CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION
Great fiction transcends time and space and enjoys universal response, yet every major work of art and literature is rooted in the soil of a culture and is held, with pride, as one if its finest efflorescence. It is by this measure that King Lear is English, Madam Bovary is French, War and Peace is Russian, Faust is German and The Serpent and the Rope is Indian. In fact, a novel is initially a sociological document and in the final appeal a cultural asset. It gives pictures of the dialectics of society and self. Percy Lubbock, in his book The Craft of Fiction, writes:

A novel is a picture of life, and life is well-known to us; let us first of all 'realize' it, and then using our taste, let us judge whether it is true, vivid convincing-like life, in fact.¹

It may be argued that by 'picture of life' the writer here does not necessarily mean picture of man's social life. The novel may give us pictures of Man's inner life, his soul, his spirit, his feelings, his emotions, his intellectual and philosophical awareness. In fact, Thomas Hardy wrote that "novelists of social minutiae" with their "photographic consciousness"² presented only life garniture and not life. Hardy
has continually emphasized the transcendental end of art. But since the very mode of human existence is a social one, so even in man's inmost being we can glimpse the society in which he lives in flesh and blood in relationship with other individuals and various social institutions. A true, vivid, convincing picture of life will, therefore, show man organically rooted in society with such dimensions as soul, spirit, intellectual, philosophical and transcendental awareness, etc. as the afflorescence of that organic body.

In a sonnet entitled "The Novelist" W.H. Auden says that the novelist has to stay all the time in a real world while he is writing his novels.

The novelist has to stay all the time in the world he is writing about. Not only that, he must also have first-hand experience of the boredom, vulgarity, filthiness with which the human society is afflicted; the wrongs from which man has been suffering, as also of the justice and rectitude that still stay in the conscience of at least some men and women. Waller Besant gives the authorial experience pride of place among the laws of fiction. In his famous essay (The Art of Fiction), he writes thus: "First and before everything else, there is the rule that everything in the fiction which is invented and is not the result of personal, experience and observation is worthless. Matthew Arnold, in his essay entitled "Count Leo Tolstoi," writes in the same vein: "In the novel
one prefers, I think to have the novelist dealing with the
life which he knows from having lived it, rather than with
the life which he knows from books or hearsay. 5

Henry James, one of the great practitioners of the art
of fiction, says something important with regard to the histori-
cal authenticity of the life depicted in novel. He writes
in his famous essay "The Art of Fiction."

... the novel is history. That is the only
general description (which does it justice)
that we may give of the novel. But history
also is allowed to represent life; it is not,
any more than painting, expected to apologise.
The subject-matter of fiction is stored up like
wise in documents and records, and if it will
not give itself away, as they say in California,
it must speak with assurance, with the tone of
the historian. 6

And the only classification of the novels that Henry
James can understand is 'into that which has life and that
which it has not.' He charges Anthony Trollope with betraying
the 'sacred office' of the novelist. Trollope tells his reader
in a digression, a parenthesis or an aside that he is only
making believe and admits that the events he narrates have
not only really happened, and that he can give his narrative
any turn the reader may like best. James calls this attitude
of apology a terrible crime and says that it shocks him "every
wit as much as it would have shocked him" in Gibbon or Macaulay.
If according to James, a novelist assumes that he "is less occupied in looking for truth... than the historian then that assumption deprives him at stroke of all his standing room." According to James, the task of either writer - the novelist as well as the historian - is "to represent and illustrate the past, the action of men." The novelist, in addition, has much in common with the philosopher and the painter and this, says James, gives him "a great character." 

