

## Chapter 5

### Summing up

Postcolonial criticism emerged as a distinct field in the 1990s.

But today it has gained immense popularity particularly among the universities of the formerly colonized countries. There are many definitions of postcolonialism. The definition of postcolonialism by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* shows the relationship between colonialism and postcolonialism and when postcolonialism actually begins. Bruce King divides the postcolonial age into two phases. The first phase aims at cultural and political liberation. The second phase strives to liberate the country from the economic clutches of the colonizer.

The colonizer suppressed the native culture and created an inferiority complex among the colonized by projecting the alien culture as superior to that of the colonized. The colonizer supported this view with many pseudo-scientific stereotypes. Travellers too developed stereotyped views about outsiders. The simple reason was that the colonized were different in culture, race and ethnicity.

The colonized also, to some extent, to blame. They were not ready to stand up to the colonizer's bullying. Several Indian English novels on the period of the British Raj have made it clear that the lack of unity among the Indians, particularly among the Indian rulers, was responsible for the enslavement of India. Gandhiji in his *Hind Swaraj*

says the East India Company colonized India only due to the Indians' slavish mentality. He insisted that political freedom can be won for India only when the mind is also set free. Most critics feel that political freedom is easier to win than cultural/intellectual freedom.

The colonizer manipulated the colonized according to their political and economic needs. The native culture was literally and metaphorically silenced. They regarded whatever was native as primitive and everything of the colonizer's as modern. But the colonizer never fully pacified the colonized. There was resistance to the colonizer from the moment of colonization.

The colonizer introduced English to the colonized people's for the sake of better administration and to train them to be better clerks. However, many Indians who learnt English turned against English political domination. Some began to use English to serve their own purposes. As Bill Ashcroft says, the natives abrogated the standards of correct grammar, syntax and pronunciation and appropriated the alien language to suit their own political and cultural needs.

The introduction of the English educational system in India brought about desirable changes in the natives. But some elite natives tried to express their views boldly through their writings. However they needed British patronage to publish. Even if they did publish, their writings seldom reached the common people of India because of their ignorance of English.

The concept of nation binds everyone, crossing the barriers of language, territory, religion, race and custom. They all unite to fight the colonizer. The elite natives tried to incite patriotism among the common people not only through books but also through newspapers, journals, pamphlets and political writings. Anti-colonial nationalism sprouted and grew by the touch of the native culture.

The world language English is reconstructed as it merges with the native and regional languages and produces Englishes with regional peculiarities. The English language of today is not centred in imperialism; it dissociates itself from the centre and expresses the native experience.

There were many great writers in India's vernacular languages in ancient times, but Indian writing in English is a recent phenomenon. One of the pioneers and one of the unjustly forgotten Indian writers in English is K.S.Venkataramani.

Venkataramani learnt English and English Literature. But his writings are assertively Indian. He reflects faithfully the life and spirit of the Indian people and grapples with the problems and tensions which affect their life and character.

A close reading of Venkataramani's oeuvre reveals a postcolonial strain in all his writings. The key postcolonial themes in his writings are: the rural/colonized-urban/colonizer divide, resistance to the colonial past, economic degradation, superiority of

the native culture over that of the West, psychological trauma due to the clash between the colonizer/city and the colonized/village, drawbacks in the educational system introduced by the British in India, regeneration of Indian villages, lack of self-esteem, the importance of the marginalized to the society, the problems faced by British Government servants, defects of modern civilization, decolonization of mind, and corrective measures for the wrongs wrought by the colonizer.

Venkataramani's *Murugan-the Tiller* has rightly been called a "vignette of vivid village life in south India," for there is no other novel besides *Murugan—the Tiller*, which portrays so simply and realistically the social, political and economic problems of village life in South India. Venkataramani asserts his unflinching advocacy of the reconstruction and regeneration of the Indian village based on a decentralized economy and polity (Uday Shankar Ojha, "K.S.Venkataramani's *Murugan*: [sic] *The Tiller*: A Portrayal of Gandhian Dream of Rural India " 21).

The Indian village is a national asset and it is the first duty of renascent India to revitalize the hundreds of Indian villages by reviving the old agencies which rendered the Indian village a little paradise on earth. This sacred duty is clear to one who knows the significance of the Indian village to the world.

