CHAPTER IV

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The Kalcidoscope of Indian life presents visuals of tradition and modernity, continuity and change, spiritual faith and rational stance. The Western culture has coalesced to a considerable extent into the fabric of Indian life and culture. Through the process of assimilation and confrontation Indian culture is developing. In fact, the western values and ideas have gradually filtered into the main stream of Indian life-style. Kamala Markandaya and Arun Joshi have articulated with candour and insight in several of their novels how the Western culture interacts with Indian culture through the ambivalence of tradition and modernity. Almost all the novels of Markandaya reflect this dialectic of tradition and modernity.

**Nectar in a Sieve** is essentially a novel on the peasant's life, their toil, their torture, their sufferings, their tragedy but it also shows the emergence of the modern urban industrial life and its sinister consequences. Rukmani and Nathan are
individuals; they are also symbols of teeming millions. Rukmani is the daughter of a village headman whose power gradually dwindles into insignificance and she care for her. Rukmani is a heroic protagonist who makes a heaven out of the ordinary surroundings. She spends her days watching the seeds split, shoots break through and fruits ripen. And then things change in their life. The change came blasting in their lives, in the form of tannery, a symbol of industrialisation, in the form of flood and drought, Nature red in tooth and claw. The octopus of hunger raises its ugly head and it envelops the peace and joy of their life. The important thing is to eat, to save one's life. One by one her sons join the tannery. The tannery, a symbol of mechanical power, destroys the traditional village. Rukmani's husband likes to see the sons beside him to teach them the way of the earth, how to sow, transplant and reap. He now helplessly watches his sons getting employed in the tannery. The eldest son Arjun joins the tannery, the next brother followed in and left for Ceylon. The third son goes out of the city to serve as a servant. In Nathan's helplessness we find the expression of the traditional Indian rural folk caught in the inevitable sweep of urbanisation and industry. Yet they have to starve. The rain failed, creating cracks on the earth and erasing traces of plants from the soil:

Thereafter we fed on whatever we could find: the soft ripe fruit of the prickly pear; a sweet potato or two, blackened and half rotten, thrown
away by some more prosperous hand; sometimes
a rabbit that Nathan managed to catch near the
river ... and for every edible plant or root
there was a struggle - a desperate competi-
tion that made enemies of friends and put an
end to humanity.¹

Raja, the next son, dies and Ira, their daughter, sells
her body to feed brother Kut. The encounter between Nathan,
the father and Ira, the daughter, is poignant enough to send
shiver into one's heart:

Nathan was groping forwards, stumbling a little
over them. 'I will not have it said - I will not
have you parading at night' - tonight and
tomorrow and every night, so long as there is
need. I will not hunger any more.²

Finally, Rukmani and Nathan are denied even the land
they toiled. They shift to a city and work as stone breakers
in a quarry. Nathan dies under the strain and Rukmani returns
with Puli, the labour, she has adopted as her son. Nathan and
Rukmani were the children of the soil and thrown out of the
soil, they lost their life. Nathan dies and Rukmani returns.
She is a heroic figure who could claim like Hardy's Henchard
that her sufferings were not greater than she could endure. In
essence, Nectar in a Sieve emerges as a tragedy that exalts
human dignity to a new light. Apart from the dignity and
endurance of human beings, the novel also explores the theme
of modernity in the guise of urbanization and industry. In a sense, the essential problem of the novel is what Rukmani herself asserts:

Somehow, I had always felt the tannery would eventually be our undoing. I had known it since the day the earts had come with their loads of breaks and noisy dusty men, staining the clear soft greens that had once coloured our village and cleaving its cool silence with clamour ... It had changed the face of our village beyond recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants in a myriad ways.³

Tannery is a real evil, the Satan in the garden of Eden that destroys the bliss of peasant's life. Industry is the first gift of the western knowledge and culture. Though it was necessary for the development of nation, yet it was the first assault on the innocence of Indian life, and simplicity of Indian people. The urban world of tannery is the world of science, industry and technology. Tannery is the 'sordid boon' about which Wordsworth laments in his sonnet The World is Too Much With Us. Wordsworth's fear of the loss of the innocence and human potentialities becomes more explicit in the last parts of The Prelude. Wordsworth's predictions have come true and the West is now spiritually sterile. Technology has atrophied human elements. Man is now a lonely, alienated creature living on an island unto himself. The Western culture is sensate. Nathan's death in the city is a poignant symbol of the truth that Indian life
is also inflicted with the terror of technology. In the march of human civilization, no country can afford to insulate itself from the contemporary scientific spirit but in its wake the innocence and vitality of Indian tradition and heritage will be affected. The encounter between tradition and change is the reality of every developing country. India is also passing through this transition. Kamala Markandaya presents the seriousness of the situation in a nascent but effective form in her first novel.

*A Handful of Rice* also implies a copresence of tradition and modernity and an awareness of both the traditional values and new trends of materialistic Western culture. It deals with an Indian caught in the vortex of change, a change from the rural society deeply anchored in tradition to the machine-based materialistic urban society. And, like all other novels of hers, it derives its "aesthetic validity from the interlocked polarities of religion and science, possession and renunciation, empiricism and transcendentalism." Whereas *Nectar in a Sieve* is purely a novel of rural problems, depicting the poverty and hunger of the rural masses, *A Handful of Rice* deals with urban life with its struggle for survival. As Kai Nicholson rightly points out in *A Handful of Rice*, Mrs. Markandaya "uses the village as a pretext for her hero, Ravi to flee the countryside and plunge into the turmoil of urban life." If Mulk Raj Anand's *Bakha* in *Untouchable* is a
case study of the thirties, Ravi the central character in A Handful of Rice, is a proletarian product of the fifties. Belonging to the generation of 'angry young men' who rebel against fatalistic attitude of subservience, Ravi has the initiative to fight for a proper place in society. But, he is ultimately forced by socio-economic oppression to recede back into his inherited destiny.

Ravi is the son of a poor peasant in a village. A perpetual victim of poverty, he is tired of hunger. To escape from the rural poverty and hunger, he leaves his village and joins the general exodus to the city. He could see that the villagers:

Had all lived between bouts of genteel and acute poverty - the kind in which the weakest went to the wall, the old one and the babies, dying of tuberculosis, dysentry, the 'falling fever,' 'recurrent fever,' and any other names for what was basically, simply, nothing but starvation.6

Though the cities, like the villages, have nothing to offer poor people like Ravi, "it held out before them like an incandescent carrot the hope that one day, some day, there would be something."7

In his endeavour to save himself from starvation, Ravi faces a series of trials and tribulations and gets disillusioned.
Floating through different streets in the city, he joins a gang of loafers and criminals. Initiated into the mystery of urban existence by Damodar, Ravi becomes a part of the underworld of smugglers and bootleggers. He is exposed to the evil that rages in the city in many forms:

The insensitiveness of the affluent, their mania for conspicuous consumption, their hardness of heart: the exploitation of small fish by the big, the worker by the capitalist, the Apus of the world, by the big shops in Mount Road; and the infernal success of the bootlegger, the blackmarketeer, the drug peddler at the cost of the poor, the down and out, the desperate.

