CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMATION

The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life... as the picture is reality, so the novel is history.... But history also is allowed to represent life; it is not, any more than painting, expected to apologize. The subject matter of fiction is stored up likewise in documents and records, and if it will not give itself away, it must speak with assurance, with the tone of the historian. (Henry James, "The Art of Fiction" 325)

Fiction transfigures the facts of life. It shows a full cognizance of the changing facets of life and reality. Novelists, like poets and playwrights, have fully taken "human history" for their domain. They seem to believe that the novel should attempt "to portray all varieties of human experience, and not merely those suited to one particular literary perspective..." (Ian Watt 11).

Few things in the present world are left untouched by historical forces. Quite obviously, no sensible literary writer can afford to disregard them. While presenting a graphic picture of society with its multi-dimensional
aspects a novelist becomes a historian. Though the essential objective of a novelist is to record historical truths, he is certainly in favour of presenting a mere transcript of reality. But the professional historians tend to disagree with the novelists who attempt to portray human history by depicting the lives of imaginary characters, putting historical events in the background. They allege that the historical novelists, depicting tales of action and conflict, intrigue and treachery, exploit and misuse history and its significant occurrences for the sake of popular appeal. To them "history is at best costume romance, a background for a potpouri of adventure, sex and patriotic legend" (Thorpe 179). Such novels, according to them, do not "make history in the best sense, though they help immeasurably to form popular views of it" (179). Salman Rushdie who deals in his novels with the theme of history and its interplay with the individual does not seem to be pleased with the historical novels which portray the holocaust of the partition in India. To him Khushwant Singh's A Train To Pakistan (1956), Balachandra Rajan's The Dark Dancer (1959), Manohar Malgonkar's Distant Drum (1960), Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961) and Collins and Lapierre's Freedom at Midnight are "anaemic and dull". (R.S.Pathak, "History and the Individual in the Novels of Rushdie." Three Contemporary Novelists 208).
An interpretation of history unmistakably presupposes an approach to time and temporal sequences. The artist who uses history in his or her novels, is obliged to prove his/her historical consciousness. Historical consciousness often leads not so much to factual accuracy as to a kind of perception. To delineate the history of the nation and the people the novelist makes use of plot, characterization, ideas and appropriate situations. In this way an artistic pattern is given in novels of history.

Kamala Markandaya with her sensitive perception of the history of contemporary society portrays the tensions and conflicts arising out of the confrontation between tradition and modernity in her novels. Her novels show how the Indian traditional rural society disintegrates due to the onset of industrialization and urbanization. The novelist seems to reiterate the point that the growing phenomenon of modernization often results in the decomposition of social and cultural domains and absolute mechanization of human existence. The well-established traditional roots of Indian society and especially the village communities crumble automatically due to industrialization and modernization. The novelist shows how ordinary and common people like Rukmani and Nathan in Nectar in a Sieve, the tribal chief and tribals in The Coffer Dams and the village headman in Pleasure City who have all along been attached to the
traditional social and cultural mores are caught unawares by the invasion of modernization and its vicious aftermath.

While portraying the historically significant changes taking place at the social, economic and cultural levels of contemporary Indian society, Markandaya seldom fails to articulate her genuine concern for the loss of human values in the wake of modernization. Undoubtedly, thoughtless and irrational advent of urbanization causes irreparable damage to the traditional rural communities and brings about untold miseries in the life of the innocent people. Markandaya does not fail to indict the very process of modernization which is devoid of genuine concern for human values.

It is evident from her novels that Markandaya is certainly not in favour of outmoded rigidities and the conventional nature of the anachronistic village life. As a sensitive writer who is able to perceive the tangible forces of history and the complex intricacies of contemporary society, she is fully cognizant of the inevitable demands of urbanization and modernization. She firmly believes that change is quite mandatory and inescapable. As the whole world is undergoing tremendous changes in different fields in response to various demands as a result of the advent of industrialization and urbanization, every society should prepare itself to accept a meaningful modern life.
Kamala Markandaya is of the opinion that India cannot lag behind while the world forges ahead in science and technology. She feels that social and cultural cohesion is very much needed now and India should be ready to obtain technology even from abroad as it is shown in *The Coffer Dams* and *Pleasure City* to enhance the pace of growth and multifarious development of society. She believes that modern science and technology shall be of great help to the globalisation process of various developmental factors. She points out that Indian rural society should be optimistic about the outcome of modernization and be ready to adapt itself to the new ways of life. She seems to suggest that while India must be proud of her glorious religious and spiritual traditions and ancient culture it should not be reluctant to acknowledge the positive aspects of modernization and urbanization. In her novels Markandaya advocates the happy co-existence of tradition and modernity.

