CHAPTER TWO

NOVELS OF KAMALA
MARKANDAYA (1954-1960)
Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve* is a genuine novel of rural India, delineating the miserable plight of the landless farmer Nathan and his wife Rukmani. Hari Mohan Prasad calls it “an epic of the Indian life at the grass-roots, a full view of the village world where peasants grow and live, suffer and endure and emerge more dignified, more human in their elements with their tattered rags, their dying moans and their obstinate clinging to the soil like the stump withered all over but its roots delve in the earth.”¹ N. K. Jain feels that the novel presents “an authentic picture of village life in transition, particularly of rural poverty and hunger.”² Uma Parameswaran and Stephen Ignatius Hemenway also commend the novel for its portrayal of rural life. M. K. Naik, however, considers the rustic life in the novel “contrived” due to the novelist’s description of “the public naming ceremony of Ira’s child which is born in sin” and feels “convinced that Rukmani’s village exists only in the expatriate imagination of her creator. Surely, no traditional Indian village will allow so permissive a code of sexual morality.”³ A microscopic scrutiny of the novel may yield many more flaws. Even though no particular location of the village is given, a series of graphic details and descriptions show that Markandaya had had

the direct experience of village life at some stage in her life. Some of these traits are not confined to villages and are to be found in the cities as well but the problems described in the novel have a typical rural tinge. Whether it is on economic, social, religious or human level, the novel belongs to rural life.

Most of the characters in the novel are typically rural. Rukmani, Nathan, Janaki, Kali, Kunthi, Ira, Old Granny and many more nameless characters. Their ways of life, attitudes, manners and speech belong to the countryside.

Hari Mohan Prasad calls Nathan and his wife “symbols of teeming millions, archetypal figures like Adam and Eve,” whereas Hemenway calls Rukmani “a living replica of the stereotyped Indian wife who regards her husband as her god and her children as her divine calling.” Other critics like Uma Parameswaran have also heaped praises on Rukmani for her stoic acceptance of difficult situations. Daughter of a village headman and now married to a village landless farmer, Rukmani is faithfully devoted to her husband and, according to Indian traditions, does not call his name but addresses him only as “husband.” Her innocence, simplicity, naivety and lack of worldly wisdom border on foolishness and land her into several difficulties for Raja’s death or when she loses all her money and belongings at the temple. Like other rural women, she would wash her clothes in the river. Her husband Nathan, like Rukmani, is “a gentle and docile soul” who “endures his lot without any thought of rebellion, or redress.” He is poor in everything except in his love for his wife. Being a rural farmer, he takes pride

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in building the house with his own hands. Since he too is simple and naive,
he becomes bewildered in the city and fails to recognise the lady doctor in
man’s dress. After seeing the miserable plight of Murugan’s wife. Nathan
feels disillusioned by the city and says, “It is better that we should go now,
while it is still light. We are not yet used to this city...darkness does not help.”
The city thus becomes identified with darkness in which the rural people
grope helplessly for a path. As long as Nathan and Rukmani remain out of the
village, their longing for the land grows. Even when they had begun to work
on the stone quarry, they never reconciled themselves to the city, as Nathan
says, “This is not my home, I can never live here”. The rural people take pride
in having more children as symbol of divine blessing. Nathan and Rukmani
have six children while Janaki, wife of a village shopkeeper, has seven children.

The concept of happiness of the rural people is very simple. They live their
life on the elemental level with bare necessities. Rukmani ponders on such a
vision of happiness:

While the sun shines on you and the fields are green and beautiful
to the eye, and your husband sees beauty in you which no one
has seen before, and you have a good store of grain laid away for
hardtimes, a roof on you and a sweet stirring in your body, what
more can a woman ask for? My heart sang and my feet were
light as I went about my work, getting up at sunrise and going to
sleep content. Peace and quiet were ours.  

1. *Nectar in Sieve*, pp. 2-3
With simple inhabitants of the village, Markandaya also depicts the one time beauty of the country side. She has not given the description of the village at the height of its glory. Slow change was coming to the village where, Srinivasa Iyengar feels, “life has apparently not changed for a thousand years” but now with the invasion of industry and modern technology “sinister consequences issue.” With the abolition of zamindari system, the headman of the village was no longer of consequence. The practice of arranged marriage, was having a setback now when its children moved out to the city. Rukmani’s marriage was settled by her parents, so was Ira’s, but Murugan’s was done by himself. Rukmani’s marriage was a sacred which bound the two together in sun and in rain. Murugan deserts his wife and takes another woman without any compunction. The tannery, symbolizing industrialization, invades the village depriving it of its children’s playground.