The story is set against the background of the village of Alavanti and Madras City. In Venkataramani's fictional design the city of Madras stands for the colonizer and the Indian countryside for the colonized and the metaphor is sustained up to very end of the novel. Of the three main characters, Ramu and Murugan belong to the village of Alavanti and Kedari, Ramu's friend, an ambitious lawyer, lives in Madras City. Kedari asks Ramu to leave the village and come to Madras so that he can prosper in life. Ramu yields to the temptation and leaves his village and fertile lands, goes to Madras, marries a city-bred girl named Janaki and fails again in the B.A. examination. He faces many troubles in Madras, as city life is contrary to his habitual simple life and high thinking. At the end of the story he finds peace of mind only when he settles in the ideal village of Meenakshipuram. Murugan, though a very hardworking tiller at the beginning of the novel, is later corrupted by the cultural invasion represented by the city-bred Thoppai. Ultimately he becomes the victim of self-destructive ambition like Kedari and finds himself in serious trouble because he opened a toddy shop in the village. Corrected by Ramu at the end of the novel, he too settles with him in the ideal village of Meenakshipuram.

In contrast to Ramu, the village bred scholar and Murugan the peasant, Kedari is very ambitious and ultimately ruins his career as a lawyer. Kedari is concerned only with success in his career and not

with values. He wants to achieve anything in a short period and also in the corrupt way. He involves himself in the Delhi Assembly elections and tries to win by buying votes. Thereby he becomes bankrupt. Ultimately Kedari is successful neither in his career nor in his life. But Ramu, who is unlike Kedari, rejects even the post of District Collector and resigns from Government service and settles peacefully in the ideal village of Meenakshipuram, giving importance to his values and thereby becoming the most successful character in the novel by the standards set by Albert Einstein “Try not to become a man of success but try to become a man of values.”

As an apostle of village reconstruction, Venkataramani weaves the narrative keeping in view the idea of a self-sufficient, morally and economically integrated village community as the basic unit of the superstructure of Indian society. Sociologically, the author makes an ardent appeal to the common people to go back to the plough for an honest life in the open farm and lift themselves to the higher virtues of evolution, gentility, humanity and love.

A kind of new birth takes place in the heart of Ramu and he resolves to dedicate his entire life to the betterment and well being of society. Ramu proposes a concrete welfare plan for the backward rural community, i.e., facilitating irrigation by renovating a lake. His mission of rural reconstruction earns him a great name among the people as well as amongst the government officials of Madras.

Mr. Cadell too starts believing in the methods of rural reconstruction and agrees with Ramu's ideas.

Another minor character, Sita, who later becomes a widow and secretly harbours deep love and respect for Ramu, feels passionately that the village needs great reforming. But the best men like Ramu leave the village and the idlers and the unfit alone remain in the village.

The colonizer greatly influenced every aspect of the life of the colonized including their minds. Before colonization people lived happily in the village, satisfied with their simple life. But, after colonization, people are attracted by the way of life of the city. Murugan is shown passionately bonded to the land and, like all peasants and farmers, he worships Mother Earth with religious devotion. He feels that the evil is in the system and not in the man, but he too becomes a victim of village politics and the governmental machinery and eventually ends up with the gang of Nagalapuram dacoits as an escaped prisoner, to be eventually rescued by his old benefactor Ramu.

Here we are reminded of the simple peasant who is tempted and corrupted and behaves like an animal in the marvellous story "The Imp and the Peasant's Bread" written by the eminent novelist Leo N. Tolstoy. Like Murugan the peasant in the story is also a good angel and ploughs his field in all innocence. But he is provided corn, more

than he needs, and taught by the Imp how to make vodka. The habit of taking vodka takes away all his angelic qualities, turning him into a beast. Tolstoy, at this point, rightly moralizes that the blood of the wild animal is always in man, but, as long as men have only as much corn, as they need, it is kept under control.

