CHAPTER FOUR

CONFRONTATION AND RECONCILIATION

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

In the complex web of the contemporary civilization of India, the two most easily perceptible strands are the indigenous Indian traditions and the imported European conceptions. Undoubtedly, every educated person in modern India happens to be the product of the conflicts and reconciliations of two cultures. But the consciousness of this tension varies from individual to individual. The Indian writer like any other writer is chiefly "concerned with the springs of human action and with the motivation behind human behaviour" (Mukherjee 64). In the present context of Indian history, a writer in India needs to analyse his self based on the evaluation of his own attitude towards these two aspects of his being -- one inherited from birth, the other imbibed through education.

Historically speaking, the East and the West were first brought together in trade. But it was due to the
introduction of the English language that a cultural dislocation took place in the general life-style of the Indians. Though the Indian mind was thoroughly exposed to the influence of European culture and its ethos, it could not surrender completely to the Western impact. Despite the fact that intellectuals were exposed to the cultural heritage and the political concepts of the West, they only assimilated Western values without actually detaching themselves from their indigenous cultural roots.

Despite the possibility of constant overlapping and interchangeability of the values of the East and the West, some sort of basic difference does certainly exist between these two divergent civilizations. The values of the Eastern orientation are commonly associated with "passivity, stagnation, rootedness and a kind of conservatism that seems antithetical to progress and material attainments" (Rekha Jha 7). The West similarly stands for a sceptical and pragmatic attitude towards the problems of the world. The conflicting elements in the domain of divergence between the East and the West are easily discernible and certain factors in operation in the modern age continue to deepen these points of difference between the East and the West. It would be quite befitting to define the ambiguous term 'values' which appears to divide the people of the East and the West altogether. The American sociologist, Clyde Kluckohn, tries to
define this nebulous term 'values':

It should be possible to construct in general terms the views of a given group regarding the structure of the universe, the relation of man to the universe ...and the relations of man to man. These views will represent the group's own definition of the ultimate meaning of human life. (410).

Several scholars in the field of anthropology, sociology and philosophy have tried to define the exact nature of Oriental and Occidental value systems. One of the most appropriate and the comprehensive definitions is that of Cora Du Bois. She sums up the whole issue excellently in three questions: "(1) What is man's relation to nature? (2) What is man's conception of time? (3) What is man's relation to man?" (7). She is of the view that "the total range of possible answers and the consistency among the answers to the questions of man's relation to nature, his conception of time and his relation to other men, constitutes the basic premises of varying value systems. These answers define the 'way of life' of different groups of people" (Rekha Jha 8).

Man in the East believes that the forces of Nature are indomitable. He willingly looks back to the past as a lost glorious age and one school of Hinduism conceives life in this world as illusory. Thus a strong feeling is engendered
to tolerate and spiritually survive the adversity of existence on account of religion and therefore the traditional Indian is prone to passivity, stagnation and acceptance. But man in the West strongly believes that he can certainly endeavour to master nature through the skilful application of science and technology. Hence, unlike the man in the East, he can happily look forward to a world of perfection through a steady progress. In the West, man is essentially an isolated individual charged with the notion of nourishing and promoting his unique potentialities. But the man in the East happens to be a member of a strict hierarchical order wherein each must perform the duties allotted to him.

The British, while in India, failed to make sincere efforts to understand India, and its people and reciprocally the Indians did not attempt to understand the West and its culture and as a result there was a strained relationship between the two especially during the later half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. Being confident of the value of their own culture, the English thought that in order to establish roots in India and succeed in their business and political endeavours there it was good to retain their own separate identity and not mingle with the Indians and imbibe their culture and ethos. Though they considered their experience in India exciting, they almost
kept themselves aloof from their Indian neighbours.

British writers like Rudyard Kipling, whose stories often were based on India, believed that there was a basic and unmistakable difference between the East and the West. John Masters, the English novelist, admits that the English were "like people [who] lived in a room upstairs who knew nothing of what was going on in the house below" (qtd. in Rekha Jha 9). He felt that to understand India properly one should become an Indian in sensibility and assimilate its rich culture. Though the English found it difficult to do so there seemed to be a definite need for the mutual assimilation of the East and the West without being detrimental to each other. Such mutual understanding between the Oriental and the Occidental was possible on the personal level only as long as the demand did not become immoderate and there was mutual adaptation and co-existence. But the real tendency to symbiosis was lacking on the part of the English and the Indians due to the prevalent cultural dualism and political acrimony between them.

Fiction in Indian English literature owes much to the historical phenomenon of juxtaposition of the two opposite culture systems and value systems. The encounter between the two is viewed from different perspectives and at various depths of meaning by the Indian English writers. The
possibilities of mutual understanding between the two sides have been explored by them in their works.

In some novels, the West appears as a character, in some others as an attitude or a set of values. And in the novels written during the Gandhian era, the East-West theme is treated as a conflict between pre-industrial modes of life and mechanization as in K.S.Venkataramani’s Murugan the Tiller (1927) and in V.V.Chintamani’s Vedantam or the Clash of Traditions (1928). In the post-Independence India a number of novels have appeared in which the conflict between the two cultures is not on the social but on the personal level and the theme found in them is an individual’s search for identity in a changing India. Commenting on the treatment of the East-West theme by the Indian English novelists, Meenakshi Mukherjee says:

The definition of 'East' as well as of 'West' varies from novel to novel, but each tries in its own way to grapple with the problem that has continued to concern the Indo-Anglian novelist for more than fifty years. One is struck by the unabating interest shown by these novelists in the interaction of the two sets of values that exist side by side, and often coalesce, in twentieth century.
Growing cultural and social interaction between the East and the West and the consequently changing social ethos after Indian Independence have given an added impetus to the writing of novels on the theme of East-West confrontation. The best examples of East-West encounter are Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope, G.V. Desani's All about H.Hatterr and Santha Rama Rau's Remember the House, Manohar Malgonkar's Combat of Shadows, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Esmond in India and Heat and Dust, and Bharati Mukherjee's The Tiger's Daughter. The cultural conflict between the East and the West and the reaction of an Indian on returning home after a period of stay abroad form the subject matter in two of the novels of B. Rajan viz., The Dark Dancer and Too Long in the West. Some of the recent novels of post-Independence India focus on a different aspect of the East-West encounter by exploring the problems arising out of Indians' inability to adjust themselves to the alien culture while they are in England. The classic examples are Timeri Murari's The Marriage, Reginald and Jamila Massey's The Immigrants, Sasthi Brata's She and He, M.V. Rama Sarma's The Stream and Look Homeward, Romen Basu's A Gift of Love, Anita Desai's Bye-Bye Blackbird, Dilip Hiro's A Triangular View and Chaman Nahal's Into Another Dawn.

The East-West encounter as represented by India's contact with Britain forms an important area of concern in
the novels of Kamala Markandaya. Her major fictional preoccupation appears to be the exploration of various factors that hamper harmonious relations between the two races and cultures. She has shown her acute historical consciousness by treating the tensions and points of contact between people belonging to two diverse races and two different attitudes of life from various perspectives by bringing them together in different relationships and situations. The West is presented in her novels through a number of characters playing different roles, representing different aspects of Western culture, and reacting in different ways to India, its culture and its people they come in contact with.

Oriental in cultural traditions and religious heritage and Occidental by habitation, Kamala Markandaya seems to possess a kind of "mixed sensibility" (Raizada 37) with which she portrays sensitively and accurately the clash of the two modes of living. Her knowledge and understanding of both Eastern and Western values of life gives her an admirable advantage to depict the personal, political and cultural interactions between the two. No doubt, she is a highly sensitive writer and her authentic delineation of the juxtaposition and interaction of two diverse civilizations, the Eastern and the Western, is veritable achievement because her own artistic personality combines in itself the
contrary qualities and values of two cultures.

The novelist's frequent return to the theme of the East-West encounter and especially the Indo-British meeting and her masterly treatment of it in novel after novel in great depth and seriousness shows her great concern for the contemporary world civilization. As a sincere student of history, she is aware that the British contact was quite conducive to the growth of a new angle of vision in the life of the East. But she knows that cultural pride, sharp political disagreement, colonial domination, racial consciousness and the subsequent tension kept the twain apart. Her anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist stance is evident in her novels such as The Coffer Dams, Possession and The Golden Honeycomb. Unlike other writers who are of the view that the gap between the East and the West can never be properly bridged, Markandaya seems to suggest in her novels that a cultural synthesis and a compromise between the two modes of living are always possible. She tries to establish the point that a harmonious union and lasting relationship between the East and the West can be established only through mutual respect, appreciation and understanding and not through domination.