As a member of Damodar's coterie, Ravi witnesses life in all its raw hunger, want and exploitation. He finds life in the city a fierce battle for survival. With its 'lawlessness' and 'darkness' the city is a jungle. Ravi realizes how "in this jungle one had to fight fiercely, with whatever weapons one had. Or go under." 

However, in his earnest effort to strike roots in the city environment, Ravi finds Apu's tailoring convenient, though monotonous, falls in love with the tailor's daughter, Nalini and decides to put an end to his criminal career. He agrees to work as an apprentice with Apu, and becomes a member of his family by marrying his daughter. The novel takes the turning
point when Apu dies and Ravi becomes the head of the family. He shoulders the responsibility of the entire family only to get bogged in an atmosphere of gloom and despondency. He proves himself a misfit for the role Apu wanted him to play in that big family. His unwillingness to toe Apu's code of conduct leads to a decrease of income. And with soaring prices he has to raise loans to make both ends meet. He says, "I've borrowed on the sewing machine, I have to keep up the interest, payments ... and the rent is mounting up ... and the light... bill and there's no water."\(^{10}\) This affects his temper also. He becomes a man of fretful nature and beats his wife. Nalini leaves the house after quarrelling with him. Two of the dependents leave the house. Damodar, no doubt is ready to help him provided he joins him in blackmarket and hoarding. But Ravi is totally opposed to the idea. Debts pile up. Life becomes miserable. His son dies of meningitis.

Unemployed and desperate, Ravi approaches Damodar once again. But he is told that people with 'no guts' cannot work with a person like him. Damodar advises him to "go back to your village. It's more your size, you are not fit for anything else."\(^{11}\) With his moral indignation "Ravi rose unsteadily. He felt like retching but he controlled the spasms and went down to the street."\(^{12}\) Thus Ravi's integrity finally alienates him.
The novel comes to a close with the crowd episode. Ravi joins the hungry crowd which plunders the rice godowns in the market place rending the sky with the slogan: "Rice today, rice." He struggles and goes very close to the rice bags, but fails to get even a handful of rice:

He struggled to reach the grain, this time at least, and he clenched his empty hands and watched with frantic eyes as the rich heap dwindled, and the empty sacks flopped and sagged and were snatched up and filled or humped away full of shoulders that could bear them. 14

Again he joins the regrouped mob, indulging in looting and destruction. When his turn comes he takes a brick to hurl at the Nabobs Row, "but suddenly he could not. The strength that had inflamed him, the strength of a suppressed laminated anger, ebbed as quickly at it had risen. His hand dropped." 15

Ravi's dilemma is essentially moral. As Margaret P. Joseph aptly remarks: "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." 16 Ravi's plight reminds us of some of Dickens' characters. Ravi's dependence on Damodar for survival invariably reminds us of Oliver Twist's dependence on equally crooked artful Dodger. Ravi's contact with Apu and his family which enables him to have a short period of happiness recalls David Copperfield's friendship with Dora
and the happy environment of his new home with his foster parents. Like Dickens he is not only aware of the problems of the society, he also looks at them from a moral point of view. Ravi's dilemma is the dilemma of being caught between two values: the traditional ethical ideals and the new pragmatic rational approach. Professor K.R.S. Iyengar remarks:

Caught between the pull of the old tradition...strangles him and the pull of the new immorality that attracts as well as frightens him, Ravi lurches now this side, now the other side, and has the worst of both. 17

It will not be perhaps impertinent to disagree with Professor Iyengar in saying that Ravi has an experience of both, he does not have the worst of both. The ultimate triumph of conscience which puts a restrain on Ravi's anger and rebellion and makes him turn away from the crowd is an assertion of the traditional Indian cultural heritage of the purity of means and ends. In his protest and rebellions in his existential agony, he is a modern character articulating changing facets of Indian society. The changing reality of Indian life has emerged both from the new social conditions as well as an influence of the Western culture. Ravi's shift from Damodar's under world to the poor but humane world of Apu's family and his consequent shouldering of the responsibility is a journey from dark sub-human underworld to the human world of emotion and conscience. The triumph of conscience is the triumph of traditional values.
Both Ravi and Dandekar are products of cultural dualism. Dandekar's problem in *A Silence of Desire* was existential and spiritual. He wanted to exist as a common everyman and thus the words of the Swami which existed on a higher plane, which pushed him towards spiritual quietness and the place was terrifying to him: "I want my world back." He wants to exist in his small world: "The world I'm in, it's most important all the small things are important." The Swami who stands for the bliss of the spiritual, the elusive and who is the springboard of his wife's faith seems to be a threat for him. Ravi's dilemma, on the other hand, is existential pitted against the moral. He is also a common Indian everyman living his life in the urban milieu which is in a stage of constant flux. The immediate situation in India after Independence was not only of political uncertainty but also of cultural heterogenity. It was almost a melting pot of traditional values; moral and spiritual, and imported values of pragmatism and progress. Initially Ravi is carried away by the principle of end but finally the purity of means prevails on him. He is a symbol of the existential crisis solved through the ethical values. In his dilemma and crisis he enacts cultural dualism.

The dialectic of tradition and modernity is embodied in most prominent terms in Markandaya's novel *A Silence of desire.*
A Silence of Desire is built around spiritual faith which is the intrinsic ingredient of Indian life and scepticism which is a fall-out of Westernization. It is the story of Dande-kar and his wife Sarojini, who represent diverse views of life: one drawing deeply from the past, another emerging from the new and contemporary. Cultural dualism is at the root. The interaction of the West and the East has resulted in the dual cultural situation. In all developing countries the cultural impact of the West has come to mingle and clash with the native tradition. In Indian life also we find a constant interaction between the gifts of the West and our heritage. Markandaya mirrors this reality in her novels. Sorokin, the German sociologist, explains the dynamics of cultural change with the concept of three kinds of culture: sensate, ideational and ideal. The sensate culture emphasizes the role of material development and discards a belief in the spiritual and mystical aspects of life. It glorifies material pursuit and pleasure. Ideal culture, on the other hand, stresses a belief in the finer, subtler qualities of life; it includes spiritual faith as a compulsive condition of human reality. Ideational culture is a stage which combines some of the qualities from both. Every culture has a tendency to move from one point, one phase to the last phase and then it reverses to its original phase passing through the middle stage of ideational culture. The European world is a blossom of sensate culture and the traditional Indian culture is a gift of the ideational. Modern India faces the dilemma of passing from
innocence of experience. It is to accept boons of the sensate culture and along with them their sinister consequences. A.V. Krishna Rao rightly remarks:

In her third novel, *A Silence of Desire*, Markandaya's diagrammatical representation of the contemporary consciousness shows up a new dimension of sensibility in that the fictional focus is on the psychological adjustment of an urban middle class family. It is essentially a spiritual crisis of Sarojini. 19