Murugan is ruined by the toddy shop and the ambitious proddings of Thoppai. Thoppai, a combination of three traits—intellect, ambition and combative energy--persuades the staid Murugan to open a toddy shop in the village. This leads to his involvement in a riot, gets him arrested and imprisoned along with Thoppai and others. The prisoners, however, escape from the jail led by a fellow prisoner who is a robber chieftain. They find their way to the Nagalapuram Hills to lead a life of outlaws, posing a threat to the government. Ramu, who has been appointed to investigate the course and the nature of the criminal activities of the outlaws of the Nagalapuram Hills, influences the dacoits by his sympathetic words and habitual simplicity. Murugan "the true salt of the Earth," along with the whole gang of dacoits, makes a passionate appeal to Ramu. Ramu offers them a rehabilitation plan if they agree to go back to a normal life. Murugan's eyes shine with the farmer's love of peace and kindles a kindred beam in the chieftain's eyes. The dacoits agree to the settlement scheme. There every member will have a three-acre holding for cultivation and a garden site with a house. With the active

help and cooperation of the outlaws and Ramu's dedication and sincerity, the dream of an ideal agrarian colony takes concrete shape in the form of Meenakshipuram.

Meenakshipuram, a garden city now smiling with a new life, is all set to prepare man for a higher plane of action, a simpler and more fruitful existence. Ramu, after the completion of the scheme, gets promotion to the post of District Collector, but resigns from government service and settles down in the new settlement.

Almost all the characters in the novel, particularly Ramu, Kedari and Murugan suffer some degree of psychological trauma. Their physical as well as mental suffering can be traced to their aping urban/the colonizer's mores.

Meenakshi, Ramu's mother-in-law, is born to rule. She considers Ramu an orphan and a drifting vessel. So she determines to play the role of the pilot. In her ambition she urges him on to incessant action. Ramu is content with the life in Alavanti. But Meenakshi compels Ramu to apply for a government job and join as camp clerk to the District Collector at Cuddapah for Rs. 25 a month. Meenakshi never bothers about the trauma suffered by Ramu but rejoices at the prospects of Janaki.

Kedari, the pushing, practical, adventurous friend of Ramu, rises and falls like a meteor. Kedari is essentially a man of action. To him his self is his only God. A burning desire to stand well with the

world blinds him to his questionable course of action. As a member of the Delhi Legislative Assembly, he achieves the crowning glory of his life. The hour of glory is also the hour of doom. From the dizzy heights of fame and success he falls into the abysmal depths of shame and defeat. The resultant psychological trauma reforms him and makes him repentant of his actions.

Thoppai, a rebellious, town-bred proletarian, who plans a get-rich-quick scheme, influences Murugan, the typical Indian peasant, unlettered and unsophisticated, humble and pious. Murugan's greed is whetted and he alienates and outrages public opinion by opening a toddy shop in his village, where none existed before, gets involved in crime and is jailed. His downfall is swift and is complete when he escapes from prison to a robber stronghold. Ramu comes to his rescue and Murugan becomes a God-anointed tiller again.

Ramu, with Murugan on his side, lives with self-esteem. But, due to the influence of his mother-in-law Meenakshi, he accepts the post of camp clerk to the District Collector of Cuddapah. Ramu recollects with pain that it is the first occasion in a period of three centuries when a member of his family is obliged to accept a menial job and stand in servitude before another.

Ramu regains his self-esteem only when he resigns his government job and settles himself in the lap of Mother Nature in Meenakshipuram, where:

Work was light and play for everyone in the settlement. For it was work for their own joy. None slaved for another. And labour was of the kind which nourished body, mind and soul. Life was simple and joyous, and man was happy on the lap of Nature, like a babe on the bosom of its mother. (Venkataramani, *Murugan* 308).

Another postcolonial feature in the novel is the economic depression suffered by almost all the characters. Ramu, the young landlord is a victim of modern civilization, the city and the university. As a landlord he lives happily and even supports many families by giving them work in his lands. But, his mother-in-law compels him to accept the menial job of a camp clerk. He has to accept the job in order to support his family. Rs.25 per month becomes such a great amount for a big landlord like Ramu. But his suffering comes to an end when he settles in the garden city of Meenakshipuram. Kedari, a successful lawyer, becomes bankrupt due to his self-destructive ambition. Murugan, who has sufficient land and money to support his family, becomes a prisoner due to his city-bred friend Thoppai. Thus all the characters tumble from their economic height due to the influence of modern society, which is the influence of the West/the colonizer. But they all recover and are healed once they return to the simple, humble, rustic life.

