CHAPTER IV

LITERARY ARTEFACTS

A good novel is an artistic imitation of reality that is somehow more "real" and less visibly formal than poetry and drama (Fogle 338). It is the artistic way of transmitting the novelist's vision. The novelist creates mirror images of respective societies developing typical novelistic techniques. In this context, Jasbir Jain's observation, "All narratives need not have a strategy, but most narratives do have one" (Between Spaces of Silence 30) is a significant comment. She further explains it: "Strategy is a move in a game, and the objectives are not available at the surface level of the narrative. It occupies a space between language and plot and between plot and character (30)." The creative instinct is the most vital element of a novelist. He should only concern himself with creating and not in defining art. The moment a novelist begins to think in terms of style and technique his writing becomes meaningless. So a novelist should only deal with human life, his own experiences and those of others. Meir Sternberg also comments on the technique: "The difference between content or experience, and achieved content or art, is technique" (The Theory of the Novel 67). Even though Buck like Markandaya does not use any innovative narrative technique, the respective themes presented and the typical character
types they delineate, - in other words, the thematic content, in itself constitute their technique.

Pearl Buck followed the tradition of the Chinese novel where the author remains uppermost without being obvious. She does not believe in any one particular form of story as being better than the rest. Moreover as a child her tutor Mr. Kung who belonged to the Confucian school objected to novels as it dealt with frivolous themes and enticed men away from deeper interests. Her parents who were very religious, felt that novels were not essential for the development of the individual. Though this lessened her enthusiasm, she was a born story-teller and who succeeded in writing good novels (Doyle 95).

In her address to the Swedish Academy on winning the Nobel Prize, she said “The novel in China was never an art and was never so considered, nor did any Chinese novelist think of himself as an artist...For the novel in China was the peculiar product of the common people...In such a school was I trained” (Harris I, 218-220).

Thus the novel in China had humble origins and was written in the vernacular about myths and legends. Unlike in the West, the novel was not more important than the novelist. *Shui Hu Chuan* was one of the greatest Chinese novels of the time. It depicts one hundred and eight characters as the Chinese demanded characters in their novels above everything else. Buck has translated this novel into English under the title *All Men Are Brothers*. 
Often the authors of these early novels were unknown and they were not in keeping with the tradition of the Western novel. The earliest novels were characterized by folklore and were lengthy with a large number of characters and incidents. Probably this has influenced Buck. Writing from this background, we find her novels to be full of events and characters. In her Alumnae Address at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College in June, 1933 she declared her love for writing and her dislike for rules as it imposes a rigidity.

Buck says:

... a good novelist, or so I have been taught in China, should be above all else “tse ran”, that is natural, unaffected and so flexible and variable as to be wholly at the command of the material that flows through him... The Chinese novelists varied their writing to accompany like music their chosen themes (Harris I, 226)

This is evident from the variety of themes she handles. Again the Chinese novel does not give any importance to style because “when the style of a novelist becomes fixed, that style becomes his prison” (Harris I, 236) Buck felt that the writer who is interested in form cannot be creative and inventive.

The Chinese novel was not a form of art because stories were incomplete and heroes and heroines not models to imitate. In fact sometimes the story “merely stops, in the way life does, in the middle of it when death is not
expected." (Harris I, 236). Buck says that it was in this tradition of the novel that she was born and reared as a writer.

The test of a good novelist for Buck is his ability to present reality and not the effect of his techniques. His characters should be alive to the reader so as to identify himself with the characters and situations. The real test for a novelist is in writing for the common folk rather than think of "pure literature as his goal". Instead he should entice people by his stories, "to farmers he must talk of their land, and to old men he must speak of peace, and to old women he must tell of their children and to young men and women he must speak of each other" (Harris I, 238).

In her Nobel Prize speech, she speaks of the underlying philosophy of her writings. Action and character portrayal was more significant than technique. According to Paul Doyle, Buck describes style on the same lines as Virginia Woolf. Good style consists of the use of "the far side of language" and Buck felt that the simplest words bring out the best in meaning and emotion (96). It is in keeping with the tradition of the Chinese novel that she closely adheres to the principles of storytelling while forgoing style and technique. Moreover, even as a child, Buck showed a great liking for stories. Her Chinese nurse narrated Buddhist and Taoist stories which were very fascinating. Added to this were the adventurous stories narrated by her father. So as pointed out by Phyllis Bentley,
Buck regards herself as a true novelist, as a pure literary artist and her works are to be estimated as works of art.

"I am, I regret to say", said Pearl Buck in a lecture at the Columbia School of Journalism "one of those unfortunate creatures who cannot function completely unless he is writing, has written or is about to write a novel...I cannot be happy without writing novels, quite irrespective of whether they are read or not" (Bentley 791).

Pearl remarks that the style of the Chinese saga:

...was one which flowed easily along, clearly and simply, in the short words which they themselves used everyday, with no other technique than occasional bits of description, only enough to give vividness to a place or a person, and never enough to delay the story (The Chinese Novel 124).

Hence there was no lapse of time between incidents.

Kamala Markandaya is a novelist of spectacular success enjoying immense popularity. As a novelist her "greater interest lies in story and social comment than in psychological characterization, complex technique or a profound vision of life" (Abidi 40). Her novels which are mainly sociological in function have well developed plots which "is unfolded step by step and there..."
is rapid denouement after the climax” (Uma Paramesaran Representative Indo-English Novelists 91) A good story-teller, her narratives are straightforward and continuous, dismissing effectively the lapse of time between one action and another. In this context it is interesting to note that both Buck and Markandaya are good story-tellers who resort to plain narration, rather than experimenting with innovative and complicated techniques. K. R. S Iyengar’s observation that “Women are natural story-tellers” (Indian Writing in English 435) is very relevant about these two writers. Even as story-tellers, they remain traditionalists.