The novel, however, is not just a depiction of a society that exists at a time, although a critic rightly observed long ago (1886) in the Saturday Review, "The condition of really enjoying a novel is that we should have a kind provisional belief in its historical truth..." Society is one side of the coin that the novel reflects. The other side is the character. The very concept of a human society means a humanscape with men and women acting out the little dramas of their lives on it. Regarding the significance of the character in the novel, Virginia Woolf makes the following remarkable observation in her essay, "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown;"

I believe that all novels... deal with character and that it is to express character not to preach doctrine, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire of the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose and undramatic, so rich, clastic, and alive, has been evolved. To express character, I have said, but you will at once reflect that
the very widest interpretation can be put upon those words... besides age and country there is the writer's temperament to be considered. You see one thing in character and I another. You say it means this and I that."^9

However different the characters may be due to age and country and the writer's temperament, they may be said to possess one thing in common: a basically discriminating and value oriented human consciousness.

Indian novel in English displays the interaction of society and self. The fabric of Indian society contains thread of rural perspective, hunger, suffering, struggle for independence, traumatic experiences of partition and post-independence changes in the nation. However, more important and most pervasive factor is the interaction of tradition and change. Tradition and continuity are the hallmarks of Indian culture and civilization. This in fact, has involved an encounter between our native, Eastern heritage and the Western empirical way of life. In simple words, our present society is the consequence of cultural interaction. This is the mainstream of our society and the Indian novelists in English have responsibly explored this phenomenon which is of colossal significance. In one way or the other, to greater or lesser degree, implicitly or overtly every important novelist, has made a cognizance of this truth of life. Here an indepth study of the major novels of Kamala Markandaya and Arun Joshi brings home to us the truth
that they have explored this facet of Indian society in a great and significant manner.

An encounter of two cultures is a very potent phenomenon. It has far more powerful consequences than atomic fission. It changes the very stance of life, the core of our philosophy of life. The results of the encounter can be varied. To outline it in precise terms, it has been of three significant kinds: acculturation, deculturation and ambivalence or transculturation.

Redfield, Linton and Herskovits rightly define acculturation as comprehension of "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into first hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups." When Indians came into contact with European culture, they acquired many of the new traits sometimes willingly and sometimes under compulsion. Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, *Some Inner Fury*, *A Handful of Rice*, *Two Virgins* and *Pleasure City* and Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* and *The Apprentice* are novels that have given a congruent fictive form to this phenomenon of acculturation in varied ways and varying degrees.

Kamala Markandaya's first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*, is a woeful tale of the trials and tribulations of a peasant couple, Nathan and Rukmani, of a South Indian Village. Through
their contact with the English medical missionary Dr. Kennington, affectionately called Kenny by the villagers, the author brings out the opposite viewpoints of the simple and fatalist creatures of the soil, who endure their miseries with calm resignation and the enlightened Englishman who has been nourished on the noble ideals of liberalism and has no patience with the passivity of the starving and suffering villagers for the amelioration of whose miseries he works indefatigably.

Kenny has been described as, "tall and gamut, with a pale skin and sunken eyes the colour of king-fisher's wing neither blue nor green." He is a philanthropist as well as great humanitarian. Out of his pity for the poverty-stricken and suffering people of India he left his country, his wife and children and has come to stay among the people who are not his men and in a country which is not his own. He is extremely reticent, and never speaks about his family or his worries. He works among the people of the tannery, treating and healing their bodies working long hours with dedication. Though he looks strange and grim outwardly, he hides the springs of deep sympathy and tenderness. He has in his heart great solicitude for Indian people and a profound love for their children. Though sometimes he gets disgusted with their follies, poverty and silent ungrudging humility as is evident by his remark to Rukmani, "I go when I am tired of your follies and stupidities, your external, shameful poverty. I can only take you people
in small dresses," Yet his heart bleeds for them and always, goes out to them in their sorrows and miseries. He has identified himself with the Indians so much so that he does not feel himself an alien among them. He does not even think that he is living in a country which is not his own. Talking to Rukmani he says: "My country, sometimes I do not know which is my country. Until today I had thought perhaps it was this."  