Markandaya treats the tensions and conflicts arising out of the interaction between the East and the West at the
personal, social, political and cultural levels in her
novels such as Nectar in a Sieve, Some Inner Fury,
Honeycomb and Pleasure City. While the novelist presents the
confrontation and the element of hostility between the
people of the East and the West in the first part of her
fictional career, the later part of her fictional world
evidently shows that the theme of reconciliation between two
races gains definite ascendancy. She is of the view that
there should be a compromise between the Eastern and the
Western values. The fine spirit of the triumph of
reconciliation between the two different cultures and the
contrasting value systems of the East and the West is
reached in her latest novel, Pleasure City, where the
dialectic of confrontation gives way to mutual understanding
and acceptance of each other's values in good spirit.
Carefully refusing to side with any particular culture, she
lays bare the strengths and weaknesses of both and her
depiction of the clash of the two ways of life is balanced
and authentic. In the words of Harish Raizada:

Like a double-faced Janus, she can look to
both ways of life with keen discernment and
dispassionate objectivity. Her treatment of
racial relationships is therefore realistic
and unbiased. Englishmen and women portrayed
by her are also not mere types but individuals
infused with vitality of their own. (37-38)

In Nectar in a Sieve the West is represented by Dr. Kennington, an English medical missionary. Through the contact of Rukmani and her family with Dr. Kennington the novelist brings out the opposite viewpoints of the East and the West. Though the relations between Rukmani and the English doctor seem to be quite friendly, the mutual and the basic inability to perceive and comprehend the motivation and behaviour of each other remains for each of them a common problem.

Dr. Kennington is a cultivated and enlightened British missionary who has been nourished on the noble ideals of liberalism. He is essentially a humanitarian and out of pity for the poverty-striken and suffering people of India he has sacrificed his conjugal happiness and pleasures of home for the service of humanity. He serves the rural folk and helps them tirelessly to overcome their miseries. With his medical knowledge he cures Rukmani and her daughter, Ira, of their barrenness. Later on, he builds a hospital in the village and renders service to people.

In the beginning the relationship between Rukmani and Dr. Kennington is one of faith and fear. When she approaches him for help to beget a son she thinks: "If he wishes to
help me he can, so much faith had I in him. My heart was thumping out a prayer" (Nectar in a Sieve 20). When Dr. Kennington asks her to come and see him she is afraid. She says, "My fears came crowding upon me again. I had never been to this kind of doctor; he suddenly became terrifying" (20).

The people of the village including the sons and daughter of Rukmani raised their eyebrows and even have doubts about her relationship with the English missionary. Though free meetings between men and women are quite natural and common in the Western countries, in India such meetings are often looked down upon and censured by the public. Not only the women will be accused of immorality but also the men seldom escape carping criticism. That is why Rukmani does not want her husband to know about her meeting with Dr. Kennington. She secretly goes to the doctor for treatment to have a child again. Kunthi's conversation with Rukmani when the latter is on her way back home after her meeting with Dr. Kennington clearly shows how the women of the village regard such relationship between an Indian woman and a foreigner.

Biswa, the money-lender of the village, also tends to believe that the relationship of Rukmani with Kenny is not in accordance with the Indian moral values. He tells
Rukmani: "They say he is a good friend to you" (105). When Rukmani retaliates by saying that Kenny is a benefactor to her family, the money-lender quietly says, "He is also a man" (105). Even the children of Rukmani do not approve of her connection with the Englishman. Her son, Arjun, strongly disapproves of his mother's idea of approaching Kenny for getting him a job in the tannery. He contemptuously remarks: "Whitemen have power. Indeed they have, over men and events and especially over women" (52).

No doubt, Kenny personally has a lot of affection for Rukmani and her children and similarly his love is very much reciprocated by Rukmani's genuine feelings and regards for him. Both Kenny and Rukmani are intimate friends and yet their basic cultural differences crop up in their thought, conversation and behaviour.

Kenny's philosophy of life and idea of individualism are quite different from those of Indians. Being an Englishman he is unable to understand fatalism and their passive acceptance of the cruelty and injustice to which they are subjected. Unable to understand them, he often speaks to them in harsh words but it is obvious that his harsh words are in themselves an expression of his deep and unadulterated love for them. He often urges them to fight for better conditions of life. When Rukmani articulates her
hope that times will be soon better he immediately shouts at her:

Times are better, times are better. Times will not be better for many months. Meanwhile you will suffer and die, you meek suffering fools. Why do you keep this ghastly silence? Why do you not demand -- cry out for help -- do something? There is nothing in this country, Oh God, there is nothing."(43-44)

In his agony, when he looks at the suffering of the meek and the poor he once again repeats: "You must cry if you want help. It is no use whatsoever to suffer in silence. Who will succour the drowning man if he does not clamour for his life?"(113).

The meaningful dialogue between Rukmani and Kenny brings out the wide gap between the Oriental and the Occidental modes of living in a vivid and clear-cut manner. Protesting against the fatalism of the mute peasants he says scornfully:

Acquiescent imbeciles, ... do you think spiritual grace comes from being in want, or from suffering? What thoughts have you when your belly is empty or your body is sick? Tell me they are noble ones and I will call you a liar.(114)
When Rukmani tries to make her point clear, "Yet our priests fast, and inflict on themselves severe punishments, and we are taught to bear our sorrows in silence, and all this is so that the soul may be cleansed" (114), he exclaims in disgust:

My God! I do not understand you. I never will. Go, before I too am entangled in your philosophies. (114)

It is quite obvious that the relationship as illustrated in the novel between the East and the West is not one of understanding. Friendship, understanding and companionship between the East and the West are possible at the personal level but the people in India generally find a no-man's land between themselves and the Englishmen.

The theme of East-West confrontation assumes several wide-ranging aspects in Some Inner Fury (1957) which is essentially "a political novel dealing with the straining of human relationships in the wake of the 'Quit India' movement" (Raizada 41). The novelist focuses her attention on the two important contemporary aspects of India's confrontation with Britain viz., the impact of Western education and civilization on the outlook of Indians and the conflict between India and Britain issuing from the latter's political supremacy over the former.
Political dichotomy of the East and the West assumes three dimensions in the novels of Markandaya. Firstly, there is a merging of political history with fiction. Secondly, the novelist carefully portrays the impact of the Western political system and the ensuing bitter consequences which were not in conformity with the traditional background of India. Thirdly, she depicts the breakdown of personal relationships because of political wranglings. Her mingling of the history of that political confrontation with fiction forms the theme of Some Inner Fury.

India's acquaintance with Western culture and civilization generally led to the emergence of three well-defined types among educated Indians. First, there were those who had been completely swept off their feet by English education and found nothing valuable in their ancient culture and traditional way of life. They, under the sway of Western civilization and ideologies, looked down upon their own country. No doubt, such anglicized and Western-educated men held high positions in the administration of the British Government in India and were regarded by the foreign rulers as the staunch supporters of their government in India. Kitsamy and his father in this novel belong to this category. Secondly, there were those who were extreme fundamentalists and who attached themselves blindly to the old Indian traditions and values. Such people
were completely opposed to the British ways of life and antagonistic to their unwarranted rule in India. They did not hesitate even to undertake violent steps and tactics to drive them out of the land. Govind belongs to this category. Between these two extremes stood the third and the middle group of judicious people. Such people, while attaching so much significance to their ancient culture, had prudently drawn inspiration from the radical and progressive democratic values of Western civilization. Such persons of reasonable nature had successfully developed a right spirit of cosmopolitan outlook on life. They were, no doubt, deeply rooted in their native soil and had a great concern for the freedom of their country. In this novel, Roshan belongs to this category.

Kit is a sophisticated, well-placed Indian administrator who has been educated in England and who has genuine respect for the West and its ways. As a result of his education at Oxford he loses sight of traditional Indian values and thus alienates himself from his roots. He is an Anglicized Indian absolutely loyal to Western culture and he is impatient with traditional mores and attitudes. Speaking about his strong orientation to the Western way of life, Mira points out:

... Kit did not merely participate in it: he was part of it; his feeling for the West was no cheap flirtation, to be enjoyed so long, no
longer, to be put aside, thereafter and forgotten, or at best remembered with a faint nostalgia. It went deeper: it was understanding, and love. (Some Inner Fury 142)

The conflict between Oriental and Occidental patterns of living is vividly reflected in the failure of marriage between the Westernized Kit and the tradition-loving Premala. Premala has genuine love and respect for her traditional values. She is an embodiment of piety, obedience and self-renunciation. For her, European entertainments like clubs, tennis and parties are profoundly alien. But Kit evaluates his wife only in terms of Western social grace or the lack of it. Being a boastful character, Kit fails to understand the silent sufferings of his wife. As a result, she becomes extremely lonely and finally gets involved in the missionary project in a neighbouring village. While participating in the project work, Premala develops a spiritual attachment with Mr. Hickey, a British missionary, who is doing service for the village people.

