CHAPTER - I

THE INDO-ANGLIAN NOVEL SINCE 1957
AND KAMALA MARKANDAYA
After the advent of Independence, the more serious novelist has shown how the joy of freedom has been more than neutralized by the tragedy of the partition; how in spite of the freedom there is continuing corruption; inefficiency, poverty and cumulative misery; how, after all, the mere replacement of the white sahib by the brown sahib cannot effect a radical cure for the besetting ills of India. When independence came, the serious novelist in a sense found his occupation gone, for the traditional villain of the piece i.e. the foreign rule was no more in the picture. Making a new start as it were, the novelist shifted his lantern this side and that, made his probes, and found little to satisfy him. The old narrow loyalties were seen to wax as eloquent as ever. Communal, linguistic, casteist passions were seen to come into the open with accelerated frequency. While talk of ‘emotional integration’ filled the air, the terra firma only witnessed the agonizing spectacle of a divided house with a deceptive floor and a precarious roof. It had the shock therapy of brutal aggression by the Chinese in October-November, 1962 and by Pakistan in September 1965 to forge in the mass consciousness a new sense of unity and urgency and a stern, serious common purpose
reminiscent of the peak moments of the Gandhian age. But the moment the external pressure relaxed, the mood passed too, and once again the winds of disunity and purposelessness began to blow again.

While it is perhaps true that more novels are published today than all other kinds of serious literature—poetry, drama, essays, etc. — put together, still there are not many novelists who are able to make a reasonably comfortable life out of their art, unless of course they are willing to turn out 'popular' novels (that is to say, crime spiced with sex, or vice versa) with electronic precision and regularity. Great minds are not often attracted to the ranks of creative novelists: such a novelist as Annada Sankar Ray, for example, who retired prematurely from the Indian Civil Service and has settled down at Shanti-Niketan to devote himself entirely to creative writing is but the rare exception rather than the rule. Amateurishness is still the general law, and the average novelist doesn't take pains enough, he doesn't go deep enough. Rather, is too superficial to achieve a complete confrontation of the contemporary human situation, and he is also too lazy to achieve mastery of the craft of writing. Quite genuine talent reveals itself from time to time, but there is little growth, and atrophy sets in too soon. There have
been far too many promissory notes that have remained unredeemed.

The difficulties facing the Indian novelist are, no doubt, real enough. What is he to write about? To which 'patron' is he to offer his particular 'crocus'? Escapism — historical fiction in terms of nostalgia is one kind of escapism, sentimental romance in another — is easy, but it soon palls. Must the novelist's be a scientific or realistic or even naturalistic approach to contemporary social problems? A clinical probe into society's sores? A drain-inspector's report? A descent into the dark alleys, the gambling dens, the back-street whore-houses? Should the novelist write for entertainment or edification? Should he write for the sophisticated or for the masses? And the masses being still largely illiterate, what is one to do except turn out film-scripts! Again, is the novel to provide a cure for boredom, or is it to be conceived as an engine of essential knowledge, a campaign for the eradication of abuses, or as something truly autonomous, art for sake's sake! And what kind of language is the novelist to fashion as his medium: is he to cultivate the exotic classical graces of purity and ornateness, or is he to plump for the homespun rhythms of everyday speech? And there is the question of questions: in which language is the novel to be written? The problem of the choice of a
subject, the choice of the medium, the choice of the technique, the choice of the audience - this problem of choice at various levels bristles with endless difficulties. How is the novelist to choose a subject of burning local interest that will have relevance elsewhere as well, and at all times? How is he to hammer out a perfect language that is vivid and alive, yet also classical in its adequacy, strength and finish? How is he to touch his writing with the high seriousness that may compel the attention of the intellectuals and also sustain the interest of the nearly illiterate? In short, how is the novelist to be more than a scribbler, an entertainer, a cheap druggist and grow into a serious novelist, a recorder of the human situation in terms of beauty, power and universality? There are no summary answers to these questions. The novelist is a man and an artist: and hence what he writes can comprehend all that comprises man's life and can exploit all the graces and freedoms of art. But what he writes must neither merely outrage humanity, nor totally deny the imperatives of art. The novel is a means of expression for the writer, and it is ultimately born of understanding and love. The novelist's understanding (of man, of Nature, of God) has to be as total, and as integral, as possible; and his love has to be a total power too. Such understanding and power will forge their own appropriate means - language
form, technique - for communicating the totality of the vision and the whole power of the love to the readers. Whatever the subject - a patch of past history, a segment of contemporary life, a problem in ethics or politics, a revolutionary eruption in the body politic - the novelist's understanding and love will make his writing transcend the merely local and controversial, and attain the vitality and dignity of creative literature.