Kamala Markandaya is fundamentally a writer with a sociological vision. She does not deal with the theme of psychological or philosophical alienation in her novels like Anita Desai and Arun Joshi. Her focus is essentially on sociological alienation of characters. Alienation is closely related to rootlessness and the loss of one's identity. In other words, it is the loss of identity that results in alienation. A pattern that is discernible in her novels is
that if one's roots are lost one loses one's identity and thus suffers from alienation. When one gets uprooted from one's society one dies spiritually.

The novelist depicts how characters like Rukmani and Nathan in *Nectar in a Sieve*, Ravi in *A Handful of Rice* and Lalitha in *Two Virgins* become alien to the new surroundings of city life after being uprooted from their village communities. In *Possession* and *The Nowhere Man*, the novelist shows how Valmiki and Srinivas respectively suffer from alienation and loss of identity when they migrate from their home country. People who migrate from their traditional rural societies to urban societies are soon frustrated after becoming aware of the ruthless nature of city life. Undoubtedly, their settling down in a strange surrounding is always accompanied by a sense of isolation and alienation.

Industrialization and urbanization force the traditional country people into towns and cities in search of jobs and prosperity. There they feel the anonymity of life which immerses them in a bleak experience of exclusion as an exile in an alien land. Homelessness happens to be an essential condition of their existence in an alien universe. No wonder, home is security. Exile which is basically the loss of home unfolds to the secure the meaning of what is lost. No doubt, exile is literally an uprooting and it often ruins
the mind and spirit which is deprived of the sustenance it has so far drawn from the native soil.

Nathan in Nectar in a Sieve dies both physically and spiritually when his roots are blistered. But Rukmani is able to keep her spirit alive because her roots in tradition are deep. That is the reason why she confidently comes back to her native soil and joins her son and daughter after a bitter sojourn in the city. She returns to her village with a crippled boy namely Puli. She has adopted this boy and she has assured him that his leprosy would be cured in her village. Markandaya seems to suggest that Puli, a rootless character leading a wounded life in the city, can be cured in the sustaining soil of the village.

In Possession, Valmiki returns to his roots in India from England to regain his self and identity. When he is in England his artistic genius gets dried up and he cannot paint his pictures as he has been wont to do before his departure. His life in London is an alienated one and as a result he suffers in his life of an exile. But once he gets back to his traditional and spiritual roots, the block on his creativity is lifted.

Unlike Rukmani and Valmiki, Ravi, Lalitha and Srinivas end up finally as victims of rootlessness and identity
crisis. Ravi's misfortune lies in his utter failure to strike root and affirm his identity in the city. His failure to sustain his spirit is due to lack of will power to come back to his traditional roots. Lalitha, like Ravi, is lost in the anonymity of city life. Her willing renunciation of traditional, social and spiritual roots lands her in tragedy. Unlike Rukmani and Val, she does not return to her roots so as to regain her original identity. She is completely ruined because of her irresolute attitude towards life. Srinivas dies in England as a nowhere man. As an exile who has lost his identity in alien and hostile surroundings, Srinivas has to lead a tortured and restless life in England. He, like Ravi and Lalitha, is a victim of rootlessness and alienation because he fails to come back to his roots.

Another important fictional preoccupation of Kamal Markandaya is the exploration of the confrontations arising out of the interaction between the East (India) and the West (Britain). She exhibits her remarkable sense of historicity by portraying the conflicting relationship between people who belong to two different races. Her perfect understanding and the knowledge of the two different ways of life of the East and the West enable the novelist to look at their divergent social, political and cultural values from different perspectives. Her treatment of this theme of East-West encounter in novel after novel in great seriousness.
reveals her genuine concern for the contemporary global civilization. As an artist with historical consciousness Markandaya perceives that cultural arrogance, colonial repression, political conflict and racial animosity sow the seeds of confrontation between the East and the West. That she hates colonialism and imperialism is clearly revealed in her novels like Possession, The Coffer Dams and The Golden Honeycomb.

Markandaya's delineation of the contrasting values of the East and the West is quite authentic and well-balanced because her own personality is an amalgamation of divergent values of two different civilizations. In her dispassionate examination of the interaction between India and Britain she lays bare the strengths and weaknesses of each country. While she exalts the rich cultural, spiritual and religious traditions of India, she does not fail to indict the economical retrogression, the blind attachment to superstitious beliefs, and the utter poverty and ignorance of the Indians. She at the same time, does not undervalue the positive contribution of the West especially in the fields of science and technology, its missionary fervour, and its broader outlook on life. She is very careful not to misrepresent any particular side and her views on the two different attitudes towards life are quite objective.
Unlike writers who believe that the gap between the East and the West cannot be bridged properly, Markandaya endeavours in her novels to stress the point that harmonious and long-lasting relationship can be established between the two through mutual respect, appreciation and understanding. She is of the firm view that a happy union between the two will not be always possible if one tries to dominate over the other. She believes that the need of the hour is global harmony and the possible avoidance of conflict at national and international levels. The confrontation between the East and the West figures prominently in the early part of her fictional corpus while in the later part the confrontation subsides and a note of reconciliation between the two different modes of life gains ascendancy.

