CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"And everywhere there is a connection, everywhere there is an illustration: no single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in its relation to other events, to other literatures" (Russel 1848). This statement by Matthew Arnold who used the term “comparative literature” for the first time in a letter in 1848, emphasised the significance of the comparative approach to literature. When two or more works are studied side by side converging and contrasting attitudes are highlighted. It is a universal phenomena that human nature is essentially the same all over. Art or literature is a very versatile medium through which these affinities and differences can be observed. Essential human experiences are similar but the artists can differ in their approaches to present them.

Kamala Markandaya and Pearl S Buck are two such writers who have handled themes of socio cultural significance in their novels. A parallel reading of their works reveals the fundamental unity of human perceptions transcending geographic, cultural and temporal boundaries.

The bilingual situation of the two writers discussed here provide an atmosphere of natural curiosity regarding their social and cultural concerns.
The study of two cultures is thought provoking from a sociological perspective as it reflects the impact of different races, ages and religions. Hence the intercultural, intracultural and polysystem approaches would be very effective in bringing out the literary kinship and mutual dependence of these authors.

A comparative study of Kamala Markandaya and Pearl S Buck who belong to different cultures and writing in the fifties and seventies should be an aesthetically rewarding experience. Both of them have lived and experienced the Oriental and the Occidental ways of life. Writing from this common background, they portray contemporary society offering the possibility of assimilating tradition and modernity.

This obvious similarity triggered a curiosity to determine whether Pearl S Buck has been influenced by Kamala Markandaya or the vice versa. "The notion of influence must be regarded as virtually the key concept in comparative literature studies", declares Weisstein (qtd. in Study of Comparative Literature, Theory and Practice 67). The emphasis is on the study of themes and techniques so that influences can be understood better. Most comparatists feel that the concept of influence is central to Comparative Literature studies as it is the expression of direct causal relationship.

The search for influence is an analytical study, as influence does not reveal itself in a single pattern or manner. Since influence is an aesthetic
concept it has to be sought in deep, minute and precise manifestations, which may lie deeply hidden in a work. An influence can be defined as “something from without” which produces an effect on an artist and his works that neither “his native tradition nor his own personal development can explain” (J.T. Shaw 91). The aim of comparison between two writers in terms of influence is not to establish the superiority of one over the other or to extol one’s native literary culture at the expense of the foreign culture with which it is compared. In the case of Buck and Markandaya, there is no textual evidence to prove that they have been influenced by each other. So, even though influence can be ruled out in this particular case, a comparative study of the two writers belonging to two different cultures separated by time and space and with no imaginable influence on each other can still be aesthetically rewarding. In fact the lack of mutual influence makes the comparison between Buck and Markandaya interesting and meaningful.

Analogy, which is another phase of comparative studies, is a parallel study of two works without necessarily implying a direct relationship. Analogy or affinity is defined as “resemblances in style, structure, mood or idea between works which have no other connection” (Study of Comparative Literature 94). An analogy or parallel study involving two writers when systematically carried out may become a study of two cultures of which the writers are meaningful products. Moreover in the absence of concrete proofs like letters, memoirs,
diaries, reviews and so on it is advisable to consider parallel studies than the study of influence. Parallelism or analogy calls for the scrutiny of similarities and dissimilarities in the literary traditions of different authors. V. Sachidanandan in his essay "Influence and Analogy Studies in Comparative Literature" quotes Prawer's survey of influences, analogy and tradition: "the finest comparisons proceed from the 'shock of recognition when one writer feels an affinity or kinship for another'...(Paniker 33). A study of the novels of Pearl S Buck and Kamala Markandaya is a successful exercise from this context.

Among the various components of Comparative Literature Remak puts study of affinities in theme first:

A systematic revitalizing of 'comparative' might be the most natural and effective way of bringing literary criticism and evaluation into comparative literature through the comparison, by analogy or contrast of (not necessarily causally) related works, works comparable because of elective affinities in theme, problem, genre, ..."(Henry H.H. Remak "Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function" 22).

There is an inexhaustible store of shared ideas, theme, situations, events and trends in the novels of Kamala Markandaya and Pearl S Buck. "Prawer suggests that the study of themes, situation and motifs, must be... aware of individual
variations on the one hand and wider cross connections on the other” as summed up in the book *Introduction to the Study of Comparative Literature Theory and Practice* (66). Such parallel studies bring to light the merits of individual literary works.

