ALIENATION AND ROOTLESSNESS

Man suffers not only from war, persecution and famine and ruin but from inner problems... a conviction of isolation, randomness and meaninglessness in his very existence. (Fuller 3)

Despite great scientific and technological advancement, which certainly has immeasurably gratified man's physical comforts, the man of the post-industrialization period is fated to find himself in a tragic dilemma. The wide-spread economic disparity culminating in the sordid poverty of the poor and the economic instability of the bourgeois as against the evergrowing wealth of the rich, the slow but steady disappearance of the age-old social and traditional conventions and customs, the quick changing value system resulting from the tremendous impact of rapid modernization and industrialization often make the contemporary man a rootless being. While taking part in a rat-race, he finds himself "estranged not only from his fellowmen but also from his innermost nature, having nothing within or without him to fall back upon in moments of crisis" (Saxena 69).

Alienation is the malaise of the present age. The development of technology, the velocity of communication,
the impersonal nature of public policies, the growing mobility of population, the changing family and corporate structures have vastly disrupted human bonds and connection in myriad unexpected ways and finally left the people vulnerable. Trying to define the concept of alienation, K. Raghavendra Rao observes: "... alienation is a condition of loss of an essential part of the self. It is, therefore, a condition in which the self is placed in a position of insecurity, anxiety, anguish, loss of identity and loss of self-authenticated authenticity" (99). The virulent effect of alienation can be seen in the form of the generation gap, the compartmentalization of our lives and the conspicuous absence of a sense of meaningfulness of life. The twentieth century, especially the post-war period, is regarded as an era of spiritual trauma and anxiety.

The concept of alienation is not quite new and it has been in vogue in philosophical, theological, sociological and psychological writings for a long time. This concept is aptly explained by the very title of David Riesman's The Lonely Crowd which essentially deals with the alienation and estrangement of individuals from one another due to lack of proper and meaningful communication and mutual understanding. Sidney Finkelstein defines alienation as "a psychological phenomenon, an internal conflict, a hostility felt toward something seemingly outside oneself which is
linked to oneself, a barrier erected which is actually no defense but an impoverishment of oneself" (137). For Karl Marx, alienation means man's dehumanization, his loss of freedom and his estrangement from other human beings. If one is compelled to do labour without one's choice or spontaneity one is alienated from one's own nature. Broadly speaking, man's alienation implies his estrangement from his family, his community, his society and eventually from his own self.

Modernists saw man as failing miserably to understand the very purpose of life and the meaning of his existence in an adverse world. The various social, political and economic conditions of the contemporary scene have led to confusion, frustration, disenchantment, disintegration, meaninglessness and complete rootlessness. The modern man feels quite helpless when he becomes aware of the fact that he cannot live a complete life as it seems to be running "out of hand like sand, and that one will die without having lived; that one lived in the midst of plenty and joyless" (Fromm, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis 86).

It is this pervading sense of rootlessness and alienation that crushes human life from different sides. The futile confrontation of man's existence with absurdity and nothingness and the nebulous nature of human life become the
paradigm of modern life. The lacuna between the individual's aspiration and his achievement, between his profession and practice and between illusion and reality has relentlessly disintegrated his life generating a divisive impact on his inner being. The wounded and afflicted psyche develops in the mind of the individual an attitude of dissatisfaction towards the established social norms and values, making him look for relevance in life. He is completely astounded to find himself quite helpless and feels estranged when he realizes that he cannot be the master of his own destiny and that there are certain forces which are definitely beyond his control.

Conscious of his uncertain and unpredictable position man undergoes the tortuous experience of severe limitation in the modern age which is torn asunder by its aimlessness and alienation. Remarking on the predominant role played by alienation in the lives of the people of the present age, Walter Kaufmann states:

"Whether we choose to speak of alienation or not, the experiences widely associated with that term are often held to be the distinctive characteristics of our time." (qtd. in Saxena 70)

Melvin Seeman, the sociologist, discusses the predicament of modern man under a set of five interconnected
operational conditions, i.e. powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. These, according to him, are different manifestations of alienation. Taviss also speaks of two different kinds of alienation viz., 'social alienation' and 'self-alienation'. She means by 'social alienation' the sense of estrangement or alienation brought about by the sudden discovery that the social systems are oppressive or insufficient to man's aspirations and ideals (46). According to her:

Self-alienation refers to the loss of contact of the individual selves with any inclinations or desires that are in agreement with the prevailing social patterns as a result of which the individuals are forced to manipulate in accordance with the social demands or feel incapable of controlling their actions. (46-47)

Self-alienation has worse effects on an individual than social alienation. The former happens to be the basic form of rootlessness and can easily impede an individual's mental and psychic development in a terrific manner.

Alienation as a universal phenomenon, no doubt, leaves an ineffaceable impact upon contemporary literature. Modern literature abounds in alienated individuals. It reflects the general disillusionment that hassles the two post-war generations and the deep spiritual isolation felt by man in
a universe in which he feels himself to be inconsequential and a stranger. The protagonist as an alienated human being or outsider is a recurrent character in twentieth century American and European fiction. The artist as an outsider is portrayed in James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, the Negro or the Jew as an outsider in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and Saul Bellow's Herzog, and the sensitive adolescent as an outsider in Salinger's Catcher in the Rye. These novels depict their protagonists as outsiders who suffer from confusion, frustration, disintegration and estrangement. Not surprisingly, most of the great literary names of the twentieth century are those of actual exiles and alienated beings. In fiction alone one can immediately think of Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Nabokov and V.S. Naipaul. Another important group of novelists is that of writers of African or Jewish origin, namely, James Baldwin, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer and Bernard Malamud.

Owing to socio-cultural and historical reasons, Indian Literature in English of the recent decades also could not help being affected by it. The pervasive sense of alienation which dominates the novel in recent American and European literatures did not have an impact upon Indian literature till the 1960s as a strong motif. It, however, became a recurring theme especially with the then young writers like Kamala Markandaya, Dilip Hiro, Timeri Murari, Anita Desai,
Arun Joshi, Balachandra Rajan, Reginald Massey and Nayantara Sahgal.

The problem of alienation is quite closely related to rootlessness and the loss of identity. Donald Oken is of the view that it is the loss of identity that results in alienation(84). As O.P. Saxena observes:

The dispossessed personality's search for identity is a commonplace theme in modern fiction, but it 'has a peculiar immediacy.' Most Indians' alienation and loss of identity is a result of historical and cultural dislocation suffered by modern India. (97)

Kamala Markandaya is essentially a sociological writer. Unlike Samuel Beckett, Saul Bellow, Richard Wright, Anita Desai and Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandaya does not treat the theme of alienation either at the psychological or philosophical level. Her forte lies in her sociological vision of human life. In her novels she mainly deals with the sociological alienation of her characters. Alienation as a concept is widely prevalent only in America and European countries where people, in spite of their riches become victims of alienation. They mostly suffer from psychological and philosophical alienation. But in India which still believes in the tenets of fatalism and in passive acceptance
either philosophical alienation or psychological alienation is quite absent though the latter seems to be prevalent among the educated and Westernized people. In the novels of Kamala Markandaya protagonists seem to suffer from sociological alienation in the beginning and, in the end, they suffer from individual alienation.

