CHAPTER V

□ SOME INNER FURY

□ THE GOLDEN HONEYCOMB
SOME INNER FURY

Against the background of Quit India Movement of 1942, the novel deals with the straining of human relations and its impact on the plight of the feminine identity. The two prominent aspects of India's confrontation with Britain — the impact of the western education and civilisation on the outlook of the Indians, and secondly, the conflict between India and Britain arising from the latter's political dominance over the former have been largely responsible for shaping man-woman relationship in post-independent India. India's contact with the western culture and civilization has radically changed man's outlook toward the female identity.

The book shows concern with the plight of the three women — Premala, Roshan Merchant and Mirabai as to how racial hatred and cultural differences destroy a woman's happiness. The Kitsamy — Premala episode verges on irony of situation: Kit leaves the English girl he loves and returns to India because of racial disparateness but equally the drama of cultural and racial disparity is enacted in his marriage with Premala since the two represent what is so widely known as the east-west encounter, which has hardly escaped the attention of any novelist.
Premala is traditionally brought up and her engagement with Kit is fixed by the elders in the two families. Kit's mother running a dual household is emancipated enough to ask her son anxiously: "The girl pleases you? You think your mother has chosen well?" But the same freedom of choice is not offered to Premala since it is a household which is at once traditional. She knows her parents desire this alliance with Kit, the District Magistrate. It is irony that Premala is married to Kit whose male-prerogative, not to let women share everything as "certain domains belong to men only" is stressed by the novelist.

"Kit was equally incommunicative: there is a tradition, perhaps not only in India, that women should not be worried, that the best way to ensure this is to keep them as far as possible in ignorance: and so now Kit insisted, blandly, that there was nothing to tell."

Premala tries to remould herself to please Kit's anglicised tastes. Despite both being Hindus, born in the same milieu, Premala comes from a conservative family. Kit with his education in England, his anglicised household and his civil service status is thoroughly British in outlook and way of living. He prefers the clubs, the formal-sitdown-dinner and tennis. She is fond of Veena playing, reading the Gita, and is domestic

1. Some Inner Fury, p. 57
2. Ibid., p. 117
bound, modest, with her paintings of miniatures and musical hymns. Cultural disparities between the two estrange them. It is only Premala who makes a constant effort to bridge the gap but fails at every step because the other party has turned indifferent to her womanly aspirations. One wonders how fruitful their lives would have been if they had been matched elsewhere — Premala with strong, silent, revolutionary patriot Govind, Mira’s adopted brother, and Kit with “the silken -haired, Sylvia, a girl I used to know” as he tells his sister, Mira. It is through Mira’s consciousness that the novelist stresses the essential propinquity of Premala and Govind: she welcomes Govind’s dramatic appearance with all richness of pleasure and “he had taken both her hands in his, was looking at her as if he could not take his eyes away; as they came up the steps he still held her hand in his. I do not think he had even seen me, or if he had forgotten, for as I rose to meet him he started a little_in surprise, then he disengaged himself, and put his arm around me.”

Marriage in such a setup, a marriage performed and struck to, to please everybody, except the principal partners in the union, does not mean companionship of the hearts. It excludes human warmth, caring and under-

1. Ibid., p.109
standing, the very essence of humanity that Markandaya emphasises in her novels. Here there is no drawing of flesh to flesh and thereby a calling of the spirit. Each goes his/her lonely way. Each individual has finally to draw upon his/her own resources to face the facts of existence. Premala does not have adequate resources of will power to stand upto her beliefs in life and Kit is also sucked into the whirlpool that opens up with her death.

Premala is drawn in sharper outlines, she is modest, innocent, utterly unpretentious and universally loved. Her gentle unassuming ways win friends wherever she goes. Premala’s heroic attempts to measure upto Kit’s requirements win the admiration of even Govind. But it is a pity that for her failure to fit into Kit’s world she grows lonely and miserable. Since the circle Kit moves in is narrow and small and where “infidelity might have been looked on with a tolerant eye, what appeared a blatant acknowledgement of its existence pleased no one.”¹

In such a stuffy and narrow world of dubious morality Premala has no outlet for her pent-up emotions and affections and Kit never fully realises the extent of her unhappiness because of a certain lack of imagination.

¹. Ibid., p. 157
Kit is merely bewildered by Premala's inhibitions; while it is Mira who suffers for them both:

"I don't know what is wrong with her. Is it me? Do you know?" he asks her and she thinks - 'On Kit, beloved, staring at me like that, with my mother's eyes and me own too. So puzzled. So pained... what is this devilish dispensation that gives clear vision to all save those most needing it?"\(^1\)

In her increasing alienation from Kit's world, because she can not adjust to its standards in her loneliness and frustration, she turns to a village resettlement scheme sponsored by the British. She comes in contact of an English missionary, Hickey to run a school for the village children which Kit does not relish. A month is passed, his patience is exhausted.' He says with a sort of aged curiosity:

"I don't know how you can stomach it, Prem! All the proselytising, I mean - after all, the chap's a missionary, he's bound to indulge and really I don't know how you can stick all that rubbish they put out!"...

Now she said, serenely, "He means well, Kit. His views may not be ours, of course- "But they're so narrow," Kit protested, "I haven't met this particular chap of course - don't want to either - but I know the breed. I don't know how you stand for their impudent nonsense."