Buck, though born an American was brought up in China and even after her return to America in 1934, continued to appreciate the Chinese life and culture. She consciously felt the difference between the two cultures. On the other hand, Markandaya, now an expatriate, writes about the Indian culture and the problems related to the rural peasant encountering industrialization. The problems of racial difference are also handled by these two writers. Besides these cultural and racial issues, we have the socio-economic problems based on the move from village to city, which interests both these novelists. Buck and Markandaya reveal the desire to write about people. As women writers, they are able to present their women characters as identifying themselves with the suffering mankind. Again they reveal the desire to write about people and the need for developing a universal fellow feeling. Both these women writers are pioneers in their respective fields and therefore it is interesting to argue the relevance of comparing the works of the two writers from a multicultural perspective.

A very interesting and thought provoking aspect of Pearl S Buck and Kamala Markandaya is their transcultural experiences. Pearl is one of the few
people who had the rare experience of living in both countries, China and America. Kamala also has had a similar experience though not as far-reaching as Buck. But this transculturalism has made them understand crosscultural reactions better. In fact they believed that such a cultural synthesis as revealed in their writings is possible. Buck firmly believed that both worlds, East and West, could combine and she loved both. Markandaya makes it clear that such a compromise is possible where there is mutual understanding and respect. Markandaya who set sail for England at the age of twenty-four to pursue her journalistic career, is married to an Englishman John Taylor. Now settled in London with her husband and daughter, she makes occasional trips to India and writes from her expatriate situation. Buck also talks about her two marriages in her autobiography. Both the cultures to which she belonged were patriarchal and divorce was a very rare thing. Yet she could not continue her marriage to John Lossing Buck and when Richard Walsh proposed to her, she decided to think in favour of divorce. The surprising element is that she married Walsh the very afternoon of getting her divorce from Lossing Buck. Women writers like Buck and Markandaya with their ‘mixed sensibility’ and ‘bifocal’ vision have embarked on creating a veritable network of social and cultural structures. It is this that invites a comparison between the two writers.

Peter Conn feels that Buck’s works could be connected to some of the prevailing concerns of American Literature in the 1930’s and 1940’s. The Good
Earth was a typical Depression novel, telling the story of suffering. Americans received it with enthusiasm as they needed a readable diversion and also establish an affinity with people undergoing similar hardships. By writing this she tried to change “American Literary culture” encouraged by what maybe called a multicultural perspective. “She was a pioneer in advocating the value and the necessity for Americans in studying the literary work of other societies” (Conn. “Pearl S. Buck and American Literary Culture” 111).

Markandaya has written ten novels to date. Her early novels are purely Indian in setting, characters and subject matter as Buck’s early ones are truly Chinese. Gradually there’s a move towards the West in both these novelists. Markandaya’s Possession shows the author’s leanings to the West. This is continued in The Coffer Dams and The Nowhere Man where the novel is set in England. The relationship of the East and the West is for far from being friendly in these novels. By the time of her last novel Pleasure City, published to date, she moves back to India and the relationship between India and Britain is presented on a cordial note.

Even while writing on American subjects, Buck showed an inclination for her Chinese subjects. After the winning of the Nobel Prize, Buck moved on to write about America and Americans. This Proud Heart was the first all American novel and she continued to present themes on the conflict of the two cultures. She even chose to write under the pseudonym “John Sedges a simple
one, and masculine because men have fewer handicaps on our society than women have, in writing as well as in other professions (American Triptych vi). But still she revealed her affinity for China and the Chinese. Pavilion of Women is a novel written during this phase, on Chinese life and is one of her best works.

According to Uma Parameswaran “expatriates always set their early novels in the land of their birth” (Kamala Markandaya 38). This is because they cannot escape the pulls and inhibitions of a parent heritage. They write about what they are familiar with. Gradually this heritage is influenced by their expatriate status and they move towards the country which is now their home. This immigrant status frees the writer from the hold of the home country. Markandaya shows a definite expatriate sensibility of this kind. Buck though not an expatriate in the strict sense of the term, has a similar experience and reveals the same inclinations.

Kamala Markandaya born and brought up in South India, belongs to an affluent and aristocratic family of Mysore. She attended Madras University and has worked as a journalist in India and in England. She lived for a time in a village in South India. Though now married to an Englishman John Taylor and settled in England, her exposure to India in her early years has brought her into contact with Indian life in all its facets. She had an opportunity to observe the culture and the customs which provided her with raw material for her novels.
She writes about the conflict between tradition and modernity, the rural and the urban and between the East and the West. Her themes transcend time, race and culture as she herself has become the product of inter-cultural forces.