Notwithstanding the peculiar occupational ailments that beset the novelist in India, it is gratifying to note that the novel is a living and evolving literary genre, and is trying, in the hands of its practitioners, a fusion of form, substance and expression that is recognizably Indian, yet also bearing the marks of universality. The novel written in the spoken languages of the people is rather more enterprising, richer in content, wider in range than the novel in English which, especially in recent years, tends more and more to address itself to a Western audience. But, in writing essentials, the novel in India today is really something challenging.

History as the theme of creative fiction seems indeed to exercise a special fascination for many an Indian novelist of yesterday and today. Vimala Raina's Ambapali (1962) takes us back to the days of Ajat-shatru and tells the story of the Vaishali dancer who
rejected a King’s love and preferred to enter the Buddha’s fold.

In Balachandra Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* (1959) also we get, towards the end, glimpses of partition horrors, and in Manohar Malgonkar’s *Distant Drum*, again, the veil is lifted a little over what happened in those fateful days in Delhi and later in Kashmir. Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* explores more fully the origins of the two-nation theory and presents in some detail the sheer frenzy that possessed people in the Panjab in August 1947. Like war and revolution, civil strife of the kind that was witnessed in parts of India in 1947 was verily a bulldozer that levelled up things, leaving an ominous calm in the wake of the precedent destructive storm. Humanity uprooted, humanity mutilated, humanity massacred — for the artistic projection of the things that happened in 1947, not even the images of Dante’s Inferno can possibly prove adequate.

Sivasankara Pillai’s *Ranti-tangazhi* (translated by M.A. Shakoor into English as *Two Measures of Rice*, 1968) describes the life of the peasants in the difficult period of transition from the old feudalism to the new wage economy. The labourer is involved in conflicts — political, social, economic and he is perforce obliged to make the uneasy passage from innocence to experience. Apart from its sociological or even anthropological
value, the novel scores mainly on account of its convincing characterization. These simple people for whom sufferance is a birthmark or badge of limitation are verily the salt of the earth. In Marathi, Vyankatesh Madgulkar has done a similar service in his novel translated into English as The Village Had No Walls (1959). Like peasants in out of the way tracts, fisher-folk living by the seaside have known perhaps for thousands of years - the same bare nude hard life, struggling yet being at peace with the elements. Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai’s Chemmeen (translated into English by V.K.Narayana Menon) is a poignant record of the life of the seafaring folk on the coast of Allepey fringing the Arabian Sea. The peril, heroism, fatality and humanity of the fisher-folk’s life is brought out with a vividness, a sense of mounting crisis, and the tremors of tragedy often remind us of Hemingway’s The Old Man and the Sea. Another novel from Kerala, S.Menon Marath’s The Sale of an Island (1968) is about a group of people who live in an island near Kuttannd, but suddenly, faced with the startling prospect of eviction from the place that has been their home for generations, they are almost defenceless. Krishna Baldev Vaid’s Steps in Darkness (1962) is the image of childhood as it wakes up from innocence to the crude realities and sordid cruelties of life among grown up people. Little Beero’s world widens
as he moves from his parental hut to the school with its atmosphere of sadism, to the huts of his fellow-pupils, and to the playground, and all the while, it is but taking steps in darkness, not moving into a world of light and joy.

It was mentioned earlier that, since Bankim's time, the 'sannyasi' (in one or another guise) has often figured in Indian fiction but the attitude of the novelist to the erection of the holy man has been varying, some times ironic, at other time it is that of an exploiter but never of appreciation. In Bhabani Bhattacharya's He Who Rides a Tiger, the bogus 'Swamy' takes advantage of human gullibility so as to be even with the 'Pillars of Society' who had given a raw deal to him and to his daughter in the days of the Bengal famine. In R.K. Narayan's The Guide, Raju is a 'Swamy' by mistake, and in the end we wonder whether the lie has not really become the truth.