Premala looked at him: "He means well," she said again, gently, "He is a good man... the children are already very fond of him."\(^2\)

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1. Ibid., pp. 147-48
2. Ibid., pp. 154-55
Kit's dislike is born of the fact that he has been a victim of the race Hickey belongs to. The novelist's socio-psychological insight into human relation is significant.

Kit's attitude to the missionary is ambiguous and it is natural because he is one whose vision is shaped by the socio-cultural ethos of life of the west the facade of which he would not easily shed away and the reality is reflected by way of contrast to Govind's.

"Kit's dislike was to some extent superficial: it was more instinctive than reasoned out. To him missionaries were simply impossibly earnest people who belonged to a class one just did not mix with, whose peculiar beliefs and habits were beyond comprehending. Govind's feelings were different, deeper, more dangerous. To him missionaries were not merely men who assaulted the religion which was his, though he might not cherish it, impugning its austere dignities in a hundred ways; they were also white men, who not only set up their alien and unwanted institutions in the land but who, for the preservation of these institutions, invariably sided with those other white men who ruled the country."

Govind represents the terrorist and shows his disapproval at Premala's visit to Hickey's school. The incident of bringing an orphan girl one day from the school is reflection on the differing viewpoint in regard to the neglected segment of humanity. The orphan finds no place

1. Ibid., p. 166
in the world "her husband inhabited". She adopts the orphan girl for the fulfilment of the motherly instinct, which brings satisfaction only a part of her hunger but it is not fully accepted by Kit. After a fortnight when he asked Premala what she intended doing about the child her answer is so simple and humanistic:

"I don't know, Kit," she said, "I thought - I hoped we might keep her."

"Keep her!" Kit echoed, aghast, "Are you crazy, Prem?"... "She has nowhere to go," she said in a low voice, and then suddenly, passionately, "Please Kit. Please let me keep her."

Kit looked at her startled: he had not seen her so vehement before, "Well, yes," he said, "If you feel so strongly about it. But really, you know, people will think I've slept with the serving maid and this is my bastard and you're just being nice about it."

"Does it matter," Premala said, "What people think? Besides, she doesn't look a bit like you."

"Children don't always show a likeness to their father," said Kit impatiently.

"Bastards always do," Premala answered, smiling."

There is that hunger in Premala which Kit can hardly appreciate because he is insensitive to the woman in her. She tries her best to care for Kit too. He being poles apart, can not be reached by her. However, Premala's excessive fondness for Kit, in psychological framework is illuminating:

"If she had not loved Kit so much, she would not have tried so hard to please

1. Ibid., pp. 156-157
him; and the very earnestness of her
endeavour, the award conciliatory
concentration with which she strove to do
the right thing, would have driven many a
man more patient than Kit to irritation.”

Govind sees this hunger even before Premala marries Kit. Premala too has the awareness of this solicitousness of his but she can’t take him as her lover, nor would Govind be the person to approve of the morality of this act. She sublimates her feelings in the school work. It is in this that her inner strength is in evidence. Premala is drawn as a stereotype, of the purely feminine and utterly predictable. She is more fully realised as a character than Kit yet she is not sufficiently rounded.

Premala is a victim of man’s insensitivity and indifference to woman’s cravings of self-realisation and freedom which in particular, it is believed, lies in motherhood. In Premala Markandaya shows the isolation, bewilderment, insecurity and vulnerability that a traditionally brought-up Indian woman feels when she has to adjust to Western norms of living and accommodate to the tastes and values of a culture in flux. She is sensitive and gentle by nature and overwhelmed by harsh realities of life. She tries to attain the ideal of a wife and companion to her husband but ends up being a non-person. Her death under such tragic circumstances is

1. Ibid., p. 143
the end of her desperate trials to come to terms with life and its adjustments to her soul - shrinking compromises.

The second story deals with the love of Richard and Mira which is also destroyed in the political violence when Govind and his men set Hickey's school to fire, symbolic of the British rule. The political upheaval costs Kit's life, he is murdered in the stormy night but no one knows who is the killer. On Hickey's evidence Govind is arrested but later it is again the violence of the frenzied mob that sets him free in the trial.

In Mira, we find the adolescent Indian girl changing into a fully mature woman, ready to meet the challenges of life under a dual hierarchy, the Indian and English. She is, no doubt, more fortunate in her birth and upbringing - she belongs to a wealthy family used to the eastern and the western ways of living but she is equally conscious of her place the traditional Indian family assigns to woman despite her exposure to western ideas. It is precisely because of her dual vision that she is able to appreciate the radical outlook of Roshan Merchant on life and emulate her and at the same time has sympathies with Premala's predicament. Early in the novel, observing Kit and Premala, she tells us: "There is a tradition, perhaps not only in India, that women should not be worried, that the best way to ensure this is to
keep them, as far as possible, in ignorance." Then she adds: "Certain domains belong to men alone, and Indian women learn early not to encroach. Kit knew, he don't have to remind Premala is a second time." But for her exposure to the two opposing influences it is hard to visualize if she would abide by these norms of social philosophies.

It is her awareness of the age-long conventions and restrictions of race and colour that enable her to perceive their dehumanizing impact on her relation with Richard: "The conventions of his caste were no less rigid than mine: he came of a race which had acquired an empire." Yet both, unlike Kit and Prem, have the wit and the nerve to overcome such restrictions. The novelist shows Premala at the dinner-table rather reserved but Mira enjoys the best of the both worlds, the Indian and the English: "Being with Richard was pleasure in itself, but besides, he knew what to do and say and took you with him, so that you were free to enjoy yourself; and moreover, if you blundered, he didn't mind: and when your companion doesn't mind, blunders lose their enormity and dwindle and shrink to nothing, for indeed in themselves they are nothing." Mira's awakening into womanhood gracefully and stepping into a life full of possibilities.