One of the prominent writers of the post-independence era, Markandaya, explores the different facets of Indian society. As a commonwealth writer, she is conscious of her native culture and at the same time aware of her acquired culture. Being an expatriate she is very much concerned with these cultural conflicts. Her native sensibility makes her write about the conflicts and concerns of contemporary Indian society. Human experiences are explored from this background of dual cultural values.

Indian society as we find it today is the result of several decades of cultural interaction. By presenting the problems faced by the people in the wake of industrialization, hunger, suffering, migration from village to city, Markandaya reveals her humane concern. It is as she herself has said at a seminar in Socio-literature at the East-West center for Cultural Interchange, Honolulu, in August 1973 that hers is the ‘literature of concern’. Through her writings she intended the betterment of human beings by remedying social ills. With this in mind she presents, the social, political, economic and even on rare occasions the religious, aspects of Indian life. Poverty and superstition are also highlighted.
Indian culture is deep rooted in tradition as against the materialism of the West. The Western influence and the gaining of Independence created a new set of social hierarchies which disturbed the ancient system based on tradition and continuity. Markandaya presents these problems realistically but offers no solutions for the same. Buck, on the other hand gives a tangible solution to every social problem that she presents in her novels.

As the Indian society changed from its traditional set up, the sensibility of women also was awakened. P. Geetha in her essay “Feminism in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya” says that the “woman-subject” has a significant place in her novels (Indian Woman Novelists II 110). She writes about the Indian woman, their thoughts and feelings in the changing social standards. This changing view of women is focussed with an eye to create awareness rather than with a propagandist motive. Basically she remains an Indian without any desire to westernize her women. She desires that equality should manifest itself in equal opportunities for both men and women. Buck also believed in this concept of equal opportunities.

In the Biography column of Wilson Library Bulletin, Ruth Montgomery says that “Kamala Markandaya describes herself as Hindu- Brahmin in religion, and ‘anti- colonialist, anti- imperialist’ in politics” (296). This reveals her ideology and her inclination. In fact this is a pointer to her approach to fiction. She remains impartial and unprejudiced, observing life around. Perhaps this is
because she has a prophetic vision feels Uma Parameswaran: “Kamala Markandaya was a step ahead” in her ideology. *In Two Virgins* she spearheaded “the feminist revolution about celebrating the body;” similarly in writing *Pleasure City*, “she has been ahead of her time about the dangers of the mushrooming tourism that has invaded little places” (*Kamala Markandaya* 244)

Pearl S Buck the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature is widely appreciated for her novels, about the rural life in China, the conflict of tradition and innovation and cultural confrontations. Her themes were mainly about Asian women and the Asian way of life. This is because, though born an American, she was taken to China as an infant where she was shaped by the values of the late imperial China. As a young girl she had a great obsession for stories as she remarks, “and above all I loved to hear stories about people” (*My Several Worlds* 75). At the age of eighteen she joined Randolph-Macon Woman’s College in Lynchburg, Virginia where she was an awkward, unfashionably attired outsider. It was here that she became aware of her ‘two worlds’ and encouraged by this multi-cultural perspective, she tried to promote cross-cultural understanding between Asia and the United States. Through her novels, she reveals to the world the Chinese culture, customs and human relationships.
Pearl S Buck’s literary career extends beyond her eighty works which include fiction, essays and non-fictional works. The success of Buck as a writer is probably because she possessed a childhood characteristic throughout her life namely, curiosity. Her involvement with life and world affairs provided her with material for her writings. Pearl’s childhood was filled with a sense of alienation. In China she was treated as a foreigner and she felt disoriented. Later when she came to America she felt the similar sense of being displaced and hence abandoned. But from this position she learned to observe people and learned to love them irrespective of gender and race. Her bicultural education and the fact that she was bilingual helped her tremendously. She says she was “mentally bifocal” (*My Several Worlds* 56).

Though the daughter of a missionary, Buck was anti missionary in life. In her speech ‘Is There a Case for Foreign Missions’ made at the award of the Pulitzer Prize in 1932, she attacked the evangelical quest to convert Chinese to Christianity. She did not approve of the orthodox religion preached by her father Absalom. Moreover he was a misogynist and her mother Carie whom she admired, suffered due to her father’s contempt for women. Her father believed in St. Paul’s doctrine “Wives, be subject to your husbands…For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.…” (*Ephesians* 5.22). She associated Saint Paul as “the source and symbol of sexual inequality.” (Conn *Pearl S Buck: A Cultural Biography* 20).
Pearl’s antagonism towards her father who regarded women as inferior took a new shape when she reached Randolph- Macon College. Here she had the opportunity for a better outlook on men and women and realised her own capabilities were not related to gender. Here starts her feminist outlook which had its beginnings in her childhood. Even as a child she regarded the Chinese custom of binding the feet as a barbaric custom symbolizing male supremacy. Moreover she had grown up in two cultures which had nothing in common except the subordination of women. From this background she began her egalitarian efforts effecting various reforms in law which facilitated her humanitarian attempts.