The significant message that Markandaya conveys in her novels is that India must dauntlessly pursue her growth, sticking to her traditional and spiritual values, adopting measures suitable to her ancient culture. She makes it very clear that India should always try to preserve her soul and forge her own destiny. In the sphere of religion she should be extremely proud of her great heritage and her constant aim should be the attainment of purity of soul which is the origin and core of all her ancient religious and cultural fountainheads. In her novels especially Possession, Some Inner Fury and The Coffer Dams, she raises her voice against
"the existing cultural synthesis, a sort of compromise between the Eastern and the Western values, for only then the best that emerges will benefit all" (Madhusudan Prasad XVIII). She wants both the East and the West to be complementary to each other so that the progressive West may derive benefit from the spiritual and ethical values of the East and the East from the modern science and technology of the West.

Markandaya's novel The Nowhere Man proves to be a further testimony of the novelist's widening awareness of contemporary developments in race relations at the international level. In this novel, she attempts to convey the idea that racism and global violence will be fatal to the entire mankind. She decries racial violence and animosity and convincingly emphasizes the need for racial harmony and universal brotherhood. She firmly believes that racial bigotry is a serious menace to human existence.

Markandaya's matured vision of life and reality seem to have reached the peak in her latest novel, Pleasure City. Unlike in the earlier novels where the confrontation between the East and the West is quite acute, Pleasure City carries a message of reconciliation between the two different modes of life. The people in this novel seem to be ready to accept the change brought about by modernization and the Westerners are willing to understand and accept the cultural and ethical significance of the East.
There seems to be certainly a compromise and reconciliation between the two different ways of life. Praising the fictional corpus of Markandaya, S.K. Aithal observes:

Though true to life in everyway, her novels are not simple documentaries; they imaginatively recreate life and manners so that her characters and situations not only stand by themselves in their own right, they illuminate the culture and way of life of a whole people. Markandaya has created a body of contact literature par excellence. (58)

Thus, from Nectar in a Sieve to Pleasure City the vision of Markandaya has shown a steady progression toward the emergence of what Hugh Duncan calls the "great literature" that is created by "the conscious exploration through the imagination on the possibilities of human action in society" (1). Her interest in India's past and its tremendous impact on the present remains complete, although the ratiocinative confrontation between East and West has now given way to mutual understanding.

A novel conveys what the novelist perceives and assimilates of the world around. In other words, a work of art and especially a novel depicts the writer's vision of
life as it faces him. Through his works, the writer unfolds the essential truth of life as he sees it. In order to do so objectively he needs to choose different types of artistic yardsticks and stylistic methods. The main purpose of adopting specific stylistic devices is to strike a chord of understanding with his readers and make the reading of his work a complete and satisfying experience for them.

Kamala Markandaya is unquestionably a careful artist who uses different artistic techniques to deal with her themes and present her ideas quite effectively. Her novels of the contemporary life of India are unique for their distinctive modes of expression and narration. Her exceptional skill as a fiction writer is memorably reflected in the masterly handling of story and plot, in the incisively relevant social commentary on events and characters and the remarkable arrangement of the material on hand. Her novels have well-formed plots showing how decidedly she regards structural pattern in the novel as an art form. The subtle difference between story and plot as defined by E.M. Forster, should be kept in mind when one considers the technical art of Markandaya:

We have defined a story as narrative of events arranged in their time sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. 'The king died and then
the queen died,' is a story. 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief,' is a plot.

(45) Markandaya who is a conscious and meticulous artist is certainly aware of this distinction between narration and plot-construction and pays adequate attention to both in her novels.

A chronological study of Markandaya's novels reveals the fact that she has used flashback and flashforward techniques in them. That is the reason why most of her novels follow the "circular" pattern and the reminiscent mood. But this technique is conspicuously absent from The Golden Honeycomb as it requires a linear development of action. The linear technique is suitable to a historical narrative.

In her art of plot-construction Markandaya follows a neat and straightforward pattern. In Nectar in a Sieve she uses a neat structural pattern. The beginning and the end of the novel are intimately linked, thus producing a circular structure. Like Nectar in a Sieve, Some Inner Fury also has a circular structure. The interaction and the confrontation between the East and the West is structurally well-dramatized through political turbulence and cultural disparity. The structure of A Silence of Desire is different.
from that of Nectar in a Sieve and Some Inner Fury. In A Silence of Desire the novelist uses an element of suspense, though the way in which the suspense is resolved fails to satisfy the reader. Again, the plot of Possession is also circular but its structure is not well-balanced. But unlike Possession, A Handful of Rice has a sound and solid plot. The events in the novel contribute unitedly to its overall structure. The plots of The Coffer Dams, Two Virgins and Pleasure City are comparatively weaker. The Golden Honeycomb is structurally designed in a historical framework. There is a sort of "classical quality" about her art and techniques:

Each novel is organised as a classical play. A microcosmic equilibrium is upset giving rise to conflicts; the focus is always on the main character, the plot is unfolded step by step, there is a rapid denouement after the climax. Some classical 'machinery' is also used. They are symbolic fore-warnings in each story. (Uma Parameswaran 91)

The phenomenal features about the plot in most of the novels of Markandaya are that the stories are inconclusive and at the end, point to the never-ending process of life. K.S.Narayana Rao writes about this quality of Markandaya's plots:

The stories do not end in the spirit of 'And
they lived happily ever after. It is as though they suggest the seeming endless life cycle... A narrative unit might be over but the life's narrative does not end. The novels conclude but they are not quite conclusive, obviously for an intended artistic effect. (107-108)

Though the novel derives its main sustenance from the story it intends to tell, its achievement and success always depend on how it is narrated apart from what it conveys. The merit of the novel is adjudged not by what it conveys but how it is conveyed.

Kamala Markandaya employs different narrative techniques and shifting points of view in order to make her novels highly absorbing. From the beginning to the end, her novels capture the serious attention of the readers by her remarkable narrative art and its aesthetic quality.

Nectar in a Sieve, Some Inner Fury and Possession have first-person narratives written in an autobiographical mode and narrated by three female characters in a reminiscent mood. In Nectar in a Sieve Rukmani, the narrator-heroine, is seen reminiscing her own past life. Rukmani's recollection of her past life ends exactly where it begins and thus the narration has a circular pattern. The narrative
technique adopted in Some Inner Fury is used with greater artistic success in terms of verisimilitude. In A Silence of Desire Markandaya employs the method of third-person narration. The point of view in this novel is that of a male character, Dandekar, and not that of a woman.

The novelist resorts to third-person narratives in all her other novels. Third-person omniscient narrative method gives her full freedom to dive into the minds of her characters, explain their actions and also to present her views on men and matter. This method helps the artist to gain complete objectivity and a panoramic view of things in general. In The Nowhere Man the narrative technique employed by the novelist is essentially explorative. While using the technique of third-person omniscient view, the novelist takes recourse to the techniques of interior monologue and flashback. In The Golden Honeycomb the novelist makes use of the historical narrative which is carried forward with great detachment and impartiality. Though the narrative technique in Pleasure City is quite effective in the first half of the novel, it becomes fragmentary and episodic in the later part.

Kamala Markandaya's fictional genius is marked by her meticulous and judicious use of images and symbols in her novels. Imagery and symbolism are quite indispensable to any
work of art for its interpretative and aesthetic values. They appeal to the sense of the readers through words. Markandaya, according to Madhumita Ghosal and Mehru M. Major, seems to be very much influenced by the diction and the artistic achievements especially of William Shakespeare, S.T. Coleridge, H.M. Longfellow and Rabindranath Tagore (40) apart from other great writers. She has come out with a typical prose style of her own. As a versatile writer Markandaya uses images and symbols to convey her philosophy of life, a vision of reality and her ideas of the contemporary society. Underscoring the significance of images in a work of art, H. Coombe observes:

In a good writer's hand, the image, fresh and vivid, is at its fullest, used to intensify, to clarify, to enrich: a successful image helps to make us feel the writer's grasp of it with precision, vividness, force, economy, and to make such an impact on us, its content, the stuff of which it is made can't be unduly fantastic and remote from our experience, but must be such that it can be immediately felt by us as belonging in one way or another to the fabric of our lives. (qtd. in Ghosal 40)

J.A. Cuddon defines an image as "one that covers the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings,"
thoughts, ideas, states of mind and any sensory or extrasensory experience. An image does not necessarily mean a mental picture" (qtd. in Inamdar 221). While defining a symbol, M.H. Abrams says: a "symbol is applied only to a word or set of words that signifies an object or event which itself signifies something else; that is, the words refer to something which suggests a range of reference beyond itself" (168).

Markandaya uses images to describe a character, a situation or an idea. Such images are found in plenty in almost all her novels. She employs them with ease and spontaneity. Though they are not as complex and diverse as those of Faulkner, Hemingway, Hawthorne and Melville they deserve one's attention for their natural vivacity and suitability. Her images are taken from common environs and experiences. In Nectar in a Sieve the images are closely linked with nature and village life. Nathan is described "as brittle as a bamboo" (12). Rukmani is asked to "bend like the grass" (32). In A Silence of Desire the confrontation between faith and reason is brought out effectively in the images. Dandekar looks "like a crazy man" (83), and his house pale and chilly "like an unlit lamp" (107) and the thrust of guilt "like a knife in his side" (110). In Possession, the novelist uses images effectively to describe the conditions of Valmiki. Valmiki before his departure to England was "rooted
there like one of those sturdy thorn trees that seem able to ride the worst storm" (21) and later, he floated around the room like "an exotic sunflower" (109). In A Handful of Rice the mind of Ravi is described as swinging "wildly from dark to bright like a mad pendulum" (61). In order to bring out the theme of confrontation between tradition and modernity the novelist describes the excavators in The Coffer Dams as "the forward thrust of the army" (34). Mackendrick calls the river "the real bastard" and "a devil" (34). In The Nowhere Man the novelist deals with the theme of alienation and East-West encounter. Srinivas is described as "a nowhere man looking for a nowhere city" (166). He is compared to "a crawling caterpiller" (218).