The mindless and savage hatred for the alien rulers felt by most people in India during the days of the freedom struggle is graphically portrayed in this novel. Govind, the foster-brother of Kit and Mira, is an extremist in his ardent love for his motherland. He is just the opposite of
Kit in his attitude to the West. He is bitterly hostile to the British rule in India and disgusted with their ways. Describing his attitude towards the British, Mira says:

Govind was not and had never been a part of it. To him it was the product of a culture which was not his own -- the culture of an aloof and alien race twisted in the process of transplantation from its homeland, and so divorced from the people of the country as to be no longer real. For those who had participated in it he had a savage, harsh contempt. (142)

Govind is a member of the National Party of Independence, and hates both the Englishmen and those Indians who serve the British crown. He even hates the missionary Hicky and his class not because "they were also whitemen, who not only set up their alien and unwanted institutions in the land but who, for the preservation of these institutions sided with those other whitemen who ruled the country and with whom otherwise they had little in common"(142).

Roshan Merchant is an emancipated young lady, Oxford-educated and divorced. A woman of strong resolution and perseverance, she always tries to affirm and assert her
individuality and her independent identity. Despite her sympathy and appreciation for the west and her intimate relationship with certain Western individuals, she is, no doubt, genuinely and trustfully Indian at heart and takes active participation in the political freedom struggle against Britain. She is, however, the best example of the harmony of two diverse cultures namely Indian and British. The following words of the narrator are quite significant in this connection:

It was Roshan who came nearest to her in liking and sympathy for the ways of the West; but she belonged to the East too. Born in one world, educated in another, she entered both and moved in both with ease and non-chalance. It was a dual citizenship which few people had, which a few may have spurned, but many more envied, and which she herself simply took for granted, and curiously enough, both worlds were glad to welcome her in their midst. (121)

Roshan fights for autonomy for all Indians though hers is the path of pacific resistance as opposed to Govind who strongly believes in terrorism as the only means of liberation. Her attitude is always positive and constructive. She tells Govind with full conviction: "There is no power in violence... Only destruction... I am not really interested in destruction" (86). Her strong faith in
her own convictions does not get shattered even when she is imprisoned during the freedom struggle. It is, therefore, beyond doubt that she stands between the two extremes of love and hatred for the West. The words of Meenakshi Mukherjee are significant in this connection: "Roshan's case is offered as the solution of a dilemma that is essentially complex" (83). It is in Roshan that the East and the West find a perfect synthesis. While summing up the character of Roshan, Stephen Hemenway remarks: "She transcends artificial barriers without compromising her personal and political integrity" (66).

The prominent line of the conflict between the East and the West is revealed through the mutual relationship of an Indian Hindu woman, Mira, and an Englishman, Richard. They are in love with each other. As their love becomes stronger, the struggle of the Indians and the Englishmen becomes more acute in the political arena.

Richard Marlowe is introduced to Mira as Kit's Oxonian friend and classmate. His stay at the home of Mira for a few weeks paves the way for her falling in love with him. Despite his passionate love for Mira, Richard never tries to possess her physically. Their love is not based purely on physical attraction. When Mira speaks about his restraint and self-control Richard says frankly, "A man does not take
a girl the moment he feels attracted to her, if she means anything at all to him" (Some Inner Fury 197). He continues, "A man doesn't lightly lie with a woman... When it's the first time for her. Especially if he loves her. It is better to wait for her to come to him" (198). When they are waiting for the marriage to take place, the political turmoil which erupts causes irreparable damage to their sincere and perfect love.

Though the love Mira experiences in the arms of Richard is fervid, honest and genuine, it finally proves to be a cursed relationship. Mira and Richard are the representatives of two nations, one the ruler and the other the ruled. Therefore, when the entire nation is rocked by the Quit India Movement and freedom struggle Richard becomes a tragic victim of the political unrest. The lovers, then, have to face inescapably that fateful moment when they have to choose between personal and national loyalties. For Mira it is a difficult moment. She is, no doubt, the victim of the forces of history and it is beyond her power to overcome them. As she leaves Richard in the midst of an angry mob, she reflects: "For us there was no other way, the forces that pulled us apart were too strong" (285). She, however, believes that in a period of a hundred years it will all be one and there will be no more "my people" or "your people and my people" (138). But she is fully aware that in the
process of liberation a few individuals may be hurt or even eliminated. Mira gives up her beloved Richard with calm resignation because she knows that while the colonial history is working itself out, an Indian woman cannot have an English husband. She says at the end of the novel:

But what matter to the universe, I said to myself, if now and then a world is born or star should die; or what matter to the world, if here and there a man should fall, or a head or a heart should break.(286)

Kamala Markandaya's handling of the problem of interracial love and marriage in this novel is authentic and sensible. Like Fielding and Aziz in E.M. Forster's A Passage to India, Richard and Mira are torn apart by political struggles which make even love and friendship impossible. The novelist strongly feels that any long-lasting close relationship between Indians and the British cannot be possible as long as India is ruled and politically suppressed by Britain. In her estimate, "there has not been much understanding between East and West in spite of the long association between them. Neither side has had the correct attitude towards the other" (Chandrasekharan, "East and West in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya" 82). Kamala Markandaya, like E.M. Forster, stresses the fact that genuine and profound relationship could ever be possible only when
India is politically free and both the races could meet on equal footing. Commenting on the message of the novel, K.R. Chandrasekharan says:

The important message proclaimed by the novel, *Some Inner Fury*, is that one race cannot forever rule over another. On the personal plane there may be and should be understanding and love between the people of one country and those of another. But any domination is bound to be resented and destroyed in due course. (90)

The events, described in this novel, are supposed to have taken place in the beginning of the nineteen forties when India was waging a political war against the British Raj and the national liberation struggle was gaining more and more momentum year by year. Though the reader may not find any direct references to the activities of political parties or prominent leaders of the period he certainly feels everywhere in the novel a historical authenticity. In her serious endeavour to examine the various factors that hinder the amicable relations between two diverse races and cultures Markandaya tells a heart-rending story of great human interest against the national historical background.
To understand the deeper layers of the interaction as well as the confrontation between the East and the West, one should study *Possession* along with *Some Inner Fury*. Both the novels examine the East-West theme in different historical and political situations and with different sets of characters. While *Some Inner Fury* suggests "the view that political equality is at best only a necessary and not a sufficient condition for the Indians and the British to come together" (Aithal 54), *Possession* indicates that autocratic and domineering attitudes persist among the British even after the end of their political hegemony, making the Indo-British relationship more difficult even in the post-Colonial era.

In *Possession*, Markandaya depicts vividly the long-awaited meeting between the Indians and the British as equals. E.M. Forster in *A Passage to India* (1924) dismisses any feasibility of cordial relationship between the two people until India gains her political freedom. *Some Inner Fury*, written after three decades, voices the same view. *Possession* is the first major novel on the Indo-British encounter set in post-Independence period, meeting the primary condition of political equality for the coming together of the two races and cultures.

The novelist, in *Possession*, presents "a drama of
de-Indianization" (Harrex 69) of the principal character namely Valmiki who is not only culturally and psychologically conditioned by the West but also possessed by it. The theme of possession is treated in a complex manner as the possession is both literal and symbolic simultaneously.

While literally the novel centres on the action of taking over of Val by Lady Caroline Bell, a British aristocrat, the novelist with her remarkable knowledge and sense of historicity interprets it "as symbolic of the historic relations between Britain and India" (Harrex 69). As it is revealed towards the end of the novel, Val's moral and creative redemption revolves round his severance from Caroline and a return to India. He is finally able to recover his lost identity as a painter and a man only with his Indian guru, the Swamy, and not with his British mentor.