The depiction of rootlessness and alienation forms a continuing thematic concern of Markandaya in her novels. Her authentic portrayal of the Indian contemporary scene with its historical significance is marked by "a peculiar contemporary relevance" (Shiv K. Kumar 95). A clear-cut pattern that emerges from her novels strongly indicates the message that if one has roots one survives; and if one's roots are pulled out or lost, one dies spiritually. One either gets ruined completely or is lost.

In Nectar in a Sieve, A Handful of Rice and Two Virgins Markandaya portrays how people become alien to the new surroundings i.e., the city after they get uprooted from their native soil. In Possession and The Nowhere Man she depicts how people feel alienated and suffer from identity crisis when they migrate from India. At the micro level the individuals suffer a lot due to the loss of identity when the migration takes place from a village to a city. At the macro level the sufferings are due to their migration from
India to alien lands.

The birth of industrialization is marked by the beginning of general or mass exodus from the village to the city. In the wake of industrialization not only in India but everywhere there was a common exodus from the rural to the urban centres especially during the first half of the twentieth century. Even ordinary village peasants began to quit their rural abode for the crowded cities in search of jobs thinking that cities were gold mines from which so much could be extracted. Consequently the impersonal and dispassionate cities swallowed them up.

The people who migrated from the rural centres to urban areas soon felt disillusioned after becoming aware of the monstrous nature of the cities. This is what is exactly found in the chapter on Bombay in Mulk Raj Anand's Coolie. Munoo, one of the principal characters, cannot help becoming a tragic victim of exploitation. The novels of D.H.Lawrence also deal with the tragic theme of exodus from village to the cities in the wake of the industrial revolution. His Sons and Lovers and Rainbow portray the agonizing picture of the hardships and boundless sufferings undergone by the migrants in the city factories.

The uprooting of a large number of people is brought
about by several factors like politics, society, economics, religion and so on. The people, who choose to leave their familiar surroundings and life-giving soil, migrate to a new environment in search of a better life or greater security. No doubt, this settling down in a new and strange habitat is inescapably accompanied by an excruciating sense of lack of assimilation and identity crisis, even if the people have migrated on their own choice. If the sojourn in a given situation extends to be a permanent or a long stay, the agony and the distress of the migrants are stronger and thus it becomes an inexorable uprootedness and alienation.

Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* is an artistic and realistic depiction of the exodus caused by the infringement of modern industry on the traditional village community and the age-old rural way of life and the consequent rootlessness. The advent of the tannery paves the way for an exodus from the village to other unknown and unfamiliar places. This is rather quite evident in the case of the sons of Rukmani and Nathan. The two eldest sons of Rukmani -- Arjun and Thambi -- have to join the tannery for they cannot earn sufficient money for their livelihood on the land. Owing to labour problems they finally lose their jobs. Then they go to Ceylon to work in the tea plantations where they hope they would get more. After their departure nothing is heard of them. Raja, the third son of Rukmani, is killed by
a lathi blow when he, according to the tannery officials, is caught stealing a piece of skin. Murugan, the fourth son, goes to the city in search of a job. He drinks, gambles, womanizes, deserts his wife and children and finally migrates to some other place. His whereabouts are not known.

The departure of the sons of Rukmani is nothing freakish or unique. It is quite a common historical phenomenon in almost all agricultural societies during the period of transition to industrialization. When modern technology encroaches upon the traditional village it gives rise to problems unheard of so far. Such an exodus took place in a large scale in the Victorian England and the Victorian novels unambiguously portray a harrowing picture of hunger and starvation resulting in migration from the rural to the urban areas. No doubt, it took place in rural India also consequent upon the rapid modernization and industrialization.

The monstrous growth of the tannery and the feudal set up in the village in *Nectar in a Sieve* cause the eviction of Nathan and Rukmani. Though they are forced by circumstances to leave their native soil and familiar surroundings for the city the tannery is a main contributing factor in their complete dispossession. The land is bought by the tannery owners from the land owner and the latter in turn pushes out
the tiller, Nathan.

The latter part of the novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*, is an exceptional *tour de force* that poignantly depicts the disillusionments and trials of the simple and innocent village couple as they go in search of their son, Murugan, "amidst vast stretches and harrowing anonymities of the big city." (Goyal 115). Deprived of their home and land they are compelled to take shelter with Murugan in the city where he has married a city girl. The novelist unambiguously portrays the city as an abode of beggars, thieves and thugs. One of the temples in the city, where Rukmani and Nathan take shelter, abounds with paupers and beggars who jostle one another for their share of *prasad* on which they survive. Commenting on the pathetic condition of Rukmani and Nathan, Bhagwat S. Goyal observes:

> From the producers of life-sustaining grain they are reduced to mere beggars, struggling for every small crumb. It appears that the city is permanently stricken with famine; what Rukmani and Nathan faced and did after the severe drought in the village seems to be regular features of the city: a grim and maddening struggle for survival stripping people of the last shreds of humanity. (115)
It is at the temple that Nathan and Rukmani are deprived of everything that they possessed. They are thus turned into destitutes like other beggars, with nothing but the clothes they stood in. They look for their son at Dr. Birla's house in Koil Street where their son, Murugan, is supposed to be employed, only to find that their son left the job two years earlier. Their disappointment is aggravated when they are told by their daughter-in-law that Murugan has deserted her and the children for other women and gambling. Their final hope is thus shattered and they are left to fend for themselves in this formidable jungle of a city. They are helped by Puli, a young crippled boy, who is witty enough to be able to survive in this perplexed and maddening world. He helps Rukmani and Nathan to find work in the quarry. They finally become stone-breakers. The stone-breakers belong to the floating population of workers who have lost their roots.

The only aim of Rukmani and Nathan is to save sufficient money so that they might go back to their native soil where their son, Selvam, would certainly shelter them. While Rukmani is able to keep her spirit intact Nathan becomes very weak. He had his roots deep in the land and he was able to get along as long as he was not uprooted from the land. Obviously, he was able to face, with fortitude and resolution, the misfortunes caused by unprecedented rains or
drought. He survived through ordeals and uncommon tribulations. Had he not been uprooted from his soil and land he would have lived on as a satisfied and contended farmer. But the tannery swallows up their land, and they are evicted and dispossessed. Once his roots are scorched Nathan begins to feel alienated. As Bhagwat S. Goyal states:

The prime cause of Nathan's tragedy in Nectar in a Sieve is that he is involved in alienated labour which while denying him the fruits of his own productive work, enables social parasites like the money-lender and the grain shop keeper to fill their coffers. From an uprooted son of the soil to an impoverished stone-breaker -- Nathan presents a vital image of human alienation in a non-human society built on avarice, exploitation and crass commercialism. (140)

In the city Nathan is unable to survive because as a rootless person everything is alien to him. The physical and mental sufferings are quite unbearable to him. His roots are gone and therefore, he, like an uprooted tree, cannot live for long. Unable to bear the load of hard work in the quarry Nathan finally falls down and dies. Rukmani returns to her village with her adopted son, Puli.