Anita Desai in her Cry, the Peacock (1963) and Voices in the City (1965), has also made intelligent use of the method. In other ways, of course, guarded experimentation is going on: zig-zag in narration jumbling the past, present and future to charge the novel with suspense and piquancy, characterization on the basis of purposeful inconsistency (human nature is 'board',
after all, as Dostoevsky used to say), and a functionally experimental prose style.

This whirl of names and titles and dates and types, although it might tend to blur the picture, must at least show that the novel in India - and the Indo-Anglian Novel, which in many ways merges with the totality - is rich enough and variegated. We have detective novels like S.K. Chettur's *Bombay Murder* and Kamal Sathianadhan's *Detective Janaki*, fantasies like Purushottam Tricamdas's *The Living Mask* and the novels of Sudhin N. Ghose, philosophical novels like Dilip Kumar Roy's *The Upward Spiral* and Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* and *The Cat and Shakespeare*, and novels of school life like Narayan's *Swami and Friends* and Muriel Wasi's *Too High for Rivalry*. Not a colour or shade of colour in the spectrum is wanting. Numberless novels are published, and they are clearly of unequal quality. But the best novels - they are not many, but there are some - are very good indeed. It is true there has occurred no Tolstoy yet, no Dostoevsky, but they will come too, for always, it is hoped that the best is yet to be! We shall now turn to the more important novelists, one by one.

Indian women novelists writing in English can not be treated as a distinct group, sharing common concerns or stylistic peculiarities that mark them out from their
male counter-parts. As a matter of fact, India's women novelists in English share the same cultural dichotomy and sense of alienation from the earth-bound realities of a major segment of the Indian society as are revealed by Indo-English writers male or female, poets or novelists. And in several respects, these women novelists are closer to the earthly reality. Kamala Markandaya is an Indo-Anglian novelist with an international reputation and recognition. Dr. K.R.S. Iyenger whose works on Indo-Anglian literature were pioneering ones in the field of Indo-Anglian literature were pioneering ones in the field of Indo-Anglian criticism, says that she represents the 'great tradition' of women novelists established by Jane Austen down to Virginia woolf. She has perhaps, established a tradition of women novelists in the post-independence Indo-Anglian literature itself. Prior to her advent, one does not find a woman novelist of some note or bulk in Indo-Anglian fiction. There are, however, a few exceptions with one novel each to their names. Some of them are Vimla Kapur's Life goes on, H. Kaveri Bai's Meenakshi's Memoirs, Zeenuth Futehally's Zohra, Iqbalunnisa Begum's Purdah and Polygamy and other nonentities. It is thus clear that Kamala Markandaya is

the first major woman Indo-Anglian novelist. After her came a long line of significant women novelists: Nayantara Sahgal with four novels,¹ R.P. Jhabvala with six², Anita Desai with three³, Santha Rama Rau with three⁴, Padmini Sen Gupta with one 'Red Hibiscus' and Nergis Dalai with two 'The Sisters' and 'The Inner Door'.

The women novelists have contributed to the development of the Indo-Anglian novel by inclusion of new themes and have given to it a new awareness of female society. They have voiced their sweets and spoils, joys and sorrows, ills and blessings. Jhabvala gives a penetrating analysis of domestic fiction and Kamala Markandaya in her novel A Silence of Desire presents a subtle study of the husband-wife relationship. Her novel Two Virgins gives a sensitive portrayal of the girl's growing awareness of the adult world, and the irrevocable loss of childhood. But it is not that these women novelists are engaged in fictionalising their problems only, instead they are aware of a larger world also.

Most of the characters and the episodes in the novels of Markandaya are undeniably autobiographical.