*Kandan, the Patriot* is woven round the main character Kandan. The story is set in the village of Akkur, and the main episodes are so designed as to reach the climax of opposing the imperialist rule by gathering together all the people.

Three episodes form the plot of the novel. The key players in them are: (1) Chokalinga Mudaliar and the tillers of the lands of Akkur; (2) Rangan and Rajeswari; and, (3) Sundaram and Saraswati. Kandan in the background knits them all into a single, harmonious whole. The place of action is mainly the village of Akkur, with its little railway station and little toddy shop, except the few hours at Adyar and Egmore at the beginning of the story and at Tranquebar when the events reach their climax.

The three episodes represent three different classes of people: (1) Chokalingam the typical *mirasdar* of a South Indian village; (2) the intellectual group who had their studies at Oxford and passed the I.C.S. examination but left that prestigious position to work for the reconstruction of the village and also to fight against the imperialist rule; and, (3) the typical government servant, Sundaram of Southern Railways and his wife Saraswati. They are all influenced by Kandan's dedicated work and join hands with him in protesting against the British, rule.

Village reconstruction is the cornerstone of Venkataramani's writing. Almost all the characters in the novel come back to the

village. Ponnann returns to Tranquebar after his sojourn in Madras for ten years. Kandan, Rangan and Rajeswari studied at Oxford but return to India to work for the uplift of the rural people. When Padma, a minor character, runs away from the village and wants to migrate to Australia, Rajee convinces him to stay in India and work for its freedom. Even Chokalinga Mudaliar, who is immersed in his luxurious and easy way of life, is changed at the end of the novel. Rangan persuades Mudaliar to take part in the freedom movement.

Living in the village, the characters understand the deficiencies of the village and work to rectify them. Kandan expresses his sympathy when he observes how the unskilled workers are exploited. He strives to ensure equality of wages to all whether they are skilled or unskilled. As an important step in village reconstruction, he works hard to close the toddy shop at Akkur, because the people spend their entire hard-earned money in the toddy shop. The toper's family is affected and also the toddy shop constantly becomes a place of quarrel, as most people who consume toddy lose their senses in intoxication.

Kandan serves as the guiding star and inspires the other characters like Rangan, Rajee, Sundaram, Saraswati, Mudaliar, and Padma to work for the country. Kandan vows to be a *bramacharya*. He inspires Rangan and Rajee not to marry till the country gets freedom.

Venkataramani insists on educational reforms also. He even blames that the wrong system of education introduced by the British in India is the root cause of all evils. The education system is framed by the British only to train Indians to assist them in their governance. This point was stated clearly in Macaulay's Minute. They are successful in getting good and obedient clerks for their offices. But the introduction of English by force in schools and colleges opened to the Indian an access to the abundant riches of world culture, through which they developed a deep urge for freedom. Venkataramani opposes this system of education in all his writings. Venkataramani addresses the problems India will face after Independence. He gives solutions to these problems. He deals in detail with the problems of Swaraj India in politics, education, and population growth and village reconstruction. He gives expression to his ideas through the characters in the novels.

The colonizer introduced a new system of education which was totally against the culture of India and suffered from so many drawbacks. Venkataramani points to these defects in the course of his novels and other writings. In *Murugan—The Tiller*, Ramu fails in Economics. Kedari and others cannot believe that he has failed. The education system does not bother about the creative sensitivity and originality of the students. The teachers just want the students to

reproduce what they have taught them. The teachers test only the memory power and not the creative originality.

Almost all the women characters in *Murugan—the Tiller* are uneducated. However, they counsel their husbands rightly whenever necessary. Kokilam often checks the dangerous tendencies of Kedari. But he refuses to accept her advice and reasons out his behaviour, which fails to convince her. Her words come true. She listens to what her conscience tells her. She is bold enough to talk about her feeling openly to her husband. She longs only for a simple life, not for a posh one, which Kedari promises.

Though Sita is illiterate, she has a very thorough knowledge of the world. Her concern for the rural people is revealed by her plan of reconstructing Alavanti. She is ready to give away all her lands in charity, so that everyone in the village may receive three acres of land and everyone may lead a financially independent life.