The conflict between faith and reason is dramatised through the life of Dandekar and his wife Sarojini and the fictional milieu they inhabit. Dandekar is a senior clerk living comfortably with his wife and three children. The opening part of the novel gives us a picture of the happy and loving domestic life which is sustained by love and efficiency of Sarojini, a good mother, wife and housekeeper. The cubit of domestic life has perfect symmetry which gradually breaks and in its fold we find the macrocosmic conflict between spiritual faith and sceptical rationalism. The early part shows Dandekar as a man with joy and anticipation. Sarojini, his wife is a centre of love and happiness:

She was a good wife, Sarojini: good with the children, an excellent cook, an efficient manager of his household, a woman who still gave him pleasure after fifteen years of marriage, less from the warmth of her responses
than from her unfailing acquiescence to his demands. He was lucky ... For instance, now that she had heard his step in the courtyard she would be putting the potatoes into fry. The agreeable hiss would last until he had washed and changed and by then she would be ready for him, and so would the evening meal. 20

Behind this smooth placid structure of appearance there is a fundamental fissure. Sarojini's attitude to religion is much different from that of Dandekar and religion occupies the central place in Sarojini's life. This lack of real contact between them or sharing of the way of life between them is implicit in the beginning. Markandaya's treatment of marriage comes out from the accepted role of husband and wife in a traditional Brahmin household in which both have their distinctive places and they are aware of them. The virtues of the traditional wife are recalled in the discussion at the office, specially in Shastri's "benign belief that wives were faithful virtues creature, prepared like their classical sisters to follow their husband's barefoot in jungle."21 That Sarojini's religion is deep and active is reflected in the dining room which is full of the rich prints of gods and goddesses, singly and in groups, holding courts in heavens. We must assume that to Sarojini, they are vivid presences, the guardians of her faith. On the other hand, Dandekar is not able to describe a single god or goddess in detail even though they are parts of
his background. His faith is not as developed as that of Sarojini. He has made compromises with the spreading rationalism. The difference in the attitude of Dandekar and Sarojini is not only obvious, but is significant for it leads to the intense tension that permeates into their life. Sarojini is a woman of faith and worship, Dandekar is a man of reason and rationality. The description of Dandekar's house ends with a reference to Tulsi that his wife worshipped. Dandekar's attitude to it is sceptical:

Dandekar did not play to it, he was always careful to say; it was a plant; one did not worship plants: but it was a symbol of God whom one worshipped and it was necessary that God should have symbols since no man had the power or temerity to visualise Him.22

Here Tulsi is a symbol of God and divinity as it is in Naipaul's The House of Mr. Billy Biswas. Dandekar feels that Sarojini goes too far. Dandekar, however, conceals that there should be a difference between God and his symbol. The difference in their attitudes to religion determines their character and it also acts as thrust to the development of the story. Sarojini absents herself from the house and tells lies:

The girls, 'he said' have they eaten already?'
Yes. That is to say no, say Sarojini. I gave them money to buy tiffin. They will not want anything more;
Money for tiffin,' repeated Dandekar, 'It seems as if you knew you would have to wait so long for a bus.'23
The reader becomes curious and a sense of suspicion about Sarojini arises, but initially Dandekar has no such feelings. When he comes to know from Rajan that Sarojini has not visited her, the seeds of doubt are sown: "something remained, of troubling and elusive as minutest grit in the eye." Dandekar's mind is now under the grip of unenduring tension. His home and office turn into two areas of his mind:

His worries over children's illnesses, the intractability of servants, relatives, insufferableness he usually forgot in office routine or they were diminished in the greater woes of his colleagues. Or if he had suffered harshness or injustice in the office, Sarojini's indignation, the extra comfort with which she took care to surround him, soon put things in their proper perspective.

Dandekar's office is a reflector of the contemporary Indian society which shows cultural heterogencity. People differ as individuals, but more fundamentally they are separated by cultural types. Chari is possessed with humanity and understanding Shastri shares his feeling with Dandekar. Consequently Shastri is able to understand the internal disturbance that rages Dandekar. They share a common cultural matrix and thus they have an inkling about Sarojini's condition:

They were talking meaninglessly, exchanging words like coins which they both knew to be counterfeit, while their minds quietly fused, acknowledging one to the other that both knew something was very wrong
To the contrary, Ghose, Chari's deputy, a Bengali with an M.A. from Calcutta University and a degree from Cambridge is an alien in this soil:

Almost a foreigner - a man from the North who spoke differently and thought differently from the clerks, most of whom were southerners. Dandekar did not like foreigners - after all he had, and not so long ago, worked under an Englishman and harmoniously as that. Yet he would very much rather have faced Chari with his request than Ghose and only the urgency of his affairs drove him to the latter. 27

The novel has a host of characters with varying attitudes, and consequently they are symbols of cultural stage. If Sarojini is a positive image of traditional Indian life, Dandekar is a character born out of the cross currents of Eastern and Western cultures. He is in the twilight zone where both cultures come to meet. The Western part in him finds its voice though his scepticism about religion and his belief in scientific system. Other characters like Joseph believe in free love. Mahadevan believes that no marriage is safe unless the wife is cloistered during her husbands absences. Ghose represents the new rising modern India shedding its medievalism and ushering in the progressive world. The transition is dramatized in the novel by a contrast between Wilson and Dandekar, Dandekar and Rajan:

Do you really think all that glory was created in order that some measly little priest can mumble in your ear how many brats your wife is going to have? Dandekar was equally outraged.

Do you think, Sir that in the universe, which is a whole in God's sight, and part could exist without influencing the other?

Oceans rise and fall by the moon, he was quivering with indignation.

'Are human lives so worthless that the stars will not touch them?'

Wilson did not answer. He surveyed Dandekar helplessly with that angry open scorn to which Dandekar knew he was subjecting Rajan; and Rajan's eyes were his own of that long ago night, obstinate the outraged as he gazed defiantly back at the Englishman.

Markandaya is a skilful novelist and thus she makes all her characters integral parts of the fictional design. Through images of life in the office, Markandaya broadens and deepens the tensions between Dandekar and Sarojini. The relationship between them undergoes greater intensity of tension. Events lead to each other carrying the narrative further. Dandekar discovers a photograph in the trunk, the key to which Sarojini had earlier said she had misplaced. We watch him search through various layers, two special-occasions saris, lengths of gold tissue, the silver, then an exercise book out of which the photograph drops:
He picked it up, staring at the face that gazed benignly back at him, his heart thumping loudly as his mind races in mounting agitation. He did not know the man he was sure of that. He was equally sure it was not one of his wife's relatives—after fifteen years of marriage he knew the lot. A friend then? He dismissed the thought. A married woman did not have men friends who were not known to the husband, the family. One of the girl's idols perhaps—a teacher, a film actor? Well, it might be he said to himself, while his uncompromising mind withdrew into some forbidding fastness of its own, from where it emerged later, and again and again without cease until at last he frantically repudiated the lie with which he had hoped to buy his peace. 29

