prince and is distanced from his people.

Rabi's growth as an Indian, and that too as being one with the commoner is the greatest achievement of the Maharani and his mother Mohini. Through him and the Dewan's daughter Usha the wider inner fury of the nation at large is vented, culminating in the violent demonstration of national indignation. The divide and rule policy of the British Raj is opposed by the people. The control they exercised over the Indian princes is resented and when Rabi decides to join the mob in overthrowing the British government, it is an inspiration for the people and they were confident of victory. As the character of Rabi is analysed in the following chapter, a detailed discussion is not relevant here.
Historically the novel covers the period from the end of the last century to the 1920’s. The national agitation erupts all over the country and the Gandhian movement gains strength. The Jalianwala Bagh massacre, the coronation of King Edward and George-V are events traced through the novel. The nationalist movement gathers momentum and the agitation in Devapur is a bye-product of nationalism. Markandaya in this novel strongly speaks of the faults and shortcomings of the British while standing firmly in familiar ground.

Like The Golden Honeycomb, Buck’s Imperial Woman is a historical romance. It is the fictionalised biography of Tz’u-his, the Empress Dowager, “who ruled the greatest kingdom in the world, the Middle Kingdom which the West called China”(My Several Worlds 4). Her greatness is in the fact that she was not born a queen, but a commoner. She was a beauty and was chosen to be the concubine of Emperor Hsien-feng. As the favourite concubine of the Emperor she lived in the Forbidden City and bore him a son. She was born to rule and by sheer strength of character rose to a position of command staying unchallenged for about four decades. The Chinese admired her and forgave many of the crimes she committed towards the last years of her reign.

The novel tells us about late nineteenth century Chinese history from the Taiping Rebellion to the Boxer Uprising which almost saw the collapse of
the empire. After Emperor Hsien-feng’s death, his son T’ung-chih was placed upon the throne. Unfortunately he died of smallpox leaving no heir. Here also the Empress showed firmness and courage. Instead of mourning over her son’s death, she secretly made plans to install her nephew as the heir, so that she would not lose command. Thus, the three year old boy was proclaimed heir and he became Emporer Kwang-hsu. He was a weak boy and too much attracted to western ways. His attempts at reform were opposed and he was taken prisoner. Once again Empress Dowager took command and to save the country from the encroachment of white men on China’s soil, sent forth the edict: “All white people are to be killed” (Harris 1, 77). Even Pearl’s father sympathized with Empress Dowager’s desire to save China from the greedy Europeans and Englishmen.

*Imperial Woman* offers a sympathetic view of ancient civilization defeated by foreign powers and its own inertia. Torn into jealous factions, the Western powers with the ideologies and machinery outwitted the Chinese. The anti-missionary feeling was most prominent at this time as the empress felt that where the Christian missionaries went, “traders and warships soon would follow” (218).

Buck’s *Letter From Peking* speaks of the East-West encounter from the political and emotional level as does *Some Inner Fury* of Kamala
Markandaya. In these novels "politics and prejudice in both nations are depicted as evil forces against which the humanity of ordinary people must contend" (David D. Buck 31). Written in the mid-1950's, *Letter from Peking* deals with the atrocities of the communist regime on the political front. When the question of national loyalty is at stake, Gerald Macleod chooses his country over his family. In fact he is compelled to, rather than making a willful decision as in the case of Mira. The impact of the second world war results in the break up of the marriage between Gerald, the half Chinese husband and Elizabeth, the American woman. Here Buck too seems to convey that "the twain shall never meet" as Gerald and Elizabeth who loved each other immensely are forced to separate. Their son Rennie becomes a victim of interracial prejudice and suffers the agonies of rootlessness.

The war creates antagonistic feelings towards the white people and hence Elizabeth was forced to leave as her safety was at risk. So strong was the nationalist feeling that Gerald was prohibited from even writing to Elizabeth in America. Pearl underwent a similar nationalist antagonism which forced her to leave China for a while. The Nationalist soldiers had been billeted in her house. Her house and furniture were ransacked and the city of Nanking devastated. It was after her return to China that Chiang Kai-shek began his struggle to rebuild China. Unlike Pearl who returned to Lossing Buck with her children, the political situation never permitted Elizabeth to
return to her husband or China both of which she cherished. Buck’s novel reflects the spirit of the age faithfully.

In the *Nowhere Man*, the nationalist struggle makes Srinivas and Vasantha leave the country like in *Letter From Peking*. Srinivas is drawn into the nationalist struggle accidentally, but his patriotism makes him stay firm. The disruption of the convocation is a reflection of the spirit of nationalism in both Srinivas and his father. Even while in London, he reminisces over the Jalianwala Bagh massacre and the Hindu-Muslim clashes after India’s independence.

Srinivas gets involved in the freedom struggle through Vasu a neighbour who was a fierce nationalist. His father Narayan, a college lecturer, though not an active nationalist, annoys the authorities by singing the National Anthem during the convocation. This becomes the turning point for Srinivas and Vasu. The British authorities very discreetly gets Narayan admitted to a lunatic asylum and Srinivas is expelled from college. Thus he becomes a victim of the nationalist movement and is forced to leave the country. His patriotism and love for India remains uppermost in his mind. Their family had suffered much under the British. Earlier the teak plantations of his grandfather were cut down to pave roads for the Englishman. And now it is a more aggressive and humiliating situation that makes him abandon his
home land. Ironically enough he goes to London with his wife and never returns to India for fear of being victimised further.

Cross-cultural interaction finds a prominent place in the novels of Buck and Markandaya. According to K.R.Chandrasekaran, Kipling’s prophecy that “never the twain shall meet” seems true with regard to India/China and the West: “Neither side has had the correct attitude towards the other. Generally speaking, the West, has been self-consciously superior and the East self-consciously inferior”(340).

This intercultural tension is looked at from diverse angles- social, political and cultural. The difference between traditions and values of both cultures and the changes brought about due to exposure to the new culture are all analysed. As neutral observers, Both Buck and Markandaya delineate situations and characters objectively. But Buck does at times make a mild appeal in favour of the Chinese culture. Anil Kumar Bhatnagar feels that Markandaya “does not show favour either to the East or to the West. Rather she brings to light the various points of weakness and strength of both the cultures” (*A Thematic Study* 29), probably because she is married to an English man. The novels of Markandaya which deal with intercultural issues are *Some Inner Fury, The Coffer Dams, The Nowhere Man* and *Pleasure City*. 
Buck’s *East Wind: West Wind, Letter from Peking* and *Come My Beloved* take up the issue beyond the crosscultural level to inter-racial tensions.

Buck’s first novel *East-Wind: West Wind* reveals her desire to create a bridge of understanding between the Chinese and the American way of life. It is a heart-searching and tender story of a young Chinese girl’s troubled acceptance of an alien way of life with all its sorrows and rewards, through her marriage to an American educated physician. It appears in two parts and speaks of the tragic impact of new on old. The story reveals the tensions of modernization in contemporary China as reflected in the private lives of the people. Kwei-lan is betrothed even before she is born, to her father’s friend’s son who was six at that time. Her mother has been preparing and waiting for her marriage, educating her in domestic skills and to be the proper wife. Bound by the age-old traditions of her people, trained to unquestioning obedience, Kwei-lan the young bride is wounded as she realizes that her husband is not satisfied with her obedience and silence. She is utterly bewildered by the words of her American educated husband on their wedding night when he says “I wish to regard you in all things as my equal... You are not my possession- my chattel”(*East* 23). For when had a woman ever been the equal of a man? She could only understand herself as his wife whom he could command. As pointed out by Peter Conn, “Kwei-lan’s dilemma takes the form of an exquisite suffocating irony” as she agrees to her husband’s
demands and tries to be a model woman (A Cultural Biography 50). He unbinds her feet himself commenting on the pain she has suffered. “How you have suffered!” he said in a low, tender voice; “how wretched a childhood-and all for nothing!” (East 49).