Pearl S Buck whose parents took her to China, revolted against orthodox institutionalized religion. Similarly, Kamala Markandaya’s anti-colonist and anti-imperialist attitude comes through in her writings. Through her Chinese tutor Mr. Kung, Buck was trained in Chinese history and she became aware of western imperialism and the resultant exploitation. Yet both these writers exhibit a rare amount of common sense and sound judgement. They try to provide a cross-cultural understanding between the East and the West. They also tried to redefine the idea of a woman’s place in modern society.

In her non-fictional work entitled *Of Men And Women*, Pearl S Buck laments in detail the waste in women’s gifts. She calls them “gunpowder
women” because they were ready to explode at any moment as they had the education and talent but lacked opportunity to use them. Hence it may “be suggested that Buck’s *Of Men and Women* anticipated Betty Friedan’s classic *The Feminine Mystique*” (Entremont 51) as Friedan also emphasised the same idea though unlike Pearl she expressed a certain empathy for women in the home. Buck worked tirelessly to bridge the gulf between man and man and man and woman. As part of her efforts in this direction she became interested in more than her home, her family and her career. “This opposition to racist hierarchies would become a major theme of Pearl’s writing through the rest of her American career.” (Conn *A Cultural Biography* 185).

As a novelist, Buck wrote with a purpose. She dealt with “the fundamental rhythms and emotions of life, their struggles, dreams and disappointments” (David D. Buck 36) Her representation of Asia especially the women was empathetically portrayed. In fact this let Toni Morrison say affectionately “she misled me...and made me feel that all writers wrote sympathetically, empathetically, honestly and forthrightly about other cultures” (Conn “Rediscovering Pearl” 2). Her representations of Asia and above all in her portraits of Asian women she was a pioneer. This made the Chinese American writer Maxine Hong Kingston salute Buck. By representing Chinese characters with “such empathy and compassion,” Kingston said “Buck was translating my parents to me and she was giving me our ancestry and our
habitation” (Conn “Rediscovering Pearl” 1). Pearl Buck was a woman of tremendous vitality and energy and she had an insatiable desire for self-expression. In her professional as well as personal life, she has refused to be forced into a category.

Pearl S. Buck has a few biographies to her credit. Moreover she has some inclination towards Indian Writing in English as such, which is evident from the fact that she has written a play based on R.K.Narayan’s The Guide. Kamala Markandaya has no biographical work as such. Buck has written My Several Worlds, an autobiography where she describes in detail her life in China, return to America and the various egalitarian works she undertook. As the title suggests, the book is about her two worlds and not about her personal life. In fact this book reveals Chinese life, culture and customs more than any of her novels. The humanitarian values that she imbibed is the result of a direct influence of the Oriental love, concern and tolerance for others, she appreciated the ‘joint family’ set up of China where no member felt isolated or lonely even if he/she were an orphan. Lin Yu- Tang in his book My Country and My People praises the joint family system practiced in China as every family takes care of its unemployed. He feels it is “even better than charity because it teaches in the less lucky members a sense of independence” (178) This again is similar to the joint family system of India which Markandaya presents in A Handful of Rice.
Carol, Buck’s daughter, who was mentally retarded was a great sorrow to her. The realisation that Carol was mentally deficient came rather late and there was nothing she could do. Moreover due to health problems, Buck had to undergo a hysterectomy after the birth of Carol. The only child she had was retarded and it was the seven adopted children that gave her the happiness of being a mother. She has written the story of Carol in the book *The Child Who Never Grew Up*.

The best of Buck’s writing is in her two biographies *The Exile* and *The Fighting Angel*. The Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy and Chairman of the Nobel Committee on Literature said:

...above all, the admirable biographies of her parents, the missionary pair in China, two volumes which seemed to deserve classic rank and to possess the required prospects for permanent interest. In addition her novels of Chinese peasant life have properly made a place for themselves by virtue of the authority, wealth of detail and rare insight with which they describe a region that is little known and rarely accessible to Western readers. But as literary works of art the two biographies remain incomparable with anything else in Pearl Buck’s earlier or later production (Stirling 191).
The Exile and The Fighting Angel are the two biographies of Buck’s parents under the combined title The Spirit and the Flesh. The Exile, a biography of Pearl’s mother was the very first book written by her, though published much later as her seventh book. This book a tribute to her mother Caroline, who died in October 1921, is a word portrait as Buck herself describes it, drawn from her exact memory, for her children who have never seen their grandmother. On returning to Nanking she says “I was filled with the need to keep my mother alive, and so I began to write about her” (My Several Words 183). This book was widely acknowledged.