Like Rukmani and Nathan, Ravi, the son of a penniless
rural peasant, in A Handful of Rice leaves his home and village in order to escape hunger and starvation and ultimately joins the common exodus to the city.

Ravi like Arjun and Thambi in Nectar in a Sieve, ventures into the city in search of a better life after leaving his parents and relations behind but he miserably fails to strike root in the new and strange soil. To his complete disappointment even the city has nothing better to offer him. He, therefore, becomes rootless -- a nowhere man running from pillar to post for survival. Initiated into the mystery of urban existence by Damodar, the gang leader, Ravi becomes a part of the underworld of smugglers and bootleggers. He, a desperate city migrant, is forced to allow himself to be dragged into the world of excitement and begins to have a sense of security in life.

... suddenly the terror and the loneliness were gone, lifted from the load whose other components were hunger, lassitude of hunger, and the terror of losing his identity in an indifferent city which was akin to death... (A Handful of Rice 27)

Ravi, as a member of Damodar's caucus, is able to witness city life in all its raw form of hunger, want and exploitation. To his astonishment Ravi finds life in the city a fierce struggle for survival. He understands how "in
this jungle, one had to fight, fiercely, with whatever weapons one had. Or go under” (198).

In his serious endeavour to strike root in city life Ravi joins Apu as an apprentice in his tailoring work. He falls in love with Nalini, the daughter of Apu, and decides to put an end to his criminal career. He becomes a member of Apu’s family after marrying Nalini. Things move more or less smoothly till Apu dies. Ravi then finds it extremely difficult to shoulder the grave responsibility of a large family.

Ravi’s unwillingness and failure to follow the method and code of conduct set by Apu land him on a steady decrease of income. His trade slackens, customers deflect and imminent disaster looms large over his head. His ineptness to run the big family seems to get him stuck up in an atmosphere of glumness and despondency.

Ravi’s business suffers a lot due to the competition of the modern textile industry. His chief resentment is against the exploitation perpetrated on him by the shopkeeper who pays him eighty rupees per dozen as stitching charges whereas the shopkeeper himself charges from the customers one hundred and twenty five rupees per piece. Ravi feels that he is destroyed by the glowing success of the textile
industry. Kai Nicholson remarks:

In A Handful of Rice it is the individual being crushed by an organization -- Ravi has been destroyed by the same organization -- the shop. Ravi sees in the textile shop, "EVE," the symbol of his destruction as an artisan... Ravi has been a victim of a capitalistic laissez-faire system of organization which exists today in India. (110)

Ravi's failure to establish himself as an artisan and the miserable condition prevailing in his house affects his temper also. Disillusioned and exasperated, Ravi takes to drinking, loses his balance, becomes desperate and starts beating his wife. Unable to put up with his irascible behaviour Nalini leaves the house with her children. In order to avenge his wife, Nalini, Ravi illtreats his mother-in-law and rapes her when she is all alone, for not telling him the whereabouts of his wife.

When Ravi approaches Damodar, who is very rich now, for help, the latter expresses his willingness to help him to tide over his financial hardship, provided he joins him in black marketing and hoarding. But Ravi turns down this idea and returns home empty-handed. To complicate the already worsened situation his son falls ill and dies of meningitis for want of proper medical treatment.
Embittered and exasperated, Ravi approaches Damodar once again for help. But Damodar tells him right to his face that people with 'no guts' cannot work with a person like him. He advises Ravi to "go back to your village. It's more your size. You are not fit for anything else" (A Handful of Rice 214). With his moral indignation "Ravi rose unsteadily. He felt like retching but he controlled the spasms and went down to the street" (216).

Spiritless and hungry, Ravi sees a hungry mob going to rampage and loot a rice-godown. He joins the crowd which plunders the rice-godowns in the city market tearing the sky with a cry: "Rice today, rice. Rice today, rice!" (233) He desperately struggles and goes very close to the rice bags but cannot get even a handful of rice:

... he struggled to reach the grain, this time at least, and he clenched his empty hands and watched with frantic eyes as the rich heap dwindled, and the empty sacks flopped and sagged and were snatched up and filled or humped away full on shoulders that could bear them. (235)

Ravi again joins another mob, indulging in ransacking and destruction. When he comes close to the Nabobs' Row he takes a brick in order to hurl it at the shops "but suddenly he could not. The strength that had inflamed him, the strength
of a suppressed, laminated anger, ebbed as quickly as it had risen. His hand dropped" (237). K. Venkata Reddy aptly points out:

Ravi's tragedy is that of the 'economically weak' who search for answers to problems, not only of day to day life, but of existence itself. (157)

In the end, as in the beginning, Ravi wanders alone and feels as rootless as he had felt on his arrival in the city from his native village. His desperate quest for identity has miserably failed. He is terrified of losing his identity in the indifferent, cold and inhuman society. He is tormented by such questions as "Who was he here? He did not know, he did not care, no one cared" (A Handful of Rice 206). He is ultimately crushed by socio-economic oppression and thereby becomes a victim of rootlessness and alienation. After the death of his son, Ravi rebukes the society, calling it "Them, Society. Guilty of casual murder" (231). His only possible way of escape through association with smugglers and blackmarketeers like Damodar is morally obnoxious to him. He, therefore, "chooses to preserve his integrity at the cost of his family's suffering, alienation from them and above all the suffocation of his rebellious spirit" (Reddy 158).
The actual tragedy of Ravi lies in the failure of his dream. Like Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman he finally becomes a victim of his quixotic dream of living a comfortable life. His aim of amassing wealth and hedonistic life is certainly disproportionate and unreasonable to his modest birth and his deep-rooted traditional background. Having abandoned the village because it has failed to offer him sustenance and unable to accept the city because its riches and job opportunities remain an illusion, Ravi becomes an outsider. He seems to be uprooted from his native soil and unplanted in an alien society. As Ramesh K. Srivastava observes:

A Handful of Rice is a pathetic cry of protest of a hungry and anguished half-grown child groping for a path haltingly through the labyrinthine lanes of quixotic dreams and ugly realities, rural poverty and urban plenty but reaching nowhere. (Six Indian Novelists in English 174)

While Nectar in a Sieve portrays a woeful account of agrarian life shattered by modern industrialization, A Handful of Rice presents a tragic picture of an immature rural young man and the failure of his dream. Nectar in a Sieve, despite its tragic tone, ends on a positive note signifying that as long as a man's roots are strong and his
spirit remains intact, the temporary material loss or defeat does not matter to him. *A Handful of Rice* suggests no such positive note. It is the sad chronicle of a dreamy person who miserably fails to establish his identity and survive due to his hesitant choices, weak resolution and nettling rootlessness. Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve* is able to survive with her spirits intact because she shed her impractical dreams willingly at the time of her marriage. Undoubtedly she is very clear in her aim of being a faithful and devoted wife to her husband and loving mother to her children. She has her roots strongly in her family and traditions and that is why she returns to her native rural soil with full confidence after her temporary alienated life in the city. But "Ravi remains a dangling man unsure of his urban moorings, unwilling to go to the rural shores" (Ramesh K. Srivastava, *Six Indian Novelists in English* 177).