The tension in the mind of Dandekar is illustrated by his outer activities. His voice croaks when he speaks to Sarojini and he has to clear his throat many times to continue his speech. This shows the inner disturbance. At the office also, his colleagues make jokes and comments. Joseph's remark, 'You look as if your wife's run away and left you' has a pungent effect on him. He is in a mood of uncertainty. He decides later that it was all the office talk that has done this damage. Markandaya is a master of powerful expressions and she commands the strategy of words. Consequently, we find here a skilful handling of verbal strategy that brings the reader closer to the immediate wroking of his mind. This first occurs when he decides to question the maid, Janki, about Sarojini:
But who on earth would gossip with that imbecile? He said to himself angrily all I'm going to do is to put a straight forward question and ask for a rational answer. But he did not feel any easier as he would prowl in search of her and when he could not find her, he lost his head. 30

The reader is placed in the system of Dandekar's consciousness. This is a modern device frequently used by psychological novelists like Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson. This method of plunging the reader into the consciousness of the character is effective in that the reader comes to know the vacillating mood of Dandekar. He is tossed between suspicion and belief. However, the growing suspicion takes stronger hold on him:

He would find out where Sarojini was going or die in the attempt. Do it or die. Die or- He stopped. He could not see Sarojini. He had lost sight of her behind a group of shoppers - temporarily, he thought, but now she had vanished. He walked faster, forgetting his pen, ruthlessly pushing his way through the crowds and careless of the dark looks it earned him. 31

The first explicit confrontation takes place when Sarojini returns in the evening. Dandekar's anger and frustration which have been boiling inside now erupt:
'Mangoes', he cried shaking her furiously, so that's what you went out for. Not for anything else ... No, oh no, just for a little fruit like a dutiful housewife. Like a loving wife. Like a thrifty whore-a-' 'For God's sake.' her voice was colourless, sick, 'which God? -the God of love?'  

Sarojini has been doing nothing wrong; she has just kept the news of her going to the Swami for herself because Dandekar would not have accepted the values of Swami's power. Since she is righteous, she is controlled and restrained in her reactions. Dandekar had accused her of having her music teacher as lover, virtually calling her a soiled woman. Sarojini is not at all disturbed. She carried on her domestic duty quietly. The clash between the two implies the confrontation between the two cultures.

Sarojini is a legacy of tradition and therefore she consistently, deeply orthodox in her faith, convinced of its total beneficence. On the other hand, Dandekar exposed to modern ideas, willing to accept western culture, is prone to reject the older notions and practices of religion. He is caught between the residual power of the ancient world and newly acquired world which has yet to achieve full shape. Here lies the dilemma. Dandekar follows Sarojini secretly while she is going to Swami's place. He is confounded to find Sarojini before the Swami in a room of people. His tension
is partly relieved because his belief in his wife's conduct is reaffirmed. He whispers "If only you had told me...why could you not tell me?" She replies that he would have called her superstitious, a fool and then reasoned with her until she lost all faith. She is right in adding that his western notion cannot explain what lies beyond reason.

Sarojini is a woman with grains of faith and wisdom both. She has also developed endurance. These virtues are typical of Indian womanhood. It is a cultural type. An alien author, whether a liberal or humanist, could not have been able to give proper contours of these traits in a woman's character. Since Indian culture is a part and parcel of Markandaya's life and consciousness, she has been able to delineate such an authentic character. In her quietness, her endurance, her service and loyalty to her husband and finally, in her allegiance to the spirit of worship and faith, she comes out as a round, three dimensional Indian woman. Her contrast with Dandekar is candidly forged equally aware of Western culture and its impact on Indian life and characters.

The third important character that forms the triangle of dilemma comes to us in the form of Swami. The Swami is a powerful figure in the Indian life. Possessing special gift these holymen are intermediaries between humanity at large and the luminous powers. Consequently the Swami can create ambiguous responses such as respect and fear, faith and scepticism.
K.R., Chandra Shekharan rightly defines that "the Swami in A Silence of Desire occupies the most important place in that novel. He represents all the virtues on Indian sainthood, living a simple austere life and silently ministering to the hungry and sick." Markandaya makes use of the Swami in her novel Possession also. The Swami figures in R.K. Narayan's novels also but while in Narayan's fiction the Swami is an abstract, vague and at times, a suspect. In him the fake-turned Swami is a significant fictional motive. In Kamala Markandaya's fiction the Swami is always a positive character, opaque yet never a fraud or a cheat. The Swami is also a cultural type; the Swami in India has always been a persuasive and powerful dimension of India, particularly rural Indian life. They are a part of collective consciousness of Indians, a product of the matrix of myths and rituals. That is why, even Dandekar who is a character in transition, a character who accepts only the values of rationalism and scientific temper, is also in a state of helplessness in the Swami's presence. When he encounters him he feels a kind of peace and he also feels unable to hold anything against him. This experience directly affirms Indian traditional belief in spiritual powers and the enlightened souls who have extraordinary supernatural qualities.

The spiritual characters are available in a large number in the Indian novel in English. In Arun Joshi's The Last Labyrinth, the novelist juxtaposes the two different worlds of
Eastern and Western culture through two sets of Characters. On the one hand, there are the father, Som Bhaskar, Dr. K. who believe in reason, industry and scientific approach to life. On the other hand, there are characters like the mother, Gita the wife of Som Bhaskar, Gargi, the Sufi lady and Anuradha who represent traditional Indian culture. The mother believes that Krishna would cure her cancer. Gita trusts like birds and she engages herself in cleansing her soul. Gargi is a Swami-like figure, a lady of spiritual power in whose presence Som Bhaskar feels peculiar peace and quietness. She can be omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. She has transcended the limits of time and space. Since the partakes of the peace of God's unfathomable ocean, her presence is soothing and pacifying. Her touch works as a balm on the ailing Aftab. Her words refresh Anuradha and her look tranquillises Som. Arun Joshi has employed her as a symbol of living proof of God's presence.

Kamala Markandaya does not make the character of Swami, a symbol of God, but he is definitely a positive symbol of peace and blessing. Consequently, the presence of the Swami has a pacifying and powerful effect on different characters in different novels of Kamala Markandaya. In *Possession*, Swami is the sustaining strength behind Val's creative power and Lady Caroline always felt something beyond her understanding in the presence of the Swami. Here also when Dandekar meets the Swami he finds that he can hold nothing against him. He
feels a calm and peculiar detachment from the everyday affairs of life. He has the same feeling of rising above the body and the worries of the world in Swami's presence. K.R.S. Iyengar beautifully suggests that "A Silence of Desire dares the invisible and the writings is competent enough to forge here and their coils of intricate suggestion that almost seem to bridge the chasm between the matter and spirit, doubt and faith."34

The Swami's world is radically different from that of Dandekar and his office associates. Dandekar lives between the two worlds—his house represents traditional Indian culture and spiritual faith while his office is a microcosmic symbol of change, modernity, scepticism and the world which has accepted the western culture values. The talk between Dandekar and Swami reveals the split in his soul:

Your possession matter a great deal to you? The Swami spoke quietly, his eyes seemed to darken and grieve for him, for humanity, and Dandekar longed to say, passionately No; they don't matter a pin's head. But truth drew him back.