Gradually Kwei-lan moves towards modernity while retaining her dignity and sense of good judgement. She is helped in this by the Western educated Mrs. Lin who advises her to accept the good elements of the western culture while rejecting that which is unsuitable. Buck’s informative handling of cultural conflicts has served to link the loyalties and longings, the joys and sorrows and the novel ends in a tone of cultural pluralism. This is evident in the second part of the novel, which concerns Kwei-lan’s brother, where in addition to the conflicts of East and West we have the problems of interracial marriage. Kwei-lan’s brother marries an American girl, which starts a set of problems. She feels the child born to them will be the one to understand both worlds, the East and the West. But her brother’s marriage shatters their parents who belonged to and believed in the traditions and customs of the conventional Chinese family structure.

In Markandaya’s Some Inner Fury the East-West encounter acquires a different dimension, as seen in the house of Mira and Kit. They lived in a combined Indian and westernised environment and belonged to a different
social class served by chauffeurs, butlers, gardeners etc. The house even had a western and an Indian kitchen and the men worked at the office:

...from ten till five, played squash or golf, depending on your age, later; then there were drinks, and afterwards you dined with someone, or someone dined with you, or you went to whichever club you belong to for bridge or billiards, or more drinks at the bar (Some 127).

Perhaps this westernisation explains how the Indian mother could allow her seventeen year old daughter Mira accompany Richard on his sightseeing trips. If it could be explained as modernity by western standards, by the Eastern culture it is a question of hospitality. Uma Parameswaran feels rather impatient with this overdone hospitality, and assumes it was deference to the English that prompted it (Kamala Markandaya 79). Social relations between the English and the Indians were negligible as the British rejected everything Indian since they believed in the superiority of their culture. In Markandaya’s words it was “too strident, too dissonant, too austere, too raw”(qtd. in Rekha Jha 209) and the cause of the greatest social problem in the world.

Buck’s Letter From Peking presents a divided family that longs for reunion but never achieves it. The death of Gerald puts an end to all of Elizabeth’s desires. Perhaps this sensitivity and compassion in narrating the
story comes from Buck’s own personal experience as she admits that Gerald is the half Chinese she fell in love with while at Shanghai boarding school:

Gerald? He was the half Chinese I told you of before... his father was American and his mother was Chinese... we became friends, we fell in love... he was very torn between his American and Chinese sides... we drifted apart when I went away to college in America” (Harris 1, 102).

Elizabeth’s loyalty to her husband is a rare virtue in a woman belonging to a society where divorces and re-marriages are not uncommon. Moreover her acceptance of China, its customs and people as they are part of her husband’s life and culture reveals a state of mind different from the cynical attitude of the West.

This simple tale of tenderness and pity narrated by Elizabeth Kirke, separated from her husband who is half-Chinese, half-American reveals Elizabeth’s love for Gerald. Buck’s affair outside of marriage, during those years before her divorce from Lossing Buck when their relationship was strained becomes the matter of the novel. The lover was a Chinese poet but the affair ended in his death in a plane crash. Though the novel reveals Buck’s relationship with Hsu Chih-mo, the Chinese poet, the affair is well disguised by altering details such as the affair leading to marriage and two children.
“what emerges vividly from the narrative, however, is the sexual and intellectual excitement of a union that defied disapproval and reached across the barrier of race” (Conn A Cultural Biography 103). The book is marked by deep resignation as Buck’s hopes of an idealized America, that could create world peace was crushed by the impact of the Cold War.

Markandaya’s The Nowhere Man “is a remarkable work of fiction depicting the tragedy of bi-cultural living in all its harrowing aspects” (Guruprasad III, 177). The novel deals with the question of racial hatred that was sweeping through Britain as a reaction to the decline of the British empire. The coloured immigrants who fought loyally for England were later despised and rejected as being unwanted. The interracial conflicts are depicted through the experiences of Srinivas an Indian immigrant in London. In fact this is the first novel by Markandaya on the theme of racism depicting the division “between their respective cultures, values, traditions, convictions and most important of all, between human beings who personify their virtually irreconcilable worlds” (Madhu Joshi “East-West Relationship” 81).

Mrs. Pickering, a genial, good-natured lady takes care of Srinivas. But the racial prejudice gets aggravated. Srinivas is victimized by his neighbour Fred and his friends who nurse an animosity towards him for no reason other than being coloured. Ultimately he tries to kill Srinivas by setting fire to the
apartment. It is Fred who dies in the fire while Srinivas escapes and ultimately
dies of shock. His isolation which began with the diagnosis of leprosy ends
when Dr. Radcliffe pronounces him dead. Leprosy becomes a symbol of his
racial untouchability. Through her portrayal of the Indian expatriate, Kamala
Markandaya, brings into greater focus the dichotomy of the East-West/Britain-
India confrontation. Moreover the animosity of Fred towards Srinivas
represents the animosity towards a race as a whole. The love-hate
relationships between the two cultures is depicted through individual
experiences. In fact Markandaya is one of the pioneers to deal with the theme
or racism, among Indian Writers in English.

Mrs. Pickering is an exception to this racial animosity. Perhaps her
innate goodness could not let her think of Srinivas as being different from the
Englishman. She could not react like the British neighbour who elicited the
typically British remarks on seeing Vasantha standing dazed at the doorstep
clutching Laxman’s wedding telegram: “The way these Indians went to
pieces. Different from one’s own kind, who would close the door and pull
down the blind decently, not stand about letting the whole world see” (52). It
could even be Mrs. Pickering’s maturity, the generational difference that made
her stand apart from Fred Fletcher and the others. Like Buck’s Letter From
Peking and East Wind: West Wind, The Nowhere Man deals with tensions
arising out of racial prejudices as well as the problems of inter racial marriages.

The East-West conflict acquires a different dimension when Srinivas who has not completed his B.A. is insulted at interviews. Markandaya feels that even if he had a degree “the joke would still have been there, it would merely have altered ground slightly to make the university its butt” (Nowhere 44). This again shows the superiority with which the British undermined the Indian education system.

The marriage of Laxman to a non-Hindu is a shock to the parents. Srinivas and Vasantha carry their culture to the alien country. They are unable to adopt the ways of the new milieu. Hence their rootlessness is two-fold as they belong neither here nor there. Uma Parameswarn’s ‘Trishanku’ aptly describes the predicament of people like Rennie in Letter From Peking and Srinivas. If Rennie’s rootlessness is the result of an inter-racial marriage, Srinivas is isolated due to the prevalent political situation and racial discrimination.

Srinivas never expected race riots in England where all were supposed to be equal. In fact he had begun to call this his own country when the riots started. And ultimately when he dies a victim of this racial prejudice:
Markandaya squarely places the onus for racism on the system, the police, the councilmen, the administration of the country, on the people’s collective that consists of outright racists such as Fred Fletcher and his large following, and unthinking racists such as Mrs. Glass in whom discrimination is so deeply entrenched that she isn’t even aware of it as she mouths her “live and let live” cliches (Uma Parameswaran *Kamala Markandaya* 197).

Markandaya here represents the moral responsibility to oneself and to others, a vision arising out of the Orientalist’s humanistic considerations (culture that cares for the individual) and is absent in the sceptical imperialist values. This might seem antithetical to progress and material attainments but it definitely stands above the cultural rejection of a whole race.

Markandaya’s *The Cof fer Dams* once again deals with the East-West theme, with an emphasis on the encounter of cultures and the problems of industrialization. Clinton stands for the British engineering firm that is building the dam. He is callous and ruthless and controls the tribals by literally flooding them out and then training them to be subservient. As a result the tribals become dependent on them. The story is set in South India and the dam is being constructed across a wild river. The Indo-British relationship after
independence is hostile primarily due to negligible social relationships. The British confident of the value of their culture behaved with arrogance and vent their anger on the country when anything went wrong. Clinton’s exasperation “Its this blasted country” (Coffer 143) and Rawlings dejection that he is “slaving away at a thankless job in a thankless bloody country” (Coffer 87) is a reaction against the changed conditions in independent India. This arrogance of the imperial days is rebutted by the locals as the occasion arises. Krishnan their leader is the best proponent of this as he: “with his subtle Brahminical mind delicately picked up and dissected the Western techniques of seduction, persuasion and coercion. It was the new guiding trinity, as piety, gunboats and the way of Christ had been the old.” (Coffer 60).