1. This Time of Morning, A Time to be Happy, Storm in Chandigarh, The Day in Shadow.

2. To Whom She Will, The Nature of Passion, The Householder, Esmond in India, A Backward Place and Get Ready for Battle.

3. Cry the Peacock, Voices in the City and Where Shall We Go this Summer.

4. Remember the House, The Adventures and Gifts of Passage.
Rukmani, Mirabai, Sarojini, Anusuya, Helen, Vasantha, Lalitha and Saroja seem to have been fashioned after the various facets of her crystal-like personality. The relationship between Rukmani and Kenny in *Nectar in a Sieve*, Sophie and Rabi in *The Golden Honeycomb*, Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering in *The Nowhere Man*, between Helen and Bashiam in *The Coffer Dams*, Ellie and Valmiki in *Possession*, between Mirabai and Richard Marlowe in *Some Inner Fury*, between Sarojini and Dandekar in *A Silence of Desire*, appear to have been inspired by her life in some measure or other. Markandaya was working in London as a journalist and has now settled there. This explains for many facts regarding her novels. Like Raja Rao who lived in France and located his magnum opus *The Serpent And the Rope* in France with a French heroine, Markandaya makes London a partial setting of her novels like *Possession* and *The Nowhere Man*. Her novels are full of British characters. *The Coffer Dams* is crowded with them. Her affiliation with England is a possible autobiographical source of the East-West theme which is recurrent in her novels, it is first hinted at in *Nectar in a Sieve* in the relationship between Rukmani and Kenny and then finds full exploration in *The Nowhere Man* and partly in *Some Inner Fury* and *Possession*. The East-West confrontation theme, race antagonism and the problem of expatriates are natural preoccupations for a woman novelist who, being
Indian married an Englishman. In *The Nowhere Man* the racial prejudices spring up between Srinivas, an Indian and Mrs. Pickering, the English gentle woman. This has obviously some autobiographical relevance. The point to be noted in these novels is that Markandaya in most of her novels makes an English character fall in love with an Indian or occasionally vice-versa. This reflects nothing but a significant episode from her own life and a suggestion of the possible synthesis of the two cultures. The treatment of this theme figures repeatedly in her novels in one or the other way.

Markandaya and Thomas Hardy have much in common. The most memorable heroes and heroines of her novels are victims - victims of fate, of their own passions or of the follies and malice of others. Unlike some other Indian writers who use English characters, Markandaya takes her characters from a very wide spectrum being comprised of Indian peasants, students, film producers, Indian emigrés in England, English engineers and their wives. Her women, peculiarly memorable, are Rukmani, Mira, Caroline Bell, Saroja and Lalitha. Markandaya has a particular interest in analysing women characters and suggesting the unusual poignancy of their fate as is manifest in *Two Virgins*. The narrators too are likely to be female, and even when not, the novel is told mainly from a woman's point of view. The novelist has well
brought out how the emancipation of the Indian woman has been seriously hampered by the distortions and imbalances in the economic and social order. In her recent novels, the Indian woman has evolved towards a larger concept of love - the 'sisterhood' of women. The quest for female autonomy leads her to the nurturance of warm familial relationships, which in turn advances towards the imaginative sympathy for the human race.

As a woman novelist, Markandaya represents "the creative release of the feminine sensibility in India". Since she shows her concern with the crisis of female identity in patriarchy, the feminist consciousness is central to all of her novels. The woman is alive to the exploitative tendencies, responsible for the marginalisation of her individuality and reducing her status to a commodity - item having its exchange value for survival. The novelist's fight for showing that the women are as much privileged beings to live a life of their own choices as much as their men are is reflected in the place and role she assigns to her woman characters. In Nectar in a Sieve, Some Inner Fury, Possession and The Two Virgins only women are narrators of the stories. This further shows the dominant female

view-point of her novels. Her novels are full of pregnancies and child births. Her being a woman has also influenced her narrative art to some extent. 'Women are natural story tellers', says Dr. K.R.S. Iyenger. And Kamala Markandaya is nothing if not a brilliant story teller.

Of the women novelists, Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Prawar Jhabvala are unquestionably the most outstanding. Markandaya's first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), has been compared with Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*, though a nearer and more apt analogy would be K.S.Venkataramani's *Murugan the Tiller*. A South Indian village in Tamil Nadu is the locale where life has apparently not changed for a thousand years and fear, hunger and despair are the constant companions of the peasant. In the existing situation can one hope to churn 'nectar' out of poverty, misery the advancing disease of overpopulation or the hopeless wailing of the helpless as the epigraph rightly underlines?

> Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,  
> And hope without an object cannot live.  