No, he said hoarsely, forcing himself to the shameful admission. They don't matter at all now, when I am sitting here with you. But they will later is reality to me, in which I must live. He paused, licking his dry lips. You see, we are not rich people, we cannot afford to give away so much.35

Now, Dandekar tries desperately to get away from the Swami because he realizes 'our worlds do not mix.' It is disas-
trous to try to mix them.

The author avoids taking in the conflicts. Dandekar is helpless, and tries to restore the bliss and harmony of his domestic life. Sarojini has turned into a woman with a will of her own. Dandekar feels that the Swami cannot live away with them and thus he shows practical wisdom to stay away from a man who disrupts the simple tenor of one's daily life. To Sarojini, however, the terror of daily life ceased to matter. She does not mind the children going hungry or dust gathering on the floor because these are insignificant matter compared with the deeper wisdom and peace she has received from the Swami.

The situation reaches a deadlock. An external agency becomes necessary to resolve the crisis. Chari, working in the office of Dandekar, appears as due ex machina. Dandekar cries with agony.

"She is still with me," said Dandekar, "but its only the shell. All that's real is left with the Swami. Sometimes when I look at her I know she has even forgotten that I exist. I know in the Swami's world it is not easy to remember - I've been in it. I know the forget fullness it brings - but I want to exist, to exist for her, I want my world back, my children happy, my floor swept." "Is that important to?" "Yes, yes, yes," he cried, "In world I'm
in, it's most important and I know it's small and petty but I'm a small and petty man."36

The tension now takes a different shape and the private problem of Dandekar becomes a public issue. Government officials begin to enquire whether the Swami is a saint or charlton. The people of the town split in two groups. Some complain that the Swami has enticed away their wives and daughters for his material gains. Others say that they have faith in his spiritual powers. On the official level Chari and his subordinate Ghosh represent two points of view. Chari, a local man with an instinctive understanding of the people wants to let the Swami live as he likes. Ghosh in his enthusiasm for rationality and abolition of superstition wants to prove that the Swami is a fraud. Ultimately the Swami himself solves the problem by leaving of his own choice. Sarojini agrees to go for the operation. The Swami has consented. Her operation is successful. Making his way home Dandekar finds the sudden release from all his problems. He rests under a banyan tree. The way its gaylak roots reach into the earth from spreading branches to begin new life gradually strengthening into new trunk is emblematic. The continuity to be re-established is obviously suggested. It will be pertinent to quote H.M. Williams here:

In some ways, like Graham Greene's novel of faith and doubt - The End of the Affair, A Silence of Desire is a subtle study of the reality of religious faith and of the opposition
between man's modern quest for scientific 'truth' and technological certainty and the sense of mystery and the inexplicable in the human condition. 37

The detailed, indepth illustration of the story brings home a few significant points which reveal deeper meaning. First of all, Kamala Markandaya has given a candid, truthful picture of the modern Indian life without any personal prejudice. The cultural dualism, the strength of her vision, enables her to absorb different facets of Indian society. Even modern India is a paradox; it carries multitude of cultural traits taken both from our own tradition and the modern western world. In the modern Indian society we find traditional character as well as creatures of the twilight. Sarojini is a symbol of the spiritual India. She can be compared with Gita and Anuradha from Arun Joshi's novel *The Last Labyrinth*. Sarojini is a simpler character in comparison obviously because Arun Joshi is a much more sophisticated contemporary writer. But in essence Sarojini catches up the whole of our spiritual past.

Dandekar's character is representative of a wider group of people living in modern Indian society. No country can afford to insulate itself against the prevailing currents of ideas. Because of its interaction with the Western world, Indian society has shed many of its traditional traits and has accepted the newer ideas. Dandekar is the product of this contemporary condition. He can also be compared with the hero
Som Bhaskar of Arun Joshi's *The Last Labyrinth*. Both the characters enact the crisis of consciousness in a modern Indian man. Som Bhaskar is highly educated, widely travelled, largely experienced. He has read the western philosophy and at the same time has shared the experience, the mystical religious experience at Banaras. He is a searcher, exploring the labyrinth of life and death, reality and truth, doubt and faith. In his quest, in his intent to unravel the cosmic mystery, "Bhaskar is a modernized, secularized, emphasized, sceptical Nachiketa who has been denied the faith and resolution of The Upanishadic model." Dandekar does not have metaphysical dimension of Som Bhaskar but at the social level he is also a character tossed between tradition and modernity, spiritual faith and scepticism. He is also, like Som Bhaskar, a contemporary Indian everyman because he straddles two cultures together. His dilemmas the predicament of contemporary Indian whose roots are in his own soil but he also responds to the west wind that blows. In short, Dandekar is the creation of cultural dualism. Dandekar vacillates between doubt and faith. His modern self forces him to explain the role of the Swami rationally, but he feels peculiar hypnotic serenity in the Swami's presence. He is transported into a new world as it were. He jerks himself into mundane reality. This twin consciousness is typically symbolic of Indian condition.
In Arun Joshi's fiction also the dialectics of tradition and modernity has been embodied congruently. It is not presented in a direct manner but implicitly in a suggestive way. In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* the juxtaposition between the wasteland of Delhi and the Garden of Eden, of Maikala jungle finally deepens into a metaphysical dimension, a quest for the true self of Mr. Biswas. The return from the phoney civilization to the tribal world enacts the dialectics of tradition and modernity. In *The Apprentice* the dialectics of modernity and tradition come forth embodied in a clash between the traditional idealism which has been the hallmark of Indian life till Independence and the new ethics emerging from a modernised commercial social change in the post-independence era. The story of *The Apprentice* illustrates this truth. In *The Apprentice*, Mr. Joshi outlines contours of Indian social life in details. It begins with the first phase of the Second World War when Indians were making sacrifices for their independence, and includes the times, when Indian became a republic, experienced the refugee problem and the Chinese war. It explains the economic, political human and moral aspects. The novel is both like Dickens's *Hard Times* and Camus' *The Fall*.