Kenny does not look at Indian villagers and their problems from the viewpoint of his own ruling and exploiting compatriots. He earnestly feels for them and is deeply moved by their sufferings. Very often he exhorts them to agitate for better conditions of life. When Rukmani expresses the hope that times will be better, he with his face grim and long and his eyes burning in his pallied face, shouts at her:

Times are better, time are better. Times will not be better for many months. Meanwhile you will suffer and die, you meek suffering fools. Why do you keep this ghastly silence? Why do you not demand-cry out for help- do something? There is nothing in this country, oh God, there is nothing.  

He expresses similar views again:

Do not the sick die in the streets because there is no hospital for them. Are not children born in the gutters? I have told you before. I will
repeat it again; you must cry out if you want help. It is no use whatsoever to suffer in silence. Who will succour the drowning man if he does not clamour for his life?  

He tries to give a jolt to the fatalism of the mute peasants by protesting scornfully:

Acquiescent imbeciles, do you think spiritual grace comes from being in want, or from suffering? What thoughts have you when your belly is empty or your body is sick? Tell me they are noble ones and I will call you a liar.

When Rukmani tells him, "Yet our priests fast, and inflict on themselves severe punishments, and we are taught to bear our sorrows in silence, and all this is so that the soul may be cleansed," he exclaims with disgust: "My God. I do not understand you. I never will. Go, before I too am entangled in your philosophies."

Out of his love for Indians, he gets a hospital constructed for them by collecting funds from different sources and serves them dedicatedly. Cut off from his own people and family, his wife having deserted him, he often feels very lonely forlorn, yet he is prepared to endure every kind of hardship for the world which he has taken in his hand and which is dear to his soul. His services are perhaps amply rewarded for he is very much loved, admired and adored by the villagers.
Kenny belongs to the tribe of kind-hearted and sympathetic English Medical Officers like Celitia Scott, De La Havre as portrayed by S. M. Mitra, and Mulk Raj Anand in their respective novels, *Hindupore* (1908), and *Two Leaves and a Bud*. Like Kenny, De La Havre also genuinely sympathises with the causes of Indians. Whenever he sees a cup of tea, he feels that it contains the hunger, the sweat and the despair of a million Indians. He, however, does not figure to prominently in the novel, "Two Leaves and a Bud" while Kenny does in "Nectar in a sieve." In fact, Kenny's presence haunts the novel from the beginning to the end. Like the chorus in the Greek Drama, he is both a participant and neutral observer in the action of the novel. Through his observations Kamala Markandaya projects an objective image of India.

In *A Handful of Rice*, the theme of cultural interaction is not at all obvious, not that apparent. However, it shows covertly how the modernism set in by the Western influence aggravates the protest of the protagonist against the traditional environment in seeking his fulfilment by carving his career independently. Groaning under the smothering pressure of poverty and squalor, Ravi leaves his village and joins the general exodus to the city and floating through the indifferent streets, lands up into the underworld of the petty criminals. Prompted by his love for Nalini whom he marries afterwards, he gives up the immoral way and struggles heart
and soul to carry out the responsibilities that have fallen on his shoulders. The novel comes to an end with the crowd scene where he joins the hungry mob that plunders the rice godown. But when his turn comes to hurl a brick, something happens within him, and he does not find the strength to do it. "But suddenly he couldn't. The strength that he had inflamed him, the strength of a suppressed, laminated anger, ebbed as quickly as it had risen. His hand dropped." Margaret P. Joseph rightly observes that, "In this dichotomy between idea and fact in the impossibility of bridging the gap between desire and honest fulfilment, lies the essence of the tragic." It's true that the basis of the tragedy in this novel is the frightening dilemma of human conscience but we can remark with a fairness that behind the dilemma of conscience lies the truth of modernism in Indian life emerging largely from the impact of Western culture which is pitted against traditional Indian ethical ethos. Cultural dualism, thus, reflects itself silently but significantly in this novel.