Though a village woman, Kunthi feels happy with the change that their “village is no longer a clump of huts but a small town” and visualizes having shops, tea stalls, and a bioscope. She beams with happiness because her sons fetch good salary from the tannery, and the village has become “a growing town”. Rukmani, however, does not like the change because of its noise, stinking smells and crowds. The birds seem to have forgotten to sing. Rukmani denounces the change because the money buys less and less. In place of quiet, the village has “all noise and crowds everywhere, and ruce young hoolingans idling in the street and dirty bazaars and uncouth behaviour, and no man thinks of another but schemes only for “his money”. Instead of living in such a place, she would rather “go back to the sweet quiet
A free reign of nature has been a characteristic of the village. Its blue skies, tender trees and running brook have been perennial source of delight to the rural people, but now there is constant encroachment. At one time, kingfishers flashed between the young shoots for fish. There were paddy birds and flamingoes “Striding with ungainly precision among the water reeds, with plumage of a glory not of this earth.” With the setting up of tannery, these birds haunt the place no more. Rukmani recollects:

Somehow I had always felt the tannery would eventually be our undoing. I had known it since the day the carts had come with their loads of bricks and noisy dusty men, staining the clear soft greens that had once coloured our village and cleaving its cool silences with clamour. Since then it had spread like weeds in an untended garden, strangling whatever life grew in its way. It had changed the face of our village beyond recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants in a myriad ways. Some—few—had been raised up; many others cast down, lost in its clutches. And because it grew and flourished it got the power that money brings, so that to attempt to withstand it was like trying to stop the onward rush of the great juggernaut.\(^1\)

Though Markandaya has depicted well the changing face of the village, she has not ignored those traits of the rural people which have remained

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1. *Nectar in a Sieve*, pp. 135-36
unchanged for centuries. These traits are simplicity, honesty, perseverance, selflessness, spirit of cooperation, faith in god and man, and absence of jealousy and temptation. Nathan and Rukmani lead a very simple life, with three basic necessities: food, clothes and shelter.

The activities of rural people consist of milking the cows and goats, planting the seeds, churning butter and milk. As a landless farmer, Nathan tilled the land, worked on it, sweated and bled for it even though it belonged to others. The best harvest gave him the least reward and the least harvest drove him and his family to starvation. At various stages of his life, he thought of many agricultural activities. The duties of the women are to clean the house, to bring up children. Rukmani collects dung for fuel and makes dung cakes.

The living conditions of the rural people are almost primitive. Nathan's house is a small thatched mud hut. The hut has two rooms, one of which is a kind of storehouse for grain. For lighting, the village has wick lamps or oil-filled coconut shells used as lamps.

To tend a small child, they don't have a wooden cradle but an improvised one of cloth hung from a branch of a tree. The village transport is a bullock cart. The sounds of sparrows and bulbuls, mynahs and parrots delight the travellers on the way.

In the matter of food, the rural people have an elemental simplicity. The modern experiments in arts have not yet reached the village. Their foods is simple, boiled rice, dhal, vegetables, curd, a coconut grated fine and cooked in milk and sugar, and a wheat cake. There are no references to hot and cold
beverages but what they drink is the clear milk. When the rice terraces are
drained, they have the fish. When they are tired to simple food and “when
the tongue repels against plain boiled rice, desiring ghee and salt and spices
which one cannot afford, the sharp bite of a chillie renders even plain rice
palatable”. On festivals, the food preparations could become elaborate. The
people also have mixed sweet and spicy dishes. When the crops fail due to
drought or excess of rains, they would eat plantain leaves, salted fish, roots,
leaves, and the fruit of the prickly pear. It goes even worse when for every
edible plant or root many contenders struggle. They would eat a half rotten
sweet potato, a crab caught near the river or even grass itself.