The story begins when the Indian leaders led by Mahatma Gandhi were behind the bars because they had asked the Britishers to quit India at once. The Mahatama had given a call to the people to "do or die." Attainment of freedom was the real goal of the Indians and for this no sacrifice was big enough.
It was a peculiar war between the rulers who were free to harness weapons and troops to crush the defiance and the struggle. Gandhiji faced their might with truth, passive resistance, non-cooperation and sacrifice. Non-violence was pitched against violence, love against hatred, sacrifice against exploitation, self-effacement against brutality and strength of the soul against the might of the armour. It required an inner strength of a very high order, and India experienced a renaissance of morality. The father of Ratan rather the hero of the novel could recognise that Gandhi was a man of suffering and that, he was the real hope. It was a time when Gandhi could awaken confidence in the strength of character, morality and soul. Indians had the faith to confront visible might with invisible strength. In this age of moral revival, people forgot pettiness and exhibited a very high degree of sense values. Ratan's father gave up a lucrative practice and plunged into the freedom struggle. It was a courageous decision because he had a tubercular wife and an infant son to look after. He had bestowed his property and embraced privation. He could identify a cause and suffer for it. Nobility and dignity lay in suffering and self-effacement. He believed that beauty and grandeur were to be achieved by distribution rather than by accumulation of wealth. He was a man of faith and conviction. He could stake even his life. When he saw Ratan, then only a ten-year-old boy, join the procession, he felt pleased and proud. He was marching to face the butcher police with his only son, an
an infant, by his side. It was a spectacle of great innerstrength. He laughed at careerism and bourgeois faith. That day he led the procession of the Satyagrahis. When the Police Squad fired tear-gas shells, he ordered people to lie down. The sergeant ordered the mounted force to charge. Ratan's father advised the people to squat on the road and cover their heads with hands. He was the first to face the butchers. Clubs were banged on his head and arms. But he sat passively. His resistance tired them and the force had to retreat. Then he got up. So did Ratan. He along with his son marched towards the sergeant who ordered him to halt. But he would not obey. The sergeant threatened to shoot him. He did not pay heed and moved forward. There was Ratan too. But the man had no fear either for himself or for his infant. It was an act of courage and noble defiance. Three shots were fired and he lay dead. But here was death that generated life and vitality. The Britishers left India because force could not crush the spirit, could not win over the spirit. The invisible might had no effective answer to the invisible vitality. Mr. Joshi depicts the climate effectively. He pictures the scene of the procession, defiance and sacrifice with clarity and authenticity. They were singing 'sarfaroshi ki tamana.' The song kindled memory of those days when youths sang and danced while being killed. The reference to Subhash Babu contributes to the authenticity of the atmosphere. Mr. Joshi does not lose sight of the human aspect - the personal dilemma. Ratan's mother was critical. She coughed, groaned and spat blood.
father was touched by her pain, he felt agonised. He suggested that she should go to a sanatorium. She said she would be all-right. She was patience incarnate. When Ratan's father persisted, she snapped: "where's the money?" He murmured that he would join the bar. It was not an inclination to compromise his ideal, but an identification with the suffering of his wife. It is this human touch that grants authenticity and appeal to the human drama. This pathetic scene elevates and ennobles the quality of the sacrifices of Ratan's father. At that time people were so much inspired with the ideals as to overlook their personal sufferings and human relationships. It was an age of service above self. It is the spirit of India's tradition.

Mr. Joshi conceives the social drama against the backdrop of Gandhian values which is a symbol of traditional way of Indian life. As the great war ended, India became free. Ratan, the child and participant of this elation and in the sufferings of the struggle for independence, hopes that New India would be a land of order, justice and joy. Honest and hard labour would bear fruit. It was not a tall expectation. Independence was obtained by pure, moral and human means. Hence, it was in the fitness of things to hope for an adherence to good values in independent- India. But new India forgot her Gandhian values. The suffering and sacrifice of Ratan's father were considered a waste. He had "squandered a lifetime." and Gandhi's devotees obliterated his memory. New India did
not attach any significance to the way he sacrificed himself. It was stupid to get killed like that. There was no glamour in heroism. Values had changed. Truth, honesty, hard labour and character had no value. Life was not easy. Even Ratan's mother had to confess the stark reality. One day she told her son: "Man without money was without worth. Many things were great in life, but the greatest of them all was money." The wife of the martyr had the agonising experience that patriotism was devalued. "It was not patriotism but money," She said, "that brought respect and brought security. Money made friends. Money succeeded where all else failed. There were many laws, she said, but money was law unto itself." Then money culture poisoned the entire society. Money becomes the be all and end all. Ratan groaned before the young student "In money's are kingdom, my friend, only money is king, all others slaves." And "it was a kingdom without frontiers." Money replaced God. Everyone ran after accumulation of money. They wanted to be rich rather, richest in no time. Hence all values were subjugated by money. Ratan had noticed that suddenly there was a torrential flow of money and Delhi became sprawled with palatial buildings and starred botels filled with the new rich.

The new rulers were Gandhians only in name. They were responsible for the murder of Gandhi's tenets and for burning them. The Sheikh tells Ratan about them. This country has two kinds of people, he said, the rulers and the ruled. The rulers were fraud, he said, the phoney people who knew only how to make
speeches, and feather their own nests. People who made of things, then went off without knowing how to clean it up. The ruled were brainless. These phoney frauds were heartless because they were ruthlessly selfish and incompetent and knew nothing except feathering their nests and as they had power, they functioned as a steam roller. In no time the country lost all sense of norms, of self above service, and deception, immorality and apathy became the new norms. When the Chinese threatened the nation, the leaders got busy in making fiery speeches. Instead of preparing the nation, they were engaged in preparing speeches. Ratan had seen that the ministers did not take the Parliament into confidence. They made wrong statements about the refugee problem and the price rise. When the honour of the nation was threatened, the minister was thinking of enriching by disposing of useless war materials stocked with Himmat. It was his coffer rather than the society and honour of the nation that engaged the attention of the minister. It was a new trio - a new system, a system based on the contractor-raj that replaced the old order. In fact, corruption at the highest level nationalised corruption. Ratan spoke with confidence "If I had taken a bribe I belonged rather to the rule than the exception." Graft has permeated every strata of the society. No sphere of life has been able to escape from it.

A bribe could get you a bed in a hospital, a place to burn your dead, Doctor had a fee to give false certificates, magistrates for false
judgements. For a sum of money politicians changed sides. For a larger sum they declared wars. Birbery was accepted by factory inspectors, bank agents... college professors; by all those who acted in the public interest. Men took the bribes to facilitate the seduction of their wives; women for seduction of other women.¹⁴⁶