1. Ibid., p. 117
2. Ibid., p. 162
is stressed. She has sufficient intelligence, courage, farsightedness and takes up a career in journalism once she is initiated it by Roshan. She, unlike Premala, is not a wilting wall flower, she is on the contrary eager for new experiences and is capable of living a full, enriched life. She is appreciative of Richard's love for her as is manifest during their stay at the village. They together visit a play, and go to eat a restaurant where Richard takes off his shoes and sits on the floor as per Hindu custom. The enormous sense and capability to accommodate with the Indianness fills Mira with bursting pride to say "there is no one like Richard, no one at all like my love."¹ They share reach other's understanding, confidence and love.

Mira is 17 and her mother asks her to wait to marry Richard till she grows to be 21. But Mira's dream of love is shattered with the beginning of the year of 1942 when the Quit India Movement generated heat of revenge, hatred and hostility against the white man. Violence erupts, the office of the Gazette is burnt down, Govind is arrested for indulging in arson and violence but is acquitted on Roshan's testimony that he "spent the night with her... and the lawyer made great play of her being a married woman, her reluctance to come forward..."²

¹. Ibid., p. 161
². Ibdi., p. 171
Mira is also aware of the reverberations that would ensure in her family if she were to marry Richard yet she loves him precisely for the same qualities that win our admiration. For her there has never been anyone else, nor will there ever be. We recall how she tells us about the growth in her consciousness of the feeling of love. It is not that Mira is blind to the obstacles that may arise in their wedded life but it is her humanity and Camusian lucidity that transcend their differences in race, colour and religion in the conflagration of their intense mutual attraction. She makes an earnest plea to take her away to which he agrees to go to the south:

"Take me with you."
"Darling, I can't!"
"Why not?"
"I must think of you."
"I can think for myself."
"If you weren't so young —"
"Twenty isn't young. In war time it's almost ancient."
"I love you so much," he said, "If you regretted it later —"
"Why should I?"
"You've been brought up - differently. I've stayed with you, I know your family. You're not like other women —"
"I'm exactly like other women," I said striving to remain calm. "I have the same emotions, I feel the same things. Do you think the way you're brought up can stop any of that?"

Richard is aware of the political agitation and the growing hatred of the Indians against the white man.

1. Ibid., p. 184
Both Mira and Richard are totally unprepared for facing the violent political strain that could engulf them any moment. Despite Mira's assurance that the hatred and the fermentation of fury is not against people like him, Richard has the apprehension of being a stranger: "It is a terrible thing to feel unwanted. To be hated." He gently asks if people could be singled out as an individual to be the victim of revenge and violence and Mira's answer is illuminating that it is not man as such who is out to destroy his fellowman but the considerations of race, colour that destroys his humanity:

"You belong to one side, if you don't you belong to the other. It is as simple as that, even children understand it. And in between? There is no in between. You have shown your badge, you have taken your stance, you on the left, you on the right, there is no middle standing. You hadn't a badge? - but it was there in your face, the colour of your skin, the accents of your speech, in the clothes on your back. You didn't ask to be there? Ah, but you had no option, whatever you thought there was no option for you there was no other place."

The anguish in Mira's heart is evident enough - she is borne along with the procession that 'liberates' Govind while Richard stays on, guarding the English along with his other companions, equally English by birth and race. He is hit by a bomb. Mira sets her misery down in

1. Ibid., p. 218
Mira, however, has immense resource of courage and endurance. Her love for Richard, though it doesn't result in wedded bliss, enriched her greatly: "What had been given us had been gifted freely, abundantly, lit with a splendour which had coloured and enriched our whole living; it could never be taken from us. We had known love together; whatever happened, the sweetness of that knowledge would always remain."2

The brooding sense of tragedy makes Mira move from the particular to the universal. Their's is not the first tragedy of love and understanding, the forces of history have been always alive to catch man unaware and strike him in the face. "But what matter to universe, I said to myself, if now and then a world is born or a star should die; or what matter to the world, if here and there a man should fall or a head or a heart should break."3

It is not evidently her stoicism and apathy to human tragedy but coming to terms with the conditions of

1. Ibid., p. 285
2. Idem
3. Ibid., p. 286
living. Her vision is re-orchestrated, she has attained illuminations and insights into the mechanism of human heart under the passion of evil. She has evolved her philosophy of life that would enable her to face facts of history and some how to transcend them.

The author's personal life, marriage to an Englishman and the subsequent transfer from one country to another, no doubt, have been a great source to understand the complexity of man-woman relationship involving issues pertaining to socio-cultural differences. And thus her study of identity crisis as experienced by a woman in a milieu different from her own or one which is plagued with the East-West conflict is authentic. Mira and Richard would have contributed much towards mutual understanding and sharing of common interests and the caring and welfare of fellow human beings, had they been allowed to unite in marriage. It can be argued that, it is Roshan who is most successful in the East and the West. Roshan, like Kit, has sympathy and understanding for the western culture and ways of living. Yet this does not include her love for the East. Mira speaks approvingly of her dual role in both the cultures. If autonomy and nurturance are mutually exclusive, the woman concerned suffers. Mira finds the political disturbance, a stumbling block to her achievement of her own personal happiness with Richard.
She could think of the national cause only at the expense of domestic felicity. Martial happiness and national freedom are mutually exclusive goals in her life. And Mira like Roshan Merchant has no regrets, and does not look back. There is quiet dignity and courage in her words:

“For myself, if I had to choose a new, in full knowledge of what was to come, I still would not wish my course deflected for though there was pain and sorrow and hatred, there was also love: and the experience of it was to sweet, to surpassing sweet for me ever to want to choose differently.”