The economic activities of the village people are completely illplanned.
Having neither money nor grains in reserve for long term plans, Nathan and
Rukmani go tilling and toiling. If the crops are good, they have feasts; if not,
fasts. One cannot economize when what one has inadequate for bare
survival. Rukmani divides rice into 24 small parts to feed the entire family.
Nathan works for thirty yers under the illusions of owning up the land. The
pathetic plight of an uprooted farmer can be seen in Rukmani’s words:

This home my husband had built for me with his own hands in
the time he was waiting for me; brought me to it with a pride
which I, used to better living, had so very nearly crushed. In it
we had lain together, and our children had been born. This hut
with all its memories was to be taken from us, for it stood on
land that belonged to another. And the land itself by which we

lived. It is a cruel thing, I thought. They don’t know what they do to us.¹

Their hardships become more poignant when the rich traders like Biswas hoard rice and refuse to part with even a small quantity of it. The economic plight of Nathan and his wife can be seen from the fact that in order to pay the revenue of the land, they sell two brass vessels, the tin-trunk, two shirs of their eldest son, and a handful of dry chillies. Finding these not to be enough, they sell even bullocks and seeds so as to retain the land.

The social life of the rural people is also quite circumscribed. Tied to its traditions and customs they cannot look far beyond their caste, village or social limits. Devoid of any mobility, they die at the place of their birth. Ira’s marriage takes place at the same house where her mother had reached after her own marriage. For them, life moves as slowly as their bullockcart. Their social activities consist largely of the celebrations of birth and marriage ceremonies, and of big festivals. Rukmani’s savings of small quantities of rice, dhal and ghee are spent on the occasion of Ira’s marriage, as if on that day. “There is plenty of food inside,” Rukmani tells Arjun, her eldest son. “Go and eat while there is still some left” and Arjun declines to eat any more because, he replies, “I have been feasting all day”.

By making Rukmani her mouthpiece, Markandaya shows her disapproval of the purdah system. Since no middle class lady has been introduced in the novel, no purdah system could have been shown.

¹. Nectar in a Sieve, p. 137
Nathan does not enjoy the power, privilege and avenues of happiness. He lives in a near-dilapidated mudhouse. Because of the failure of his crops, he sells his possessions to pay off land revenue. Hence the essential feeling of a sense of loss of something which once was great is not there. In a tragedy, “it is these wonderful people, with all their mighty resources of power, privilege, and personal endowment, who are shown in tragedy to be exposed to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune; suffering intensely the confusion, terror, and humiliation of the human condition; and having in the end to endure the last loss and degradation, the extinction of personality in death.” Nathan is an average man, living and working with other poor farmers, beggars, destitutes and stonebreakers. His death does not come as the fall of a giant, creating a vacuum, but only as a minor happening. Throughout the novel, the continuous sufferings of the farmer couple make the mood of the novel sombre.

And yet it would be wrong to deny his individuality altogether. Nathan’s endurance is not without dignity. Living in the village, these people have learnt a lesson from nature to mould themselves according to the changed circumstances whether it the sun or the rain, good times or illtimes. Hence the deaths of Raja and of Kuti don’t draw their protests, nor do the departures of their sons make them extremely sentimental.

There are a number of social problems which have been taken up in the novel. These are the problems of marriage and dowry, of poverty and corruption, of superstition and ignorance. Markandaya does not provide any solution to these problems. The drawback comes not so much from the
absence of her art. Markandaya tries to squeeze in all kinds of problems—social, religious, economic—into the lives of the farmer couple and their children.

Towards the end of the novel, Markandaya writes about Nathan and Rukmani working in a stone quarry. They have been deprived of their belongings at the temple and are to face the hard world in their old age. Without having hammers both Nathan and Rukmani work on the stone quarry, breaking stones with stones. Markandaya does not seem to have experienced how difficult it is to break stones with stones. It is possible to break bricks into small pieces with stones but it is very unusual to have stones of the right size broken with stones on commercial scale. Markandaya might have done better by providing them with borrowed ones or given them loans to buy new ones. The mere fact of working hard would have made the reader sympathize with them. A sack filled with stones would be too heavy to be transported from one place to another and at the same time their weight as well as the sharp edges of the newly broken stones would tear the sack.
Markandaya’s Some Inner Fury depicts the kind of love as it existed in the westernized, upper class Indian families of the 1940’s. One can find in it some traces of Kamala Markandaya herself when she had married Mr. Taylor and had finally settled in England.