But the heart that is a tampered in the flames of love and faith, of suffering and sacrifice, will not easily accept defeat. Rukmani, the narrator-heroine, is also a

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1. Iyengar, K.R.S. *Indian Writing in English*, p. 435.  
2. Epigraph (Coleridge) *Nectar in a Sieve*.  

Mother of Sorrows. She receives shock after shock, such as her husband Nathan's infidelity, her daughter's sacrificial going on the streets to save the family from starvation, the death of the child Kuti, the ejection from the land. This last is too hard to bear for the peasant community with their ineradicable and inextricable adhesion to the property. One must hope and one must persevere even if one is engaged only in trying to discover nectar in a sieve. But the calm and hope is passive. There is no stir, Rukmani feels contented what little she is left with.

In *A Handful of Rice* (1965) Markandaya again concentrates on the socio-economic factors influencing a woman's individuality. The Ravi-Nalini episode is at the centre of the action: Ravi's vacillation between the material prosperity as ensured by the shady world of Damodar and of honesty tells upon Nalini's identity as a wife in the household. After Appu's death, Ravi becomes the master of the house, and despite keeping the Singer buzzing ferociously in an effort to cope with the situation he accepts defeat in the end. The incident of getting insulted for a faulty cut-out of a blouse by an Indian memsahib brings out the gap between the haves and have nots. Ravi returns with no money but words - "Fool, wretch, call yourself a tailor? A barbar would have done better... Rogue" which bring to his mind the power of
money. He ruminates, "and why not, since they had money and money was power. Money, he thought, with a craving that crawled like a disease in the bones and marrow of his body, if only, if only... and in his mind it took on the shape of a dark flame over which men crouched like opium-eaters to taste the savours of life.1

It is this ever increasing void of economic differentiation which breeds bourgeois evils such as moral perversion, dishonesty, greed and acquisitiveness. The thought of the humiliation heaped upon the poor by the rich unnerves Ravi but Nalini is conversant with the ways of the world and thus keeps poise and calm which ironically brings beatings instead of applause because he expected her to intervene to avoid the crisis. Nalini knows the moral significance of the poor man's implorings, "Should I have fallen at their feet... Grovelled in the dust for their custom." Ravi is roused into fits of anger and furious contempt, he "began to slap her then sharply blow after blow across her face."2

The poverty and the economic crisis in the household has perverted Ravi's vision, Nalini is hospitalised when in the advanced state of pregnancy the beatings caused profuse bleeding. It was feared a case of abortion but the child was saved by the timely efforts of the doctor.

2. Ibid., p. 187.
Ravi's reflections on the tragedy are highly comic, he wished the child to be destroyed in the womb, "it occurred to him to wonder if the disaster so narrowly averted would not in fact have been a blessing", but the thought "left behind a turmoil, and a sick, self-hatred that made him savagely question his fitness to be assigned the dignity of a human being." If Ravi fears that he can lose his humanity any moment in the grip of poverty, what of Nalini's individuality which is bracketed with the predicament of her lord?

A Silence of Desire (1960) explores the metaphysics of spiritual realities which adds new dimensions to Markandaya's vision. The important issue that creates crisis of a woman's identity under patriarchal system is the clash between the medieval world outlook and modernism, faith and the cool reason. The ever-increasing incompatibility of the two sets of values generates the waves of misunderstanding and hurt emotional stability in the wake of which both man and woman drift away from each other. The woman is a greater sufferer in such a situation and the novelist's plea is to seek compromise between tradition and modernity, faith and science and the spiritual and the material so as to create a meaning in life.

1. Ibid., p. 199
Dandekar tortures himself and goes to pieces because his wife Sarojini ailing from a tumour runs to a holy man for faith - cure. This clash between the individualistic attitude to pains of life surfaces but at the end the Swamy leaves the place and Sarojini undergoes a successful operation. Dandekar gets his peace. "I wanted - so little. My wife - I wanted her back, that was all." But what of Sarojini's self realisation and fulfilment? Can she keep her individuality in tact under a system that stands on self-annointed male- hegemony or will she ever cease to have faith in spiritual healing?