At the dam site where two Britishers meet with accidental deaths, work is suspended to rescue the bodies and give them a “decent Christian burial”. But in a later accident where more than forty locals are killed and two of the bodies are irretrievably jammed, Clinton’s disgust is obvious when he says “rather than delay the work, the bodies could be incorporated into the structure”. He finds the demand of the workers that the bodies be retrieved rather unreasonable and cannot understand “such preoccupation over something which is lifeless and irrelevant, when there is so much at stake”(Coffer 209).
*Pleasure City* deals with 'the East-West encounter from a new post-independence perspective "...India has achieved its freedom and the two nations are brought on equal footing" (Ramesh Chadha "Cross-Cultural Interaction" 63). The garden in this novel is being built by AIDCORP, a multinational construction company which sees the potential for attracting tourists from all over the world. Though there are occasional clashes between the Indians and the British there is none of the usual antipathy and bitterness. The spirit of tolerance and understanding make the locals willingly work for the British.

The events are seen through the eyes of Tully, an engineer and Rikki, the fisher boy. Superficially it is about the building of a luxury hotel and narrates the events from the beginning to the completion of the project. Rikki is an orphan boy adopted by another fisher family as is the custom. Tully and Rikki represent two cultures and their friendship shows the co-existence of these cultures without any identity crisis.

The novel portrays an understanding relationship between people of different ethnic groups. Valli, Rikki’s sister, Carmen the Spanish dancer, Tully and Rikki are the typical representatives of these cultural archetypes. Valli and Carmen may be dancers by profession but they interact in terms of their culture as seen by their exchange of gifts. "Cultural dualism finds an
expression through the interaction between them” (Sinha 98). Tully’s warm relationship with Rikki and his participation in the life around is a symbolic extension of characters like Doctor Kenny, Richard, Helen and Mrs. Pickering who are the finest embodiments of European culture. Their relationship with Rukmani, Mira, Srinivas, Bashiam and Rikki who are the finest metaphors of Indian culture is an exploration of the true identity of our country.

Markandaya seems to believe that people are the same everywhere and she trusts their innate goodness. The dichotomies and confrontations reach a point where differences resolve and people like Tully and Mrs. Bridie prefer to stay back rather than return to England. This proves her humanistic vision that colour makes no difference to basic humanity. This is what Buck also tried to convey in East-Wind: West-Wind and Letter From Peking through interracial marriages and the tolerance of other cultures.

Pearl Buck’s novel Come My Beloved has a cast of missionary characters. Like The Good Earth; four generations of the Macard family is reviewed. It starts with Thomas Macard who plans a missionary college in memory of his wife. His son David, who proves to be more serious and devoted in vocation moves to India with the intention of carrying out his missionary aspirations of the upper class. He builds a school on the English model. A true Englishman, he supports the colonial powers. His son
Theodore, called Ted, disapproves of his father's missionary endeavours. Moving to the village, he preaches a creedless religion emphasizing the significance of good deeds and actions. He practices what he preaches, giving up the comforts of his father's house to lead an austere life.

*Come My Beloved* is set mainly in India. It is from a transcultural point of view that the novel is significant. The confrontation of the East and West is represented by the romantic involvement between the American heroine and her Asian lover. And as in the case of Richard and Mira in Kamala Markandaya’s novel, the two have to separate, though for different reasons. Pearl Buck takes the involvement beyond the political level giving it social and psychological significance.

In Ted, Buck seems to have reached a creative synthesis which could solve the East-West dichotomy. But the exclusiveness of David's Christianity is still dormant in Ted and this makes him object vehemently when his daughter Livy wants to marry the Indian doctor Jatin, because he wants her to "grow into an American woman and maybe she will marry an American man and stay in America" (*Come* 288) Here we find a parallel situation in Markandaya’s *The Nowhere Man*. Vasantha dreams that her sons, though born and brought up in London, would marry Indian girls and settle in the same
house with her. Ted who fails to attain that level of tolerance, succumbs to his limitations and like Mira, Livy too is separated from her lover as she obeys her father, leaves India and the East-West dichotomy remains unresolved.

The East-West confrontation is not as obvious in *Nectar in a Sieve* as in the other novels of Markandaya. In this novel, she brings the two opposing poles together in the characters of Rukmani and Kenny. Her submissiveness may appear a weakness to Westerners, but “she is clearly an autonomous person with a strong sense of her own identity” (Kirkpatrick 125). Her resignation to the will of God is again a characteristic of the Eastern way of life and Kenny can never understand this. He tells her “It is no use whatsoever to suffer in silence” and advises her to “cry out if [she] wants help”. But Rukmani only replies “want is our companion from birth to death” (*Nectar* 113). The Western-minded doctor cannot understand the grandeur of being “in want-or endurance”(113). There is nothing public or colonial in Kenny’s interest in India. He really appreciates the strong family relationships in the Indian situation. This is something he missed in his own country and family. The ideal of the devoted wife is misjudged by the West as merely a weakness, whereas the East conceives of self-sacrifice as a form of power. They become symbols of heroism in the face of despair.
So we find that rather than make the East and West meet, these writers envisage a situation that could be complementary to each other. They demonstrate that the progressive West could benefit from the cultural and spiritual greatness of the East and vice versa.

Technological advancement and its impact on the environment is a bye product of modernity. In the pre-independence period, the colonial powers were exploiting natural resource in the name of industrialization. Traditional culture and life were destroyed and villages ruined. Now the neo-imperialists were involved in the same process of exploitation of forests and beaches in the name of resorts and hotel complexes. Ecological balances are disturbed either way. This is a serious concern and Markandaya condemns this callous destruction of natural resources that upsets the ecology. Buck’s Mandala, Command the Morning and Markandaya’s Nectar in a Sieve, The Coffeer Dams and Pleasure City are novels which express concern over the environment and ecology.

Nectar in a Sieve depicts the sad chronicle of change that overtakes a traditional village. Like every other peasant village, urbanization and industrialization affect this small village through the tannery and it begins to change. Rukmani and Nathan are upset by this change and Rukmani ruminates “Change I had known before, and it had been gradual…. But the change that
now came into my life, into all our lives, blasting its way into our village, seemed wrought in the twinkling of an eye” (Nectar 25).

This man-made change creates conflicts as the corruptions of the city creeps into the villages. The cool, calm village life is disturbed by the noise and filth seeping in from the tannery, “Already my children hold their noses when they go by, and all is shouting and disturbance and crowds wherever you go” (Nectar 29). Rukmani stands for the traditional and the rural, while people like Kunthi, Kali and Janaki welcome the change because they prefer the pleasures and comforts offered by urbanisation. In the name of modernity, the simple peasants succumb to greed and materialism “and no man thinks of another but schemes only for his money” (Nectar 46). The villagers are exploited and “the tradition bound agrarian society disintegrates on the physical, emotional and moral planes” (Chadha, Cross-Cultural Interaction 17).

The tannery, the symbol of modernity and industrialization, upsets the equilibrium of the village. There is more money among those who work in the tannery while the peasant is poorer than before. “With economic disparities come moral depravities” (Uma Parameswaran Kamala Markandaya 57). Ira’s and Raja’s tragedy are the direct outcome of this, whereas Nathan, Rukmani, Arjun and Thambi gradually fall victims to this exploitation. It also
creates inflation as the village traders raise their prices. People like Kunthi prosper as the village is being converted into a town and she finds it easier to sell her beauty and charms. Kamala Markandaya’s aversion to industrialization is because of the havoc it plays on nature and the economy causing a loss of traditional values and brings in moral debasement. This concern of the author’s is put forward through Rukmanis’s comment:

Some how, I had always felt the tannery would eventually be our undoing. I had known it since the day the carts had come with their loads of bricks and noisy dusty men, staining the clear soft greens that had once coloured our village and cleaving its cool silences with clamour...It had changed the face of our village beyond recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants...(*Nectar* 133-134).