Two virgins also reveals the consciousness of cultural dualism indirectly through the polemics of modernism and tradition in Indian life. In this novel we often hear of the British rulers from Appa, a freedom fighter who was called a terrorist and whose house was burnt by the Tommies. He understands that it was a British strategy to divide the people and set them one against another to rule in India yet he has no
rancour against the British and other Europeans. When his wife criticizes European doctors and says that they have no religion, no ethics or scruples to restrain them though they trumpet they have nothing but Godswallopp, Appa snubs her by pointing out: "One must take an overall view. One imbibes what is bad in the West as well as what is good... there are no national frontiers." Appa is a balanced character who assimilates the western influence into the texture of his outlook. His daughter Lalitha is portrayed as a liberated girl. She is conscious of her uncommon beauty and is also highly ambitious. Mr. Gupta, the film director who comes to the village for a documentary film, exploits her weakness and promises to give her a role in the film. She suffers in his hand. If Appa has assimilated the best part of the West, Mr. Gupta has imbibed its worst. Though Lalitha has spoilt herself, yet she refuses to come to the village and is lost in the city: She couldn't face going back to the village, it stifled her, her talents, her ambition. She intended to stay in the city where she belonged. She looked after herself. In this novel, cultural dualism shows itself through the girl's growing awareness of the adult world and of the slow but irresistible encroachment of new and material values on the ancient belief and old established relationships within the family and the village.

Arun Joshi's The Foreigner also configurates the story of Sindi Oberoi who is the product of the crossroads of the West and East. The formative part of the novel develops in the
backdrop of the West and the second phase in India makes an acculturation. Born of an English mother and an Indian father and brought by his uncle in Kenya, he was denied love, familial nourishment and cultural roots. Sindi Oberoi turns into an anomic, an outsider and undergoes varied experiences in Kenya, London or Boston. June, the American girl, represents the sensate pleasure of American culture but she also longs for oriental transcendentalism. Sindi who is emotionally sterile and he reflects: "Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far I had lived without a purpose." Consequently he spoils his relationship with June. By his false sense of detachment Sindi drives Babu, the symbol of oriental innocence to death. June also dies and Sindi comes to India by chance. Here when he encounters in Mr. Khemka's house the bronze figure of the dancing Shiva, he is held, as it were, in a supreme ecstasy: "For a moment just one brief moment, I was struck by the intense beauty of the divine dancer. America, Indian, Egypt, all mingled behind him in aeons of increasing rhythm." The archetypal image of the dancing Shiva is India in essence and Mr. Oberoi is illumined with the elan vital of Indian culture as it were. He begins to understand the real meaning of detachment. Acculturation takes place.

In The Apprentice, Mr. Ratan's movement from the world of idealism to the inferno of corruption is in fact an acceptance of the materialistic stance of life imbied from the culture of the West. Gandhian values which have prevailed in
Indian society during the period of freedom struggle gradually give way to the new values in the free India. Self above service, deception immorality and apathy are the new principles that have greater relevance in today's society. Ratan's cry in angry spells out the situation: "It is not the atom of the Sun or God or Sex that lies at the heart of the universe, it is deals, deals." Materialism, careerism, compromise and justification of every means for the attainment of a goal are the new traits of behaviour learnt and developed in the process of modernization which is largely associated with Westernization. Ratan Rathor's stance of life is an instance of acculturation under compulsion.