Two themes which are closely intertwined in Some Inner Fury are cf love and death, S.C. Harrex writes that the theme of the novel is “the tragic participation of disunity and catastrophe in personal relationship.” The personal relationships operate on many levels—between Mira, an Indian girl, and Richard, an Englishman; between Kitsamy, a westernized husband, and Premala, a typical Indian wife. The undeclared war is between the freedom-seeking, colonized Indians and the colonizing Britishers. The racial prejudices do not let the Indians and Britishers stay together harmoniously, even on individual level, and result inevitably in disunity and deaths of Premala, Kitsamy and Richard. The themes of love and death interact with and intensify each other. Richard’s death tests Mira’s love in the same way as Premala’s death tests Kitsamy’s.

The entire novel is coloured, by the cautious love between Mira and Richard and, by rather cold relationship between Premala and Kitsamy. As its title shows, the novel deals with some inner fury—the passion, love, anger— of Mira for Richard as also with the fury of the Indian freedom fighters up in arms against the colonizing Britishers. Some inner fury is intensely felt but remains inadequately articulated. For A.V. Krishna Rao, the title appears "symbolically significant on two levels: first, the emotional inner fury of Mira
is completely quenched when her love for Richard results in an ecstatic experience of the 'sweep and surge of love' secondly, the wider inner fury of the nation at large is fully vented, culminating in the violent demonstration of national indignation at the alien rule, Govind being its local figure."

The novel begins with Mira going over the scene of Richard's death in the mob fury, ruminating over a little silver box containing the remnants of her world of love-- "the scrap of material torn from Richard's sleeve" which she had "picked from the dust when it was all over". She also refers to "the slow pain coming over : seeping up, filling my throat with grief, flowing from dust to temple". S. Krishna Sarma refutes it by saying that in the novel there is nothing "to suggest any physical injury caused to Richard, not to speak of death." On the contrary, Srinivasa Iyengar, H.M. Williams and Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly believe that Richard was murdered by the mob fury because one does not talk of dust, of grief unless someone were dead.

From the very beginning of the novel, Mira's actions show an unconscious liking for Richard. Her confused act of garlanding him at the railway station, and her defence of Richard's embarrassing act of borrowing a dhoti and a pair of chappals from one of the servants show the sprouting of love in her.

In the second stage, love is no longer an occasional spark originating from Mira's act of innocence; Mira who had often gone to the clubs with her father now goes with Richard and feels quite cheerful and smiling. Markandaya depicts the first flame of love in Mira. They go out together as man and woman with a rich glow of love. A message from Richard becomes more meaningful to
her. She meets Richard in the Government House and “the tapers of pleasure began to glow” on her. They touch and kiss each other. For her to be in the company of Richard becomes pleasure.

The third stage can be called that of the simmering, life, in which their love no longer remains an occasional flame. Mira meets Richard in his second visit though Govind disapproves of it. They now are in deep love. He thinks of marrying her, while Mira, in his absence, cannot put his image away. It is when both of them go to Kanyakumari. While taking a naked bath in the sea, Richard becomes “a creature of gold,” his body turns to “a pale gold” and his “hairs glinting golden against the skin, the skin as tight and firm as a silken sheath”. They talk of love and the atmosphere between them becomes moving and changing.

Mira and Richard act as unmarried husband and wife. Richard talks of “fever” and “ache”. Mira feels:

Slowly my senses awoke and responded, the buds of feeling swelled and opened one by one. In the trembling silence I heard the blood begin its clamour, felt its frantic irregular beat; then the world feel away, forgotten in this wild abandoned rhythm, lost in the sweep and surge of love.¹

In their promise to be together all the time, one can read the feelings which the two swear to be together till death. Love, which is a substitute for marriage here, becomes “a talisman that would somehow keep us together, protecting us against war, the world, everything”.

¹. Some Inner Fury, p. 110
In the fourth stage, violence and disruption are introduced in their love. When the lovers are happy and their love at its peak seems secure against all the dangers of the world, political violence threatens its very existence. Being a symbol of chaos in nature, violence implies the breach of order and love. Someone throws a stone and the sound of splintering crash comes. Sensing danger, Mira checks Richard from going out of the car. The stone symbolically becomes a potent signal of threat to their mutual love. The "unadmitted truth" Mira talks of is the fact that an Englishman and an Indian girl have no business to be in love and that the East and the West should never meet. Using the same image, Markandaya in *Nectar in a Sieve* terms the establishment of tannery in the village as the first stone tossed "into the calm lake of the lives of the farmer couple". The existence of racial prejudices becomes for Mira more than a stone, "a vampire, sucking from us the lifeblood of love".