*The Coffeer Dams* reveals the problems that are artfully forgotten when ambitious projects are undertaken in the name of modernity. Markandaya seems to say that industrial and technological progress can be had but not at the expense of human sacrifice. The non-human and inhuman forces are symbolized by the machines and the British technicians who disregard the native human feelings and beliefs of the tribesmen. Kamala Markandaya
pleads that the two forces need not be pitted against each other, but work complementarily, bringing about a balanced fusion of the two worlds.

In *The Coffin Dams*, Markandaya speaks of the threat posed by the river to human beings and the environment by the building of the dam. This is very much akin to the imperialistic desire to civilize a colony. The coming of the dam will ruin the aboriginals’ way of life. Clinton the engineer, may provide statistics, but Bashiam and the tribal chief who know the river and the region are apprehensive about the dam. As the modern civilization invades the village, the natives have to sacrifice their familiar ways with nature, so that nature can be conquered and subjugated. Ostensibly all this is done to improve matters and bring about a better quality of life. But in effect what happens is that the old culture is wiped out as the tribals are flooded out by Clinton and his associates.

Uma Parameswaran points out a similar analogy in the contemporary issue of the Narmada Valley Sardar Sarovar dam. The new Supreme Court order has allowed the dam height to be increased because stopping the project will prevent foreign investment. So the same principle of submerging the villages to make the people move out is applied here too. “It is the same pattern as the British followed- destroy the old culture in the name of modern
civilization" (Kamala Markandaya 162). Now it is not the British, but the Indians who are driving away their fellow citizens.

To develop its natural resources into holiday resorts the Government invites AIDCORP, a multinational construction company to build a luxurious holiday complex in a virgin stretch of coastline. This complex “is to be a heady combination of dreamlike opulence and undisguised crass commercialism, with marble statues in swimming pools and a hierarchy of small-time contractors and caterers bent on making their fortune” (Uma Parameswaran Kamala Markandaya 244). This pleasure city grows, pushing aside an entire fishing colony affecting the traditions and life-style of its residents.

Rikki, one of the main characters adjusts well to the change. His foster mother too is happy as there is better remuneration and a steady flow of income for the tribal youth. But Apu, his foster father recognizes the slow and steady decline of his tribal culture as they now prefer to live an easy life rather than being men of the sea. Markandaya feels that in the name of technology and industrialization native groups get uprooted. So if earlier the British, had forced themselves in, exploiting the resources and destroying traditional ways of life, now foreigners are being invited to do the same. So this environmental problem is presented not just as a problem faced by a developing country but
as “the portrayal of different kinds of human life that interact and influence each other... through the pleasures and pains of natives and aliens alike” (Madhumita and Mehru 245).

Buck’s Mandala similarly deals with the construction of a luxurious hotel complex. But unlike Pleasure City it does not upset the ecology or the environment. Jagat, a Maharaja decides to convert one of his palaces into a tourist resort. It is not done at the risk of destroying the existing culture, but by beautifying the palace preserving its natural surrounding. The difference here is that, this resort is not the brain child of foreign investors, but of an Indian who inspite of his British education prefers to keep his Indianness and be loved and respected by his people.

Buck’s Command the Morning, is a thought provoking novel on the Manhattan Project. Modern scientific and technological progress clash with humanitarian ideals of care and concern for fellow human beings. The technical details and the effort at the creation of the atom bomb is vividly described by Buck. If in The Coffin Dams Markandaya portrays the cold-hearted indifference of Clinton and his group to submerge the villages to drive the villagers away, here it is the callousness with which the scientists bomb out the Japanese so that the war would end quickly, that is portrayed by Buck.

Though for a moment, the scientists are caught in an ethical dilemma, they
finally sacrifice ethics for a quick victory. Pearl’s novel seems propagandistic as she speaks through the scientist, Jane Earl that it is immoral to kill lives in this manner and that if “...we drop the bomb we’ll destroy ourselves, everywhere in the world. People would not believe in us any more” (Command 267)

Similar to the division between Clinton and Helen is the chasm between Burton Hall, the project director and his wife Mollie Hall. Both Helen and Mollie are human in their considerations and can never support any project that can cause such destruction of lives. Clinton and Burton are devilish in their aim to complete their projects successfully and on time, even if it means killing people. Helen is able to identify herself with the tribals and Mollie becomes hysterical on learning what has happened.

The title of the novel is from the Old Testament where God asks Job if he had “commanded the morning”. The scientists after dropping the bomb and celebrating the success of their discovery forget the incident and go back to making newer and better weapons. Maybe they expect the day to come when they could ‘command the morning’. Pearl S Buck’s opposition to nuclear weapons was her last major political battle.

The book is remarkable for the strong protest against nuclear weapons and male chauvinism. The presence of Jane, a woman scientist is a unique
feature which conveyed Buck's conviction "that childbearing, which gives women the same sense of living beyond themselves that war gives men, also makes women antiwar" (Entremont 52).

In the name of progress, rivers and forests are still being destroyed which is a serious environmental problem. It affects the ecological balance destroying valuable flora and fauna. The same social, economic and ecological problems in the construction of *The Coffer Dams* exist all over the world even today. Hence Kamala Markandaya's appeal gains greater significance as she advocates preservation of the environment rather than destruction. As pointed out by Ramesh K. Srivastava "To brush it aside as a whimsical liking for an anachronistic past is as much a jaundiced view as is the heightened glorification of a modern mechanized culture" (*Indian Scholar* XIV, II, 1).

Kamala Markandaya and Pearl S. Buck are very much preoccupied with the theme of the confrontation between tradition and modernity. They depict the clash of traditional beliefs and customs with the modern attitudes and ideas of the people brought about by scientific progress and urbanization. A survey of the novels exposes the attitude of the authors to these two sets of values. These novelists are aware of the gradual shift in values that has been taking place during the past decade or so. The move towards modernity is presented through characters and situations. Shiv K. Kumar's observation that "change
is the focal theme of her novels; it is the pivot round which her fictional world resolves" ("Tradition and Change" 86) aptly describes Markandaya’s predicament. Buck’s, A House Divided and Markandaya’s Two Virgins depict this clash of tradition and modernity.

A House Divided the final volume of the House of Earth Trilogy traces the growth and development of one, young man, Yuan, the son of Wang the Tiger during a very violent and crucial period of Chinese history. After his exploits with the revolutionists, he decides to live a quiet life in the house of his grandfather Wang Lung. But when he reaches there, he understands that the sons of Wang Lang are not loved by the people and so it is unsafe to stay there. The present condition of Wang Lung’s descendants is related by a peasant “Your honored father is not loved well because he is a lord of war, and your uncles are not loved, either…” (House 12). This is an ironic turn of events because this is the land where Wang Lang worked and was honoured and respected.

Yuan the young boy joins the revolutionists and later deserts them. His dissatisfaction makes him leave home and ultimately reaches America where he resumes his studies. He admires the material achievements of America. But is taken aback by the racial prejudice that he encounters for the first time. He defends his country by idealizing Chinese life ignoring all the misery and
poverty. Ultimately when he returns to China a new revolution has changed life but the poverty and squalor remain the same. He feels ashamed of his country and is relieved that he did not marry the American girl Mary Wilson and bring her to China. Yuan gets a job as a teacher in a government school and even here he is dissatisfied.