Lalitha like Ravi becomes a tragic victim of common and unrealistic dreams in *Two Virgins*. While Rukmani, Nathan and Ravi have to leave their native soil for the city just to escape hunger and poverty, Lalitha escapes from her tradition-bound village to pursue the glamorous life of the city. To her, village life is nothing but stifling. She seems to suffer from cultural alienation and it is a kind of self-exile that she has imposed upon herself. She renounces
her family, the social and the moral traditional roots of her village just to become a star. Her strong egocentric tendency for name and fame finally ruins her. She is brought low by excessive fondness for the glittering life of the city. She does not want to be roofed in by the familiar environment and the familiar emotions. She strives towards the illusory life of splendour.

Markandaya clearly indicates that physical beauty and feminine desirability -- the cardinal points in Lalitha's existence -- do not pave the way for personal fulfilment. Lalitha strikes out beyond the pale of conventional society and is thus brought low. In the process of entering the tinsel world she loses her virginity and becomes pregnant. Finally she is forced by circumstances to abort the illegitimate child. As Saroja states, Lalitha succeeds in having "more than her fair" (Two Virgins 13) share of man and ends up as a woman of the streets.

The film director, when approached by the parents of Lalitha, refuses to undertake any responsibility for Lalitha, the victim of the glamour world, blaming it all on her femininity: "Lalitha is a woman with the natural desires of a woman, he said" (220). Amma feels so much for the unwanted pregnancy of her daughter and in order to save the family prestige the parents finally decide to abort the
baby in the city. The backlash it has on the two sisters is foreseeable. It is Saroja who saves her sister from committing suicide. Both find the whole episode quite horrible.

In her balanced examination of human nature, Kamala Markandaya does not attribute Lalitha's drifting away from the traditional way of life mainly to the newer influences of modernity, Westernized education and individualism. Her heredity and her family surroundings definitely contribute to her downfall. Amma, herself a complex character, is certainly "not lily white and pure as Sita or Savithri" (Krishnaswamy 216). She is supple, fully effeminate and carefree with her looks and passionate by nature.

Despite her passionate nature, Amma is strongly rooted in tradition through her marriage. She is devoted to her husband in her own special way. The marital relationship between Appa and Amma is a kind of "enduring bond that makes close ranks in the face of the common enemy" (217). But Lalitha fails to have such bonded relationship with Mr. Gupta. He is, despite being a Hindu, certainly an outsider to her community. He is, moreover, not bound by the traditional mores that guard her as a woman or as a girl in her own family. Her choice of Mr. Gupta as her lover is not
wise. She is ready to risk all and is, therefore, brought low unlike Saroja who observes everything minutely and waits for her time wisely.

It is quite obvious that Lalitha is betrayed by her firm faith in her beauty, in womanly desirability and sexual powers. She fails to be a proper match in the game of sexual politics against a merciless, city-bred and money-loving witty impresario like Mr. Gupta. Since Lalitha fixes her chances of success on her desirability to men she cannot have any other alternative to fall back upon at the time of crisis. When she is betrayed by Gupta she can do nothing but turn to the streets. Her impulsive urge as a woman and her biological demands also make her susceptible.

Lalitha cannot cover up her faultlines in a tightly organized tradition-bound society. Rigid rules and regulations were framed in order to block all routes to escape from the traditional mode of living. When Lalitha violates the well-established customs and conventions she has no other alternative but to confront the society. The social tenets and rules at home and in society have been designed in such a way that a woman cannot become pregnant without the proper canopy of marriage. Despite her beauty and intelligence and the excessive love and concern shown by her parents and others, Lalitha easily falls a prey to her
temptations. She has finally to pay the price for her vulnerable nature. The girl who had a very high ambition for her future is drained of her delight and happiness. Her life now seems to be a doomed one and lacks a sense of fulfilment. In the words of Shantha Krishnaswamy:

Like Emma Bovary and Anna Karenina, Lalitha, too, is endowed with natural beauty and vivacity, only to be laid low all too cruelly. Life seems to be a terrible waste of human potential. It is especially ironic since Lalitha had demanded so much from life and ends up with nothing. (219)

While Lalitha resembles Kunthi in Nectar in a Sieve, Saroja is reminiscent of Rukmani. Both Lalitha and Kunthi are representatives of the loose moral values that corrode human dignity and nobility. Likewise, both Saroja and Rukmani have unswerving and resolute faith in their traditional roots. While Lalitha and Kunthi get completely ruined due to their manipulation of beauty and womanly desirability Saroja and Rukmani are able to survive due to their unwavering faith in human values.

Saroja becomes aware of her own integrity through the negative baseness of licentious love as seen in Lalitha. She, like Rukmani, is able to create a positive world from the
sympathy and loyalties of ordinary human relationships and from her protection of deep-rooted love and respect for others. It is this consciousness that helps her to withstand masculine attraction in the form of Devraj. This is quite evident in the interesting episode where Devraj, the assistant of Mr. Gupta, tries to make a pass at her:

He came close. He touched her. Please, he said, Saroja leapt up. Her flesh was molten. She knew what he was asking. She knew where it ended. She had dragged her bloated gravid sister out of the bog, she had seen the bloody pulp of the baby. Take your hands off me, she cried, and Aunt Alamelu of all people loomed up and put words she was fighting for into her mouth. What do you take me for, she screamed, a virgin in your whore house? (Two Virgins 245)

Like Rukmani and Aunt Alamelu, who epitomize 'society,' tradition and the norm of social behaviour, Saroja is ingenious enough to observe the power of social strictures. She, unlike her sister, is rooted strongly in the soil and has warmth of heart side by side with a consciousness of reality. She knows pretty well what she wants in life:

She wanted lots of lovely cuddly babies, and, as Appa said, the way society was organised you had to be married for that. A peasant's
ambition, Lalitha called it, but Saroja did not feel herself demeaned by that, there were lots of qualities of peasants that she greatly admired. (57-58)

The experiences which Saroja has gained both in the village and the city provide her with a global vision of life. Her understanding of the city life has not undermined her nourishing side. She is wise enough to apprehend that it is always good to live by the prescribed social code. This is the new kind of perception and discernment that she arrives at. She now understands that many things could be done for the nurturing mankind within the existing limits of social norms and traditions. Like Rukmani who returns to her native village after her temporary sojourn in the city Saroja finds her roots and freedom in the fresh air of her ancestral home and the familial surroundings. She "hated the city. She didn't belong to it, she wanted to go away and never come back" (243).