Meenakshi, the mother-in-law of Ramu, guides him and directs him whether necessary or not. She never hesitates to use harsh words to him. When Ramu's mind is depressed by his hard work, she boosts his morale by pointing to the financial condition of the family. She even predicts that if he works hard he will one day become a District Collector. Her words come true at the end of the novel. Because of her urging Ramu agrees to toil in the malarial district of Cuddapah. When

he creates a new settlement, he aptly names it “Meenakshipuram,” as he thinks that she is the source of his success in life.

Ponni, the faithful wife of the peasant Murugan, warns him against his friendship with Thoppai. As warned by Ponni, Thoppai is the cause of his downfall, his loss of fame and wealth, his arrest by the police and finally his association with the Nagalapuram dacoits.

All the women characters in *Murugan—The Tiller* understand human nature and the troubles of their families. This is common to Kokilam, Janaki, Ponni and even Mrs. Cadell. They are bold enough to open their hearts to their husbands and also openly criticize their husbands’ misbehaviour.

In *Kandan, the Patriot* Rajeswari Bai is born rich, studies at Oxford, but devotes her life to the service of the country. As she is educated, she is able to make any decision by herself and follow it up without any hurdles. She decides firmly to postpone her marriage till India gets Independence. She does not work alone for freedom. She persuades everyone who is close to her to work for freedom. She persuades her friend Rangan, I.C.S., to quit the service and join the struggle for freedom. At First he is hesitant, as he is not ready to shed the comforts, fame and name of a District Collector. But when he is suddenly transferred as Settlement Officer, as advised by Rajee, he resigns his post and joins the freedom movement. She makes Rangan realize that his study at Oxford does not help their country in any

way. Even the post of District Collector does not give him freedom to work for his country. They are mere slaves to the British Government to carry out their orders. Their education alienates them from the suffering of the poor people. They live only to satisfy their needs and obey the orders of the British. But once they shed their power, they mingle with the common people, understand their difficulties and only then feel empathy for their suffering.

Rajee is a source of inspiration to both Kandan and Rangan. She even guides the runaway from home, Padmanaban, in the right direction and helps him to join Kandan in the freedom movement. Her education and financial independence give her freedom and mental strength.

In *Murugan—The Tiller* the women characters are illiterate and they have to depend on their husbands for financial support. Therefore they have to follow them even though they do not like their behaviour. But they are the ones who direct the male characters. They are able to guide their family, distinguish the false from the true. They can even sense any misfortune that will befall their family. They persuade their husbands to follow the righteous path, which will give them a happy and peaceful future. Sita, though uneducated and a widow, uses her inherited wealth for the betterment of her village.

If these women characters are given education, they will guide the family and the nation in a more effective way. The character of

Rajeswari Bai in *Kandan, The Patriot* proves this. To help the womenfolk of our country, the existing system of education has to be changed. Most of the male characters who receive proper education in Venkataraman's novels are unable to guide either their family or the nation in the proper way. Their real talents are suppressed by the existing system of education. The highly educated and those who are in the higher positions are unable to solve any problem of the public. Instead they complicate the problem without understanding the root cause. Therefore Venkataramani insists in *The Next Rung*, "Only a drastic change in school and college curricula will put us on the way to achieve a future for the race worthy of its own inner prophecies and higher tendencies" (58).

Under the British system of education, in India, the first twenty-five years of life are wasted merely on books. Only from twenty-five to forty these students learn about life. They gain knowledge of the ways of the world through pain and suffering. To avoid such experience in later life Venkataramani says one can learn from one's own mistakes. Any change in education should be made from the initial stage, i.e., from the bottom rung of the ladder rather than at the top, which is not visible clearly. If changes are made from the primary level, the real value of education will reach everyone. Women are naturally intelligent, and if they are given education (a new system of education), they will create a new world. With

intelligence, education, financial independence and their inherent desire to follow the right path, women will create a paradise both at home and in the country.