Roshan Merchant, Premala and Mira, each in her own way, is well brought up, and equipped with all the comforts of material well being. They are planted in various situations to seek self attainment and the success comes to one who understands the value of involvement, participation and the existential view that detachment lies not in inaction but in really getting involved.

Roshan Merchant is drawn with a touch of sureness to show that woman can seek self-fulfilment not by tying herself with the other philosophy of life. It is by way of integration of the contrariness that she can transcend the obstacles to the fulfilment of her nobler aspirations of her life and escape exploitation, suppression and the

1. Ibid., p. 57
loss of her identity. Roshan has the sympathy for the ways of the west', but she belongs to the east too, and with this curious blending of the two opposing views she faces no problem of accommodation, wherever she happens to be. Roshan is the rich Mill owner's daughter, she is the most striking and unusual woman in the novel. Everyone likes her despite her unusualness. She is frank, educated and talented. She is motivated towards an inspiring goal—that of winning freedom for her country in an enlightened way. Mira says, that there "was something about her that was turbulent and unafraid which you sensed beneath the sparkling surface she presented; and I admired her because she stood alone and thought nothing of it."¹

Roshan had married, but now she is not living with her husband. She has sought separation to attain her selfhood, she buys the paper for which she once worked as a columnist. Her ex-husband is now an influential member of the government. Roshan admits to Mira and her mother, "My husband and I have parted company... we haven't lived together for years. We used to squabble like anything when we did, but now - funny thing - we're the best of friends."² She is very honest. She is too lazy to keep up any deception and this frankness appealed to young

1. Ibid., p. 71
2. Ibid., p. 70
people, not to the older generation. She does everything that a well brought-up girl is not supposed to do. She is a challenge to age-old conventional upbringing. She switches professions with airy ease. We hear of her as a poetess and fellow student in the college through Kit. She goes where her heart leads her to and whichever direction she takes, she goes whole heartedly into it and makes a success of whatever she is doing. She does not allow prudence to dictate her. She is the pioneer who points the way. The elders in the novel are worried that she would lead the younger people into the strange uneasy paths but she is magnetic and her appeal to Mira, Govind, and even steady Kit and shy Premala is irresistible.

Roshan illustrates Markandaya’s commitment to issues larger than private consciousness and the woman’s grievances. Markandaya writes with a longing for moral coherence that transcends barriers of sex, religion, politics and economic inequality. She shows us through Roshan that it is possible to reconcile need for personal freedom with the larger concept of national and eventually global freedom. In the narrator’s words:

"There was something in her, a flame, a vitality, which drew people to her despite themselves; and this quality, which she possessed so lightly as hardly to be aware of it, enabled her to surmount the barriers not only of race and creed, but also - perhaps even more formidable - that of politics."^1

1. Ibid., p. 174
Roshan’s pursuit of autonomy is to be viewed in a wider perspective. She battles for autonomy for all Indians though here is the path of pacific resistance as opposed to Govind who believes in terrorism as the means of liberation. Her attitude is always constructive. Roshan’s character is reflected in the model of the dam she keeps on her table, symbolic of the constructive service in the interests of prosperity and peace. She is well aware of the horror of violence and the resultant ruination. She says to Govind but half to herself, “There is no power in violence... only destruction... You see, I am not really interested in destruction.”¹

Under Govind’s tutelage when there was a call to boycott the British goods, she changed her habits without any hesitation.

“She stopped smoking, she gave up, regretfully, using lipstick, until one joyous day she met an American officer, who kept her supplied with American brands.”²

But what she refused to give up were her English friends who as individuals, she insisted, “were pleasing, humane, civilised, charming.” This is the reflection of her humanistic outlook on life, not to be corrupted by evils of colonialism or narrow parochial traditional orthodoxy. Yet when Govind is arrested as a terrorist, it is Roshan

1. Ibid., p. 126
2. Ibid., pp. 173-74
who is willing to bail him out, vouching a sound alibi for him. She swears unhesitatingly in the court that he had spent the night in question with her. She is truly a remarkable woman, a remarkable human being.

Thus the three women amply explicate the view that the woman's sufferings stem not only out of her inadequacies and weaknesses but they are rooted in the inherent imbalances in the social order. Like Roshan, every woman needs to reeducate herself and re-mould her attitude and responses to the people around her. It is the potentialities of the individual and the acceptance of their limitations as well that will enable them to resolve the conflicting social muddle and seek some moral significance in life.
In The Golden Honeycomb, the scale changes. In the earlier novels, the woman's predicament was moulded either by the destiny of their men-folk, and if ever they resisted the sinister anti-feminist forces to seek self-expression the move was thwarted on the plea that 'freedom to woman' was not a part of their tradition. As such, she was a passive sufferer and her protests against the crucial conditions of living was marginal that brought no substantial comforts. There is a galaxy of women characters in the novel: there is Her Highness, the Dowager Maharani, Manjula, Mohini, the concubine to Bawajiraj III, Usha the Dewan's daughter, the girls, Jaya and Janaki representing the proletariat class and the rank of the commoners and Sophie, the Resident's daughter who dominate the physical and the emotional life of Rabi, the illegitimate son of Mohini and Bawajiraj and the heir of the state of Devapur.