For the first time he realizes he is in a mid-point, where he has to accept the past while visualizing the future. This conflict of tradition and modernity begins with Yuan’s rejection of his father’s request to marry a girl he recommends. He feels that his father represents the old way of life that must be destroyed. Even when he reaches America, he is tormented by this feeling as well as the question of racial prejudice. His ambivalence keeps him aloof and like Srinivas he finds himself a ‘nowhere man’. He realizes that the West has very weird notions about China and feels the responsibility to defend his country. In this patriotic zeal he forgets the poverty-stricken villages, the beggars and even female infanticide practiced in China, while eulogizing his country and country-men. He is unable to fit into the American life and is lonely. Even Mary, the American girl to whom he is attracted cannot hold his attention and he finds physical contact with her unpleasant because she is an American. This racial prejudice overtakes him inspite of his modernity and we realize he is a victim of the conflict between the two mentalities as experienced by Val in Markandaya’s Possession.
Another setback in this clash of outlook is the deflation of the idealistic image of China that he carries in his mind while in America. This is shattered when he reaches his country. After staying in China for a while he realises that he does not fit into the old mud house of his grandfather nor the fashionable luxurious house of his Uncle just as he could not accept the materialism of the West while rejecting his own country. Now a worldly-wise man, he comes to terms with the past and the present and with this new strength decides to move to the future. Unlike Srinivas who has to pay with his life, Yuan resolves the conflicts of tradition and modernity, the old and the new and the East and the West. This is the position in which China finds herself to be in, that is halfway between the past and the future. Buck brilliantly presents the China in transition from the old to the new, through the portrayal of one family through three generations. The Earth trilogy begins in old China passes down the generations to the revolution and Wang's descendants trying to build a new civilization of East and West combined.

Two Virgins by Markandaya has a number of themes which are not artistically linked. The novel is set in a village and its theme is a timeless and universal one of growing up, of love and lure of the city. The conflict between parents and children and the irresistible encroachment of new material values on the ancient beliefs form the background of the novel. This new set of values affect old and established relationship within the family and the village.
The two virgins in the book are the two sisters Lalitha and Saroja. Saroja the younger is a simple but shrewd, mature girl. It is through her eyes that we view the family, their neighbours their fortunes and misfortunes. Lalitha the elder one likes sophistication. The family consisting of their parents and Amma’s widowed sister Alamelu live in perfect harmony in the village. Gradually the girls grow up and Lalitha’s mistress Miss Mendoza introduces her to the film-director Gupta. She is cast in a documentary film, which he is making about the village. Attracted towards the glamour of the film world Lalitha returns to the city without the permission of her parents. She is seduced and returns home pregnant. As Gupta disowns responsibility an abortion is arranged. Lalitha is lost in the city’s glamour and decides to continue there while Saroja returns to the village having learned her lesson. The city culture does affect the rural life but Lalitha’s going astray cannot be solely attributed to this. “Her heredity and family environment all contribute to her fall from grace” (Krishnaswamy 216).

The novel does not have consistency and the various themes are shuffled back and forth. The polemics of tradition and the modern in Indian life, escape from the narrow world of home and village into a wider world of lures and opportunities and man’s desire to escape his own actions are represented through the various characters and incidents. Aunt Alamelu stands for age old traditions while Lalitha is initiated into modernity, western culture,
city life and even sex, Gupta represents the modern man’s tendency to shun responsibilities where as Saroja grows up as a responsible girl, achieving a stability from the healthy reconciliation of the different attitudes to life.

Spiritual faith is an intrinsic ingredient of Oriental life as opposed to the West. Faith as an essential condition of human life is dealt with by Buck and Markandaya. With the advancement of science and technology, spirituality becomes outdated and is pushed aside as being superstition. Further, fake saints and suspicious Swamis become a significant issue in that social set up. Through their novels these writers try to portray the tensions that issue from orthodox beliefs and rationalism which is an extension of the conflict of tradition and modernity.

*A Silence of Desire* by Kamala Markandaya assumes the form of a confrontation between deeply held faith and scepticism. The plot involves a middle class family and the main theme is the clash of faith and reason, represented by Dandekar and Sarojini. The whole issue is presented from Dandekar’s point of view. Sarojini, a traditional Indian woman finds her spirituality in conflict with the rationalism of her husband. This conflict is revealed through the contemporary problem of inarticulation that exists within many marriages and “the real achievement of the author lies in the projection of this theme through the awakening of a mind developing from thoughtless complacency to tremulous introspection”. (Joseph 350).
Dandekar a typical middle-class husband, is content with Sarojini’s management of the house-hold. His demands too are average and they are well taken care of by his wife. Engaged in routine clerical work at office, his expectations have a regularity that work as conditioned reflexes. He enjoyed his wife’s placidity, her cooking and was contend:

She was a good wife, Sarojini: good with the children, an excellent cook, an efficient manager of his household, a woman who still gave him pleasure....He was lucky...For instance, now that she had heard his step in the courtyard she would be putting the potatoes into fry. The agreeable hiss would last until he had washed and changed and by then she would be ready for him, and so would the evening meal (Silence 7).

This comfortable world of Dandekar’s is upset when he notices the change in his wife. Events are brought to a head when he realizes that Sarojini is secretly visiting a Swami and doubts her of infidelity. This distancing arises from a lack of communication as there never was any real discussion of ideas and issues between them. Sarojini keeps the knowledge of the tumour a secret, because she knows he would want her to go to an hospital for surgery. As she is afraid of surgery, she depends on the Swami for faith healing. Dandekar who does not believe in faith healing, maintains
silence in deference to her. This inarticulation builds a wall and each seek their own pleasures, Dandekar in prostitution, Sarojini getting more involved with the Swami. Yet the hurt feelings pile up and he feels the need to break the silence “I must speak to her, he told himself, racked, but speech seemed locked somewhere beyond his dry lips, his constricted throat” (85).

Dandekar, the rationalist could not bring himself to pray to the tulasi as he felt it was just a plant. But for Sarojini “...it was a symbol of God whom one worshipped and it was necessary that God should have symbols since no man had the power or temerity to visualise Him” (5). So his questioning the genuiness of the Swami is to be expected as much as Sarojini’s blind acceptance of the same. Pictures of Gods and Goddesses are in plenty in Dandekar’s house and they were worshipped as representations of gods. Sarojini’s secret meetings with the Swami seem justified because if she had told Dandekar he would have laughed at her superstitious nature and tried to reason her out of her faith. According to her, he did not understand what lay ‘beyond reason’ (87). Even while nursing him in sickness, she does not stop her visits to the Swami.

Dandekar gets to see the Swami on three occasions and on the third prodded by the dwarf, the Swami’s assistant, he speaks with the Swami. In the ensuing conversation Dandekar feels that he is being manipulated and that the
Swami “has been putting words into [his] mouth, he’s got [him] to say the things he wanted” (25). And again the request for a donation increases his suspicions about “the question of whether the Swami is a saint or a charlatan” (Mukherjee 112). This makes him rethink about the sincerity of the Swami. But in his conversation with the Swami he learns a thing or two about life.

After the Swami leaves the town, Sarojini agrees to the operation. She is able to accept his departure without sentimentality and Dandekar feels indebted to the Swami for returning his wife to him. Sarojini’s operation is successful and he is now a happy man, released from all his problems. This conflict of faith and reason, introduced through a domestic problem, gets resolved peacefully and life continues afresh for Dandekar and Sarojini. The Swami’s lessons make Dandekar a better and wiser man “...that people must make their own decisions. One should not have an attachment to material possessions. One should not impose one’s will on others; one must have patience” (Uma Parameswaran Kamala Markandaya 99).

*Possession* invades the imponderable realms of spiritual reality. The title expresses the theme precisely. The novel’s background is the 1950’s when India was becoming popular in the West. The impact of colonialism and the post-independent Indian who resents the British while admiring them at the same time is represented by Markandaya. The question posed through the
confrontation between Caroline and her rival, the modern Swami is whether free India should shape itself, after the sceptic hard-headed materialism of the West or be blown afresh in the fertile springs of her exotic culture. And here again Markandaya gives the answer in Caroline’s words to Anusaya:

Do you know, we go out of our way to meet, and we squabble every time we do. It’s a sort of love-hate relationship don’t you think? Like the kind Britain and India used to have….perhaps it comes from the same thing - we can’t do without each other (Poss 70).