Markandaya’s images like those of Shakespeare, Webster, Marlowe and Tennessee Williams are culled from different walks of life. The images which are frequently used in her novels are taken from animals, birds and insects. In Nectar in a Sieve Rukmani is compared to "a water buffalo" (19) When she is pregnant. Markandaya implies through this image the enduring capacity and the fertile nature of Rukmani. Kunthi is likened to "a vulture" (88) and her dependable husband to "an ox" (86). Just as the vulture is a bird of prey Kunthi also survives by sucking the blood of others and especially the husbands of other village women. Rukmani and Nathan watch the ripening paddy "as a dog watches a bone" (97). In
Some Inner Fury the saree of Roshan is compared to a "butterfly's wings" (79). In A Silence of Desire Dandekar is described as clever "as a monkey" (125). He thinks about the operation of Sarojini "like a squirrel in a cage" (175). In Possession Caroline watches things with a "cat's concentration" (124). Val lays his cheek against the hand of Lady Caroline Bell "the way a dog will sometimes thrust its muzzle into your palm" (12). In A Handful of Rice Ravi is bound and beaten "as if he were a mad dog" (8). His head swings "like a shoal of fish" (9) and the shock goes up his arm "as if the snake had come alive and bitten his hand" (17). In The Coffer Dams people stand in a queue "like passive cows at a backstreet Christian butchery" (69) and the river dwindles "like an animal placed in a cage" (31). In The Nowhere Man Srinivas is called "a dark horse" (62). The house of Srinivas is compared to "a pigsty" (52). In Two Virgins Saroja feels "as blithe as a bird" (166) and suspects that the males are prowling through the streets "like wolves on the look out for girls" (197). In The Golden Honeycomb Mohini is described as "a pig" (32). Janaki has the "freedom of a bird" (220). The Minister in the novel is compared to "a fox, jackal, jackass, gazelle and weasel" (342).

Markandaya's effective use of symbols enriches the meaning of her novels. A careful reader can perceive a common pattern of symbols in her novels. The evolved pattern
consists of house, tannery, jungle, city and colour. The house as a symbol is effectively used in *Nectar in a Sieve*, *Possession*, *A Handful of Rice*, *The Nowhere Man* and *The Golden Honeycomb*. In *Nectar in a Sieve* the house of Nathan symbolizes Rukmani's withered future with "... a garland of mango leaves... dry now and rattling in the breeze"(4). The dried garland of mango leaves symbolizes the fruitlessness of the farmer's labour. In *Possession* the house symbolizes the energetic vision of the characters in the novels. The three storied house occupied by Valmiki, Caroline and the cook symbolizes their individual psychological characteristics. Valmiki lives upstairs and his room is "the one above"(45). It symbolizes the realm of imagination. Caroline symbolically has her room on "the first floor"(45). It indicates her possessive urge. The cook lives in "the one below"(45). As the man catering to the need of Caroline and Val he naturally occupies the lowest room.

In *A Handful of Rice* Ravi's "roof-top shelter"(122) symbolizes his feeling of superiority over the other household members. It also indicates his ardent desire for acquisition of the worldly possessions above the other members of the house. His part of the room "in perpetual gloom"(122) symbolizes his miserable life.

In *The Nowhere Man* the house of Srinivas symbolizes his
pitiable condition after the death of his wife. Its "grimy curtain and peeling paint" (55) symbolizes the shattering of his life's prospects. Srinivas's serious endeavour to unite the East and the West is symbolized by the house when it is rented out to the whites, the browns and the blacks. But it comes to an unfortunate end when the house is set on fire by the hardcore racist, Fred Fletcher.

In *The Golden Honeycomb* the ashram of the Minister, Narasimha Rao, symbolizes his successful attempt to break away from the glamour of the world to attain nirvana. The description of the ashram itself is quite symbolic: "Stony and monastic character, crumbling, roots and vines encroaching and are splitting the stone work" (24).