Lady Caroline epitomizes the Colonial and post-Colonial attitude and outlook. This lady, who visits India in 1949, is "descended from a long line of men who had ruled India in the days of the British Raj" (Possession 9). Daughter of a former British Resident in India, she staunchly believes that being British is best and she impresses upon Anasuya and others both directly and indirectly that India is in need of England. She is rich, beautiful, arrogant, self-
centred in her behaviour. She is, no doubt, formidable and has "iron and steel" (230) in her. While describing the character of Caroline Bell as symbolic of the old Empire, Anasuya says:

She was supremely confident, born and brought up to be so, with as little thought of fallibility as a colonial in the first flush of empire, as a missionary in the full armour of his mission, dogged by none of the hesitancies that handicap lesser breeds. (15)

Caroline resolves, for instance, to take Val away the moment she recognizes his artistic talents. Anasuya points out, "There was not even a pause to consider whether he would like to or not; nor any recognition of him as a human being, with human ties" (10). Later on, the narrator observes that the English woman "cared for him with zeal and efficiency as she might have a property -- the necklace of diamonds round her throat" (81). She again repeats, "Caroline thinks Valmiki belongs to her, and in a way she's right. She won't let go. People don't easily give up what they think are their possessions. The English never have" (198).

Despite her awareness that times have changed and the past colonial attitudes will not do, the colonial outlook inherited by Caroline persists. Her attitude represents the
changed role of Westerners who begin to substitute their political dominance by cultural with the sole aim of alienating the Indians from their traditional roots. Under the boastful patronage of Lady Caroline, Val in London is able to achieve success completely in the Western sense which is defined by the novelist in terms of money, public honour and exhibitionism.

After a period of psychological distress resulting from sudden transportation from a familiar environment and the kind protection of the Swamy to a strange land and people, Val adapts himself to a new life under the tutelage of Caroline. He acquires the knowledge of Western civilization and becomes, "an ostentatious artistic persona, and the kind of artificial, extravagant personality which conformed to the English notion of what an Oriental should be" (Harrex 70). With her characteristic colonial arrogance and disdainful nature Caroline tells Anasuya that Val is "grown completely away from it all -- he'll never be able to settle down with his people again, never want to either. I think if you'd seen his mother, that hut of theirs; you'd be convinced as I am " (Possession 104).

Despite the difference in age, Caroline takes Val as a lover. Though she has indulged in several love-affairs in the past, her abnormal sex relationship with Val becomes a
typical one. In the words of Meena Shirwadkar, Caroline is a "highly individualised, an unscrupulous and sexy woman who tries to possess Val, the village artist... physically as well as spiritually." (138). Keeping an Indian as a lover has another advantage, for in post-Colonial period "India has come into fashion. Fashionable to know of India, fashionable to know Indians, fashionable to admire its art, fashionable to welcome its women and even, at a pinch, its men" (Possession 125).

Being largely commercial, selfish and inhuman, the British were oblivious of human values and relationships. A.V.Krishna Rao observes that Caroline with her sagging sense of values dehumanizes the personality of Valmiki" and with her maddening power for possession "kills the artist in him" ("Continuity and Change in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya" 10). This is what was symbolically done to Indians in the process of colonization. Whenever she finds it difficult to get on well with Val she at once describes it as "an old ailment... That England and India never did understand one another" (Possession 77). Her estimation is not wrong in her case because she is fully ignorant of the significance of the spiritual values of India and the religious motive behind Val's art. Though Caroline ignores the Swamy in the beginning, gradually she realizes to her discomfiture that the Swamy exercises a much greater
influence over Val than she does. When the Swami visits London she "did not go near the Swamy. He subdued her, she was afraid of him, or if not of him of the power he still wielded over the clay she had moulded and caressed to an image she could love" (144). Her concept of art is essentially commercial and she looks at Val's paintings as commodities to be sold in the market for higher rates. She is unable to realize that Val's artistic creations are an expression of his spiritual communion with the divine.

Despite the great influence of the West on him, Val is able to stick on to his Indian spiritual roots. This is quite perceptible from the divine inclination which finds expression even through the pictures painted by him under the temporal power of the materialistic West. Inspired by Val's paintings, an American art critic remarks: "This young painter paints as if unknown to himself he had glimpsed, beyond the horizon, the transcendent powers of Universe, and the refracted light brings a hint of the power and the menace into his own painting" (164).

The final return of Valmiki to India and to the Swamy evidently shows that the kind of power exercised by Caroline over him cannot restrain him from the dictates of his spirit. His attachment to the Swamy and the caves has not been weakened in any way due to his stay in England.
Caroline follows him to India thinking that Valmiki would not like to live among the rocks after his taste of Western life and that he would be willing to come back to her. Contrary to her expectations, Val says confidently: "The wilderness is mine: it is no longer terrible as it used to be: it is nothing" (228), and the Swami reiterates, "Even this wasteland may have something to show, other than what you have seen" (228). She realizes that she has lost Valmiki now, and perhaps she had lost him forever, given her colonial attitudes and beliefs. The following verbal exchange between Caroline and the Swamy makes the point very clear:

"There is still one thing," she said at length, equably, "to be taken into account: Valmiki is yours now, but he has been mine. One day he will want to be mine again... and on that day I shall come back to claim him."

The Swamy's eyes were troubled: "If that day comes," he said.

Caroline came of a breed that never admitted defeat. "Of course it will come," she said with a faint contempt. (232-33)

The conflict between the Swamy and Lady Caroline for the possession and control of Val truly becomes symbolic of the
conflict between Indian spiritual values and Western materialistic civilization for possession of the soul of India. In this regard, the remark made by H.M. Williams about the novel being "an exploration of the distortion of India's national character in the British embrace and of her consequent urge to be free" (Indo-Anglican Literature 1800-1970 A Survey 87), appropriately characterizes its symbolic structure.

The return of Val to the Swamy clearly implies that a brief acquaintance with the British can be beneficial for India's cultural sophistication and modernization but its ultimate fulfilment is possible only through its nourishment by her own spiritual values and sustenance. The association of India with the West may be valuable and profitable but the attempt of the West to dominate and possess the soul of India is certainly bound to hinder its progress. Since the union of Caroline and Val is not based on mutual respect and understanding, but on the desire of one party to dominate over the other, it is foredoomed to failure and disappointment at the end. Commenting on the depiction of the colonial conflict of the past in Possession, Ramesh K. Srivastava observes:

Markandaya in Possession has shown a historian's perspective in presenting the tragic drama of India's colonial past. The symbolism may be too transparent and
declarative, the characters may be all black, all white or in identifiable colours with their tell-tale placards, but from the pathetic plight of the gifted goatherd issues forth a poignant song which revives the unhappy memories of the colonised India. The novel is the fictionalization of multi-dimensional historical reality. ("Levels of Colonial Consciousness in Markandaya's Possession" 125)

In The Coffer Dams, the novelist treats a new facet of Indo-British encounter by delineating the conflict between technological power and the forces of nature symbolized by a tumultuous South Indian river. At one level, The Coffer Dams is also "a story of how some of the post-Colonial British technocrats react to, and interact with a strange and vanishing ethnic group with its exotic customs in the midst of a fast changing world" (K. Madhavi Menon & A. V. Krishna Rao, "The Coffer Dams: A Critical Study" 168). The confrontation is shown in the form of hostility between the progressive-minded British technicians and the hilly tribesmen of India who consider the river as a God.

The Clinton-Mackendrick company gets the tender to construct a dam across a tempestuous river in Malanad, South
India. Clinton, the leader of the group and Mackendrick, his partner, with a team of Englishmen arrive at the construction site with schedules already worked out in England itself. The Coffer dams are to be completed before the monsoon and this produces the inevitable tensions between the British and the Indian engineers and the British and the Indian workers. The Whitemen look down on the Indians whom they generally regard as technically incompetent. The Indians are easily offended and cannot forget the insults of the colonial era. While the English team consists of Howard Clinton, his wife, Helen, Mackendrick, the Chief Engineer, Rawlings Henderson and others, the Indian team consists of Krishnan, the engineer, Bashiam, the crane operator, Gopal Rao, Shanmugam and other local inhabitants.