The novel at one level is an artistic rendering of the decline and disintegration of a princely state in wake of the rising forces of democracy and freedom. Yet the real interest lies elsewhere: Manjula, Mohini, Usha share in common the state of heightened consciousness which shows that the distinction of rank and station in regard to preservation of individuality is meaningless. What is material is the awareness that woman develops to
be as much of herself as her men-folk do and thus any assault on their identity would result in confrontation. The novelist has created the three positive images of women endowed with higher consciousness to save their individuality in a changing traditional society. Their view of man-woman relationship is determined by Sartrean concept of the Being which in the third state of existence moves from self to social concern: the most important thing is the emphasis on right relations between the people involving the notion of human responsibility at various levels.

Manjula, Rabi's grandmother, is an impressive figure. She was married to Bawajiraj II at the age of thirteen and was brought to replace the deposed ruler. On her entry into the palace, Manjula at once sees through the power-centre controlling the state - the trappings of rule being buckled on by the British-Resident and the Brahmin Dewan or Minister. When she mothers a child she is subjected to the cruel practice of installation of the wet-nurse which represents the defeat of the Maharani and the denial of motherly privileges. The Maharaja is also helpless to change this evil practice, they are made to accept it as 'sacrifice' in the interest of the child and the state.

"The Maharani weeps from frustration. She places rough hands upon her breasts and squeezes them brutally. The milk spurts
out rich and abundant; the bed-clothes are
drenched.
'Vewaste, the waste,' she cries
furiously. 'You expect me to waste this
precious fluid! Vandals!' She rips the
lacy wraps with which the maidservants are
endeavouring to cover her.

The Maharajah comes in on the
disorderly scene. He has had to dislodge a
score of supernumeraries before he can do
so. He kneels by the bed.
'Perhaps they know best,' he soothes
his dishevelled wife.'"1

However, Manjula keeps her freedom in tact. The
quality of education that Rabi under Mr. Barrington, the
tutor, gets is the first step in the alienating process
Manjula shows concern with. She feels that her son "is
being moved away from her, from herself which encompasses
her country and her people which are also his country and
his people - though she has no notion how."2 The
education imparted is a distortion of history, which in
turn, would alienate the prince from ancient pride and
glory of his country.

"The chronicles of his own country are,
inevitably, curtailed, beginning summarily
with the European connection; and of his
own ancestral history he is given the
barest bones. The plight of his deposed
kinsman, the manner of his deposition, are
disposed of in a few sentences; but the
story of the Great Queen, the human
circumstance of her accession in girlhood
and early bereavement are so vividly
portrayed, the wisdom and benevolence of
her rule and that of her Ministers so

1. The Golden Honeycomb, p. 14
2. Ibid., p. 18
enthusiastically, communicated, that it becomes a matter of pride to consider himself her subject.¹

The impact of her personality is manifest in the dialogue that takes place between Rabi and Bawajiraj. Rabi says he has no passion to be the heir of the state because the English will not allow it, nor does he want to be his people because "your people are always hungry" But to humour the Rajah Rabi draws his attention towards the decline glory of the state of Devapur through 'gold-gild' imagery:

"I like your throne," he says. He runs his hands over the arms, which end in a pair of carved, gilded, magnificent lions' heads.

'Do you?'

'Yes, it's not a real one, is it?'

'Of course it is! What do you mean?'

'It's only gilt.'

'It's gilt. The old one was gold. The British took it away, my grandmother says, from my ancestors, after they were defeated in battle.'

'That old story!'

'Isn't it true?'

Bawajiraj is flummoxed.

Manjuja is not at all dismayed at the tyranny of the rulers, her boldness to question the royal arrangement is a badge of a free soul, not at all to be bowed to the forces of colonialism. She fails to see why the boundaries of the alienating process are being widened.

1. Ibid., pp. 17-18
2. Ibid., p. 63
Her view that Rabi should first learn about his own country is dismissed as retrograde and backward-looking. Manjula is fully conscious of her freedom and of Devapur state as well under the dominance of foreign rulers. She is suffused with anti-British feelings which is not the racial hatred as the Britishers display in their conduct against the Indians but an urge to be free. S.P. Appasamy has rightly pointed out that Manjula "remains a power behind the throne and really a force to be reckoned with. Since the Agent and even the Dewan have no easy access to her, she is a force they can not really contend with publicity."¹ Thus it is Manjula who sows the seeds of rebellion in the masses and makes Rabi conscious of his responsibilities towards the self and the state. Together Mohini the mother and the grand-mother, Manjula in carving out their own destiny sculpt Rabi's life.

Bawajiraj was an excellent horseman. He met with an accident when a cobra frightened the horse, he was riding, Bawajiraj was thrown and his back was broken. He was brought in a palanquin to the palace and could not survive. Manjula bore the tragedy like a heroic character. The grandeur, royal dignity and the strength of her character are stressed:

"The women waiting in the ante-chamber in silence have intended to break into weeping and wailing, but are quelled by her appearance. She is like wax, an unlit candle. No tears have coursed down or marred her countenance. She walks between the women—none dares aid her—and enters her sanctuary."