Mira's love on individual level for the Englishman is the hatred of Indians in general against the British displayed in the form of filthy abuses and slogans. Richard measures smallness of Mira's love against the general hatred for the British and he, murmurs, "It is a terrible thing, to feel unwanted. To be hated". Individuals cannot be excluded from the vast pervading hatred which originates from the British colonization and their policy of supporting their countrymen even when they were in the wrong.

In the fifth stage, Mira parts company with Richard, sacrificing her personal love for the larger love of the nation, and identifying herself with the Indian mob.
We had known love together, whatever happened the sweetness of that knowledge would always remain. We had drunk deeply of the chalice of happiness, which is not given to many even to hold. Now its was time to set it down, and go.¹

Taken on symbolical level, the parting of Mira and Richard is the parting of India and England after a short relationship.

Mira-Richard relationship is based on love without marriage, the relationship of Premala and Kitsamy could be termed marriage-without-love. Influenced by the Western ideas. Kitsamy refuses to marry a girl without first knowing her. His love for a silk-haired English girl called Sylvia could not have been turned into a marriage. His opposition to marry Premala arose in the absence of his acquaintance with her. The first stage in their relationship is when in order to facilitate marriage, Premala begins to live with Richard’s mother and Kitsamy comes in contact with her.

The second stage begins with the marriage of Premala and Kitsamy. It is also here that their contrasting natures begin to surface. Premala is like a dampened lights only to be extinguished even before its function is over. Kit likes playing tennis; Premala does not. He asks her to put on shorts for which she has no liking. She prizes honesty which for Kit signifies nothing. Her desire of playing on Veena is in contrast with Kit’s absence of liking for classical music. She knows Gita which Kit has forgotten.

In the third stage, Premala’s dampened love for Kit is extinguished in the absence of her husband’s reciprocal gesture. Mira talks of Premala’s

¹. Some Inner Fury, p. 110
quiet-pained bewilderment and her lost face which "gave up, one by one, the lights and colours of happiness". In any case, Premala's love has been one-sided; it was because of her love that she tried so hard to please him. The bubbling enthusiasm of Kitsamy in modernizing her also cools down. Premala becomes withdrawn in the parties. Her behaviour before the guests invites her husband's wrath.

In the fourth stage, the absence of her husband's love brings frustration in Premala. The failure of Kitsamy is not in providing for Premala's physical comforts, she adopts a child and shares with the village people the warmth of her love. For K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Premala "is symbolic of the Mother—Mother India who is compassion and sufferance, who must indeed suffer all hurts and survive all disasters." The child that pleases Premala irritates Kit because of the danger of it being taken as a bastard.

It is this marriage responsible for Premala's social service. If Kit had really loved and accepted her as she was, without forcing her personality into inhospitable moulds, the problem of her becoming a reformer would not have arisen.

The fifth stage comes in the sudden awakening of Kit's love for Premala once danger and death threaten her. On learning of the danger to Premala's life, Kit hurries to the school only to have the satisfaction of holding her dead baby. Her failure to find a meaning in life drives her to death. Mira writes about Premala's death:

But I could not believe she was dead. The feeling would not come,
then. I looked at her and she had always been beautiful and she
was beautiful now.¹

For people like Premala, death means nothing because one remains
beautiful even in death. Srinivasa Iyengar points out how Premala “looks
transfigured through suffering.” In Premala’s face before death, Mira had
noticed “a glow, a serenity” which did not exist before. She had serenity—
“finer, more tempered, as if the dross had been taken from its virgin gold in
some unknown fiery crucible”. Premala, as her name suggests, is an
embodiment of love— prem— and she, like a reformer, must lavish it on her
husband, on Govind, on the adopted child as also on the entire village.

The fire that consumes her could be the her inner fire. She is
consumed with dignity in the real fire. It is then that Govind accuses Kitsamy
of killing her:

“She loved you,” he said, “you never loved her--you do not even
know the meaning of love. You gave her nothing--not even a
home. You drove her to the village--you drove her to her death”.²

Since Premala had identified herself with the village and its school, must
have meant the absence of meaning in life. Kit, on the other hand, charges
Govind with her destruction considering him “as guilty of her death as if you
had strangled her with your own hands”. The fact is that to some extent, both
Kitsamy and Govind have been responsible for her death--Kit by not loving
her enough, and Govind by being a leader of a group of nationalists who

1. Some Inner Fury, p. 133
2. Ibid, P. 133
destroyed the village school and caused her death. In order to check further bloodshed, Mira encircles Govind in her hands but one more death comes—
that of Kitsamy:

He was lying in the mud a few yards away. Kit, my brother, lying in the rain, in the mud, in darkness but for the lightning. I knelt beside him, and he was not conscious. I took his head in my lap leaning over to shield him from the rain, and he roused a little. I saw his eyes open and they were bright; even pain, this mighty pain of impending death, could not blur them.¹

The death of Kitsamy is like that of Nathan who too had died in the rain with his naked body squelching in the mud. In both these cases, Markandaya seems to be emphasizing that the human body comes out of earth and returns to it. However, her treatment of death does raise a question was Kitsamy's death an artistic necessity? S. Krishna Sarma feels and rightly so that Markandaya wanted to build up Kit's death “into a melo dramatic denouement, and capitalized on the earlier antagonism” that Govind had towards Kitsamy. Whether this antagonism originates from Kitsamy's ill-treatment of Premala or because of his being on the side of the British when he was fighting for the political independence of the country, his antagonism was not powerful enough for Govind to murder his own cousin. Hence Sarma's argument is valid when he wishes “to have a more solidly laid foundation for the antagonism to make the culmination artistically inevitable.”

¹. Some Inner Fury, p. 34
Markandaya's female characters in *Nectar in a Sieve* are uneducated and remain passive recipients of loving or cruel treatment of their husbands; in *Some Inner Fury*, they are educated and assert their individualities—Premala by adopting a child against Kit's wishes and Mira by loving Richard against Govind's and her parents' wishes.

Belonging to a westernized Indian family, Mira is a young woman—emotional, imaginative and of a contemplative nature but also, on occasions, quite timid and perplexed. Being a woman and having not much experience, she as a narrator has a limited function and becomes ineffective under certain situations. A narrator's consciousness is a window through which internal and external activities of characters are viewed. In Mira's case, the window obviously has a narrow frame, and the glass panes have some scratches, distortions and opacity at certain places. It is Mira's flawed personality which is accountable for the inadequacy and inarticulacy of the narrative in Markanday's *Some Inner Fury*.

Mira is sixteen and her knowledge of the world is based on theoretical grounds rather than on her own experience. She had learnt a good many speeches but they all failed her at crucial moments and she felt "if I spoke all I would stammer, and so I kept quiet, holding back even the commonplace politeness of saying they were most kind". Belonging to upper class, Markandaya must not have witnessed the crude from of violence and death, poverty and misery and its is natural that the narrator Mira shies away from them. While visiting Roshan's office, Mira felt "the sense of strangeness of being a woman among so many men".
It is this sense of strangeness of being a woman that breeds Markandaya's hesitation in describing the man's world of violence, terror, and death. Had the question been about Mira's depiction of a dying person or of death itself.

The events of 1942 are a part of the histories of India and England. It is an important year of the changing relationship between Englishmen and Indians, and, as such, deserved a detailed portrayal. This is what Markandaya does not do. She writes rather casually "the next year—that never-to-be-forgotten year of nineteen forty-two—had hardly begun". She rightly picks up Govind to portray his animosity against the British. He did not like Premala's visit to the village where Hickey, the missionary, had opened a school, because for him it was the missionaries' assault on the native religion. In order not to report the intensity of the Quit India movement, including the hatred Indians had for the British, Markandaya, as a diversionary device, makes Mira and Richard go for six weeks to the South as if the movement did not exist there. It is this first person point of view that restricts her vision. Even when they were in the South, Mira could have reflected over the happening in the north. Raban writes "One of the functions of the story teller is to be everywhere at the same time, mindful of past history, conscious of the present and aware of the possibilities of the future." Mira that way thinks neither of the past, nor of the future. While being at one place, she becomes oblivious of the other place. Instead of describing the movement of 1942, Markandaya talks of "creeping hostility," "the brooding watchfulness of people," her own "growing uneasiness" while looking at the hoardings and bills on the
walls and refers only to some "obscene abuse...which had been written with a
hate such as only an occupied country can generate". The description seems
as if the reality had been viewed through a distorted or dull glass. Instead of
writing so, why not give the details of feelings of hatred and what generated
them and what form the Quit-India movement took? L.P. Hartley talks of the
novelist's sensibility as "the ability to feel what one is writing about." It is
"like feeling in real life" and that "a novelist will never be any good until he
has learnt to exteriorize himself and to write about characters who are no
way like him."