Even the British officials seem to be divided in their attitude towards Indians of the post-Independence period. The British of the older generation, who have enjoyed the glory of the British Raj in India, find it difficult to perceive how the youngmen are able to adjust themselves with the natives of post-Colonial and new India. Mackendrick envies "youngmen like Bailey and Lefever, who despite rebuffs rubbed along with new India better than he or his generation could hope to do" (The Coffer Dams 62). While working together on the same project, the British and the Indian technicians remain hostile to each other and are
unable to appreciate the opposite point of view. Krishnan, the leader of the Engineers deputed by the government of India, disagrees with Clinton on the construction programme of the dam and finding the latter indifferent to his advice feels bitterly hurt:

Brush us off like flies, he thought, hurt and insult like splinters under his skin; despise us because they are experts and we are just beginning. Beginners, he repeated bitterly; barred from knowledge and power as from the secrets of a master guild; and the memories of those neglectful years lay in deep accusing pools in his mind. But it's over now, he said to himself. Our day is coming. The day when they will listen to us. (19)

The British treat the requests and arguments of the local inhabitants with contempt. Clinton is too convinced of the superiority of the Western World to pay attention to the natives. While he represents the post-Colonial England and its advancement in science and technology, his treatment of the Indians closely resembles that of the former rulers. Just as the colonists, Clinton subdues the Indians to his will and has no human consideration for them. He has no concern for the tribals whose lives are dislocated and disrupted because of the dam. He rejects the idea of
relaxing the work schedule to give some relief to the men who have been working round the clock and who have been driven to the point of breaking. Like a slave master, he pushes them on.

In spite of the recruitment of coolie labour from among the tribals, the English officers have no sympathy for them and fail to make sincere efforts to adapt themselves to local environments. To Clinton, the local people seem to be "a tribe whose outstanding characteristic in his view was the severe retardation of its civilization" and "who presented to him only the blank opacities of their total incomprehension" (35). He finds it hard to accept the view of Helen that they are harmless.

Despite the backwardness in their outlook, the tribesmen possess the advantage of close acquaintance with the local environment. They are able to perceive the changing moods of its seasons and can easily predict the rainfall and the monsoon by the mere smell of the soil. Their old village chief foretells when the rains will cease and the fury of the frantic river abate. Unlike the British who seem to be frightened of the deep jungle, the tribesmen and women are not scared of the wilderness of the jungle and its animals. Almost all the British residents who are basically hostile to local surroundings undergo a tremendous strain on their
nerves when the continuous rains and the overflowing river threaten to breach the dam during the construction work. Some of them run away from the place in utter dismay while Millie Rawlings becomes mad. Only Helen and a few others who have developed liking for the local surroundings and the tribal people are able to maintain composure and serenity.

Helen, unlike Clinton, is kind and understanding. Being highly sensitive to the needs and sufferings of the Indians around her, she has great sympathy for the tribal people and identifies herself with them. She establishes closer ties and communion with the aboriginals by learning their local dialect and calling on them frequently. She feels greatly distressed when she learns that the bungalows for the English officers were constructed on the land earlier occupied by a tribal settlement. Enraged by their docility and submissiveness in vacating their land without any sign of protest, she tells Bashiam, "Without protest. Just got up and walked away, like animals" (48). When she gives herself up completely to Bashiam and finds him hesitating she tells him: "Look at me, I've never been a memsahib. You're not some kind of freak to me. We're alike, we're freaks only to the caste we come from, not to each other" (136).

Helen seldom associates herself with the British officers and their wives. She often avoids their parties
and picnics. To the utter bewilderment and dismay of her fellow countrymen, she develops close contact with the natives. "I expect", she says to her husband Clinton explaining her success with Indians, "it's something to do with being born in India in my previous life..."(12). While Clinton wonders what blocks his understanding of Indians Helen tells him, "It's nothing to do with age. I just think of them as human beings, that's all"(12) and adds more, "you've got to get beyond their skins, darling. It's a bit of hurdle, but it is an essential one"(12).

To the British officers and technicians, India is "the vast sprawling enigma"(36) which they do not want to explore. Many of them feel that stepping outside their territory would just be "a hazard whose culmination would be a total, terrifying absorption of identity in an unknown ocean"(36). They find pleasure in their commune life and enjoy each other's company. They do not want to intrude upon others and be intruded upon by outsiders as well. Jackson illustrates this situation more compactly when he remarks, "we like keeping ourselves to ourselves"(36).

The Indian officers too have positive hatred for the British. The shadow of the imperial arrogance of the Colonial period in the Indian history still haunts them and they exhibit their animosity or resentment towards the
British whenever they find a suitable occasion. When Helen, astounded by the slavish attitude of the native tribals, asks Krishnan, "Why did Indians do it, had they no integrity of their own?" (71). Krishnan at once bitterly remarks: "The British had eaten it away during the centuries when they were the rulers and Indians the ruled: it would take a century to form again" (71). Mackendrick alone seems to be able to perceive the hatred of Indians towards the British in its proper historical perspective and traces "its sour origins in past and present, from the noxious emotional cauldron that Britain the ruler and India the ruled had kept on the boil throughout the term of an imposed lordship, to the humiliation of being an underdeveloped and pauper nation" (43).

During the construction work, two fatal accidents take place. In the first accident Bailey and Wilkins die and work is suspended to give them a decent Christian burial. In the second accident, due to the premature blast of the dynamite forty men -- most of them tribals -- are killed. Two of the dead are caught in a boulder that has jammed them. When Mackendrick and others discuss the possibilities of the recovery of the corpses, Clinton ruthlessly suggests: "Rather than delay the work, the bodies could be incorporated into the structure" (163). This suggestion provokes the workers to racial conflict. The Indian workers
demand that the bodies should be recovered. Krishnan, the engineer who dominates the group and others threaten to strike work. They quote the precedents when the bodies of the two British workers were recovered and work remained suspended for two days. Krishnan reminds Rawlings and other British officers of the cold indifference in their treatment and tells them that it should be "a simple matter of equality, the same done to us as to you" (179).

As a dispassionate observer in the novel, Helen highlights the evils of technological advancement and modern sophistication without giving equal importance to values. She perceives that machines make people heartless and inhuman. She withdraws from her husband gradually because he looks at himself as a builder. Since he lacks human values and sensibility she falls in love with Bashiam who is humane by nature.

Markandaya seems to suggest that industrial and technological progress are beneficial but human values and sensibilities are more important. Mere scientific and mechanical progress cannot be the end of human existence. She shows very clearly in this novel how the age of technology turns people into soulless machines and kills the human feelings in them. The values of human relationship cannot be sacrificed to iron and steel. In this context it
will not be out of place to quote the meaningful words of Madhavi Menon and A.V.Krishna Rao:

The tale of individuals caught in moments of crisis enlarges into the tale of an encounter between the deepest roots of Indian sensibility and the Western dominance in the field of technology. It is not merely Clinton versus the Indians or Clinton versus Helen who has identified herself with what William Walsh calls, "the more inclusive, the more ancient and ritualistic Indian sensibility." It is the idea of the East versus the West. ("The Coffer Dams: A Critical Study" 184)

In The Nowhere Man, Kamala Markandaya deals with the theme of East-West encounter from a new perspective by portraying the miserable plight of the Indian immigrants in England from pre to post-Independence. In the words of B.Krupakar: "Kamala Markandaya's novel The Nowhere Man... is a compassionate and distressing tale of an aged Indian immigrant who becomes a martyr to racial hatred" (24). The Indo-British interaction is depicted mainly through the experiences of Srinivas, an Indian immigrant in Britain.

Unlike Dev and Adit, the protagonists in Anita Desai's Bye-Bye Blackbird, who are young and have a definite option
whether to go to India or to remain in England itself. Srinivas, being an old man, has no such option except to stay in England. He has spent nearly half a century of his life there and has started looking upon it as his own country. Assuming England as his own country, he takes exceptional caution not to hurt or offend his hosts in any way. He tells Mrs. Pickering with pleasure, "This is my country now... My country! I feel at home in it, more so than I would in my own" (The Nowhere Man 58). He reveals similar feelings to his friend, Abdul Bin Ahmed telling him that England is his country, "This is where I live, in England" (75). He does not agree with him that Britain would one day like to turn him out at any time.

The East-West encounter as treated in this novel arises mainly from the economic pressure faced by Britain in the wake of the disintegration of the British empire. The post-war England with all its immigration problems is not safe for people like Srinivas. With the loss of the colonies the British have started treating the immigrants in London as mere intruders. Unemployment and housing have become the most acute problems. The British tend to view the outsiders with great suspicion and are very much afraid of the economic competition as they fear that sooner or later they will transgress their rights. According to them, the immigrants without money are parasites and the ones with
money are animals and at no level is it possible to treat them as human beings. Very often the interests of the British and those of the immigrants clash with regard job, or housing or cultural activities.