In *Paper Boats*, Venkataramani shows how some sections of the people are marginalized in India. He stresses that they should be given due importance in society. Though the beggars beg for alms, Venkataramani philosophies on their life. The beggars induce the impulse of charity in the people. The fishermen community is neglected in the Hindu society. He wants to concentrate on welfare measures for this community. They have to be credited for the work they do. Arunalam belongs to a marginalized society in Tamilnadu. Venkataramani talks about the pariah community's service to the village people. He highlights their merit and praises the community. He also gives a personal touch to the sketches by talking about his grandmother. But, beyond the personal touch, he upholds the tradition of Indian culture and the ways of the Indian joint family life. The excellence of Indian domestic life is pictured in this sketch.

He projects the distinguished features of the Hindu temple and the Hindu pilgrim. He also shows the exalted character of the Jagath Guru and how his devotees revere him. An Indian marriage is brought before the eyes of the readers and Venkataramani visualizes the merriment involved in the marriage. It is a social get-together, the two families come to a good understanding and the bride and the

bridegroom understand the importance of maintaining a good relationship with the public. A marriage in a village is not a domestic event but a celebration for the entire village.

The happiness of married life depends on the wife one gets. Venkataramani delineates this dictum in "My Neighbour." Pitchu Sastri renounces his family and worldly affairs and becomes a *Sanyasi*. After finishing his domestic duties, Sastri turns to world service. According to Hindu philosophy, a man, in the first half of his life, has to toil for his family and, in the second half, for the service of humanity. The speciality of the Indian way of life is pointed out here.

In *Jatadharan and Other Stories*, Venkataramani devotes two stories to Jatadharan and the other stories to his favourite theme of the educational system and the problems faced by the British Government's servants. The two stories related to Jatadharan show how a love-failure at the prime of life turns one to a better life. Venkataramani touches upon this point in *The Nest Rung*. He says one has to control one's sex-impulse so that one can divert one's strength, both physical and mental, to a higher purpose. Jatadharan refuses to marry a rich girl and join a government job. Instead he likes to improve the life of the youth of his village by becoming a pial teacher. He considers his work a service to the rural people. Because of him many illiterate youth are empowered to attain high positions in life.

In “Destiny” Venkataramani proclaims his strong dislike for the British-designed educational system of India. Muthu is a revolutionary character. He and his creator both consider working for the nation to be more important than passively studying prescribed books. Venkataramani felt this when he was quite young and here he talks about it. He gives expression to this idea through the character of Muthu. Muthu’s work is selfless. The people for whom he has done social work fail to share his debts. Though he understands the common man’s nature, he does not change his principle. He finds happiness only in serving the people. Indirectly Venkataramani hints that the common man has to change his selfishness and everyone should work for the common cause and everyone has to contribute either in terms of money or physical work for the uplift of society. To emphasise this point Venkataramani, in *Murugan—The Tiller*, says that one Gandhiji is not enough for India. There have to be Gandhijis in every village so that there will be a real rejuvenation of the Indian Village.

In “A Fractured Arm” Venkataramani shows what may happen to students and to the school if a misanthrope is appointed teacher. He insists that the appointment of teachers, especially primary teachers, has to be done carefully. The teachers play a great role in shaping the young people of a country. Therefore they should love their profession and the students and never threaten the students

with a cane. Venkataramani is opposed to the view “spare the rod and spoil the child.”

The plight of parents having a girl child is illustrated with Sastri's life. He has to devote his time only to fulfilling his duty as Sub-Inspector in the Salt and Abkari Department. He cannot do justice to his family by finding a suitable groom for his daughter. As insisted on by his wife, he takes leave to carry out his duty as a father. But, this results in only a waste of money and his transfer to a malarial district. Here Venkataramani wants to change the mentality of the people. He does not blindly support whatever is Indian. In the 1930s people thought that a girl child has to be married off by the age of twelve. Venkataramani, through Sastri, presents the scientific justification for delaying the girl child's marriage.

In the last story “Illumination,” Venkataramani indirectly advises the readers to ignore the rational mind which finds reasons for all actions and reactions. He urges the readers to work with detachment and with dedication, which will lead to eternal bliss. The West tries to reason out everything scientifically. But Venkataramani says that the West's approach to life does not give peace of mind. A man can understand the course of life better only with the help of his religion and not with the rational mind.