She dons the mantle of a widow Maharani, breaks the bangles of her wrists, cuts her long tresses and clads herself in a widow's white, ascends the crystal gallery and watches the glow of the funeral pyre. She has a store of will power that stands her in good stead, in the days to come. She preserves her own integrity in the face of onslaughts by her weak-minded son and the wily Britishers. Manjula is clearly patterned after the great warrior queens of Indian History. Though hedged in by the alien rulers, she is a brave woman and remains free to the end of her days. She goes through the routine of death unflinchingly. In her, we see not the pain of death but of the living after the loved one has died. She inculcates in her grandson a love for family life, the country and the life itself. She faces life simply, bravely, without any fuss, in her way up as a girl in a remote valley to the kingdom of Devapur. She dies as simply, as desired by her, with 'no fuss': "So, without fuss, he (Rabi) lit the pyre, performing a duty which had skipped a generation to devolve on him."

1. Ibid., p. 25
2. Ibid., p. 376
Mohini is contrasted at every step with Shanta Devi, the queen of Devapur and the legitimate wife of Bawajiraj III. Shanta Devi is an arranged match to an equally pliant prince. She comes from a proper family, equally royal in its lineage and again and again, what is stressed is her docility: "The docility of the girl enchants the agent." Manjula guesses correctly that, though pretty, the bride lacks in spirit: "Manjula sighs but rationalises: spirited responses are not conducive to happiness under the British Raj and happiness is what she must seek for her son."¹ She can not foresee that the very docility that has been so praised in Shanta Devi leads to an estrangement between her and her husband. The marriage yields no male issue, but daughters and the failure to produce an heir to the throne is attributed to the queen: "The irritability concentrates on Shanta Devi, while Bawajiraj whose sperm sexes the child, is not even named. As Mohini alone is adjudged responsible for the birth of the embarrassing boy, so Shanta Devi alone carries the obloquy for failing to bear a son."² The tepidity of married life forces her husband, the king into a string of liaisons until he meets Mohini, the spirited girl from the mountain valley, the girl who refuses to be swamped by the royal, rarefied atmosphere.

1. Ibid., p. 22
2. Ibid., p. 52
How the evils of princely life destroy a woman's identity even in state of legitimacy is reflected in Bawajiraj's relations with his concubine, Mohini. She is a distant relation of Manjula, 'sent as retainer and companion to the widowed Maharani'. Soon Bawajiraj is drawn to her beauty and Mohini stays as concubine replacing Shanta Devi whom, it is told, the Raja never loved. Shanta Devi has born daughters and thus falls from the royal grace. Mohini bears a son who is named as Rabi after Rabindernath, the poet. But what is significant is Mohini's consciousness of her freedom and identity, which she never let it pale into insignificance.

During the Delhi Durbar, the mode of communication taking place between Mohini and Bawajiraj is contrasted with Shanta Devi's dwindling "to monosyllables and silences." The impassioned exchange reaching her tant as a formless murmur borders on jealousy. Mohini's stance on the question of Rabi's becoming a cadet establishes her sway over the Maharaja: she curtly brushes aside the idea as suggested by the Raja of Krishnapur laconically which shows that she is a woman of difference:

"It's a frightful idea.'
'The Corps is meant for-
'Lackeys!'
'-the sons of Princes.'
'I won't allow my son.'
'He's my son too.'
'Only half. Do you think you were entirely responsible for his creation?'

Bawajiraj often plumes himself in this belief. It is not physically true of course, but it is the spirit of the thing that one goes for.

'Mohini, you must allow me to decide-

'Why should you? Why can't I?'

'I will not put up-

'Neither will I.'

'I have stood quite enough.'

'So have I. So have I! Do you know what I have to put up with?'

Mohini may look to be wilful and wayward but her lustfulness does not suggest that she is a waif or a woman with no individuality. As mistress to a Maharaja, she never harbours illusion of becoming the queen, rather she refuses the offer of marriage knowing well the predicament of a co-wife behind the royal trappings. Even in love-play, she is not blind to the ironic implications of the queen's identity, being reduced to non-entity. The Raja sighs, kisses and bemoans his fate:

"If only I had known you before!"

'Before what?'

'Before my wife.'

'What would you have done?'

'Married you. Made you my queen.'

'And been happy ever after.'

'Yes. Why do you laugh at me?'

'Because it's a dream. No one can be happy forever.'

'I would have been, with you.'

'Until the next woman.'

'There wouldn't be another woman. I wouldn't look at another woman.'

'And I would end up like the rest. Sit in the women's apartments waiting for my husband to come to me.'

1. Ibid., p. 143
'No.'
'Like Shanta Devi.'
'I give her everything.'
'Except yourself.'
'How can I? I belong to you. Why do you torment me?'
'You are the tormentor. You torment women.'
'Why do you say such cruel things?'
'Because of my plight?'

Mohini is not the wiper of a character such as we meet in Ganga Dasi in Private Life of an Indian Prince who exploits her bodily assets to consume a life of wealth and pleasure. The Maharani is her guardian and thus Mohini acts at times as a moral guide to save the animal in Bawajiraj from extinction. The following dialogue between the two reveals the intensity of love and Mohini's awareness of individuality and lucidity of vision in regard to her relations with the Maharaja outside marriage:

"Ah, Mohini!' he sighs again. He has taken to pleading with her; it is becoming quite an exhausting business. 'I beg you, will you not marry me?'
'No.' 'It would make me the happiest man alive.'
'I can make you happy without that. I have no wish to be your official wife. I have no wish to be your second wife either.'
'Can you not think of the child?'
'I often think of the child. It is precisely because I think of the child.'
'I cannot understand your objection.'
'I've explained it to you.'
'I must say I find it difficult. Even princesses do not baulk at becoming Junior Maharani.'