The novel ends with the assurance by Caroline that Val will return to her. Like the true imperialist, she tries to possess Val just as the British tried to possess India. Moreover after Independence, possessing anything Indian was regarded fashionable. Here Caroline in trying to possess an Indian is a typical autocratic imperialist. But Val, with all the western influence, does not cut himself off from his Indian roots. So he survives and returns to India unlike Srinivas who because of his rootlessness has to die in an alien country in the face of apartheid. Neither Val nor Caroline thinks of a compromise. The two cultures clash as Anasuya observes: “Perhaps, indeed, relationship was not the word to describe a forcible possessing which had established nothing so clearly as that there could be no reasonable relationship- merely a
straddling of one stranger by another with little out of it for either” (Poss 70).

The tussle between spirituality and materialism is represented in the form of the Swami on the one hand and Caroline Bell on the other. The Swami of Possession is not an ascetic as the Swami in A Silence of Desire because it was the “human tie, tenuous though it was, that led the Swami to forsake his isolate life in the realization that he was yet unready to meet its austere demands” (153). Caroline is pragmatic and intends only to make Val a good painter. His spirituality, she abhors and cannot understand the philosophy behind offering one’s work to God. Val is strongly embedded in the cultural philosophy and spirituality of India. The Swami has a very powerful hold on Val and she finally looses him to the Swami. In the confrontation that ensues, we find that the Swami wins over Caroline though she is not willing to give him up so easily. She returns confident that he will return to her ultimately and thus will she triumph over the Swami.

This struggle between the Swamy and Caroline for possession of Val is symbolic of the struggle between Britain and India. India established an identity for herself after severing her ties with Britain. So also Val cuts himself off from Caroline to develop his identity. The clash between materialism and spirituality ends with the triumph of spirituality. When Caroline complains to the Swami that Val has returned to mere “wilderness”
the Swami says "Even this waste land may have something to show, other than what you have seen" (228) shows the power of spirituality and the Swami stands an adversary to the materialism of the west that is threatening India. He is a symbol of spirituality and is God to a disciple. He possesses maternal qualities and under his nurturance Val is able to free himself from the crushing, stifling, possessive domination of Caroline.

By the time Markandaya wrote Possession, she was already at home in Britain changing her status from expatriate to immigrant. This enables her to express her feelings about Britain and the British with a sense of freedom. She is aware of the diversity and the western urge to dominate which in turn would crush its victim to extinction. Therefore in this delicately poised situation "...while Val clutches the fragile straw of a fast vanishing integrity to hoist himself to the healing peace of India's country-side, Caroline pursues him and even in apparent defeat, seems sure he will return to her" (Joseph 51).

Buck's Come My Beloved portrays missionary work in India, by the Macard family who are unable to accept Hinduism and its customs. Thomas Macard prevents his son from working as a missionary among superstitious people who kneel before a cobra, palms folded. The East-West encounter takes on a religious dimension in the conflict between practical Christianity and the seemingly passive, (philosophical) Hinduism. Through the dialogue
between David and Darya Sapru the Eastern and the Western attitude towards religion is exposed:

"With us," David said diffidently, "religion is or should be expressed in practical works...."

"But what of the soul?" Darya pressed. "What of the mind, the heart, the communion with God?" (Come 35-36).

Thus from the American context religion is viewed from a pragmatic point whereas in India spiritual gains stand far above all material success.

Ted MacArd, finds Solomon’s song “Come, My beloved, let us go forth into the fields and lodge in the villages”(Song of Solomon.7.11.) as equally appealing as the words of Sankaracharya:

For only where the one is twain
And where the two are one again
Will truth no more be sought in vain (Come 260).

This helps him to visualize the concept of an Indian Christ and he extends all support to Jehar, the only son of the wealthy Sikh, who, wants to be a ‘Christian Sadhu’. His marriage to Ruth Fordham, a missionary’s daughter makes him realise even better that both religions grant man the same bliss and salvation.
Buck’s *Pavilion of Woman* is unique as the religious encounter here does not have the background of orthodox and institutionalized religion. Madame Wu is sceptical yet tolerant of all religions. Brother Andre is not a ‘Christian priest’ in the orthodox sense of the term. The novel is totally devoted to mysticism and spirituality. Madame Wu’s communion with the spirit of Brother Andre is similar to the communion between the Lama and Jai. Through the religious encounters between Madame Wu and Andre, Buck’s essential humanism is revealed.

In her attempts to “cultivate her mind” (Paul Doyle 131), she meets Brother Andre, her son’s tutor. Brother Andre makes her understand what it is to love and to be considerate to others. With this realization comes happiness sans ill will towards anyone. Buck’s humanism is exemplified at the mystical level through Madame Wu and Brother Andre, “Gods she did not worship, and faith she had none, but love she had and forever. Love alone had awakened her sleeping soul and had made it deathless” (*Pavilion* 419).

This concept of universal brotherhood that she learns from Brother Andre now really puts her on a superior level without being aware of it. Both of them are free to seek spiritual happiness without the restraints of any religion. Beyond that they are free of human passions. This kind of spirituality which is for the purpose of human understanding is based on the principle of
universal love. Buck's idea of religion involved certain humanist convictions. The novel ends with Madame Wu's realization of the soul's immortality.

*Mandala* is a book on contemporary India. It deals with Indian mysticism and the theory of reincarnation through mystical experience. The spiritual motif, so strong in Indian saga is well handled by Buck. The novel also attacks international politics and finds fault with the Chinese for invading Tibet. The conflict of reason and faith is represented by Jagat, on one side and Moti and Miss Westley on the other. Father Paul too does his bit to reinforce religious brotherhood in Jagat as he says “What does it matter if your God is Krishna and mine is Christ? There are those who say that the two are one…” (*Mandala* 251).

The story revolves around Jagat, the former Maharana of Amarpur, a man who moved with the times. Knowing that modern India is very different from the India of his ancestors he is prepared to change his outlook. The power of the Maharajas’ were on the decline, so too their wealth. As observed by Sharada Dwivedi:

> Once upon a time, India was the land of kings, princes, naiks and noblemen...And then these noblemen became common folk: ordinary citizens. Nobility may have come and gone but the palaces remained. (Sunday Magazine, the Hindu Feb.20, 2000)
To augment his dwindling wealth, Jagat converted one of his marble palaces into a hotel. He decided to educate his son Jai at Harvard (as he could not be expected to live by the family wealth any more). Jagat’s modern outlook even made him allow his daughter Veera to meet and know the man who was to marry her. Moti, his wife, was allowed to share the intellectual companionship of the English priest, Fr. Francis Paul. The underlying theme of the novel is the theory of rebirth revealed through Miss Westely and the child.

The process of rebirth or reincarnation is essential to Indian mysticism. As explained by the Lama, a child remembers something of its previous life. It is in fact a step further from vision which Buck presents in the form of Gerald’s spirit visiting Elizabeth in Vermont as he is being shot dead in Peking. This spirit of rebirth makes Miss Westley feel that she has some connection with Jagat and India and makes the peasant child to acknowledge Westley and Jagat.

“He knows you” the mother exclaimed,... “Perhaps I also know him”, she replied, and opening her bag, she took from it the toys that had once belonged to Jai... He examined them and then with care he took in his tiny fingers the tiger’s paw, and clasping it in both hands, he held it to his breast. The mother laughed. “He will be a hunter of tigers”, she exclaimed. (Mandala 3).
Jagat’s son Jai is killed in the war against the Chinese in Ladakh. Moti’s belief that her son is not dead, sets Jagat out in search. The Lama is able to establish a communion with the spirit of Jai and declares that he is taking a second birth in a peasant home in Amarpur. Towards the end of the novel as Jagat moves through a village in the south of the city he saw a woman with her son. The child turned his face to look at Jagat and he laughed loudly. To this the woman asked “does my son know you, High One?” (281). Incidentally this is the same child who recognised Miss Westley and she had given him the tiger’s paw. Now he recognizes Jagat too. Watching the child with the Tiger’s paw in his hand, Jagat sighs “believing and unbelieving” (28).