Kamala Markandaya, with her remarkable artistic ability, depicts the pathetic plight of the persons who are placed in a hostile environment. Possession and The Nowhere Man deal with the isolation and alienation of the displaced persons arising out of rootlessness. They migrate from their native soil and settle down in England. While Valmiki in Possession
does not freely opt for his emigration to England. Srinivas in _The Nowhere Man_ chooses to settle down in London due to political reasons. While Val eventually comes back to India to re-establish his roots, Srinivas "dies a martyr's death on the altar of tolerance in the context of apartheid in post-war Britain" (Menon K. Madhavi, "The Vision in Kamala Markandaya's _The Nowhere Man" 34).

The novelist presents in Possession "an account of de-Indianization and the resultant loss of identity" (Pathak 9). Valmiki, a born artist, is a "permanent outsider" (Possession 222). He feels alienated as much in his native village as in the urbane London. He is a poor neglected lad, a simpleton, not able to learn "even the simple skills their living required" (28). Caroline finds him to be "a simpleton, useless on the land, useless at home" (17). His art has no relevance for his poor family. The members of his family simply reject him.

Obviously when Caroline comes into contact with Val the latter "is young and no shell has formed to protect him as yet" (30). He needs freedom to broaden his artistic talent and to give vent to his artistic expressions in an atmosphere conducive to growth. Lady Caroline, no doubt, gives him freedom and saves him with her money from want, from utter poverty and from the need to backscratch. But
she restrains his spontaneous activity.

Besides Caroline's physical and psychological domination Val's artistic growth is curtailed by other factors also. He obviously suffers from a sense of rootlessness and uprootedness and he feels homesick. He finds that he is transplanted into the alien milieu where he receives acclaim as a painter but soon begins to feel that he has no roots in the country of adoption.

The arrogant and insolent attitude of Caroline also is not helpful to reanimate him. He feels that for her, he is not a fullyfledged human being to be loved and cared for but "the clay" in her hands to be "moulded and caressed to an image she could love"(144). Valmiki complains to Anasuya, "she does not care for me... When I do nothing I am nothing to her, no more than a small insect in a small crack..."(155). This awareness is much worse than being a neglected goatherd.

Although Val was living in a squalid condition in his village before his departure to England he found adequate compensation in the spiritual company of the Swamy and in the latent and the throbbing affection of his mother. But in London, being uprooted from his native soil, feeling rootless, this sensitive artist "experiences emotional
isolation and is over-powered by alienation" (Bande 75).

The period which Val spends in Europe is considered to be a glorious period materialistically. It is almost "a tempestuous period of worldly glory -- money, power, repute, sex and travel" (Bande 75). Leading a bohemian life, Val enjoys life to the maximum with recklessness and adopts the mercenary values of the "gilt-edged society" (Possession 142) which alienate him further from his roots. That he is often estranged from his traditional roots is often remarked by Anasuya, the narrator. Under the powerful influence of Western culture he becomes promiscuous, making love first to Ellie, then to Caroline and later to Caroline and Annabel by turns. These years can be considered a period of alienated activity in which he loses touch with the core of himself. His attitude towards life now becomes out and out disoriented.

Since his personal life becomes more lascivious by nature Val begins to crave for lustful things and thus becomes a pleasure-seeker. Though his art acquires accuracy and precision the focus shifts from 'within' himself to 'without.' The copious productivity is "the frenzied labour that had eaten up canvas," (231) not "a slice of himself" (119).
The glorious materialistic life led by Val in London can be described as the "having mode of existence," to borrow the terminology used by Eric Fromm (To Have and To Be 12) to define a life which solely rests on money, power and status in contrast to the "being mode" which is marked by "aliveness and authentic relatedness to the world" (12) requiring one to relinquish one's egotistical attitude and selfishness. Despite the hectic period of extravagant and intoxicating success, Val happens to be lonely and an outsider. He does not feel quite at ease. Since his life lacks perceptiveness and a pattern, his art, even at the height of his professional glory, reveals a lack of discipline which his art critics repudiate.

After his rift with Caroline which deflates his self-esteem Val undergoes a tremendous psychological crisis. Like an exile in an alien culture Val feels rootless and develops into a twisted personality. K.R. Rao's opinion about Ramaswamy is applicable, in a way to an exile like Val in Possession:

The amiable memories of the past as well as the painful realisation of his own isolation, both in time and space weigh on his soul oppressively. He cries out in a mood of seemingly total vacancy and dejection. There
is nobody to go to now: no home, no temple, no climate, no age. His agonising sense of alienation and non-belonging reduces him to the predicament of a mere nobody in the wide phenomenal world. He becomes a prey to uncertainty and anxiety, and the traumatic memories of the past hang heavily over his mind." (The Fiction of Raja Rao 71)

Val is agitated not by the wicked nature of Caroline, nor by Annabel's malicious attitude, but by his own self-castigation. During this miserable stage his selfless love for pet animals crops up and he sincerely feels sorry for having failed to understand that animals are created in their right and man should not exploit them. Although self-reproof could have led him to self-reprobation and self-hate which would have automatically resulted in self-destructive actions his self-awareness and love of honesty and integration help him overcome the bitter crisis.

After the suicide of Ellie, Val, now alone passes through a kind of self-analysis, bears responsibility for his immoral actions and acknowledges his mistakes. When Annabel questions him about his role in the suicide episode of Ellie, Val tells her, "I did nothing because it was easier not to" (Possession 212). Acknowledgement of one's faults is
the first positive step towards self-realization. When Val is going away from Ellie because she is not beautiful and good enough for his rising reputation and status, he exhibits not only his cowardice but also his weakness in being influenced by public opinion. He admits:

I gave her up, because she was not quite... It didn't matter to me, but when there were other people I did not see with my eyes, I saw with theirs, I had no heart, there was no me, then it became very important. (212)

Considering his relationship with Caroline, Val again castigates himself for being a puppet in her hands. "People do not have power unless you allow them to have it" (213). This statement of Val is similar to Cassius' famous statement in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar that when a person becomes all-powerful the fault "is not in our stars,/ But in ourselves that we are underlings" (971). Strong faith in honesty and self-integration provides him ample strength to move towards a healthy life.

Val is able to achieve a mental balance when he boards the ship for India. After having had the experience of an alien culture, Val becomes a nowhere man and finally returns to India in order to re-establish his identity and cultural roots. He understands that the foreign experience has led to the loss of identity and roots, and it is only through
homecoming that he can regain his sense of belonging. On his return to India he does not seem to be suffering from emptiness or a sense of loss.

When Anasuya meets him in India she finds to her surprise that he has accepted the wilderness completely. Again when Caroline sees Val in his village he tells her with pride and unswerving confidence, "I am not stranger to it. The wilderness is mine." (Possession 228). He ably changes the source of strength from outside to within himself by renouncing the last remnants of sovereignty and fame viz., the gold sovereigns, the ruby ring and the cheques. As the narrator aptly mentions, the "promissory symbols... the symbols of power and influence promising the kind of strength that Valmiki no longer needed [are] emasculated, meaningless now..." (230).