Venkataramani, in *On the Sand-Dunes*, muses on the disadvantages of modern civilization. He always prefers to be one with

Nature. He enjoys the beauty of Nature. The thought of moving from the sand dunes and starting his work in the city in the crowded cells pains him. He compares the rural life with the urban one. He finds life only in the rural area. Everything pulses with life. People gather in the temple for evening prayer. They live a carefree life. Venkataramani is envious of the scene because he feels that it is not his own. The urban life is influenced by the colonizer and therefore loses its native touch. Because of its influence the urban people are restless and they lose their peace. They develop false ambitions and always think of profits and the ways of exploiting others.

In the name of architecture, they abuse the environment and disturb its balance. Venkataramani considers this an obstruction to life's way. He urges the people to change their life from the city to the rural areas. When he is a child, he becomes one with Nature and plays in the open air and enjoys his life thoroughly. But now he cannot think of that joyous moment. He is imprisoned in the name of school and college education. Here again as in other writings he talks about his favourite theme of the evils of the educational system prevailing in India.

In this musing he openly calls to the West and shows them what they have done to India. They have only polluted the earth and the sky in the name of industrialization. Due to civilization the natural course of everything is disturbed. Man loses his leisure and

always chases something, which results in nothingness.

Venkataramani expresses his anger against the West when he talks about their method of ruling India. He says even beasts do not enslave another. But the so-called civilized man rules others and enslaves, exploits and plunders them of their wealth. The West has brought only sleepless nights after hard work and they have become slaves to machines. But the dependence on machines does not eradicate the problem of the poor and the hungry. It only induces a slavish mentality in people. He provides solutions to all these problems. He asks man to work with detachment and with dignity and return to village life. The line of *dharma* has to guide man to have peace in life.

In *A Day with Sambhu*, a Sadhu educates the child Sambhu on how he has to spend his day from daybreak to night. He also explains the Indian way of life to Sambhu and instructs him to follow it with faith. He shows that the Indian way of life is eco-friendly. It does not disturb Nature but grows with Nature. Indian culture does not pollute the earth, water and land, whereas the Western way of life and their culture pollute everything and lead to nothingness.

The Sadhu instructs Sambhu to worship Nature so that he may preserve the Nature and pass on a better life to the next generation. He explains how nourishing the Indian breakfast is to the physique and advises him to avoid the food items introduced by the West.

School education must teach him everything, Venkataramani explains how a student has to behave in school. After school hours he has to take care of his garden and grow fruits and vegetables. The food from one's own land will be tasty and give more nourishment. The evening stroll in the fields accompanied by a cow will be health giving for both Sambhu and the cow.

He cautions him against taking non-vegetarian food. Vegetarian food will be natural for any human being. Those who consume natural food will be healthy and their mind and soul will be soft and friendly. Those who eat non-vegetarian food may grow violent in mind. To follow the path of *ahimsa* it is necessary that one eats only vegetarian food.

Venkataramani chooses a child to advise and thereby project the superiority of Indian culture. He thinks that the age of twelve is the ripe age for it is the age of transition. There may be confusion whether to follow the native/ colonized or the foreign/ colonizer's culture. He compares both and praises the colonized people's original culture.

The books *The Next Rung* and *Renascent India* were published in 1928, that is during the pre-Independence period. However instead of dealing with the freedom struggle, Venkataraman, in these two prose pieces, thinks ahead and talks about the problems that India will face after Independence.

In *Renascent India* Venkataramani speaks about World War I and anticipates that the leaders' approach to World War I may lead to another World War. While talking about the Indian scenario he says that in India the unrest has started already and it is only the first step. The unrest will come to an end once India gets freedom. The two causes that drive the unrest are thirst for freedom and the widespread poverty in India.

Venkataramani talks about the postcolonial problems of India. The West has disturbed the entire structure of India and thrust its culture on India and shown the native culture as inferior. The colonizer has silenced the Indians' voice and even if it is raised it is hardly heard. Venkataramani suggests corrective measures for the wrongs done to the colonized.