Deculturation is still another facet of the dynamics of cultural interaction in Indian novel in English. It implies a rejection of the validity of an alien culture for the proper development of an individual. It rejects the adopted culture for the sake of the native one. Kamala Markandaya's Possession, The Nowhere Man and Arjun Joshi's The Strange Case of Billy Biswas are significant novels given an authentic voice of the phenomenon of deculturation in Indian society or in the life of Indians living in India or abroad. Possession is a concrete interpretation of an alien onslaught on the auto-ethnic cultural matrix. The novelist probes into the dilemma from the deeper perspective. The theme of national identity, the possessive traits of a culture, and the negative influences of an inter-
action between two cultures are the important tenets of experience in this novel. Here the novelist gives almost a sociological interpretation of India-England relationship. So forges her understanding of two different cultures, two different ways of life through the three-cornered story of Caroline Bell, the English woman, Valmiki, the Indian native boy and the Swami. Valmiki, the rustic Indian artist, is the symbol of raw independent India for the possession of whose soul the formidable Caroline Bell symbolising the Western culture and civilization, makes an all out effort. Alienated from spiritual roots of his country, Valmiki's artistic talent becomes dormant. Only when Caroline manages to establish his contact with the Swami who is the fountain spring of sustaining Indian spiritualism, that Valmiki's talents begin to blossom again. His final return to the Swami is the return of the native. In his suffering and anguish, in his failure and inability, in his temporary inactivity, Valmiki shows the malevolence of an alien culture. In her possessiveness and pride, in her passion and arrogance, in her materialism and physicality, Caroline is a cogent symbol of the destructive fury of the Western culture. The implied message of the novel is that while a brief contact with the West may be worthwhile, may be good for India's modernisation but its ultimate fulfilment is possible only through its nourishment by spiritual values. To tell the truth, the novel shows how India and England didn't really understand each other, how their political
relationship stifled their cultural cooperation. The novel may be a parable of colonialism but in its deeper implication the novel illustrates how a culture tries to atrophy the life-force of another culture. A man can express one's true self and can fulfil one's being only when he plants his roots in the soil of his native culture. The novel enacts this dilemma more powerfully than Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* and Nayantara Sehgal's *A Time to be Happy*. In the story of Valmiki, Kamala Markandaya forges out the journey to India from alienation to arrival and shows for once and all that preservation of basic cultural traits are necessary for people to survive and flourish.

The story of Valmiki in this context of cultural encounter forges out his quest for his true self and real identity. In this context the novel can be compared with *Remember the House* of Santha Rama Rau, *The Dark Dancer* of Balchandra Rajan, *A Time To Be Happy* of Nayantara Sehgal. Like Markandaya's *Possession*, these are novels growing on the soil of autobiography. Autobiographical happenings often metamorphose into successful work of art, particularly fiction. Babu Goray, Krishnan, Sanad Shivpal and Sindi Oberoi are projections of their creators and much of the writer's life has gone into their making. The conflict in their own condition is liberated through the dilemma of their protagonists. *Remember the House* is a fictional rendering of the dramatic tension in Baba Goray's life. She is an Indian girl who, like her author,
returns from abroad and finds herself in a fluid situation in India. Both East and West pull her apart. She feels like meeting the missing element in Adex and Nicky, but her relationship with them does not endure. Soon she discovers that what they stand for is mere mask and their reality is incompatible with her own identity. Her ideals of life are different from those held by the Americans. The basic difference in the stance of life becomes clear in these lines:

Our place in a certain structure, a pattern of life, of birth, of marriage, children, peace and death ... within our framework we would make our happiness ... It was never suggested that we pursue happiness. We were not encouraged to waste our time. Her infatuation with American ideals is transitory. 24

The episode of Nicky’s kissing her while swimming makes her still more aware of dichotomy. Apparently it is a mere fun for Nicky. But Baba Goray is disturbed from within and she throws herself on the bedrock of Indian tradition. She moves to Chennur where the reticent, tranquil Indian life enchants her. Her disappointment with Krishna, the influence of the lives of her mother and her grandmother, recalled with tenderness and nostalgia, the constant references to the house at Allahabad and her father's death - all these experiences give a tangible shape to her identity. She learns to live in terms of her own self. Fumbling through experiences, the adolescent girl gains maturity and finally through her marriage she comes
to accept herself as a real Indian, her roots now firmly planted in Indian culture. Her European education had intensified her concern for identity. As is Babu Goray's case, so also in Valmiki's case in Possession, the contrast between cultures makes Valmiki find his roots, restores in himself fuller understanding and deeper emotion.