We find the politicians interfering with the army. The Brigadier came out of the conference and felt dejected and depressed. He felt the war strategy was being decided by the civilians and politicians. He looked aghast at the stupidity and cowardice of those men. But they were to call the tune and soldiers had only to dance to it. The novel clearly suggested that a fraud was committed on the honour of the nation and the soldiers were betrayed. Hundreds of lives were lost, but the ministers were blind to it. Rallies were arranged where the minister made a fiery speech. He would defend the honour with graft and fight till the last man. He promised to enact Chitter. A playback singer was employed to sing songs, of valour. Ratan remarked ironically. "If only songs could replace valour."¹⁴⁷ When ministers could cheat the army and the nation, why not the businessman, the soldiers and the Babus? Ratan posed the question "If there is sawdust in flour and common salt in penicillin, why, my dear friend, why can't men be expected to buy proxies in the hall of death."¹⁴⁸ So new India presented a new set of norms. It preached cruelty and ruthlessness, in feathering one's nest. Only money is truth. It is a
permissive world. There is no God, no religion, no morality, no law. The Sheikh was frank when he said that the laws were framed by society, which sold itself for a trash. Freedom was a mere word and careerism and bourgeois faith which Ratan's father disliked and disparaged so much, became the lighthouse for the sea-farers of Indian society. Sacrifice was replaced by self-interest, valour by cowardice, honesty by fraud and deception, courage by fear, faith by insincerity, morality by corruption and ideal by deals. Life was to be eked out not according to the ideals but by deals. Ratan speaks in acute agony: "it is not the atom or the sun or God or sex that lies at the heart of the universe, it is deals." Thus, the social picture in The Apprentice is qualitatively different from that of The Strange Case of Billy Biswas. In this second novel, Mr. Joshi is not concerned with corruption. Billy is not a victim of corrupt society. He rejects the material civilization not as much for its corruption as for its money-mindedness. Bilasia has nothing to do with money. In its emphasis on money-culture, the two novels resemble. But The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, is a study in contrast between two cultures - primitivism and materialism. On the other hand, The Apprentice presents the corrupt society where corruption is corroding the very fabric of the Indian tradition. Prof. Iyengar rightly remarks: "As a fictional study of the anatomy and dynamics of the almost omnipresent corruption in the country, The Apprentice is a powerful indictment. The human study and the
stark message both come through. The social set up in this novel is so powerful as to assume the function of the invisible divinity influencing everybody.

This corruption in the social life or the substitution of ideals by deals reflects the temper of modernity in India. In fact, the English did not merely mutilate the native cultural values of India, the Western culture distorted the very fundamentals of the tradition of India. The achievement of new goals, of money, career and power by any means was in fact a consequence of the process of urbanization and modernization under the influence of the West. Ratan Rathor's story further illustrates this process of social change.

Ratan Rathor is the son of noble parents: a heroic father and an enduring mother. He imbibes from his father a love of ideals, a devotion for a cause and a will to suffer, of a man willingly embracing death for a noble cause. The love of the heroic gets reflected by the triumphs of his. As his father dies, all his followers desert Ratan and his widowed mother. The life that he considers to be a beautiful sacrifice, a service for the Gods, is forced on his consciousness as a stupid sauntering of a life time. The apathy of the people and the hardships of an orphan life sow the seed in him. Here is a boy to be launched on the unchartered sea alone, fatherless. And uncertainties unnervre him. He confesses "what clouded my horizon was the future, my friend, the unknown ominous
Future." No doubt, nervous he is, but he shows courage. He does not find a job in his village. Like the Brigadier, he wants to be distinguished. He goes to Delhi in search of a job, and meets all those who claim to be friendly. In the beginning, they are warm and cordial, show even enthusiasm, but very soon they reach the 'cot farewell' stage. A friend of the Brigadier's father is very rough, and chides Ratan that he is sure to fail because he expects too much; Ratan is agitated and suffers privation, he wants a job to earn his living, and the man tells him that he expects too much. He strives hard, but he is rejected everywhere. He is a victim of either pre-election or apathy. He does not have political support and people do not notice Ratan's glorious background. He finds that his other five room-mates are employed but he, who is wise, educated, polished, intelligent, and cultured is wandering from office to office facing rejection and humiliation. When they eye him he feels ashamed at himself. He begins to pity himself and in order to avoid their pitying look, he tells a lie that he is employed. This is Ratan's first degradation. He narrates:

I had become, at the age of twenty one a hypocrite and a liar, in short, ashamed ... From morning till night I told more lies than truths: I had become a master faker.\(^{52}\)

Here is Ratan disillusioned. The glory of his family, the sacrifice of his father, his friendship and his education
and merit are of no help. The climate has changed, people are actuated by self interest, not by philanthropy. The disillusionment is shattering. He confesses,

What is more shattering than the breakdown of a faith? Nothing that I know of. It is not the facts themselves that hurt. What hurts is the collapse of the faith that they destroy...you assume your wife is faithful, your children love you, your boss fair, or that God exists. And then, somebody... comes along that nothing is so. This is what hurts.\(^53\)

The failure of truth, nobility, education, justice, friendship and hard labour shocks the current reality. His inner stuff withers. He is restless. The lies make him disturbed. But he cannot help. He is made to realize that in free India, it is hard to earn his living. A steno-friend helps him and he gets a job. He is an assistant in an office dealing with the purchase of war-materials. He is a temporary clerk, and he cannot afford to lose his job. Ratan now departs from his father's ideals. He is no more heroic. He has lost his courage. He takes an interest in career, a thing his father disliked. He labours hard. He is alert. His competence is acknowledged but he has to get confirmed. After all the war cannot go on for ever. It will depend on the recommendation of the Superintendent. He must please him. Ratan really pleases him. His nobility and obedience gladden the boss. He overstrains himself to catch his eye and he succeeds. Simply at his hints,
Ratan leaves his room. He has got the key to strengthen his position, to rise in life. His colleagues are agitated that their office has loaded them with extra work to assure his own promotion. Ratan sides with them. The Superintendent points out to Ratan that he should mind his own career and must not annoy his boss. Very soon a post of Assistant Superintendent is to be created, and Ratan may stand a chance. Now Ratan deserts his colleagues. They appeal to his sense of justice and commitment. But he turns a deaf ear. He has come to realise that "some survive through defiance, others through ability. Still others, through obedience, by becoming servants to the powers of the world." The paralysing infliction of the bureaucratic system is a potent evil of the modern civilization. Ratan becomes a victim to it. Max Weber, the noted German sociologist, makes an illuminating exploration into the dysfunctioning of the bureaucracy. His concept boils down to the fact that bureaucratic coordination of activities are organized according to the principles of rationality, impersonal rules and hierarchy and gradually it leads to depersonalization and death of human elements — like love, affection and personal relationship. Ratan's decline is the process of depersonalization; he begins to ignore the expectations of his colleagues from him. The streak of the anomic who is only responsible to himself infects him but his soul is not fully dead. He is not emotionally atrophied like Camus' Meursault
and hence a dilemma, a Hamlet like vacillation persists, like the character, Surendra in the Indian novel Kundic Aur Kuhase by Gridhar Gopal, Ratan becomes anomic in the manipulative set up and in the process loses his soul. Ratan makes compromises but in every compromise, he becomes restless, spends sleepless nights. But he can't help it. He cannot afford to ignore his career. Uncertainties of life terrify him; He has to adjust, accommodate and fall in line. Once his notings destroyed the life of a prosperous contractor who offered him ten thousand as bribe to change his comments. Ratan declined the offer, but remained restless. Why should truth be troublesome? He still feels greatly upset. Corruption has not seeped to the last layer of his soul. He has to mount the ladder anyhow. The superintendent hints one day that if Ratan marries his cousin's daughter, he may become an officer. There is no way out. Ratan decides to marry her. It is a kind of deal and prosperity comes with deals, not with merit. His colleagues call him a whore. He forgets to become restless. He has hardened. He develops apathy for the opinions and sentiments of others.