Val successfully relinquishes all "forms of having, in order to fully be" (Fromm To Have and To Be 115). His latent artistic potentiality brings a definite change in him. The excellent artistic human figures appear to be languishing for light and his divine figures seem to have perceptiveness and sagacity. Anasuya remarks:

There seemed to be a moving, extraordinary yearning in the human countenances he had depicted, upturned, groping towards the light,
a quality of compassion and profundity in his divine images, that had never been apparent before. (Possession 231)

Ramesh K. Srivastava observes that Val's art "is no longer art for materialistic gains -- name and money but for the glorification of his god" ("Woman as possessor: A Reflection of Markandaya's Anti-Patriarchal Rage and Divided-consciousness in Possession" 53).

Though Val's switch over to a wholesome and healthy life may seem to be unbelievable, the novel contains some clues to show that the seed for it had always been present in him. The craving for invigorating and nourishing human nature had already been found in his character though befogged transitorily by glamorous success and worldly glory. Significantly, his absolute loyalty to the Swamy and his irrefutable love for painting sustain him. He, furthermore, is basically gentle and soft and this makes him feel deeply for human as well as animal sufferings. He feels extremely sorry to see his pet monkey in miserable condition and he rebukes himself for possessing her "like a god, for ends of my own" (Possession 219).

Val's condition is akin to that of the monkey, Minou, which he carries with him -- cut off from its kind, deprived of its natural habitation and freedom. In spite of his
Westernization, Val is not completely cut off from his roots and a sense of identity. Metaphorically, the death of the monkey portends the end of his showiness when he used to carry her about with a silver chain around her neck, and Caroline flaunts him with a gold chain.

It is necessary to know about his two love affairs if one intends to understand him better. If proper credit is to be given to Val for sustaining a healthy vision it would be unfair to ignore his earthly weakness which is evidently human and which enables one to understand him properly. Val first falls in love with Ellie because she happens to be a symbol of suffering humanity. As he is "basically gentle, vulnerable to any appeal from the persecuted and the lonely" (133), he is very much moved by the pathetic accounts of Ellie's sufferings in concentration camps in Germany. The innate artist in him blossoms when he shares emotionally and imaginatively in the sufferings of Ellie, just as the latent poet in the mythical Valmiki finds his full throated utterance when he shares in the pain and the sufferings of a love-making pair of birds killed by a hunter. But pure love and fidelity do not matter much as he is enjoying power and status resulting in luxurious and glorious worldly life. When he hears about the suicide of Ellie he suffers agonies but again it is too late to amend.
Later, being fully engrossed in the new mercinary values, which he has acquired in London, he falls in love with Annabel. She is effervescent, cheerful and blossoming. Though he loves her sincerely, his love is tinged with distress. The dissimulation that he is practising disturbs him. When Annabel goes away from him once and for all he is too guilt-ridden to justify himself. Undoubtedly, his desultory behaviour causes boundless agony to the three.

Val may be seen as weak and debilitated, a scapegoat of tremendous material opulence of the English heiress, Caroline. Of course, poverty and illiteracy force him to be dependent on her and thus he becomes weak-spirited. But he is certainly not a coward. Val can as well be a defiant and resolute character. Lady Caroline understands this very well even in the beginning. Having fully perceived the obdurate nature of Val, she assumes deceitful methods like forgery, tricks and sex just to keep him under her control.

When Caroline tries to exercise her power on him, soon after buying him from his parents, he reminds Anasuya disdainfully that "she has not bought me"(22). He makes it very clear that he can never be possessed nor can he be made a slave. As Anasuya observes "the seed of the knowledge of his power"(49) somewhere implanted in him "gave him the bearing which is also conferred on the truly innocent, the
walking saint. It had kept his head high even when he was discredited goatherd, and it sustained him even now, full and fretted knowledge of the shackling of his strength..."(49). Undoubtedly, Val is stronger and more resilient than Caroline and even Anasuya. Despite the education, sophisticated manners and monetary strength, Caroline and Anasuya often feel uncertain of themselves because of unsteadiness and disquietude.

Val comes back to India to re-establish his traditions. In London Val meets disillusionment at every step and becomes an emotional wreck. He even becomes frustrated and neurotic. The condition of Val is akin to that of exile about whom D.V.K. Raghavacharyulu speaks:

People without roots or roles become dysfunctional, neurotic and infinitely sad without the dignity of tragedy because they possess no sense of affiliation or loyalty to any particular society, culture or nationality. (qtd. in C.D.Verma 6)

Val has faced difficulties, experienced life at different levels, gained worldly knowledge and finally he has come back to his roots. He has come back to his native village as a man of self-realization. And once a man has achieved self-knowledge and self-awareness, he no longer
oscillates between becoming and being. Back in the world of the Swamy, he regains his 'me': his self. He finds the wilderness of the caves loving because here his spring of inspiration will have perpetual refurbishing. Val now has no rancour and malice against anyone, "he is at peace and satisfied" (Possession 232). His return to the world of the Swamy and the caves is an indication that he has repossessed his self and that he has regained and reasserted his identity. Usha Bande in this regard observes:

Coming back to the "wilderness" is not an impulsive act, because he comes with faith and in faith -- faith in himself and the Swamy. Creative urge and the creative power stem from an artist's desire for self-realisation. In London, Valmiki's creative energies are shifted to prove his ability to the world, so his creativity is impaired; it shows "an indisciplined incoherence." Back with the Swamy, his art gains spontaneity because it springs from within and is used for self-satisfaction. Though bred in obscurity, it surely will vouchsafe health. (80)

The alienation or rootlessness of the Indians who live in foreign countries, whether as immigrants or as temporary visitors, is the leitmotif of Indian English fiction.
Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* (1972), Dilip Hiro's *A Triangular View* (1969), Reginald and Jamila Massey's *The Immigrants* (1973), Timeri Murari's *The Marriage* and Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971) deal with the problems of Indians living in England. Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* (1968), Nayantara Sahgal's *This Time of Morning* (1965) and Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife* (1975) explore the problems faced by Indians living in America. The theme of alienation of the immigrants is found in immigrant poems like Zulfikar Ghose's "This Landscape, These People." In this poem the narrator says that even after staying there for a number of years England seems to be only a museum to him.