As a biography The Exile is flowery and sentimental at times. Buck was very much attached to her mother and so her style tends to become tender and emotional. Moreover there is a tendency to digress as well as to be repetitive which maybe a methodical device to bring out her feelings realistically. All in all it is a fine biography, creating a wonderful portrait through the deft use of language. Buck’s biography of her mother is an excellent portrait of a woman who was “sceptic by nature, yet mystic too, lover of beauty and dreamer of the unknown”(The Exile 206).

In her later years, she regretted having treated her father so badly in The Exile and wrote The Fighting Angel, a biography of her father. It was the portrait of the missionary who came to China believing it was his duty to save souls. In addition, she gives a vivid description of the missionary world. The Fighting Angel comparatively is more simple in style, but could by all standards
be declared an even better portrait than The Exile. Buck did not really approve of her father and it was only later when he lived with her in his old age that she began to love him. In writing this biography she has used the technique of mixing her earlier memories of her father with the later picture she drew of him. Through this mode of narration the portrait is more focussed and the reader gets a thorough picture of the personality. Buck herself says in My Several Worlds that it is more taxing to make a biography successful than fiction because you are dealing with facts. Yet her ability as a writer has made her biographies a greater success than her novels. She has paid a grand tribute to her parents.

Pearl S Buck though a prolific writer with more than eighty articles to her credit, has very little critical material on her works. This is because she has not been getting the attention she deserves. The almost journalistic profusion with which she turned out her works could in itself be the reason for this. However the few works that have been published do support her as a great literary artist.

One of the earliest books on Pearl S Buck by Paul Doyle is a study of the strength and limitations of Buck as a writer. He makes a survey of Buck’s short stories as he feels they were significant in her Nobel Prize status. Paul evaluates her short stories as amusing to an unsophisticated audience but they do not reach higher levels of artistic purpose and meaning.
Theodore F. Harris has given a biography of Pearl S. Buck in two volumes. He delineates Buck’s life from birth through the various turmoils, victories, and humanitarian achievements culminating in her old age and death. Nora Stirling speaks of Buck as a woman in conflict. She presents Buck from the diverse point of view as belonging to two cultures, beyond all institutionalized religion and harbouring a universal concept of motherhood.

*The Several Worlds of Pearl S Buck* is a collection of essays presented at a Centennial Symposium at Randolph-Macon College, Buck’s Alma Mater. These essays are on the several subjects dealt with by the author such as women, literature, history of China and the United States. Margret Parton reviews Buck’s *My Several Worlds* as a perfect synthesis of her two worlds. She writes about China and America from her forty years of life in China and the rest in America.

The more recent book by Peter Conn interprets Buck as a cultural biographer. He sets out to reconstruct Buck’s life and significance, and to restore this remarkable woman to visibility. He also presents her as a social reformer. Malcolm Cowley feels that Buck’s popularity began without the help of critics. E.H.A Carson, gives a provocative and balanced account of Pearl Buck’s career upto 1939. Lee Henry reports on the wartime activities of Pearl
Buck, with emphasis on some of her various humanitarian endeavours. Carl Doren Van praises the style and richness of *The Good Earth*.

S. J. Woolf's essay "Pearl Buck Talks of Her Life in China" is valuable in establishing, the style and the influences on Pearl Buck's writing. She was mainly influenced by the King James version of the Bible and the old Chinese sagas. Phyllis Bentley analyses the art of Pearl S. Buck taking into account the scenes, characters, themes and technique. Ami Henchoz analyses Buck's use of conflict and contrast to develop the themes of pain and sacrifice of the innocent victims. Robert Van Gelder gives a brief but informative revelation of some of Mrs. Buck's writing habits.

One of the earliest essays on Kamala Markandaya by Joan F. Adkins presents the Indo-British conflict as unity. She delineates this conflict as it appears in society at different levels. But the artistic or stylistic techniques are not touched upon by the essayist. The social and cultural life of India as presented by Kamala Markandaya is what R. S. Singh is concerned with. He also highlights the conflict between the Indian way of life and the Western. S. C. Harrex feels that there is a definite purpose in her writings. While dealing with the predicaments of the characters, the novelist emphasizes the conflict of tradition and modernity of East and West. O. P. Saxana is concerned with the depiction of the Indo-British conflict in Markandaya's novels. Rekha Jha
portrays the East-West encounter which is always an unsolved issue. However she feels that Kamala Markandaya has been able to successfully convey her themes.