1. Ibid., p. 31
'I am not a princess.'
'You could be a queen.'
'I don't want to be your queen. I want to be free.'

The conversation does not reflect that Mohini is ever used as a garbage or 'convenient', if she is mistress to the Maharaja, she never harbour self delusion to be a legitimate queen. It is not a display of the devilish passion of hankering after a life of royal splendour but the basic urge to keep her humanity in tact. Her viewpoint is positive because like Manjula, she too has the instinct of being one with the people by way of education. Though she prefers to act as concubine to guard the frontiers of her freedom of action and thought, she has the courage to chastise and influence the socio-political views of Bawajiraj more than any woman in the larger interest of the state. It is Mohini who openly impresses upon his mind the need of the ouster of the Britishers as they are to gain the monetary and territorial benefits.

Mohini, Manjula, Usha represent the fresh forces at work with the conviction that the British administrators are not concerned with the wellbeing of the Indian people and thus it is sin to be neutral and blind to their manoeuvrings. The Indian princes and kings were not free in their choices, what to say of stately matters, they

1. Ibid., p. 32
were the rulers only in the name as we learn how he is wanted by the authority even for naming Rabi, because the child is a case of illegitimacy and he has to bear no connection with the ruling dynasty.

Manjula and Mohini are equally critical of Bawajiraj for his fighting war for the Britishers on foreign lands in stead of fighting for his own people's freedom at home. It has mailed the family. Mohini sees no grain of sanity in the compulsion inflicted on the Indian rulers. It is the force of her character that she can call a spade a spade and does not play a flunky to gain the royal favour:

"Why should be? He's Indian, isn't he? Not some kind of brown Englishman? Why should he get mixed up in their battles? For liberty? Hogwash. They're not even going to talk about our liberty. D'you think they're going to 'give up the most profitable thing they've got? They're not addled, you know!"

Mohini frequently picks up quarrels with the Maharaja, especially when she sees the interest of the state being damaged and exploited by the Britishers either by way of legislation or force. Mohini asks him to abolish tax from the salt but she is told that the Maharaja is "perfectly free agent but there are limits: limits placed upon by one's obligations". But he never defines those 'obligations' which are nothing but her moral

1. Ibid., p. 315
impassiveness and servitude. Mohini's anger is apparent: she identifies the Maharaja with salt and Rabi with water which is a high piece of comedy to affirm that a concubines moralistic stance can so meaningfully influence the political philosophies and ideology of the ruler and be instrumental in the recast of history of a regime.

"Do you expect me to carry all this kind of detail in my head?"
'Why shouldn't you? You call yourself the Head of State, don't you?'
'I am the Head of State!'
'Then you should know.'
'I suppose he told you.'
'He? Do you mean Rabi?'
'Of course I mean Rabi.'
'Then why can't you say his name? Can't you get your tongue round your own son's name?'
'Don't be so absurd.'
'I'm not being at all absurd. Your English friends have that difficulty and you get more like them every day.'
'Is that so awful?'
'lt's frightful!'
'Civilised people.'
'Civilised wolves. No, not wolves. I like wolves.'
'Mohini, you're so prejudiced -'
'So would you be, if you were in your right mind. And if you want to know, Rabi didn't tell me. It's common knowledge, the smallest bazaar urchin. You'd know too if you weren't so rarefied.'

No, no one in the kingdom. Bar one. Say two. Nowadays the Dewan had lapses, forgot he was a salaried employee.
'I sometimes wonder,' Bawajiraj was inspired to say, 'if you are in your right mind.'
'I am. We are. It's you. Your mother would have been ashamed if -'
'Please leave my mother out of it.'
'Why should I? Your mother was my guardian. She warned me not to take up with you.'

'Then why did you?'

'I loved you.'

'What did she say?'

Bawajiraj could not restrain his curiosity. His mother had always been a mystery to him.

'She said we were incompatible.'

'But we're not! Couldn't have been closer. Couldn't be closer, mostly.'

'That's flesh.'

'Are you telling me it's not important to you?'

'She meant spirit.'

'I have reason to think that my spirit' 'It's monstrous. I thought not, but I've changed my mind. You're a monster to your people.'

'I think I can safely say that my people—'

'Your people! They were. Now you can count your people or the fingers of one hand and all of them are toadies. They're Rabi's people.'

'Of course they are. I rejoice at it. In due course, when I'm gone. It's the natural order.'

'Now,' cried Mohini. 'I mean now.'

And trembled. As one must when the natural order is upset. As did Bawajiraj, though not for himself.

'Have you,' he said, very quiet and anguished, 'no respect at all?'

'For what should I have respect?'

'For me. For me as occupant of the gaddi.'

Her tears were flowing. Huge drops of a total misery, welling up out of an anguish hardly less than his.

'You cannot command,' she said. 'Highness, you cannot command respect.'

'I'm not commanding. I'm asking.'

In continuation of series of favours and facilities

1. Ibid., pp. 400-402
extended to Mohini Bawajiraj wishes her to occupy a dwelling matching to her status. He has in fact, the Summer Palace in his mind. But he approaches the queen to seek her formal permission the implication of which she well understands. Shanta Devi has no second choice but to accept the predicament of a royal woman in a society where men fashion the code suiting their needs. That is why, even the inhuman practice of polygamy is not condemned as brutal and irreligious. It flourished fearlessly in ruling houses. When Shanta Devi asks if he needs the Palace for his use, he nervously answers that it is for Mohini's child.