Buck’s The Devil Never Sleeps deals with theme of conflict between religiosity and atheism. In the name of Mao, two Irish priests are held prisoners on a trumped-up charge of espionage. Betrayed and humiliated, the two men face persecution and torture. Forcefully cut off from the rest of the village only Siu-Lan, the young peasant girl comes to look after them.

The two priests, the elderly orthodox, god-fearing Monsignor Fitzgibbon and the younger Father O’Banion are shocked that Ho-san the boy who grew up with them, has now joined the communists and is holding them prisoner. He is now a soldier of Mao’s Communist regime and has given up
family, religion and all other personal attachments. Shouting and cursing he rushed into the church when Holy Mass was going on. He spoke between set teeth to the Monsignor, "There is no God... You have deceived me, foreign priest!... You stole my soul away by your kindness... It is for this that I cannot forgive you" (Devil 21). His anger not quelled he commanded his soldiers “Take these priests to prison where they belong!” (81).

Atheism is finally defeated suggesting that man needs religious faith. Similarly Markandaya through the Swami in A Silence of Desire advocates faith as a necessary ingredient for healing, though she is not an advocate of faith healing. Ho-san realizes he must look within him and his actions should come from within and not be directed from the outside by someone else. He had refused to acknowledge the teachings of Christianity though Monsignor Fitzgibbon reminded him often. The convictions which made him join the Communists now seem futile because he had foolishly:

...believed that the Communists could bring about quickly what the Church worked so slowly to achieve, a world where men were good, unselfish, brotherly to one another, where all were fed, the sick healed, the children taught” (Devil 141).

At the end he tells the Monsignor “you taught me better than you know” (152). This realization makes him feel the need of “someone who felt with the heart” (142) and the face of Father O’Banion comes to his mind. It is a triumph
of personal goodness and a triumph for the priests who stood by their faith, when Ho-san with his experience both as a Christian and an avowed atheist gets purified. The Swami in Possession is a representative of the faith and spirituality of India. West represents materialism as the Swami in A Silence of Desire reveals. Education, technology and the questioning of faith healing is a legacy of the colonial rule.

The theme of Peony is the conflict between conservative, orthodox religion and practical spirituality. Confucianism emphasizes piety, respect and tradition. These views of Confucius came from the intention to preserve the foundering values in Chinese society. Buck represents these aspects of the philosophy in the novel. In contrast to the spirit of religious tolerance and humanism of Confucianism we have the rigid fanaticism in the Jewish doctrine of the ‘chosen people’. This religious encounter is expressed through the exchange of uncomfortable remarks on religious beliefs between Kung Chen and the Rabbi who was blinded by an eye disease. Hence “he was compelled to look upon the face of God...[and] appeared to be all spirit and no more flesh” (Peony 4).

David’s decision to marry a Chinese girl and thus ending his Jewish ties leads to the decline of Madame Ezra and the Rabbi. Madame Ezra cannot think of marriage outside the Jewish community because Jews “are children of
the true God and they [Chinese] are heathen”(68). The Rabbi loses all his senses and soon passes away. Madame Ezra too looses her will to live as she sees her family like the other families “[where], even the pretense of worship had been forgotten and the sacred days passed like any other in business and in pleasure”(231). Perhaps the most poignant image of the novel is when Madame Ezra is buried. She had been the sole reason that Judaism was still in practice, yet at her own funeral her faith was not recognized. “So Madame Ezra was buried, but there was no one to read a prayer beside her grave (241).

David realizes that the integration of culture was necessary since the Jews could not live in a society without interaction. His fate as well as that of his fellow Jews is inevitable as they will end up a part of China whether they like it or not. Once all three core believers have passed away the Jewish religion becomes only an identifying characteristic. But Madame Ezra continued to influence those in K’ai feng in the form of “David’s fourth son who grew up so different from the others that he reminded his father of what his ancestors had been. Hot hearted, impetuous, excitable, strong”(310). As the Jewish faith crumpled, it opened up into a brotherhood of the Chinese faith and Kung Chen words, “God- if there is a God- would not choose one man above another or one people above another. Under Heaven we are all one family”(152),acquires a new meaning for David.
Peony is a memorial to the disintegrating Jewish families of K’ai-feng. The Confucian principles of practical piety, tradition and respect was always in clash in the novel. Practical piety insists that a woman be mindful of her husband and allow him to lead the family. Madame Ezra was the dominating force of the Ezra household and this always paved the ways for arguments. Tradition in the Confucian concept was the emphasis on the ancient values laid down in the Jewish tablet which reflected the culture of a people. By insisting on the Jewish practices, Madame Ezra threw the traditional Chinese values in the wind. The third principle of respect is what parents and children should have for each other. The feelings and opinion of the children must be valued in a Confucian home. But Madame Ezra does not consult her son David, instead makes her own decisions even in matters concerning him. These three main beliefs – piety, respect and tradition is used to counter point Jewish culture and show its deterioration in China. Kung Chen’s advise “None on earth can love those who declare that they alone are the sons of God” (137) reflect an universal truth which humanity can never deny.

In Peony, Buck moves out of Christianity and embraces religious tolerance, which is practiced in China. Her purpose in writing the novel she says was “to show that the Jews could be assimilated by another people, as they were in China, and that in a sense persecution taught them to respect people” (Harris II, 278). This is the essential humanism envisaged through
religious tolerance. Markandaya exposes this through the Swami in *Possession*. Both Buck and Markandaya see religion as a means by which one can embrace love and compassion for all mankind.

Like in India, family was the basis of society in China too. Patriarchal piety is the basis and life for the poor peasant was an endless round of toil. For both Nathan and Wang Lung land is their sole security and this hope holds them together when victimized by natural calamities and political disasters. O-lan as the central figure, holds the family together through her hard work and love for the land. In the midst of this growing prosperity, the birth of a daughter whom he calls 'the Fool' as she is retarded is the only dark event in his life. The birth of sons was definitely more welcomed than the birth of daughters in Indian and Chinese societies. Markandaya's novel deals with a family of six sons and a daughter, while Buck speaks of Wang's family with its three sons and two daughters.

Extra marital relations are portrayed by Buck and Markandaya in *Nectar in a Sieve* and *The Good Earth*. According to Lin Yu-Tang 'the Chinese regard marriage as a family affair and therefore accept concubionage when marriage fails which at least keeps the family intact as a social unit' (164). Kapadia speaks of instances recorded in Puranic literature "where a
husband demanded that his wife take him to the house of a prostitute on her
shoulder, and the wife willingly did it...”(169-170).

Wang Lung and his wife are illiterate and as he prospers, sends his sons
to school so that they will be more efficient. Rukmani an educated woman
Teaches her children. Both Nathan and Wang realise with deep sorrow that the
children do not cherish the love for the land as they did. Wang now a
Prosperous man, gets dissatisfied with O-lan and purchases a concubine Lotus.
Gradually the family gets disoriented and with O-lan’s sickness and death, it
gets disintegrated. The novel ends with Wang Lung on his death-bed and his
sons already discussing his funeral and division of property. Nathan too has
his stint at extra marital relationships and the fact that he has fathered the sons
of Kunthi comes as a shock to Rukmani. His family too gets disoriented,
though in a different way.

The Good Earth and Nectar in a Sieve too have the families migrating
to the city. In their move to the city, both Wang and Nathan, have to engage
themselves in menial jobs for survival. While Nathan and Rukmani work at
the quarry involved in the back-breaking job of splitting stones, Wang Lung is
forced to pull a ricksha at Nanking. Pulling a ricksha, was a degrading form of
labour. It was seen as a picture “of western imperialism” by Pearl and she
used “the ricksha as a symbol of inhumanity in several of her stories”. (Conn
A Cultural Biography 301). This was one of the pleasures promised to the western traveller who comes to the exotic East, though it represented social injustice at its worst.