Rajan's story in Krishnan in The Dark Dancer is again a cognate case of self division. Krishnan is an outsider and in his predicament the novelist has tried to resolve the crisis of a Westernised Indian. The West hangs too much on him, Heru turns to India and settles as an efficient civil servant. The coming of Cynthia, his Cambridge friend, gives a sudden twist to the chord of his existence. He is married to Kamala, and is attracted to Cynthia. 'That's the way things are,' Cynthia tells him, "and until you accept it you'll just be going round in circles." Fumbling between Cynthia and Kamala, he discovers reality in the temple when the priest blesses him but denies Cynthia. The shock of recognition makes him aware of his situation. In his case we find a sensitive symbol however. The division in Krishnan's self is reflected in Kamala and Cynthia. They are sheer opposites, but they are truly Rajan's East and West. Cynthia is a fragment, the cosmic dance of Shiva is a whole. She stands for assertion of selfhood. She wants Krishnan to be and yet not belonging to a totality. Kamala represents the dignity of acceptance. Like
Valmiki's infatuation with Caroline, Krishnan's attraction towards Cynthia is shortlived. With Cynthia he is nothing but a non-conformist individual, with Kamala, a man striving to the God. The sense of being Indian makes Krishnan break relationship with Cynthia and his return to his wife is a return of the native.

Sanad Shivpal is another variant, similar in his predicament with Valmiki. Though Valmiki is not West-educated yet, he gets his training for development of his art in Western countries. When Sanad returns to India he is caught in dilemma of identity:

I don't belong entirely to India, I can't. My education, my upbringing and my sense of values have all combined to make me un-Indian. What have I in common with most of my countrymen. 25

His self pity is genuine and his seeking roots which he feels have been alienated due to his anglicized background. In Valmiki's case the problem is similar. He feels himself entirely lost from the latter's milieu. Uprooted and alienated he gains strength from the letters of the Swami who stands for the heritage and culture of India. He finds his true self, fulfils his sense of belonging only when he comes back to the folds of Indian soil. Sanad Shivpal also regains his roots by plunging himself into the stream of turbulent social and political life. His marriage with the unanglicised daughter of a
Professor, learning of Hindi and spinning are symbolic of his
awakening to the secrets of Hinduism. He finally belongs.

Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope* is a complex novel
but one of its themes is the encounter between two cultures.
Ramaswamy and Madeleine are separate from each other partly
because they are true symbols of their cultures on the physical
plane. *The Serpent and the Rope* tells the story of Ramasway,
a South Indian Brahmin engaged in writing a dissertation ex-
ploring the connection between the Albigensian heresy and
Brahminical influences, and of Madeleine, a French woman
working in a college in France. They are married; their first
child whom Madeleine at first calls Krishna and afterwards
Christens Pierre dies only a few months old when Ramaswamy
is on a visit to India on account of his father’s death. In
India he accompanies his little mother to Benaras and does
his religious duties as the new head of the family and after-
wards returns to France to pursue his research. While in India
he also meets Savitri whom he again meets in London and
Cambridge; they became devoted to each other, but Savithri
marries a government official and goes to live in Assam. Ramas-
swamy makes a second visit to India to attend his sister’s
wedding. During their visit Madeleine’s second child is born
dead. When he returns to France, he finds that a great change
has come over Madeleine. She has begun Buddhist-practices of
purification and her ways have become strange. A separation
between them becomes inevitable. Ramaswamy's dissertation is complete. He decides to go to Travancore 'in search of Him to whom I have to go, though I have always known HIM without knowing His name.'