"Is it for your use?"
'Not strictly speaking-'
'For your paramour then. For you and her.'...
'For the child.' he offers her nervously.
'If you like.'
'It's true.'
'It's for her.' Shanta Devi raises her heavy eyelids to confront him. 'A love-nest for her and her son in which you will be welcome. That's what you want. That's what you're asking me for. Why do you ask? I don't want to know. Take what you want. You will anyway. You always do.'

Usha, the Dewan's daughter also shares the patriotic and humanistic sentiments as initiated by Manjula. Her father is the Chief Minister of the state and the revolt by children, she knows would land him into troubles. But

1. Ibid., pp. 42-43
the group loyalties are triumphant over the individual loyalties. The familial considerations are secondary. She joins hands with the forces of democracy and freedom which is manifest in her protest through a play which is her own creation. In the play she has shown the monstrosity of the ruling class. Mohini chastises Bawajiraj for salt tax, Usha shows the enactment of it on the stage to rouse mass consciousness. This shows that it is the initiations and feminine consciousness that, in the first place, can assure a woman’s identity, the role of the social forces, being secondary.

It is not hunger, deprivation, shame or exploitation that can threaten Usha’s identity as a woman of distinction in the state, she enjoys the royal class privileges but she keeps the national interest in the front and does not feel hesitant to be an active revolutionary in the interest of the state. She is also aware of the growing intimacy between Rabi, representing the state and Sophie, the residents daughter representing the alien power. Rabi too finds Usha falling in the pattern of the life of the commoners. The play roused varied notes of reactions; fashioned in Renaissance tradition it is viewed as subversive and sour to the British taste. The new Agent Mr. Buckridge takes it as a case of personal ego-injury and comes heavily on the Dewan: "Is it necessary Minister, to use children to
fight your battles?” Consequently, the play is banned fearing that it would incite feelings of revolt and disaffection within the territory of Devapur State. The Resident dictated a Memorandum which is read as under:

"Under the authority promulgated by the Dramatic Performance Act, 1876 (check that, will you Krishnan) all further performances of the Play (get the name, Krishnan) are forthwith forbidden as being likely to incite feelings of disaffection within Devapur State."

However despite the ban, the performance of the play was enacted at least a dozen more times, in private premises to which the Resident and his Staff had no access, until the cast had to return to school. The Dewan too felt rather perturbed and interrogated his daughter but Usha reassured him that it was one one’s else’s idea but her own. When she asked if he enjoyed the play and found it interesting, the Dewan in a tone of appreciation said it was most interesting.

What is interesting is that like his father, Bawajiraj III, Rabi too succumbs to the charm of a number of girls of diverse rank that he happens to encounter one after the other, but equally surprising is the fact that the women coming into his contact never surrender their individuality to his royal dignity. In the first place, it is Janaki, a nine years old sweeper’s daughter who

1. Ibid., p. 353
during the play with the prince does never feel enamoured of his palatial comforts. She is conscious of her status and honest to it because she knows that looking beyond it like one as a victim of bourgeois acquisitiveness would bring moral ruination. It is, equally the education as administered by Manjula and Mohini that Rabi himself develops a proletariat attitude to the commoners. The exchange of gifts between the two - Janaki presents a flower, in return, Rabi's gift is a feather, is symbolic of his being a sympathiser of the have-nots. Rabi's socialistic leanings and ideological commitments find expression from the start in the form of pure adolescent love between the two. One day Rabi thrusts Janaki on to the ground to inspect her rib-cage, then he shows her his own to mark evidently the standard of comparison between the haves and have-nots, the ill-fed and the well-fed. Rabi brings gifts of clothes for Janaki from Delhi but finds her disappear all of a sudden without telling anybody the reason of her disappearance. The next girl to come in his life is a mill-worker, Jaya, in Bombay. Jaya does not object to Rabi's advances because she had been also starving of love for five years in the absence of her husband who was imprisoned for taking part in union activities. She does not feel otherwise insulting to take Rabi to her humble dwelling of a colony of the textile workers when he is injured in the demonstration
during the strike. Sophie, the daughter of British resident, Sir Arthur, is a young lady of charm and attraction. She is a girl with a different viewpoint and that is why, unlike her mother, she does not feel hesitant or scared to mix with the Indian people at Holi festival. She fully understands how to guard the ring of modesty and decency in human relationship. She has no inhibitions to go with Rabi on hunting and boating expeditions.

Despite the contradictory opinions about the celebrations of Holi festival, Sophie gets ready to participate in the fun associated with this religious festival of colour and water being thrown on all alike everywhere. Her mother looks upon it as a festival of the pagan race, "not one of us". Sophie is an extension of the novelist's view of a woman whose philosophy of life is not influenced by narrow boundaries of race, colour, nationality and religion. Her concern is the essentials of humanity which alone, she is of the view, can save her identity but not in isolation.

Sophie is well aware of the weaknesses which destroyed Caroline's dream of possession, which was symbolic of the spiritual heritage of India. Instead, she is a prototype of Helen and her attitude to the Indians is above the racial considerations, prejudices and differences. She seems to be well influenced by the
spirit of the Holi-festival which is symbolic of love, unity of all races and universal brotherhood. The individual merges one with the group but her individuality is not threatened.