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar in his book gives a critical commentary of Kamala Markandaya and her novels. He evaluates the merits and the thematic patterns while stressing the artistic quality of the work. In keeping with his style of writing K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar is rather subdued in tone while maintaining a clear-sighted picture. Margaret P. Joseph gives great credit to Kamala Markandaya as a distinguished literary artist. She gives a remarkable picture of the characters, themes and techniques in her novels. She felt that Kamala Markandaya was an artist with a vision to improve the lot of mankind.

H. M. Williams feels that Kamala Markandaya deals with the turmoil and tensions of life in the modern, progressive world. Madhusudan Prasad critically evaluates each and everyone of Kamala Markandya’s novels to show her enormous growth and maturity as a writer. He classifies her with the novelists of international acclaim in her handling of themes though he feels that she lacks depth at times. William Walsh like Harrex admires the novels for its wide range of themes.

Hari Mohan Prasad says that Kamala Markandaya’s achievement is in her live sensibility and effortless art. He feels that her language is her strong
forte. It is intact and at the same time flexible enough to contain the essential feelings. On the other hand Ramesh K. Srivastava feels that Kamala Markandaya’s language is jarring at times. Yet he says she has a perfect command of the language which makes her style rich. Shanta Krishnaswamy makes a study of the women characters and feels they are universal in their delineation while Usha Pathania emphasises the human relationships. P. Geetha stresses the role of the women-subjects in the novels. The impact of modern everyday problems on individuals and society as a whole is exposed by the author.

Uma Parameswaran introduces Kamala Markandaya to the western reader by her description of the themes, language and characters. In her latest book she studies every novel in detail while implying the greatness of Kamala Markandaya as a novelist on the international arena. B.K. Das makes a thematic analysis of Kamala Markandaya’s novels concluding that she presents a variegated picture of Indian life. Her creativity gives these themes of urban and Indian life a uniqueness ending her novels with a sense of well being.

“Kamala Markandaya: Sense and Sensibility” by P. S. Chauhan deals with cultural confrontations in her novels. The conflict of the East and West becomes the major theme of her novels and unlike other Indo-Anglian writers she does not give a romantic colouring to her writings. Shyam M. Asnani too feels that Kamala Markandaya’s preoccupation is with the clash of the East and
the West, Indian and the British. Harish Raizada feels that Markandaya's mixed sensibility enables her to take an unbiased stand with relation to racial issues. The proximity of two cultures helps her to view these contrasting cultures with serenity. As observed by Salman Rushdie "our identity is at once plural and partial, we straddle two cultures" (Imaginary Homelands 1). This bifocal vision is characteristic of the diasporic imagination.

In his essay "An Anatomy of Silence", N. Ramachandran Nair says that Markandaya presents Indian life in the context of Western progress. P. P. Mehta describes Markandaya as a master of plot construction. The novels reveal a purpose and the plot is driven to achieve this end. The various narrative techniques of Markandaya are dealt with by critics like S. Z. H. Abidi and V. B. Gulati.

This critical survey clearly shows that much has been written on these two writers. These individual works deal with the theme, structure and imagery present in their works. But no work has so far been published as a comparative study of the two authors. H. H. Remak, the American comparatist says:

Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the (fine) arts, philosophy, history.
the social sciences, the sciences, religion, etc... on the other. In brief it is the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression” (qtd in *The Study of Comparative Literature* 1).

Dr. S.S. Prawar feels that comparison should deal with more than one national culture and is a tool with which one can study more than one literature. This thesis is an attempt to examine the themes, techniques and characters in the novels of Buck and Markandaya, writers of two different national cultures. For this purpose all the ten novels of Kamala Markandaya and fourteen representative novels of Pearl S Buck are selected concentrating on the themes, techniques and characters and their cultural impact. Buck’s novels are chosen from her forty odd works because they directly deal with the issues examined.

Buck returned to America first to continue her education in Randolph-Macon Women’s College and then to settle there permanently in 1934. As she herself has said she belongs to the Asiatic scene as much as to the West “she belonged as much to the one as to the other” (*My Several Worlds* 57). Markandaya on the other hand, though an Indian by birth and existence, lacks the tolerance that is expected from an Orientalist. It is only in her later novels that she shows a tendency to be sympathetic of the Western civilisation. So while Buck serves as an intermediary of the two cultures, Markandaya seems to
treat the situation as one of conflict and adjustment with a touch of understanding and love.