The young men of England like Fred Fletcher, Mike, Jo and Bill who undergo the tremendous strain of being unemployed look upon the immigrants as the cause of their miserable plight and turn hostile towards them. They hold them responsible for "they came in hordes, occupied all the houses, filled up the hospital beds and their offspring took all the places in schools" (163). Fred, behaving like a racist demon, challenges a coal-black man who is sweeping the street: "Here you. You got no right to be in this country. You bugger off, see" (164). Similarly when he meets Srinivas he tells him without any reservation, "You got no right to be living in this country" (164). When Srinivas tells him that he is British" by adoption" (165), Fred tries to assault him. Fred begins to feel that "he hated that colour, and the man, and the untold evil he and his kind were letting loose in his country, his beloved England which he felt he had never loved so much before, not even when he left its shore for Australia" (165). Ascribing the miseries and the predicament of the unemployed English youth to people like Srinivas, Fred becomes a professed defender of the cause of the British youth crusading systematically against th
foreigners. "He shone, Fred felt: was born to lead, he knew with utter conviction. So he would. He would lead his countrymen in the fight to overthrow the evil, hidden forces that were threatening them in their homeland" (279). As the intensive agitation against the blacks mounts, posters begin to appear in different parts of London carrying "man-sized messages of hate, BLACKS GO HOME," and opening new hells of "fear and desolation in those at whom they were aimed" (168). Srinivas is able to understand the veracity of Abdul's words when he is tormented by Fred and his friends. He, no doubt, looks upon himself as an unwanted man and pathetically tells Mrs. Pickering "It is time... when one is made to feel unwanted, and liable, as a leper, to be ostracized further, perhaps beyond the limit one can reasonably except of oneself" (193). The West, in fact, has made him a nowhere man. He sadly realizes that he has nowhere to go to if at all he leaves England.

Nowhere, he said to himself, and he scanned the pale anxious eyes which were regarding him for reasons that might drive him out, a nowhere man looking for a nowhere city. (166)

Srinivas thinks over his situation as "an alien, whose manners, accents, voice, syntax, bones, build, way of life -- all of him -- shrieked alien!" (166). Brooding over the uncongenial climate prevailing in England, he voices his miserable condition to Mrs. Pickering: "The people will not
allow it. It was my mistake to imagine... I am to be driven outside, which is the way they want it. An outsider in England. In actual fact I am, of course, an Indian"(231-32).

It is quite evident that Srinivas and Vasantha have different attitudes towards England. While the former entertains a kind of cosmopolitan outlook in life, the latter remains wholly an Indian till her death. In spite of his broadminded attitude towards his adopted country it seems to be doubtful whether he has cut himself off completely from his country. He is able to realize the significance of his motherland and its traditional roots when he becomes old. He tells Mrs.Pickering: "One does not realize when one leaves one's country, how much is chopped off and left behind too"(67). When Mrs.Pickering tells him with a note of consolation, "There can be compensations. If one is cut off from one's culture there is always the adopted one to draw upon," he replies. "But you see, we -- that is to say, my wife and I -- I do not think we did"(68). Srinivas, in the midst of agitations arising from racial prejudice and discrimination, tries to accept his position as an outsider in Britain.

The reaction of Srinivas's son, Laxman, to the problem of racialism is quite different from that of his father. He, who has never known India, has his education in the
Christian schools. His participation in the War and marriage with an English woman make it clear that he has totally identified himself with the English society. And that is why the racial discrimination against the blacks shocks him profoundly. When an English woman tells him in a spirit of racial antagonism, "Go back where you belong," (261) the enraged Laxman retaliates, "I belong right here" (262). When accused by her husband of total ungratefulness to England for its aid to India, he retorts "Loans totalling one quarter of one per cent of the gross national product. Lent at rates of which a backstreet money-lender would be ashamed. It is, in any case,...less than a hundredth of what has been lifted or looted" (262). As a reply to the rude remark of his adversary, "You're going to cause an explosion, you and your sort," (262) he says with contemptuous spirit, "you mean you are. You'll be blown up with it, what's more, you and your sort" (262).

The delineation of the relationship between Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering after the death of Srinivas's wife, Vasantha, transforms the entire novel into "a perceptive work of art" (K. Madhavi Menon "The Vision in Kamala Markandaya's The Nowhere Man" 29). Their relationship is undoubtedly built on an unswerving commitment to human values based on true freedom. True freedom is essentially commitment without either force or compulsion. The novel holds out the
possibility of intercultural meeting through this relationship founded on profound human sympathy, care and compassion to the exclusion of racial and cultural barriers. Mrs. Pickering tries to alleviate Srinivas's sufferings. She is extremely kind, understanding and helpful. A divorcee of middle age, not physically attractive, enters his house and gradually influences him. Though Srinivas meets her by chance, the meeting develops into a warm relationship. She cooks, cleans, mends his clothes, sometimes even spends her own money and helps him with good counsel. Srinivas admires her and later she becomes a sort of common-law wife to him.

Through the cordial relationship between them, Srinivas realizes his responsibilities to Mrs. Pickering and also to the country he has adopted as his own. He begins to feel that he has a duty and an obligation to the society which has given him refuge. Therefore, he has to remain passive and calm though he suffers a lot in the hands of fanatics like Fred and his people. His spirit does not give up its strength completely even though he seems to be undergoing a lot of racial conflict.

One can find a similarity between this novel and *The Plague* (1948) of Albert Camus. In the novel of Camus, there is exile which is due to the plague but the emotions which accompany it are similar to those that Srinivas experiences
in the lonesomeness of exile from his people. Camus in his novel sees love as the only solution to the problem of aloofness and exile. Rambert in the novel says: "And that's my point, we -- mankind have lost that capacity for love.... Let's wait to acquire that capacity ...." (65). This very well applies to the problems arising from cultural conflicts.

After establishing a wholesome relationship with Mrs. Pickering, Srinivas grows to a better awareness. It helps to revive Srinivas. The exercise of this true love automatically implies freedom. It is interesting to note the contrast between Srinivas's reactions and those of Cross Damon, the outsider, in Richard Wright's *The Outsider*. Unlike Srinivas, Damon reacts against racial intolerance aggressively and violently. For him, rebellion seems to be the only way in his pursuit of freedom. He commits crime because he desires to escape from responsibility. Like *The Nowhere Man*, *The Outsider* shows that there is no escape either from the world or from responsibility.

*The Nowhere Man* shows that in spite of the presence of fanatical racialists and their sympathizers, England is not without its men of good sense and humanity. On the one side, there are self-styled racial champions like Fred who bursts out, "He's a devil. They're all devils," or like Mike who
bellows, "Bloody swine. Deport the whole bloody lot" (The Nowhere Man 205), or like Mrs. Glass who observes, "It's these people, these immigrants. They keep coming here, who asked them? One day they're poor, living off the rates, the next day they could buy us all up" (197). On the other side, there are people who are able to understand the process of history. They are Dr. Radcliffe, Mrs. Pickering, Mr. Glass, Mrs. Fletcher and the constable Kent. Mrs. Fletcher feels extremely sorry for the misconduct of her son and apologizes to Srinivas on behalf of her son. These people, no doubt, stand for the highest British traditions.

Kamala Markandaya's The Golden Honeycomb is an epoch-making historical novel which deals with the Indo-British encounter, covering a long span from the later half of the 19th century to the attainment of Independence in 1947. It is a story of intrigues and political manoeuvres of the British against the backdrop of a decadent princely order in British India. The scene of action in the novel is the princely State of Devapur.

With a unique artistic vision of contemporary history Markandaya leaves Independent India and goes back in time and looks at the British-ruled India with perceptive eyes and from a historical perspective. The novel unfolds the workings of the British mind in its political relationship
with India. It skilfully attempts to lay bare the techniques the British government successfully used in keeping the Indian princes as puppets in their hands, exploiting them fully by a complex web of schemes and counter schemes. The novel seems to be more a fictionalized history than a work of fiction. Divided into three parts, the novel excellently presents the woeful tribulations of our country under an alien British government through a series of moving events. Talking about the greatness of the novel, A.N. Dwivedi says:

It is undoubtedly Kamala Markandaya's memorable fait accompli in which she turns her all-absorbing mind to the momentous historical events shaping and affecting India's fate during the British regime. This historical novel, precisely speaking, follows a certain chronology in recording the dates, and years of these events, and reflects, the spirit of the age faithfully.