The symbol of the tannery is effectively used in *Nectar in a Sieve* to bring out the vicious impact of modernity and urbanization on rural India. As Ramesh K. Srivastava rightly observes: "The tannery represents a world of immorality, greed and corruption invading another which is moral, happy and pure" ("Symbolism in Nectar in a Sieve" 115). The symbol of the tannery is closely connected with the symbol of the city. The city and Damodar in *A Handful of Rice* symbolize the savagery and the corrupt nature of modern and especially the urban civilization. The city is considered to be a jungle in this novel. The jungle symbol is allied to the
animal symbols in the novels of Markandaya. In Possession the animal symbol becomes a focus of relationships. The bondage of Ellie and Val parallels Val's bondage to Lady Caroline. The relationship between Valmiki and the monkey mirrors the symbolic possessive relationship between Val and Caroline. In The Nowhere Man Srinivas dislikes the parochial attitude of the white race and its inability to accept the wholeness of creation. He tends to think that its mind can understand only "... the shape of grids which it laid upon natural patterns... of animals to cherish and experimental animals... white man and other man..."(225-226). The experimental animal is paralleled by the image of the black man and it, in turn, reminds one of the mice under experiments:

... caged, mute, vocal cords cut to silence their distracting cries... They scurried about demented these small white bruised creatures pumped full of distorting chemicals, tearing nests to pieces, turning on each other too, their backs bore weals and scratches.(128-129)

The patriots in India during the British regime are symbolized as mice under experiments. Srinivas, Vasudev, Narayan and his family remain silent and passive onlookers of the British onslaught on them:

All of them in those moments, were reduced, carved into base attitudes and shrunk into
their clothes which no longer fitted but hung loosely on their abject frames, like shrouds. (132)

Markandaya's appropriate and careful use of symbols offers more meaning to her novels. In Some Inner Fury, two sets of rooms in the Indian and the Western styles in the house of Mira symbolically indicate that there is no compromise between the East and the West. The tulasi plant in A Silence of Desire is a symbol of the orthodox religious life led by Sarojini. In A Handful of Rice, the word 'Rice' is used frequently as a blatant symbol of poverty in urban life. In The Nowhere Man leprosy is used as a symbol in three perspectives. Firstly, it is used as a disease contracted by Srinivas which results in his being rejected by other fellow human beings. Secondly, it is treated as a symbol of rejection because of the colour of his skin. Thirdly, the disease is treated as a symbol of spiritual leprosy which disintegrates the human values of the nation. In Two Virgins the symbolism in the dove and the eagle is quite apparent. As a mark of giving a grand reception to Mr. Gupta, Lalitha draws a "Colam" (106) patterned like a dove, at the entrance of the household. As he leaves he unknowingly shuffles his feet, and the "dove got blurred" (107). Lalitha brushes away the "scuffed powder" (108) and draws a "golden eagle soaring over the plains" (108). The novelist makes it clear that the bird is Lalitha herself.
The dove will lose its purity, and ultimately turn into the ambitious eagle. The Golden Honeycomb is a symbol for the princes of pre-Independence India who stood aloof from the majority of the people in the country by their manner of thought and life-style.

In some of the novels of Markandaya, the journey of her fictional hero from the village to the city or abroad, or from tradition to modernity, or in essence from innocence to experience follows some common archetypal pattern. The village is the starting point in her fiction. The structure of Nectar in a Sieve is based on the archetypal pattern of "rejection-initiation-return" (Campbell 30). Rukmani and Nathan, once their land is grabbed by the land lord and the mechanistic civilization, are finally forced to reject their village and move to the city for better livelihood. On the journey and during their sojourn in the city they undergo the initiating experiences. Finally, after the death of her husband, Rukmani, returns to her village with a new self-awareness. In A Handful of Rice Ravi rejects his village and goes to the city to have better prospects in life. Conventionally the city is a symbol of man's social and cultural aspirations. Like Rukmani whose hopes in the city turn out to be nectar in a sieve, Ravi fails to attain better livelihood. The novelist presents the city in this novel as an amoral jungle. Damodar, who is born and bred in
the city, becomes a prototype of urban culture. But unlike Rukmani, Ravi does not return to his native village even after getting his initiation and experience in the city.

Two Virgins is certainly another novel of Markandaya on the theme of initiation. It follows the mythical pattern of trial and initiation to deal with the awakening of two sisters to womanhood. Lalitha goes to the city in pursuit of stardom and is finally ruined by the film director Gupta. Lalitha, through her relationship with Gupta, comes to know of the facts of life. Her initiation into and discovery of the complexities of modern life enable her to choose her own way of life and also to adjust herself to the new cultural set-up she adopts. Saroja attains her initiating experiences only through her sister, Lalitha. While in the city, she reaches a state of self-discovery which finally makes her return to her native village.

In Possession also Valmiki goes to England from his village, gets experiences of different types and finally returns to his native place. While in England he is initiated into the different areas of reality and gains worldly knowledge. In The Coffer Dams and Pleasure City, there are two mysterious characters: the anonymous old chief of the tribals in The Coffer Dams and the headman Apu in Pleasure City. Both of them seem to be quite critical of
the invasion of modern civilization into the old order of life. They register their protest rather silently in the novels. Both of them are presented "as archetypes of a sense of guilt on the change of old order" (Geetha 172).