Kamala Markandaya's novel, significantly named *The Nowhere Man,* deals with the plight of a lonely man, Srinivas, in an alien land. It explores his inner crisis i.e. the crisis of alienation and loss of identity as an Indian immigrant. He is depicted as a figure of loneliness, a 'disoriented' person and a trespasser, who, even after staying for half a century in England, feels like a "nowhere man, looking for a nowhere city" (*The Nowhere Man* 166). Being cut off from his well-founded cultural roots, he tries to get sustenance from his adopted country. Discussing the thematic nature of the novel, V. Rangan observes:

*The Nowhere Man,* as the title itself indicates, is a novel about a displaced Indian (a South
Indian Brahmin to be precise), Srinivas who settles down in England, but unfortunately not fully accepted by the English community. Srinivas becomes a rootless, restless individual, dispossessed of India and disowned by England. Though the predominant theme of the novel is displacement, alienation, and a search for identity in alien environs, it treats of larger human relations rendering the work an interesting psychological study of human relationship as well as of the essential human loneliness. (186)

After his emigration from India in his youth, Srinivas lives in England for half a century and almost becomes a "naturalised Briton" (The Nowhere Man 93). Descriptions of his early life indicate the basic rootlessness of Srinivas even in his own native land. In fact, the first uprooting in his life takes place during his school days in India when the large teak plantations belonging to his grandfather are cut down by the Imperial government in order to lay a road and thereby divesting the family of a permanent source of income. It is obvious that Srinivas is perceived as an outsider and nowhere man in his own native soil. He abandons his studies and migrates to England, thus uprooting himself from his own motherland.
While Rukmani, Nathan and Ravi are forced to quit their native village by hunger and social conditions, Srinivas is compelled to go out of his place to England due to political persecutions. He realizes that all he really needs is peace and better livelihood. He ultimately escapes from India in search of peace and better sustenance. It is a kind of self-exile that Srinivas has taken upon himself. In order to escape persecution -- for their family has been branded by the government as a terrorist family -- Srinivas is advised by his father to go away to England. He tells him: "They say that England is not a bad place. Platt says in many ways it is better than here. Especially for someone like you" (148).

Driven there in anguish and despondency, Srinivas is compelled to carve out his future in England which is entirely different from the one he had previously envisaged. In an effort to strike root in the alien soil he begins a spice business in London. When Srinivas settles down permanently in London along with his wife and two sons -- Laxman and Seshu, his ties with India are more or less completely snapped.

The attempt of the transplanted family of Srinivas in the process of complete integration with the culture of the adopted country fails in different measures. The most uncompromising failure is Vasantha. Even after settling down
in London she never compromises her orthodox Indian ways. Though living on the British soil she adheres to her Indian ways of living, dressing, eating and even dying. As a typical Indian woman she never compromises with her rich religious tradition. Commenting on Vasantha, Rangan observes:

She could never think of herself as a Londoner. As a matter of fact, she feels superior to the Whites in that she belongs to a religion of cosmic concepts, dealing in high intellectual things in contrast to the parochial thinking of Christianity which she describes as the religion for ten-year-olds. (187)

Srinivas buys a flat in order to strike root in the foreign soil. The house is named 'Chandraprasad.' The name is at once symbolic and suggestive. It is symbolic of Indian culture because Vasantha has given it not only a name but also a habitation that can very well remind others of Indian atmosphere and milieu with the incense and fragrance of a pooja and a clean and holy life. Vasantha proudly says:

At last we have achieved something. A place of our own, where we can live according to our lights although in alien surroundings: and our children after us, and after them theirs. (The Nowhere Man 20)
Despite acquiring property and status Srinivas and Vasantha cannot fully identify themselves with the alien culture. Total integration with a foreign environment and its socio-cultural atmosphere is not possible for them because they cannot give up their deep-rooted native traditions and religio-cultural development. The thesis of the novel is excellently elucidated by studies in sociology as, for example, *Between Two Cultures* where it is enumerated:

All groups who come to settle in a strange country have difficulties adjusting to a new way of life. Asians in Britain face particularly acute problems. Strongly attached to their own religions, languages and customs, they feel that the Western culture is a threat to their values and traditions, and so they tend to become isolated.... As they strive to preserve their culture and identity it becomes harder for them to 'assimilate' to be accepted as British. (Menon 26)

Laxman and Seshu, the sons of Srinivas and Vasantha, fail to inherit the Indian character and the Oriental values since they are brought up in a Christian environment and educated completely in Christian schools. They seem to belong to the second generation of immigrants who have miserably failed to strike root either in their native soil
or in their adopted environment. Obviously, their alienation is complete in that their roots are completely cut off and their adoption into the new and strange precincts is rather dubious. At least Seshu seems to have retained some of the Indian values which are found in Vasantha but Laxman is a hard-hearted realist and Indian attitudes towards parents and family are quite absurd to him.

The family of Srinivas falls into disarray with the advent of the Second World War. Both Laxman and Seshu enlist in the army and the latter even becomes an adept bombing pilot. But soon Seshu is removed from active service in the War for he quails before the revolting spectacle of killing numerous innocent civilians in his bombing raids. He becomes an ambulance driver and at the prime age of 21 dies in a German bombing raid while discharging his duties. Laxman after his meritorious service in the War marries an English girl and settles down as a prosperous businessman in Plymouth.

The sudden and unexpected demise of Seshu and the callous nature of Laxman affect Vasantha so much. Laxman lacks love and respect for his parents. Vasantha's dream of keeping her two sons in her house is doomed to be an utter failure. Her separation from them, one already dead and the other living separately from her, tells upon her health so
much. She finally dies of tuberculosis. The death of Vasantha, who symbolizes for Srinivas his traditional and cultural moorings, leaves Srinivas all alone, desolate and depressed in the big house and also the world.

The two deaths prove a great blow to Srinivas. Vasantha has, no doubt, been a source of great strength to him. With the death of his wife, Srinivas finds life quite empty and barren. His business also goes to pot and the house becomes what his elder son, Laxman, contemptuously calls a 'pigsty'. Srinivas's loneliness is very much caused by his severance from his kith and kin who leave one by one from his life forcing him into a predicament against an alien and hostile environment. He feels terribly lonely and rootless and often resorts to the memories of the past. He feels frustrated and even thinks of returning home. He wishes to return to India but he cannot do so. He can only make an expedition to the land of his birth mentally or in imagination.

But the thought of the process of leaving -- the form-filling, the packing, the selling-up and going -- made him flinch. When I have the energy he promised himself. When, however, some of his energies did dribble back, he found he had no notion of where to go to in India or what to do when he got there, since so much had been destroyed or given up -- self-
respect, livelihood, family cohesions -- during the struggle for Independence. In the absence of these robust lifelines the decision to leave did not survive. (The Nowhere Man 44)

It is only after the entry of Mrs. Pickering, a very poor old divorcee and a former nurse, into the house and in fact, into his life that the dejected Srinivas once again becomes a normal man. The emptiness created by the death of Vasantha is more than filled by Mrs. Pickering for the blood relationship between the father and the son, Laxman, "had withered next to nothing, worked on by an alien culture" (57). When Srinivas is afflicted with leprosy, she looks after him with humane concern. Even then the relationship between Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering cannot be considered a deep-rooted one as Markandaya describes the situation:

They had been derelict, in a way, when they met. They had come together, and in the process had salved and restored each other. But it was a muted process, more an easing of aches than a violent build-up of pleasure, which did not demand the constant stimulus of touch and presence of young love. (70)

However, the placidity of his life with the English widow happens to be short-lived because he soon becomes a target
of the atrocities and the mindless attacks of Fred Fletcher, whose sole aim is to send the immigrants out of England.