(208)

An analysis of the novel shows vividly that the novelist projects a picture of England primarily from two points of view -- her political activities in India and her unscrupulous economic exploitation of that country. In this regard, it should be remembered that the Prologue, Epilogue,
Note and Acknowledgements found in the text are not mere unnecessary appendages but important devices to convey "the purpose of this work and the author's choice of a particular time, the tense drama enacted on the national stage and its eventual outcome in the form of Independence..." (Dwivedi 208).

The Prologue in the novel stresses the fact that India is treated as an important dominion in British possession. After the Declaration of Independence by the United States of America in 1776 the British began to pay more attention to other colonies and try to keep them intact under their control by hook or crook. This is quite evident in the speech of Lord Randolph Churchill to the members of Parliament. For him and others of his generation, the British Empire was endowed with a divine mission -- to rescue the world from darkness and barbarism.

The British Empire held its sway over the Indian princes and States through its political Agents, Residents, Commanders, I.C.S. Officers, Governor-Generals and later Viceroy. In order to maintain law and order it kept garrisoned forces in each State which can easily be used for purposes of intimidation and deposition. The princes were asked to rule the States according to the
dictates of the British Raj. Even in the selection and succession of princes to the throne, the British played a vital role.

This is quite evident in the novel when Bawajiraj I, the ruler of Devapur State, is deposed for his alleged seditious activities. The British political Agent along with the Dewan, who serves as Chief Minister, selects a young man of eighteen to succeed to the throne of Devapur State as Bawajiraj II. Belonging to the Kshatriya caste and married to a thirteen-year-old girl, he is in reality a commoner -- a landowner's son. With the sole purpose of executing the British design he has been raised to the highest position of the State. But unfortunately Bawajiraj II dies in an accident during his hunting expedition leaving behind his young wife and a son. The young son ascends the throne as Bawajiraj III under the direct supervision of the British Resident, Sir Arthur Copeland and the Dowager Maharani.

Bawajiraj III, like his father, receives European education through an English tutor. After attending the Chief's college, he graduates to the Military Academy where he receives special coaching in civil administration under a veteran I.C.S. officer. This rigorous training, the novelist says, is calculated to make an English gentleman of the scion of Indian rulers and the result is that they totally
conform to the pattern of rulers that Britain wants them to be. Bawajiraj III, trained under this system, becomes a suitable medium to carry on the interests of the British Raj even at the cost of his own people and their resources. Serving as an intermediary between the rulers and the ruled Bawajiraj III admires the British and is absolutely loyal to the system and the establishment.

But new and fresh forces are at work at many levels. Manjula, the Dowager Maharani, still feels oneness with the people of the State from whom her son has been removed and alienated systematically by his pro-British education. Another powerful force is Mohini who is the concubine of the Maharaja. The love between Bawajiraj III and Mohini is strong and mutual.

As a mistress she has greater freedom to criticise and influence the king more strongly than anybody else in the State. The influence is all the more powerful since she gives birth to a son namely Rabindranath. While the king continues to follow the old tradition of being a vassal in the hand of the Britishers, his son is not prepared to follow in the footsteps of his father. This marks a definite change in the course of events in the novel.

Rabi is trained not by an Englishman but by an Indian
Pandit. He does not attend the Chief's college and refuses to go to the Military Academy. Indeed, he learns tales of former glories and heroic deeds of his warlike race through his tutor-cum-mother and grandmother. He gains a lot of experience by travelling with them to see the country-side and the different parts of the State. Unlike his father, Rabi easily mingles with the commoners and their children even in public places. When he attends the Great Delhi Durbar along with his father and other members of his family he realizes how the Indian princes are treated as mere puppets in the hands of the Britishers. His heart turns sick when he sees how his father and his fellow princes express their unquestionable loyalty to the Viceroy in the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught and how they have to retreat from their presence backing out like servants.

Apart from the unwarranted political domination of the British over India the novel shows how Britain has exploited India economically also. The maintenance of the Army, of the British officials, and the Political Agent or the Resident are all met by the Indian Princes. In the words of the narrator: "The costs of the Residency have been and are borne by Devapur State. A system of high finance -- such as would need a battery of revenue officials to unravel and explain -- obscures the fact that the entire expenses of the Residency continue to be billed to the State Exchequer" (The
Golden Honeycomb 66). Gifts were offered to the British by the Princes generously and the costs of the gifts were often in line with the dignity and the decorum of both the parties involved, while the reciprocal gifts from the British were of a high symbolic order and not a matter of money or wealth. No special days were fixed for giving gifts to the English, though there were certain special occasions such as Durbars, Emperor's and Empress's birth days which demanded more expensive gifts to be given to the British.

The major part of the novel deals with the early life of Rabi, the illegitimate son of the king, but nevertheless heir to the throne. The main events of his life are seen through the prism of his growing awareness of his motherland, India, and of the problems of general human nature. After his first traumatic experience at the Grand Delhi Durbar, another more important experience takes place in Rabi's life in Bombay where the royal family proceeds to receive the delivery of three Rolls-Royces which were ordered earlier. The programme of the royal family is disrupted by an agitation of mill workers there. Since the royal family has no experience of tackling such a situation, both the Maharajah and Rabi get injured badly in two separate incidents. While the Maharajah convalesces at the Imperial Hotel, Rabi is looked after by Jaya, a mill-worker, in her hut where he gets his first experience with a woman.
No doubt, strikes and agitations become a part of the national awakening in India and they even invade the State of Devapur. The Indians decline to cooperate with the British government which levies new and heavy taxes on them frequently and makes their life more miserable. People in Devapur too rise against King Bawajiraj who does not take steps to resist these taxes and unnecessary torments. The Resident is not spared from the attack of the masses, for he is the representative-head of the British Empire. Evidently Rabi takes a leading role in the mass-struggle for India's freedom. He is always on the side of the masses. In his crusade against the British Raj, he gets full support from Usha, the youngest daughter of the Dewan. Since the masses become restless and their spirit to get freedom for their motherland cannot be suppressed, the Maharajah, the Resident and the Dewan realize the necessity for changing the attitude of the establishment to genuine demands and the birthright of the populace. Mohini, Rabindranath and Usha emerge successfully as symbols of independence. The Epilogue brings the book to a safe conclusion with the assimilation of the States into the Republic of India in 1947.

Thus, the novel is remarkable for the subtle and careful depiction of the relations between the English and the Indians. It, no doubt, shows the novelist's "extraordinary sense of conscious realism and historicity" (A.V. Krishna Rao
"The Golden Honeycomb: A Brief Study" 79). Commenting on the novel, A.V.Krishna Rao further says:

Markandaya's novel... creates a sense of history in the reader's mind by depicting the events that rocked the State of Devapur for three generations. She achieves a sense of historical continuity -- a quality of tradition -- while recording the vicissitudes of fortune that befell Devapur, a representative princely State. (79)

Kamala Markandaya's latest novel, Pleasure City (1982) is certainly a continuation of the treatment of Indo-British relationships in The Golden Honeycomb. While her earlier novels portray the confrontation between India and Britain due to socio-political and cultural problems, her latest novel, Pleasure City, is marked by a note of reconciliation which reaches a triumphant pitch in it. The building of a luxury holiday resort "Shalimar" near a remote fishing village on the coast of one of India's Southern States is highly "symbolic of the technological co-operation transcending the narrow cultural barriers" (Ramesh Chadha, "Cross-Cultural Interaction in Markandaya's Pleasure City" 58).

The construction work is undertaken by the AIDCORI (Atlas International Development Corporation) which is
reminiscent of the Clinton-Mackendrick company of The Coffer Dams. The AIDCORP consists of Britishers as well as Indians. While Copeland Tully, the Director and Herbert Boyle, the Chairman are both British, Mr. Heblekar is an Indian and the contractor is a Parsi. The project is thus a multi-national corporation.

What is remarkable about Pleasure City is the absence of the usual confrontation between East (India) and West (Britain) conspicuously found in Markandaya's other novels. The occasional clashes between the Indians and the Britishers do not certainly end up with big scenes. There is actually none of the bitterness here that typifies her treatment of this theme in Nectar in a Sieve, Some Inner Fury, The Coffer Dams, Possession, The Nowhere Man and The Golden Honeycomb.

The Englishmen in the novel generally exhibit a remarkable understanding and sensitivity to the spirit of India and its traditional values while the Indians instead of blaming the West seem to be ready to welcome the change brought by the west. For instance, the people in Nectar in a Sieve consider the tannery an unwanted intrusion but the people in Pleasure City are ready to accept the wholesome impact of modern technology. In this novel, there are no desperate cries and protest against the introduction of
modernity. Despite the village headman's lamentation of the loss of traditional values, his wife is able to appreciate the bright lights of the holiday resort. Rikki's unwillingness to go back to his fishing job reveals his strong tendency of accepting the change.