I am a thick skin now, a thick skin and a wash out but, believe me my friend, I too have and thoughts such as these. But what was to be done? One had to live, And, to live, one had to make a living. And, how was living to be made except through careers.
Ratan becomes a careerist. It leads to avarice. His life begins to corrode. He has money, with money comes the drawbacks associated with it. He is tempted by women, drinks, an easy life. He enters that strata of society where money and merriment measure greatness of a man. He comes into a contact with Himmat Singh who brainwashes him. He takes bribe to clear defective war materials. He becomes convinced that he is Nobody and his action is insignificant. He notices that graft is an inevitable part of life. It percolates every inch of life. Hence, he succumbs to the persuasions. He has seen people flourishing in graft and deception and yet no harm done to them. So he thinks that there is no cause and effect relationship so far as graft is concerned. Now Ratan is completely a man of modern times—cunning, deceptive and easy going.

With every shift in his life, Ratan shrinks, he gets isolated and incommunicative. He becomes no island. The consciousness that deviated him from the ideals torments him, yet he has to suppress the murmur of his soul. The climate of the society smothers. He tries to find meaning of his actions. He gropes for light and devotion Falsity, hypocrisy, corruption estrange him from his own self. He wants to know who he is—a faker, a sham, a martyr’s son. It is a quest for his identity. Ratan, like Sindi of The Foreigner remembers The Geeta. The holy book asks people to perform ‘Karma’—dispassionately and if a man wants to attain self realization, he should
renounce actions and submit himself to him. Ratan listens to a speech of Swami who asks men to renounce his acts. Ratan does not understand it. How to renounce? Whom to renounce? Where to renounce? Once he refused bribe and destroyed a prosperous contractor. He wants to know if his action is correct. He consults the superintendent. The old man remarks vaguely that only God exists and quality of money is judged by the use of which it is put. Ratan fails to understand. He is bewildered. According to the superintendent, it is the end that determines the moral aspect of wealth. In Gandhian system of values, means is as much significant as end. Now 'means' loses validity. Naturally Ratan felt disturbed. What type of God he is who is not concerned with the evil and good. What is easier after all than to accept a God who wishes only to be acknowledged and could not be bothered with of one's actions, directed at good or evil, as long as the allegiance to him is duly renewed. Ratan gropes for God, wants to realize Him, not for salvation, but for knowing the relevance of His actions. His unconscious reminds him of a different set of norms where good and evil do not overlap. In practical life, he is confronted with the facts with profound hostile values. He experiences a war within himself. Every and of corruption and immorality alienates him from his own self. He feels that he is a split personality, and the good self is being smothered. He is becoming a life that is strange to his consciousness. He gets degraded and suffers quietly. He suffers in his soul.
And all these years this terrible loneliness, something that you may not suspect by looking at me, something that none has even suspected. How, all these years, carrying them in secret like a thief, close to my heart, until their blazes have turned upon me and turned me to ashes. 57

His restlessness, loneliness and torment grow as time passes. He even goes to a temple. But he is disillusioned. The pujari offers him a bribe for a recommendation. Even at God's shrine, corruption flourishes. If God has no concern for man, and it is only his 'Karma' that matters, then why should man care for God? Ratan wants to know if consequence of an action appears in this very life or not. Since man has not seen God, and he does not seem to be bothered, and has left man to chalk out his own destiny on the basis of his actions, the important thing is the experience in this very life. Who knows about life hereafter? He poses this problem in clear terms. "There might be births without number waiting us and a ceaseless accumulation of 'Karmas' but does one not get paid as one goes along, right here in this birth, in this world." 58 Ratan is not Billy who goes to primitive life to find fulfilments. Mr. Arun Joshi does not approve of Billy's ways. The novelist is concerned with the cosmopolitan society and the fulfilment should be experienced in the social contexts. Man should explore his identity and fulfilment as a social being. That is what Ratan does. His constancy and sufferings reveal the experiences of
God. He finds his best friend, the Brigadier, shattered by the Chinese war. The pathos of the Brigadier's plight shakes Ratan, and he feels a mother's pain as his own, and he prays.

I did not actually pray. I did not know who was to be prayed to and how. What I did was I said things to myself, some part of myself that I had not spoken to in a long time... I said to myself. I shall be good. I shall not be greedy. I shall not be afraid. I shall be decent. And I told myself. I shall have nothing more to do with Himmat Singh, or the likes of him. 59

For the first time, Ratan forgets his self and feels for others, and God listens to him. He gives chance to make amends. Ratan misses that chance. The layers of filth in his soul do not allow his mind to be enlightened. The Brigadier dies, and Ratan knows that it is his action that causes his death.

The death of the Brigadier is catalytic. In a novel exploring the ethical problem of good and evil, the characters are bound to assume allegorical significance. The Brigadier is valiant, dashing and practical and he takes the world to be a whore. He forgets that a whore does not only offer pleasures, she can be deceptive also. She can betray as well. In fact, the Brigadier is betrayed. He loses honour, even his life. But he acts as a catalytic agent in precipitating the sense
of evil in Ratan and tormenting him with repentence. Repentence is the key of redemption. Ratan feels as if he were in a hell living like a tormented soul. Now he feels there is God and action bears fruit in this very life. Ratan tells his friend, "He has got a stick all right and he is not mocked and sooner or later, some place or another, he will sap your knuckles. No doubt about that. Take it from me." Mr. Joshi does not develop a philosophy of doom. Ratan has got clouded his enlightened soul with filth of immoral actions. He has known the test of a moral action. Ratan tells his friend "Be good. I tell myself. Be good. Be decent. Be of use. Then I beg forgiveness. Of a large host: my father, my mother, the Brigadier, the unknown dead of the war, of those whom I harmed...." Ratan remembers his father's words to arrive at his final perception of truth. His father is a recurring symbol of Gandhian values based on The Gita. It is not machiavellian. Justification of the ends but Gandhian purity of means and non-violence that finally stand in good stead. Like Sindi Oberoy, Ratan also learns to be of use to others after passing a rough - give it and remorse. Sindi learns, detachment through selfless involvement and Ratan accepts Karma through experience. He develops Karma. Ratan develops a philosophy that works in practical life, is an off shoot of the doctrine of 'Karma'. He decides to clean the filth enveloping his soul. He feels that God lives in human hearts and not in the temples. Shoe-
shining kills his vanity and contracts his inflated self. Ratan gets peace because he has discovered an equation in practical life. Old memories haunt him, but in course of time, he hopes to get rid of them after he is purified. He finds faith to work out his own rehabilitations. The purification is to be attained not by 'Sadhana' or any ritual, but by 'Karma.'

This story of Ratan Rathor amply illustrates that he is a typical modern Indian caught up in the wake of social change in the post independent India. Hypocrisy, careerism, profiteering, individualism - are all traits cultivated by Indians in their endeavour of modernization which is largely due to the process of westernization in India. In fact, Ratan's dilemma is a dialectic of tradition and modernity, of the old Indian stance: of sacrifice, heroism, and nobility pitted against profiteering, selfish attainments, of personal gains and lack of fellow-feeling.
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