The city offers them no relief. If Nathan and Rukmani engage in stone-breaking at the quarry for a living, Wang pulls the ricksha while O-lan and the child beg for food and money. They become part of an army of displaced refugees seeking shelter in the new land. While Wang Lung and his family live in makeshift huts under the city’s wall eating the free food offered at the public kitchens, Nathan and Rukmani sleep in the temple premises accepting what was offered as food at the end of day

_A Handful of Rice_ by Markandaya deals with urban poverty and the struggle for existence in a city like Madras. Ravi a poor peasant boy leaves his village for the city and he finds his traditional values being in clash with the insensitivity of the city dwellers. Being educated, the city attracts him and he joins the general exodus from the village to the city as he felt it offered better employment prospects. Once he reaches the city, he is disillusioned, as the city has nothing to offer him and he still has to struggle to save himself from starvation. In his disillusionment and anger he is like Yuan.

The city is a disappointment to Ravi. The traditional beliefs and the codes of integrity become irrelevant in this urban setup. The ‘arid dump' of
the village is now replaced by the 'jungle' of the city. Similar to the older generation of the village, the elderly in the town also accept suffering with a fatalistic resignation. Nor does he find the town offering him better comforts. The houses leak, and hunger continues to be the companion of the unemployed. “The half-empty cooking pot of the village provides only one good meal in town when the wage-earner is unemployed” (Margaret P. Joseph Kamala Markandaya 61). This makes Ravi realize that the situation is no better in the city that was so full of jobless graduates that he did not stand any chance. He broods over his joblessness:

The key opened no doors: it closed them for his education did not allow Ravi to compete against the gaunt, shabby-genteel young graduates who hung around the streets, while it had taken from him the ability to work with his hands except in an amateur capacity (Handful 27).

Another significant thematic concern of Buck and Markandaya is the issue of female bonding among, Indian/Chinese women. The traditional mothers Mohini, Mira’s mother, Vasantha’s mother, Buck’s mother, Madame Wu, Madame Ezra have all benefited from friendships with women. Friends, aunts, sisters, acquaintance have helped them at crucial moments of their lives. The finest instance is of the unnamed mother of Buck who is helped by the cousin’s wife after her husband deserts her. Vasantha’s mother is consoled by
Srinivas's mother when the daughter is humiliated by the British soldiers. When she agrees to Srinivas's marriage with Vasantha it's a salvation for both mother and daughter as it is difficult under the circumstances to get a good alliance for a girl so embarrassed.

Pearl has said in her autobiography that "there are many persons I would like to have been- example, again a sculptor- had I not wanted to write books" (My Several Worlds 201). Perhaps this explains the success of This Proud Heart. The central character Susan Gaylord is a young girl, very independent and her pride would never allow her to compromise anything nor depend on anyone. She had to be creative and talented so that she resembled Pearl Buck's artistic self and the struggle such a woman makes for a normal life. This is perhaps Buck’s most autobiographical novel though the autobiographical elements are thinly disguised.

Thematically This Proud Heart speaks of the fate of most women who are talented. Susan is a genius who can do anything better than anyone and at the same time is desirous of love and family life. In fact as Peter Conn says "she is less a fictional character than an allegorical emblem, a sign of the opportunities and limits women faced in the America of the 1930's" (A Cultural Biography 205). At a certain stage she even contemplates giving up her art to save her marriage, but ultimately decides against it as she is too
independent to extinguish herself in mere domestic responsibilities. At the end she realizes that she can fulfill herself only through her art and separates from her husband so that she can pursue her work with undivided attention. Susan is one of the modern women and she is classified with similar women in the following chapter.

We see that the East and West have met in the novels of Buck and Markandaya. But without converging, they end on a note of ambiguity. The conflict of tradition and modernity in the wake of industrialization, urbanization, progress of science and technology, migration and nuclear weapons, which upset the ecological balance and the environment, touch the heart of these writers. Social injustice, which cause poverty and suffering while deepening the dichotomy between the rich and the poor is strongly opposed by them. Being brought up in strong religious backgrounds, at the same time mature enough to be free of any institutionalised religion, Buck and Markandaya present the clash of faith and reason in their works. An examination of their novels reveals the commonality of the themes handled.

A close thematic scrutiny of the novels of Pearl S Buck and Kamala Markandaya can be presented in the following classification:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Novels by Pearl S Buck</th>
<th>Novels by Kamala Markandaya</th>
<th>Observation/treatment/worldview</th>
<th>Thematic system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Hunger</td>
<td><em>The Good Earth</em></td>
<td><em>Nectar in a Sieve,</em></td>
<td>Social, economic and moral implications drawn as the result of industrialization and natural calamities</td>
<td>Man - Society circuit</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>A Handful of Rice</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Nationalism</td>
<td><em>Dragon Seed, Letter From Peking,</em> <em>Imperial Woman</em></td>
<td><em>Some Inner Fury,</em></td>
<td>Loyalty and patriotism stronger than love/romance; East-West interaction</td>
<td>Man - Society circuit</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><em>The Golden Honeycomb</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Cross-cultural/inter-racial contacts</td>
<td><em>East Wind: West Wind,</em> <em>Letter From Peking</em></td>
<td><em>Some Inner Fury,</em></td>
<td>Clash of cultures/races a universal phenomena with the individuals being ‘nowhere’. Markandaya’s Pleasure City and Buck’s Letter From Peking do suggest the possibility of a synthesis.</td>
<td>Man - Society circuit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Possession,</em></td>
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<td><em>The Nowhere Man,</em></td>
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<td><em>Pleasure City,</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>The Coffer Dams</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Village to City</td>
<td><em>The Good Earth</em></td>
<td><em>Nectar in a Sieve,</em></td>
<td>Migration offers no solution-prospects not brighter in the city and suffering continues. Urban-rural acculturation</td>
<td>Man - Society circuit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>A Handful of Rice</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Tradition and modernity</td>
<td><em>A House Divided</em></td>
<td><em>Two Virgins</em></td>
<td>A synthesis of both-accepting progress rooted in one’s culture and values</td>
<td>Man - Society circuit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I: Thematic Range in the novels of Pearl S Buck and Kamala Markandaya
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Novels by Pearl S. Buck</th>
<th>Novels by Kamala Markandaya</th>
<th>Observation/treatment/worldview</th>
<th>Thematic system¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Technology and environment</td>
<td>Command the Morning, Mandala</td>
<td>Nectar in a Sieve, The Cofferdams, Pleasure City</td>
<td>Plea against destruction of environment/ecology</td>
<td>Man-Society circuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-marital relationship</td>
<td>The Good Earth, Pavilion of Women</td>
<td>Nectar in a Sieve</td>
<td>Part of the accepted social conventions of the times- concubionage</td>
<td>Man-family circuit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Amiya Dev “Literary Themes and Comparative Literature” *Comparative Literature* 238
The Table showing the thematic range commonly covered by the novelists in reference helps us to derive a thematic system of general validity. In the novels of these two women writers, at the center of the system is placed Man and Man is circuited to family, society with links among the socio-political events. Amiya Dev rightly says:

Since *stoff* is a direct or indirect product of experience and since experience is culture and history bound, *stoff* has an independent cultural-historical ambit-independent, that is of our essential task as *stoff* critics which is text-oriented. (Comparative Literature theory and Practice 236).

In the historical and cultural format of western influenced society, the writers discuss the problems of hunger, nationalism, cross-cultural contacts urbanization and conflict between tradition and modernity at large. Pearl S Buck has definite solutions to these issues; but Markandaya maintains an ambivalent attitude. Wellek is right in believing that all creative literary writings and experience had an aspect of unity as exemplified in this typology. Chandra Mohan also stresses the same view in his introduction to *Aspects of Comparative Literature* that “the proper perspective is to regard all literatures as weltliteratur” (Introduction xvii).