The true subject of the novel is the unblemished friendship of Tully, the grandson of Sir Arthur Copeland Tully, the well-mannered and benevolent British Resident in The Golden Honeycomb, with Rikki, a sixteen-year-old fisherboy. Rikki becomes an orphan at the age of five and is adopted by a family of fishermen. He, after his adoption, learns the ways and the customs of his community from his foster-parents and is initiated into the English life and language by the Bridles, a British couple, who run a school in the village. He is, no doubt, loved by both the families -- the Indian and the British.

When Rikki works as a tea-boy at Shalimar, he is able to attract the attention of Mr. Tully by his physical charm and fluent English. He is even offered the job of making a boat for Mr. Tully. Rikki is certainly proud of calling himself Tully's assistant.

Tully is a broad-minded, courteous and thoughtful gentleman. Notwithstanding their racial differences, Tully
and Rikki enjoy each other's admiration and fondness because of certain essential human characteristics. The friendship between Tully and Rikki blossoms during the reconstruction of Avalon, Tully's grandfather's home on a height above the beach, where they meet frequently. When assigned the work of making a boat for Tully, Rikki is extremely happy and he tries to make the boat for Tully not for money or any valuable gift but for innate love for him. Doubtlessly, "Tully, after waiting, paid fairly lavishly, by local standards. But Rikki scarcely thought about it. He would have worked for Tully for nothing" (Pleasure City 64).

Rikki's loving attachment to Tully is deep and genuine from the very beginning. When Tully goes for a swim in the rocky area of the sea, Rikki at once warns him. Tully, the Director, is quite surprised at the fisher boy's intuitive resourcefulness despite his lack of formal and methodical scientific training and admires the unflawed innocence in Rikki. Commenting on the friendly relationship between Tully and Rikki, Ramesh Chadha observes:

Rikki, the child of nature or the aboriginal world, knows the secrets of nature, its unpredictability, its turbulence, its savagery and also knows how to tame it and bring succour to the people unfamiliar with the unpredictable elements of nature. Tully, the
Rikki's genuine and selfless love for Tully counterbalances the emotional vacuum created by his wife in his married life. The marriage of Tully proves to be a failure due to lack of mutual understanding and appreciation on the part of Corinna. In the process of constructing a magnificent mosaic around the pool at Avalon, Rikki collects the coloured stones from different places. He does this work with unmitigated love and sincere devotion, unmindful of the bruises he receives while collecting the stones. In spite of the social and cultural "ocean between them," Rikki at times feels that they are "within touching distance" (Pleasure City 147) on the emotional level.

Tully has developed a strong attachment to India and its people. No doubt, to Rikki's question: "When will you go home?" Tully answers at once without any hesitation, "I feel at home here. After all, I was born here the loom gets in, a few grains at least -- at least I like to think" (179) though it is obvious that Tully won't be staying in India permanently.

Tully feels much obliged to Rikki when the latter saves
Corinna's life by risking his own. He even extends the period of his stay in India till Rikki recovers. The unadulterated and selfless love and affection between the two is stated in clear-cut terms through the omniscient authorial intrusion: "They shared a language that went beyond English, and was outside the scope of mere words" (340).

Tully presents Rikki the boat, as a parting gift after knowing the latter's fondness for it. The parting occasion is movingly described by the author:

Grief smears on cheeks too young, really, to take them. He too was having difficulty, as he let in the clutch. He would not have thought it possible to feel such pain. Bunched, like a fist, in his throat. (340)

Rikki's relationship is not the same with Corinna as it is with Tully. He tends to feel ill at ease when he moves with Tully in the presence of Corinna. He understands that Corinna does not like the friendship between him and her husband. Yet he openly admires her excellent surfing performance in the sea. He learns surfing from Corinna and when Tully sees them surfing he is "mesmerised by the two, youth and the young woman, who are playing the ocean literally" (131). Before leaving, Corinna generously presents her surfing plank to Rikki.
After winning the prize in the surfing competition Corinna again wants to go for surfing. Heedless of Rikki's warning that the sea is quite rough, she goes to the sea for surfing. Soon she is swept away by the inner currents of the water and cries for help. Rikki's "first impulse was to let her drown. He could not. The screams were too raw. His own strong impulse, he recognises, is corrupt. So, he goes after her..." (306). While trying to save Corinna, he himself gets hurt. As a way of reciprocating this act of kindness and bravery, the British couple treat Rikki warmly. Rikki finds that he cannot continue to hate her, now that she is leaving. Corinna's hostility towards Rikki is completely subdued and on her way to the airport she speaks about the boy endearingly: "Thank heaven he's mending. I'd never have forgiven myself if -- keep me posted" (319).

In a very important episode in the novel, the English and Westernized Indians of Shalimar go on a picnic to the caves where, amid sensual and amorous sculptures, an abandoned child is discovered. Happily linking the East with the West, Mrs. Pearl, who is the embodiment of goodness, adopts the girl-child and decides to stay forever in India. Undoubtedly, the novelist intends this central episode of the novel an ironic commentary on E.M. Forster's Marabar Caves. The caves in Markandaya's novel are neither empty nor annihilating, but on the contrary, are filled with artistic
The sculptures "celebrating human sexuality and offer a gift of child, redeeming both the gift and the receiver" (Rubin 170).

The major difference between the sensibilities of the two writers -- E.M. Forster and Kamala Markandaya -- could be attributed not only to their racial differences but also to the period in which they have created their works of art. Forster with all his liberal and humanistic traits could foresee the impossibility of the friendly and enduring relations between the two cultures and nations unless both of them were placed on an equal footing. Kamala Markandaya, on the contrary, suggests that "genuine friendship between the people of two races is now possible as India has achieved its freedom and the two nations are brought on an equal footing" (Chadha 63).

Obviously, one can perceive in the novel the outright rejection and refutation of Rudyard Kipling's claim that the East and the West shall never meet. Markandaya suggests beyond doubt that the meeting of the twain is always possible, at least, on the personal plane as it is evident in the Rukmani - Kenny relationship in Nectar in a Sieve, the Mira - Richard relationship in Some Inner Fury, the Val - Ellie in Possession, Helen - Bashiam in The Coffer Dams, Srinivas - Mrs. Pickering and Srinivas and Dr. Radcliffe in The Nowhere Man and Rikki - Tully in Pleasure City.
despite the social, economic, political and cultural dichotomy between the two races.

While in The Coffer Dams Kamala Markandaya portrays the bitter tensions experienced by the British as well as Indians engaged in a different kind of construction project, in Pleasure City, she depicts a happier cooperation in which sensibilities and attitudes are freely exchanged and fused together. Once united and integrated neither of the cultures can ever remain the same. It is certainly beyond doubt that Tully cannot be content with the old life he shared with his wife and Rikki cannot go back to be a fisherman but must continue at Shalimar. Commenting on the novelist's ability to portray the successful fusion of the East and the West in Pleasure City, David Rubin observes:

The slender material of Shalimar [Pleasure City] provides the element for an extraordinary rich structure, full of refractions and resonances not so much Forsterian as Shakespeare. This is, after the manner of Shakespeare's late romances, a poem of reconciliation and the triumph of loving relationship. (170)

It is quite apparent from the detailed analysis of Kamala Markandaya's novels that the novelist has depicted
the theme of the East-West confrontation very comprehensively. Her presentation of the East-West conflict arising out of socio-political and cultural situations is certainly marked by exceptional perception, keenness and understanding. The confrontation between the two has been objectively viewed on individual, group, political, cultural and artistic levels. As a neutral observer, the novelist examines the strengths and weaknesses of both the cultures. While acclamining the traditional, philosophical, religious and ethical values of India, she is not uncritical of its economic backwardness, fatalism and passive endurance. Despite her strong contempt for the heartless and soulless nature of the West, she is ready to acknowledge its scientific and technological advancement, its rational and liberal outlook. She wants both the East and West "to be complementary to each other so that the mechanized West may benefit from the ethical values of India and the spiritual India from the modernization of the West" (Raizada 69). She emphatically says that India should be able to preserve her own soul and carve out her destiny on the basis of her spiritual and ethical values. Kamala Markandaya seems to advocate a compromise between the diverse values of the East and the West in her novels.