The social conditions in the post-war England with all its immigration complications are not quite conducive to people like Srinivas. Britain with the loss of colonies began to treat the immigrants in London as trespassers who have actually no business to be there. Though a great deal of settlement took place when England was economically sound and well-founded, the Depression, the two World Wars and the loss of the Empire brought about a definite change in the prevailing situation. Owing to the problem of severe unemployment in the country, industries and organizations inclined to prefer the natives to the immigrants. The immigrants came to be more and more unwanted and unwelcome.

Fred, who has proved to be a good-for-nothing fellow, has failed to get a job in England. His entry into Australia in order to make a living there is also futile. On returning to Britain he finds that a large number of African and Asian immigrants are blocking the way of the English youths to economic security. He blames people like Srinivas for the miserable plight of the wandering and unemployed English youth "and becomes a self-styled champion of the cause of the English youth, campaigning systematically against the
foreigners whom he wants to go back to their own countries" (Rangan 190).

Srinivas feels extremely lonely when he comes to know that his living in London becomes unpleasant and unacceptable to people like Fred. He tends to feel cut off and isolated from the well-known surroundings in which he has lived so long. His effort to establish his identity by wearing his old Indian dhoti and walking barefoot on the London road seems to be a kind of protest against Fred's refusal to accept his identity with Britain which has given him shelter all these years.

Srinivas's feeling of loss of identity and his tropical disease namely leprosy make him more alien to his surroundings. The disease becomes the external manifestation of his isolation. And of course, it is the cause of his alienation from his neighbours. Commenting on the pitiful condition of Srinivas C.D. Verma says:

The question that Srinivas again and again asks himself is where he would go if he were to leave the country (England). The experience of Srinivas in England becomes the theme of isolation; he has been deserted by his son; his wife is dead; as a leper he is an island
unto himself. His condition is beyond redemption. (38)

If Srinivas has to leave England he has nowhere to go to. Nor can he peacefully remain where he is. That is the reason why he becomes a miserable nowhere man. He feels as though he is totally alienated from the society. He more or less becomes a prisoner within his own house. He is both mentally and physically sick. Even his son, Laxman, does not show him love and concern when he is suffering from leprosy. Instead he accuses his father of "sticking out like a sore thumb instead of decently integrating" (The Nowhere Man 261). Srinivas tends to believe that his disease has finally separated him from others and thus he becomes a stranger to himself.

I am a stranger he said. I have been transformed into a stranger said the unwanted man, and examined a pair of hands whose stigmata would be the excuse. (230)

And again he feels:

... and the white drops fell within him where they could not be seen, for the fissure that gaped between him and flesh, though it could also have been between himself and the country which had, until not so long ago, been loved as his own. (261)
Fred's diabolic nature seems to be quite boundless. He torments Srinivas in various ways. He puts faeces, dead mice etc, at his door step. Srinivas is abused and scandalized and eventually Fred sets fire to his house to burn him alive. While trying to set fire to the house of Srinivas, he himself gets caught in the flames and is charred to death. Srinivas is finally saved from the burning house, but he soon dies of shock.

Despite his sincere efforts to integrate into the alien culture and the life of the country of his adoption, Srinivas is not allowed to do so. Ever since he reached England he has tried his best to feel one with the people of the country of adoption. But unfortunately the English community has failed to absorb him into its mainstream. The pertinent comment of Rangan deserves to be mentioned here:

Srinivas represents millions of men who for some reason or other leave their own roots and fail to strike roots in the alien soil, and die as rootless and restless individuals. Srinivas lives in England for one full generation of thirty years only to be a nowhere man.(192)

It is quite obvious that a clear-cut pattern runs through these novels of Kamala Markandaya. The author seems
to think that if one's roots are attenuated or lost one gets ruined. If one becomes rootless and gets estranged from one's tradition one has to suffer a lot.

Rukmani and Nathan have to move out of their native soil due to poverty and starvation. In the city they suffer a lot. While Nathan dies because his roots are scorched, Rukmani is able to come back to her native soil. She is able to survive and keep her spirit intact because she has a very strong hold of her roots. Her firm faith in her family and well-established tradition is unshakeable.

Similarly, after his harrowing experiences in England Valmiki returns to India to re-establish his well-founded roots. Though he happens to be a rootless person who has lost his artistic ability in the alien surroundings, his coming back to the native soil and roots help him regain his original self and identity. Val is able to recover his artistic genius only after getting back to his roots.

Unlike Rukmani and Val, Ravi, Lalitha and Srinivas become the victims of rootlessness in an alien atmosphere. The tragedy of Ravi lies in his miserable failure to establish his identity in the city. He fails to keep up his spirits intact because he does not want to go back to his roots. He is unable to regain his identity due to his
irresolute choices, lack of will power and rootlessness.

Like Ravi, Lalitha is lost in the city life. She becomes a tragic victim of impracticable dreams. She is lured to the city by the illusory splendour of a film career. Her neglect of the social and moral roots paves the way for her complete destruction. Unlike Saroja who never leaves her roots though she has to go to the city and mingle with strange people, Lalitha gets ruined by her estrangement from her traditional roots.

Likewise, Srinivas dies a nowhere man in an alien situation because of his utter failure to come back to his root. He suffers a lot in Britain as a rootless and restless creature because he has lost his identity there. Ravi, Lalitha and Srinivas become tragic victims because of their rootlessness. Rukmani and Valmiki are able to survive because they finally get back to their roots.

Kamala Markandaya works out a clear distinction or even a polarity between the people who mentally and spiritually leave their roots and those who leave their roots only in terms of space. Nathan, Ravi, Lalitha and Srinivas belong to the category of those who leave their roots spiritually. They come to grief. They are restless thinking individuals. But the other category consisting of Rukmani, Saroja, Vasantha
and Valmiki has a native simplicity protecting them. Like Donne's devoted lovers, who never really part though they go far from each other, these simple people and their roots are never really separated. All the tremors of their neighbourhoods finally leave them safe, their equilibrium undisturbed. The pattern is systematically developed. In Nectar in a Sieve, Two Virgins and A Handful of Rice it is the city that stands for the new world, symbolizing the removal from roots. In Possession and The Nowhere Man it is England that stands for the alien world.

All the same, the common factor is the basic question, "Where do I fit in?" as O'Neill in The Hairy Ape (259) would put it. Kamala Markandaya is able to identify this identity crisis in respect of the various permutations and combinations. However, in the context of the Indian culture, the end may not be as pathetic as that in The Hairy Ape. In the Indian context, a via-media is possible and this is what the maturer Kamala Markandaya suggests in a few of her later novels. This theme of reconciliation is the concern of the next chapter.