All these characters in different Indo-English novels are greater or smaller symbols of deculturation. They face a sense of loss of their selves; they feel uprooted; they find themselves divided between the Western and Eastern part of their own identity. Their alienation is different from that of the modern characters of Saul Bellow, Camus, Kalka, Sartre, Durrell, Ionesco, Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee. They are also dissimilar in comparison with the characters of Anita Desai, Sehgal or Arun Joshi. In these modern Western and Indian writers the alienation or rootlessness of the protagonists emerges from a metaphysical human condition. Markandaya's Srinivas in The Nowhere Man comes to develop this metaphysical dimension. Valmiki, Sanad Shivpal, Krishan and Baba Goray are blossoms on their native bough and they begin to wither in an alien climate. Obviously their situation is the result of compulsive condition of cultural dualism prevailing in India's life. An Indian novelist writing in English, aware of both the Indian and Western audience, exposed to the world of English language and culture, cannot afford to insulate himself from from the flux of change in Indian society. All of them are sons and daughters of the soil yet they have too much of the
West in their make-up. The split between Indian blood and Western brain is transferred into the characters of these novels and the crisis is resolved through the crucible of their dilemma. These novels portray the social and psychic tension of Indian society. These novels have come out as triumphs of art because they reflect the dynamics of deculturation.

The *Nowhere Man* shows the situation of acculturation in the attitude of Mr. and Mrs. Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering but in its final implication the novel articulates the ethics of deculturation. Srinivas who has passed nearly two-thirds of his life in England and has come to look upon it as his own country. He describes England before Mrs. Pickering as my country now' but soon he is disillusioned. When he suffers torments at the hands of Fred and his friends Srinivas finds himself unwanted, and as an outsider:

Nowhere, he said to himself, and he scanned the pale anxious eyes which were regarding him for reasons that might drive him out a nowhere man looking for a nowhere city.26

In fact, the novel unfolds gradually this estrangement that is rooted in two world views to which each subscribes and which immensely affects the ways of looking at things. Influenced by the racist incidents around them, Mrs. Pickering is under stress to perceive Srinivas as the member of an inferior, subhuman race while Srinivas, victim of a nasty racist experience
in the neighbourhood, becomes increasingly sensitive to the
difference between the two races. The Western world is isomor-
phic, the native's world is polymorphic. The former divides
and categories, the latter accepts, assimilates and synthesises.

The Eastern way of life also differs from that of the
West in its leaning towards transcendentalism and self-realiz-
ation. Arun Joshi's *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is a
novel of a deeper level, articulating almost with the intensity
of "Lawrence and Conrad, human craving for the primordial,
the *elan vital* of our anthropological heritage,"*27* but at the
same time it also appeals as an indictment of the phoney, hot
shot, sordid modern culture. It is a rendering in fictive terms
the facet of deculturation, rejecting a culture for finding
one's real identity in the deep crusts of one's own culture.
Billy, a man with 'inhumanly sharp eyes', a 'singular air'
around him and extraordinarily sensitive, bids farewell to
the gloss and glitter of the modernized, urbanized westernized
India and retreats into the mossy labyrinths of soul, of the
dark recesses of Maikala jungle. In his denunciation of the
civilized life of Delhi which hangs 'on the peg of money' and
his running away from the educated, rich, civilized Meena to
Bilasia, who is the essence of the primitive force, "the
embodiment of that primal and innumerable force that had ruled
these hills, perhaps this earth, since time began,"*28* the
novelist has magnified the sinister consequences of westerni-
zation that have clipped and smothered our native, natural instincts. The novel portrays the forces of deculturation in our society.

However, the most pervasive cultural situation in our modern Indian society is the situation of transculturation or coexistence of dual traits. Dynamic culture carries the healthy traits from tradition and also imbibes new fruitful trends from the co-alien cultures with which it comes across or faces an encounter. The dialectics of tradition and modernity present this predicament of transculturation in most eloquent terms. Kamala Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire*, Pleasure City and Arun Joshi's *The Last Labyrinth* beautifully fictionalise the dilemma of a modern Indian who is neither purely western, nor wholly Eastern or native. Western rationalism, scientific temper and matter-of-factness as well as traditional stance of spiritualism play equally dominant roles in the life of a contemporary Indian.