In An Introduction to the Study of Comparative Literature Theory and Practice, the discipline of comparison is explained from the Indian context as “a study in terms of comparisons and contrasts of similarities and dissimilarities of literatures and cultures and countries more than one in order to contribute to the mutual appreciation of literary experiences of various people” (8). Essentially both Kamala Markandaya and Pearl S. Buck are bilingual and belong to multicultural societies. They favour the Oriental to the Occidental. So from a cultural, national and literary point of view this comparison would be a rewarding experience.

Gender was a crucial parameter in the cultural confrontations which these two writers deal with in their works. They focussed on the unequal relations of power between men and women as a result of which women were positioned at a subordinate level. Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn feel that the question of gender holds two related aspects. First is that the inequality of the sexes is neither a biological given nor a divine mandate, but a cultural construct and therefore a proper subject of study for any humanistic discipline. The second is that a male perspective, assumed to be “universal” has dominated fields of knowledge, shaping their paradigms and methods (Making A
Difference 1-2). As women writers dealing with the Oriental woman they are able to present their women characters as identifying themselves with the suffering mankind. This ability for caring and for developing a universal fellow-feeling is characteristic of the oriental woman.

The novels of these writers often challenge patriarchy which inhibit the concepts of womanhood. Traditional practices of polygamy, concubionage and dowry system which subjugate women is a matter of concern for Buck and Markandaya. They also deal with the trials faced by women in urban environments as in Some Inner Fury and This Proud Heart. Motherhood is glorified and upheld as a generative force. Though ancient forms of victimization such as child-marriage and sati are on their way out "the air of 'freedom' which touches the women is like the kite though flying yet, being stringed into the manipulative and manoeuvring hands of their men" (Indu Prakash Singh 8)

Markandaya's novels reveal that she too believes in the greatness of being a woman. Though she learns to live with tradition and modernity, she remains Indian in sensibility. Mira, Rukmani, Mohini and Lalitha are some of the 'liberated' women created by Markandaya in this sense of the term. Pearl has created Jane Earl, a physicist to provide a feminist perspective as she felt there was widespread discrimination among male scientists. Feminine qualities
are considered to be a source of personal strength and there is no need for the woman to imitate the man or consider herself to be inferior. Buck had definite points to prove the greatness of women but no one would pay heed to what she said because that was the way tradition held women.

Another common element in the writings of these two writers is confrontation of the East and the West. In her autobiography Pearl S Buck says that she was reared in two cultures and hence she observes the world from two perspectives, the American world of her parents and the exotic culture of China where she grew up. This has made her an inside-outsider in depicting the Oriental culture and an outside-insider in portraying the Occident or rather her own American culture. Kamala Markandaya writes about the India where she was born and brought up and Britain where she is now settled. The influence of the British rule and the struggle for independence is portrayed in her novels. So she becomes an inside-outsider to the western audience and an outside-insider to the Indian reader.

Both these writers claim to be anti-colonist and anti-imperialist. Buck has even supported India’s struggle for independence. She attacked Britain for her colonial rule declaring that the suffering and poverty in India was a result of this. She was a great admirer of Jawaharlal Nehru. The experience of the clash of cultures has deepened their understanding and sympathy for fellow human
beings. They are capable of projecting the tensions and joys of two different peoples successfully. Like Buck, Markandaya too has travelled extensively in India and Europe before she settled in London. So she too has developed a "mixed sensibility" which like in the case of Buck helped her to recognise the differences and the similarities of the two cultures.

The East–west conflict is presented at various levels. At the political level we have the Government officials. Markandaya in *Some Inner Fury* presents this in the form of the District Magistrate Kit, who with his love for the empire fits the job perfectly. The British officials Sir Arthur Copeland the political agent, the English tutor and the Viceroy in *The Golden Honeycomb* are also of this category. In Buck’s *Imperial Woman*, the officials are authoritative and selfish. At the social level we have Kenny the doctor, in *Nectar in a Sieve*, and Mrs. Bridie the genial missionary who educates Rikki in *Pleasure City*. In *East Wind: West Wind* Mrs. Liu who is a teacher in a foreign school, helps to modernize Kwei- lan according to her husband’s desire.

The industrialist and his workers are found in abundance in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. They stand for the technological advancement of the country *The Coffer Dams, Pleasure City* are good instances of this. Buck’s *Mandala* has a few western industrialists who help with the hotel project. The missionaries represented by both these writers stand for the human level of the
encounter. The nobility are portrayed by the Maharajah, the Maharani, the Empress, Jagat, Moti, Madame Wu, Madame Ezra and others. They represent the encounter at the cultural and artistic level.