The Nowhere Man (1975) is a powerful dramatization of the truth of history how evils of racialism, colonialism, are hard to overcome. The title shows that man in the state of 'no whereness' ironically speaking, influences the identity of a woman. Srinivas, a South Indian Brahmin is despatched to England, his wife Vasantha also joins him there with two sons, Laxman and Seshu. What shapes their relations in an alien socio-cultural milieu is the concept of Hinduism: Srinivas is guided by its core philosophy of renunciation and self-denial which has a direct bearing on Vasantha's individuality. In place of sympathy, love, they have suspicion, hatred and wrath of the English community as

if they were a moral pollution. The feminine consciousness of Vasantha gets wounded when she as a mother is denied the right to choose a bride for her son, Laxman and as a grand mother she is kept away from the reunion of the family at the time of the birth of a son. She dies of illness, Srinivas develops leprosy, symbolic of the alienation of an immigrant, especially of an Indian origin. Srinivas’s titanic battling against the value-orientation of anotherwise inhospitable region of adoption renders him a ‘dispossessed’ person which involves the ‘dispossession’ of Vasantha’s wifely identity. He is confined to a narrow stuffy attic room in his own house which, metaphorically speaks of his presence as being contagious. With the loss of roots to exist, the woman’s identity becomes non-existent in the general melee of socio-cultural chaos.

The Coffer Dams (1969) is a subtle complex study involving issues of socio-psychological implications which thwart the harmonious growth of woman’s individuality. Outside the physical contact what creates meaning in the life of a woman’s individuality and freedom? The novelist shows concern with the predicament of a European woman, Helen. The locale is not shifted but the cast changes its nationality. The novelist broadens her range of study. What is significant is that the shadows of this unfeeling professionalism as
much obliterate the Indianness in the tribal population as they corrode Helen's femininity. Clinton is blind to the fact that his moving away from Helen will alienate from his own self. Helen too feels alienated in absence of reciprocity involvement and understanding but she regains her selfhood through her relation with the tribal population and its chief Bashiam. The rising dam is symbolic of the wall separating the Indians from the Britishers but at the deeper level it leads to alienating a Britisher from a Britisher. The novelist is not against the material progress associated with the technological progress but what certainly she indicts is the loss of basic human values in the process of change: human interest is primary before machines are brought in to dislodge man from his traditional anchorage. Helen's identity is obscured by Clinton's alignment with the forces of materialism. Being much closer to machines, he has developed a purely mechanical mode of relationship with no warmth of human passions. Markandaya's humanism is wounded by the assault of the forces of racial hatred and colour prejudices on one's humanity. The togetherness of Helen and Bashiam is employed by the novelist as a metaphor to suggest the possible way to escape the terror of racial discrimination. The book intends to show that the sequestered bits of humanity divided in the name of colour, race and nationality are
reconciled provided there is an urge to get involved and understand each other's humanity. There are scenes in which the Indians and the English are shown having physical relations based on purity of feelings of love, not of hip-morality. But they are not lasting and the reason is simple - the essential incompatibility and contrariness of race, colour and culture. If man-woman relationship verges on animal level, for want of sharing each other's feelings and emotions, it injures the essence of womanhood.

The next novel, Two Virgins (1975) is a reflection of the anti-human forces which rob a woman of her identity. The two virgin daughters are Lalitha and Saroja: The former is maverick, the city is a hermitage for her naturalistic escapades whereas the irony is that she hardly understands the alphabets of a metropolis city culture, its dangers and snares and thus she loses her very identity in a bid to identify herself with its consumerist culture. The latter has also developed a passion for city life but she is saved at the end from the trap of Devraj, the assistant of a film director, Mr.Gupta; who has devoured the sex of Lalitha and left her in distress.

Markandaya's view of man, especially in this novel is akin to that of the existentialists. Acts alone are important, man to start with, is nothing and he becomes
what he makes of himself. He is what he is not and is not what he is. That is there is no supernatural deity outside his own to carve out his destiny. If Lalitha loses her identity, she is her own enemy who is blind to the ironic implications of the lures of the city and glamour of the film world as represented by Mr. Gupta.