Markandaya uses irony in her novels effectively. The titles of some of her novels are quite ironic. Nectar in a Sieve refers to the illusory and deceptive happiness of man in his hard and vain struggle for mere survival. Some Inner Fury refers to the general outcry of the Indians against the British Raj. A Silence of Desire depicts a desire which can never be silenced. Possession expresses the idea that the imbrided spirit could be possessed by material prospects and wealth. The Golden Honeycomb is nothing but a palatial cage.

Markandaya's art of characterization draws its strength and sustenance from her vast experience and knowledge of the world around her. Her characters undeniably belong to different sections and are taken from a wide spectrum of society. They are Indian peasants, upper class gentlemen and women, government servants, film producers, prostitutes, students, sanyasins, immigrants in England, engineers, tribals, working class people and vagabonds. Her characters include the English whom she minutely observes in their inter-cultural and inter-racial relationships. What provides
a stronger foundation to a number of different situations — social, historical and cultural contexts — is Markandaya's remarkable artistic skill perceptibly evident in the creation of complete and credible characters. She possesses, as William Walsh remarks, "the genuine novelist's gifts for fixing the exact individuality of the character" (Indi Literature in English 116).

Markandaya's principal characters in the novels project the novelist's sociological and psychological vision of life. She, like many great writers, is basically a humanist. She is certainly for human values and against the ruthless machinery, against exploitation and suppression of the weak, against war and violence. She hates racialism and blames Britain for its cultural arrogance and superiority complex. Yet she does not conceal her love and appreciation for British characters who are essentially humane in nature.

Major characters like Rukmani and Nathan in Nectar in Sieve; Mira, Premala and Roshan in Some Inner Fury; Sarojin and Dandekar in A Silence of Desire; Ravi in A Handful of Rice; Valmiki in Possession, Srinivas and Vasantha in Th Nowhere Man; Saroja and Lalitha in Two Virgins; Rabi in Th Golden Honeycomb and Rikki in Pleasure City are well-realized and convincingly drawn. Through the depiction of these characters, Markandaya throws light on the
invincibility of the Indian psyche and of the human spirit. Most of these characters finally become universal beings and archetypes. They are not static and types but there is a definite flexibility and they change themselves according to the demands of the situations. All these characters have full human potentialities and they disturb the readers. It is for this reason one can say without any hesitation that the characters of Markandaya are the true representatives of contemporary Indian society. One can also very well agree with Martin Seymour Smith when he says that Markandaya's characters are "impressively real" (725).

Markandaya's minor characters such as Ira, Dr. Kennington, Selvam in Nectar in a Sieve; Govind, Kitsamy and Hickey in Some Inner Fury; Chari and dwarf in A Silence of Desire; Anasuya, Ellie in Possession; Jayamma, Apu and Thangam in A Handful of Rice; Mackendrick, Krishnan and Gopal in The Coffer Dams; Laxman, Mrs. Pickering and Mrs. Fletcher in The Nowhere man; Appa, Amma and Aunt Alamelu, Gupta and Miss. Mendoza in Two Virgins; Mohini, the Dewan, Janaki and Sophie in The Golden Honeycomb; and Tully, Mrs. and Mr. Bridies and Apu in Pleasure City are well-drawn. The characters of Markandaya whether major or minor are torn by "conflict between East and West, or tradition and progress, or society and individual" (Margaret P. Joseph 155).
Markandaya’s distinctive artistic talent is revealed in her portrayal of women characters such as Rukmani, Ira Mirabai, Premala, Roshan, Sarojini, Nalini, Saroja, Lalitha Manjula, Helen, Lady Caroline Bell, Vasantha, Mrs. Pickerir and Mohini are all living characters of flesh and blood. Most of these characters are quite memorable and unforgettable because of their strong will, judicious characteristics, noble qualities, independent and individualistic nature.

Another unique feature of Markandaya’s art of characterization is her portrayal of certain characters with physical abnormality. In *Nectar in a Sieve* one comes across the albino child of Ira and a leper boy, Puli. Similarly in *A Silence of Desire* there is a dwarf guarding the Swami. In *Possession* the Swamy is being looked after by the cripple and the invalid. Kumaran is a cripple and Kannan is one-eye in *A Handful of Rice*. In *The Nowhere Man* Srinivas contract leprosy. Similarly, Nalini in *Two Virgins* is mentally retarded. By depicting these characters Kamala Markandaya seems to point out that though these characters are physically handicapped and abnormal they are nobler and spiritually healthier than the physically normal characters.