The colonizer has not left anything untouched, and their imprint is felt in all fields. The Indian Village, which kept the culture intact, was disturbed by the colonizer. People lived happily in the village. But due to industrialization people now migrate to towns. They leave behind their traditional work of ploughing the land to the simple people and work as government clerks in the city. The government does not spend money on the development of villages but on military expeditions and on perpetuating the dynasty. He argues that the ancient way of governing the village is the best suited to

Indian villages. He even proclaims that the Indian Village can provide solutions to the economic ills in any progressive society.

Apart from the village problem Venkataramani talks about other evils and how they can be rectified. Venkataramani thinks ahead of his time. Postcolonial readers can easily understand the depth of the problems projected by him in his writings. If the existing problems of his time are left unattended to, they will penetrate into and spoil the entire society. So the wrongs have to be corrected so that everyone in India can enjoy real Swaraj.

After talking about the general problems, Venkataramani says that the individual in India has to change his/her character and attitude to public affairs. The Indian does not care about his neighbour and fails to extend a helping hand to them. Venkataramani attributes this quality to the evil of the long political subjection of India. The public and the individual have to come out of the influence of the colonizer and realize their native tradition and uphold its superiority. If everyone understands this and rejuvenates the villages, a real paradise will be born for Indians.

In *The Next Rung* Venkataramani says man moved from the bottom rung of civilization by learning the art of cooking and clothing. But man has improved only in external affairs. He has not changed fundamentally. Intrinsic progress is the ultimate. But it is not easy to

attain. The external institutions like Government, property, marriage, religion and science have to help man to achieve his goal.

The Government sets and directs the individual in every action in modern days. Its primary function is to monitor whether everyone gets food and to protect the weak and the poor from any sort of exploitation. The Government needs to function in such a way as to maintain economic equality among the people. As the goal of the Government is lofty, the people working for the proper functioning of the Government have to do it as an honorary service. But the Government and the government servants flourish, ignoring the poor tillers of the soil. Venkataramani insists that the sense of gain and possession has to be replaced by the sense of public duty and right conduct.

There has to be an equal distribution of property, i.e. land to all the people in order to maintain economic equality. Venkataramani blames that Government for failing to establish this ideal. This high mission cannot be attained till man refuses to get a high salary for the “clever work quickly done” (Venkataramani, *The Next Rung* 17), No one should get more than what he needs in kind. Only then real redemption is possible.

Religion, which sprang up to guide man in times of need, fails to do its function. Religions under different names fight for supremacy. If religion performs its real function—inducing spirituality-

-man can have real peace. Wars fought in the name of religion or in the name of protection of their peoples fail to achieve its prime goal. Wars never bring peace to the world. At least science has to bring peace and freedom to all. To achieve this goal science has to progress in the path of *ahimsa* or non-violence. Due to advancement in science, people have neglected the primary occupation of agriculture. The responsibility of agriculture is thrown to someone who is innocent and simple-minded. Others migrate to the city where they expect speedy progress with the help of industrialization. Venkataramani considers this to be the root cause of all evils. In modern days people concentrate more on pleasure stuff than on foodstuff. Therefore agriculture has ceased to be an enjoyable and profitable profession in the eyes of many. This is one of the few fundamental wrong concepts introduced by the colonizer.

The colonized people begin to accept the ideas of the colonizer because the colonizer mutilates one of the basic necessities of any human being, i.e., education. The system of education, which the British have given to Indians, is enough “to indict the future of the race.” Venkataramani points out all the ill features of the educational system introduced by the British. He emphasizes that the ills have to be corrected. Only then there is redemption for Indians. The readers can sense the urgency in Venkataramani’s tone. If Venkataramani’s ideals are realized a real paradise for Indians is assured.

Venkataramani is a prophet and a visionary who foresees Swaraj India, dons the mantle of a preacher and teacher and launches a mission to educate his countrymen on what they should or should not do. In the process he practises resistance to the colonizer. He establishes the true Indian identity, asserts the superiority of the Indian culture and composes a paeon to Indian village life. The most remarkable feature of all the writings of Venkataramani is that, in all of them, he is a preacher or nothing. In this respect Venkataramani fulfils Naik's dictum, cited earlier, that, in countries with long histories of invasion and rule by foreign powers, the artists invariably become teachers, helping the nation to an awareness of itself, its aspirations and its troubles (17). Undoubtedly Venkataramani is a postcolonial writer par excellence.