In *A Silence of Desire*, Markandaya's representation of the contemporary consciousness shows a new dimension in the spiritual crisis of the couple Sarojini and Dandekar. This spiritual crisis is a problem of psychological adjustment in the life of this middle-class family. Sarojini is the image of the newly emergent middle-class traditional housewife in India. Dandekar is the voice of the newly emergent and as a
parable on the cultural conflict between the Indian spiritual faith and the modernism born of India's contact with the West. Sarojini seeks faith-cure for her tumour from a Swami but her husband asks her to go in for a scientific cure through operation. Sarojini remarks:

Yes, you can call it healing by faith, or healing by the grace of God, if you understand what that means. But I do not expect you to understand—you with your western nations, your superior talk of ignorance and superstition when all it means is that you don't know. What lies beyond reason you prefer not to find out?²⁹

This polemic of faith and reason is a recurring dilemma for Indian life. This is the result of cultural dualism, the coexistence of India's spiritual tradition and western pragmatic outlook. Consequently Dandekar who is a product of this transition feels: "He could n't make up his mind because heart spoke one way, head the other and sometimes the two changed places."³⁰ In the presence of the Swami, he feels a greater chaos because when he was before the Swami, nothing material or physical mattered. In this dichotomy between the body and the soul, the material and the spiritual lies the essential predicament of the modern Indian society. Thus A Silence of Desire poignantly articulates one dimension of cultural dualism in Indian life of our country, of continuity and change, of tradition and modernity, of rural richness and technological triumphs,
of ethical values and of existential pressure, spiritual faith and sceptical intellect. And all these find congruent configuration through cultural dualism.

In Pleasure City we find a more contemporary form of the East-West interaction. The dam was a necessity for the development of the country, the pleasure city is a luxury complex. Here is also enough possibility for a dramatization of the ethical, aesthetic and cultural values of Indians and Europeans. This latest novel indicates a direction as it were toward the possibility of coexistence and assimilation of cultures. Clinton's brutal technocratic approach to life has been attempted in this novel. In the character of Tully, Markandaya forges out a symbol for future possibilities. Even if he departs, even if he holds on to its own ways, even if he is a true Englishman, he is as human as the natives living on the sea coast. His participation in life with Rikki, his sharing of the world around and his warm relationship with him extend further to the symbolic dimensions of the characters, like Doctor Kenny, Richard, Helen and Mrs. Pickering. They are the living metaphors of European culture and their relationship with Rukmani, Mira, Srinivas, Bashiam and Rikki, who are the finest blossoms of Indian cultures, is an exploration of the true identity of our country.

The Last Labyrinth enacts the dilemma of Som Bhaskar who is at a fix on the cross roads of the East and West. On
the one hand, we have Bhaskar, his father, Doctor K, Leela Sabnis and Bombay, and on the other, Bhaskar's mother, Aftab Anuradha, Geeta, Gargi, Lord Krishna and Benaras; one represents the rational, scientific, empirical approach, and the other manifests the spiritual, mystical, inexplicable. Bhaskar, the modern industrialist, west-educated and rational in approach fails to understand the mystery of life. When he meets Anuradha and Gargi his rational self ceases to work. He wants to know. When Leela Sabni quotes Descarts, he reminds her of Spinoza who says that both spirit and matters embraced in God and flowed from him. He wants to hear from Anuradha in the guest-room about the God in the hills and he tells Gargi in direct words: "No, don't misunderstand me. I want to know. Probably, I want to believe. But one can't order belief."31 This predicament shows the significance of both science and mysticism, rationalism and spiritualism, the heritages of western culture as well as the native culture operating on the mind of an Indian. In fact, transculturation is the most prevailing situation in contemporary Indian society.
REFERENCES


7. Ibid. P. 45.


12 Ibid, P. 71.
13 Ibid, PP. 43-44.
14 Ibid, P. 114.
15 Ibid, P. 114.
16 Ibid, P. 114.
20 Ibid, P. 236.


30 Ibid, P. 144.