The style of an artist reflects the image of his mind. The style of Markandaya not only reflects the images of her
mind but also of her characters, events and actions which it attempts to depict. Her style, no doubt, "has the smooth, uniform ease of public school English" (Mukherjee 175). She has such an absolute command over the English language that she uses it with grace and flexibility. Her remarkable prose style deftly expresses "her expatriate sensibility, her broad spectrum of experience and social realism..." (Madhusudan Prasad, Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya XXII). She does not seem to give much importance to rhetoric and ornamentation in her novels. The short and long sentences or even her use of sentence fragments makes her style unique and life-like. Commenting on the style of Markandaya's language -- especially her earlier works -- Uma Parameswaran says:

Kamala Markandaya's is not a translated language. She does not attempt to adapt the vernacular idiom or tone; the language of her earlier work is always unobtrusively pure. Yet she succeeds in bringing out the texture of the social classes by varying the degree of simplicity and articulation. (54)

The style of Markandaya is simple and chaste. It is completely devoid of rhetorical raptures and lyrical effusions which one comes across in the novels of Anita Desai and metaphysical preoccupations and philosophical
speculations found in the novels of Raja Rao, Balachandra Rajan and Arun Joshi. Though Markandaya calls her literature socio-literature and her vision is essentially sociological in nature she does not commit herself to any particular social ideology or doctrine. Despite her use of irony and wit at appropriate places in her novels, she does not pay any special attention to the humorous and comical aspects of life like R.K. Narayan and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Her style is not something static but dynamic and it modulates itself from time to time in keeping with the demands of the story. Markandaya by following the middle path in her style between the two polarities of simplicity and complexity strives her best to transfigure the experiences of her characters into an artistic whole.

Kamala Markandaya like any other writer has certain artistic defects and shortcomings which cannot be simply ignored. Not surprisingly, Markandaya writes her novels essentially for the readers of the West. In a way, she, like Rabindranath Tagore, interprets the East to the West. Her deliberate focus on various social, economic, political and religious aspects of India indicates clearly that she writes certain things only to reach them to the Western audience. One cannot easily overlook the factual errors regarding cultural traits and social customs. Her imperfection of style is revealed in the language used by ordinary people
like Rukmani and Janaki who speak more or less Anglicized English.

Markandaya's inclusion of elaborate glossary of Indian terminology and her authorial intrusion to explicate the various Indian customs, rituals and traditions point to the fact that she primarily writes for the West. These things certainly mar to some extent the spontaneous flow of the narrative and hamper the fictional illusion of the readers.

Another glaring artistic imperfection in Markandaya's art is her failure to portray the contemporary Indian reality quite realistically as is evident in her later novels. The primary reason for her failure to do it successfully is her expatriate status and, in the words of Margaret P. Joseph, "the price the expatriate writer has to pay" (209). Her depiction of the fast changing Indian contemporary society at various levels in an unconvincing manner indicates her too long stay in the West.

Despite these weaknesses, Kamala Markandaya is a great artist and her novels have achieved wide popularity and critical acclaim because of their universal appeal. Her success as a novelist lies in her masterly handling of the interaction between characters and situations. Though her characters and backgrounds in the novels have South Indian
leanings, Markandaya transcends what is regional or temporal in the process of depicting life at a particular time and space. Her artistic sincerity and the authenticity of experience grant her a vision which appeals to the whole of mankind. The plays of Shakespeare are English, the poems of Whitman are American and the novels of Tolstoy are Russian in their regional identity. They possess the distinctive social and cultural aspects of their own soil, yet they have universal appeal. Their subtle nuances have been enjoyed and perceived by people all over the world. Similarly the novels of Markandaya too have universal appeal.

Though her themes are set against the background of India and its fast changing society, Markandaya's success as a novelist lies in catching the spirit of the life of modern man. Her novels have been critically acclaimed because of her objective delineation of the contemporary society and the emergence of a universal stance and human appeal in her novels. In the case of William Faulkner or James Joyce or Pearl S. Buck regional culture is the shaping spirit but the first appeal of the novels is universal. When one reads the novels of Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Saul Bellow and Ralph Ellison one can see that cultural dualism and racialism form the major themes of their novels. But these novels finally overcome the limiting pressure of regionalism or racialism or bi-culturalism and transcend into tales of
human condition. While writing about what it essentially means to be a Negro in America, James Baldwin writes about what it means to be a man in his novels. The novels of Kamala Markandaya also reveal a consistency of vision of the human condition. She is essentially preoccupied with the effect of socio-economic conditions on the individual, and his constant search for identity and the attainment of an integrated and acceptable self. Her novels offer a wide scope to the future scholars who can study her novels from the angles of woman consciousness, man-woman relationship, characterization and language properties. An outstandingly gifted novelist, Kamala Markandaya's artistic and fictional achievements are exceptional. She undoubtedly and quite deservingly occupies a very significant place in Indian English fiction like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi and Shashi Deshpande.