In the next novel, *Possession* (1967), the dragon that threatens a woman's identity is the instinct to possess or inherit what one is not destined to do so. It has its own tragic flaw which perverts man's outlook on life and leaves him a disillusioned derelict. Unless one has his roots to exist, life becomes a nightmare in face of the socio-cultural confrontation. The fact is illustrated by Lady Caroline Bell's failure to possess an Indian painter, Valmiki who is the twentieth century prototype of Giotto, the Italian boy. Caroline's tragedy is of her own making, she is a victim of overpossessiveness and over-ambitiousness born of the disgust of materialism. She is fascinated by the mysterious tinge in Valmiki's paintings and her cravings are therefore the natural cravings of the woman to seek fulfilment. But during the process she loses what is her own by way of inheritance thereby to be a victim of the technique of self-mockery. Caroline is an extension of imperialistic greed, the ambition to possess India in her wholeness. The novel has two more episodes outside the story dealing with the
unsuccessful efforts of the English woman to possess something of India which Valmiki embodies. The Val-Ellie episode verges on irony as to how the swollen conceit of the painter ignores the claims of the yearnings of a sincere heart and destroys the woman's femininity. Valmiki's ultimate return to the Swamy is symbolic of the spiritual merger of the two similar selves after a temporary separation. Thus the novel at one level is a study in the East-West theme dramatizing the failure of one's possession or assimilation by the other. If Caroline embodies the dehumanizing impact of materialism on art and Val represents the good in spiritualism, then the novel assumes the significance of a morality play in which the fight between the good and evil to possess human soul does not end in a draw.

In Some Inner Fury (1955), Markandaya deals with the theme of violence and man's inhumanity to man: violence generates a sense of horror and fear and a wave of terror is unleashed. The 'Quit India Movement' of 1942 is used as a backdrop to show how political turmoil and the cultural differences create topsy-turvydom in the scale of value and destroy the essentials of humanity including that of the women. The two stories - of Premala-Kitswamy and Mira - Richard - are fused together to exemplify the dampening impact of the racial animosities and socio-cultural disparateness on human sensibility.
Nearly all the characters, both male and female, are involved in one or the other tragic event culminating in death. Premala, brought up in a traditional Indian family, is married to Kitswamy who belongs to a rich sophisticated family and who has returned from England with an English friend, Richard. Kit, for his different race and culture, has to leave the English girl he loves, but equally the drama of the clash of the differing cultural milieu is enacted in his marriage with Premala in that the two represent what is popularly known as the East-West encounter. The second story deals with the love of Richard and Mira which is also torn asunder when Govinda and his men set Hickey’s school to fire. Kit is murdered in a stormy night under mysterious circumstances, Govind is arrested on Hickey’s evidence but he is set free by the violence of the frenzied mob. Govind’s arrest shakes Mira violently, she sees the oppressive and beastly designs of the English man work on vengeance. Mira develops a consciousness of the inner mechanism of evil and rises above inadequacies of life threatening her individuality. And finally it is in The Golden Honeycomb (1977) that Markandaya shows that what shapes the identity of a woman is not the rank or the place she occupies on the social totem pole but initiation, lucidity of vision and Sisyphusian dogged determinism to surmount fate.
Manjula, the Dowger Maharani of Bawajirao-II, Mohini, a concubine and a commoner of the present king of the state of Devapur, Bawajirao-III and Usha the daughter of Dewan are the images of diverse rank and station but the unity is maintained by a view which they all share a common view in regard to their identity in a state governed by alien rulers. Mohini, Manjula, Usha are the 'initiates, they dominate the scene instead of being dictated or harassed by male-tyranny. Bawajiraj desires Mohini to accept his offer of marriage and be a maharani but she is well aware of the inescapable hazards and risks involved in this royal and genuine offer. It is a trap, she feels, symbolic of the state of incarceration and thus she rejects the proposal in plain words fearing the loss of her freedom. She does not want her and the child to be shackled like the Maharaja who has served an onerous apprenticeship to fulfil his role as a ruler under the non-native power:

You could be a queen
I don't want to be your queen.
I want to be free.'

There is another group of women characters - the proletariat class - who are equally conscious of their individuality as are the royal ladies. They are not charmed by the glamour of royalty. Janaki and Jaya are

its representatives and their relations with the prince Rabi, Mohini's son, are not dictated by the image of sovereignty. Their attitude to man-woman relationship is not primitivistic, it is enduring and human based on reciprocity, involvement and love which keeps their proletariat identity in tact.