“Like the British in India, though on a smaller and shallower scale, Americans in China formed a Raj” (Hayford 19). Buck was trying to interpret China and Asia to her American people and create a bridge of understanding between the two nations. The Western educated Chinese doctor in *East Wind: West Wind* and Jagat’s son in *Mandala* have a new outlook to life like Markandaya’s Kitswamy in *Some Inner Fury*, Dandekar in *A Silence of Desire* and Anasuya in *Possession* with their new sense of nationalism and socialism.

The conflict of cultures creates a byproduct-rootlessness, which is seen in the novels of these writers. Srinivas, Ravi, Rennie, Yuan are some of the characters who suffer this dilemma. In Markandaya’s novels if it is the Indian suffering from a loss of identity, in Buck it is the sense of loss rising out of intercultural and interracial marriages. Markandaya clearly traces the roots of her characters in the society to which they belong. Buck tries to give roots to those who have been uprooted. Both of them believe in the fact that one dies if one’s roots are severed.

Religious encounter is another common theme of these writers. Their characters uphold the tradition of universal love and respect for all life. Buck
and Markandaya exhibit a strong Oriental strain in their philosophies, being strongly embedded in Confucianism and Indian philosophies of tolerance and love respectively. It is therefore a relief to see evil being counteracted by love and humaneness. It is again a reflection of the Oriental view that life is always full of hope rather than the western nihilistic view which drives one to desperation. They are not fatalists with a deterministic outlook.

The novels of Buck reveal the principles of tolerance and mutual understanding which has saved man from destruction. This is because though born a Christian, she went outside of her religion to embrace Buddhism and Confucianism which gave her the spirit of inclusiveness and humanistic concerns. Markandaya born and brought up in Hinduism, has imbibed the tradition of universal love and life. Through her characters she seems to be defending her ideology, both these writers rise above the practice of orthodox institutional religion. Superstitions too find their way into their novels.

This deep rooted religious conviction in the broad sense of the term has given these writers an affirmative vision of universal brotherhood. In this respect the human relationships presented in their novels have a great significance. It stands high above religious conflicts and is characterised by humanism and tolerance. Human relationship is the basis of any society. And the basic unit of this is the family. Buck and Markandaya show a deep rooted connection with families in the novels. *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice*
are struggles by the lower middle class to keep their families together. *The Earth Trilogy* similarly deals with the fortunes of one house through three generations. This concern for human beings and relationships has led them to present their characters in the most endearing manner.

Buck and Markandaya mention missionary work in their writings. It is interesting to note that both of them were not supporters of this type of humanistic work. Pearl had her own personal reasons for her antagonism. Kamala regards it to be in conflict with the spirit of Nationalism. These two authors also reveal a tendency to repeat their themes and humour is lacking in their novels.

Thus there seems to be close resemblances in thematic concerns and narrative strategies between these two women writers from two different continents. It is true that literature is conditioned by its geographic locale, socio-economic, political and cultural forces as well as by the writer's personality. So a comparative study of these two writers highlighting their converging and contrasting ideas will be a possible and profitable literary exercise.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. After giving a review of criticism on the authors under discussion and explaining the critical approaches in the introductory chapter, the next chapter concentrates on the thematic clusters in the works of the two writers. K. Chellappan in his article "Thematology in
Comparative Indian Literature: Matter and Method” quotes Harry Levin: “...a writer’s choice of subject is an aesthetic decision, that the conceptual outlook is a determining part of the structural pattern, the message is somehow inherent in the medium” (Aspects of Comparative Literature 112). A thematological analysis will not be complete without reference to characters. Themes are concretized through characters whereas motifs are derived from situations (Study of Comparative Literature 59). The third chapter discusses themes in terms of literary characterisation following Harry Levin’s approach. A comparative study of themes and characters enables one to understand the writer, his/her choice of material and its treatment in their works. Thematic study must not be divorced from study of literary style, as per Prawer’s approach. The modern criticism associates theme in terms of subject matter to both form and content. Chapter four, Literary Artefacts analyses the narrative technique and style. The concluding chapter sums up the arguments without forgetting K. Chellappan’s comment: “the job of the comparatist is not simply to reduce all... literature to a few symbols and situations but to see how they change during the various realizations with different meanings” (113). Further this cross-cultural comparison leaves the problem of evaluation behind and concentrates on “knowledge about the potentialities and effects of literature” (Fokkema, “Towards a Methodology in Intercultural Studies” 129).