“The control the novelist exercises on his readers depends ultimately on the stance, the point of view, the distance from the action, that the novelist adopts…” (Walter Allen 329). The relationship of the narrator to the story is revealed through the several narrative possibilities depending on the manner in which the narrator reveals his words, thoughts and actions. This channelling of thoughts gives the reader information about mental states, setting, situation and character.

In the novels of Pearl S Buck and Kamala Markandaya, we have mostly women narrators and the story unfolds from the feminine consciousness. Buck’s novels East Wind: West Wind and Letter From Peking and Markandaya’s Nectar in a Sieve and Some Inner Fury make use of first person narration. The story of Buck’s first novel East West: West Wind is narrated by Kwie-ian, the
protagonist. It is in the form of an epistle written to a friend. This woman is aware of the customs of the East and the West. Kwei-lan is so distressed by the attitude of her progressive husband that she needs to speak out to someone who is willing to listen. Again when her brother decides to marry an American girl, it is to this friend that she once again narrates her agonies. It is a delicate and self-conscious presentation where Kwei-lan narrates her story romantically using exotic language. The second story is narrated in a more serious and moralistic vein. The language is flowery and forced at times so that the style seems artificial. As a monologue by a Chinese woman it is fairly long and:

...the framework of having Kwei-lan write the details of the story to the foreign lady who has lived in China becomes increasingly artificial, forced and wearisome as the narrative progresses (Doyle 33).

Nevertheless the novel gives descriptions about clothing, furniture, rituals etc. These descriptions give the novel its Chinese background and colouring by portraying effectively the picture of a Chinese aristocratic family. Through this documentary approach, Buck is able to convey the difference in the customs between China and the West as Kamala Markandaya does about India and the West in Some Inner Fury. The situation is presented realistically by giving an authentic colouring to the scene and the setting. The narrative is presented entirely from Kwei-Lan’s point of view and so the West is presented as being
strange and exotic. The customs of the West like serving the lady before the man, dressing babies in white which for the Chinese is the colour of mourning, talking directly to the woman, seem strange to Kwei-lan. But in her Buck presents a woman who is accommodative and therefore accepts the best from the West.

_East Wind: West Wind_, by Buck reveals her fundamental narrative sense. The locale and setting are authentically portrayed. She manages to convey effectively the idea that the book “celebrates tolerance and a version of cultural pluralism” (Conn _A Cultural Biography_ 85) an idea that Buck tried to promote throughout her life.

_Letter from Peking_ is a novel where Buck resorts to first person narration. This mode of narration can have an autobiographical air about it. Anyway she has successfully presented emotions and an intelligence that reached beyond racial borders. The warmth and love that emanates from Elizabeth for Gerald is carried to the heart of the reader through Buck’s skillful handling of language.

Elizabeth, the protagonist narrates her life. Just as Mira’s memory is triggered off by a torn piece of Richard’s shirt, Elizabeth’s past is brought to her by a letter from Gerald from whom she is estranged for political reasons. The yearning of a woman, wife and mother is convincingly conveyed by Buck. Like Mira, Elizabeth reminisces about her meeting with Gerald, the courtship,
marriage and the life in China. Now completely alone in America her homeland, she finds consolation in these occasional and rare letters from Gerald. Later on when she learns that he has taken a second wife, she writes to her, pouring out her heart.

Kamala Markandaya’s first novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, like Buck’s first novel is a first-person narrative. Like Kwei-lan in *East Wind: West Wind*, Rukmani narrates her story, reminiscing about her life, though of course the circumstances and emotions are entirely different. Rukmani, an elderly widow narrates her past nostalgically. Though a village woman she is comparatively better educated and so Markandaya makes her vocabulary suitable for a “semi-literate village woman” (Sunaina Kumar II, 54).

The protagonist being a woman, we have the female point of view presented in the novel. Rukmani’s reactions to situations and events are focussed upon. The female point of view of this novel captures emotional responses, familial situations and interpersonal relationships. She is a rural woman commenting on the debasing effects of industrialization on the rural folk. In fact one is left wondering whether it is the author’s point of view that is being filtered through Rukmani. The first person mode of narration helps the reader to identify with the narrator.
Markandaya’s second novel Some Inner Fury, also follows the same technique of first person narration. It has greater success in terms of artistic verisimilitude. Mira, the protagonist is a young lady inexperienced about life but has undergone a great emotional trauma. Nectar in a Sieve and Some inner Fury have a few common factors as far as the narrative is concerned. Both use the past tense and the protagonists are women and events are seen from a woman’s point of view.

Possession though not a first person narration, is a narrative by a woman who is a minor character, in fact an onlooker. Anasuya as an outside insider has very little participation in the action. The narrative is from the Indian point of view even though the main character is a British woman and most of the action takes place in England. The narrative is effective at first, but becomes fragmentary and episodic in the later part. Anasuya though not a central character, is a very important link in the novel. As a perfect combination of the East and the West, her point of view is significant.

In Markandaya’s Two Virgins the female point of view expressed through Saroja who narrates the experiences of Lalitha reduces the novel to one of mere reporting. Hence “the narration is linear—a progressive line with no depth” (Margaret 143). As the narrator merely tells us what happens to her sister the whole narrative lacks feeling or depth and the details are loose and incoherent.
Hence it lacks artistic integrity. Uma Parameswaran also feels that “the feminine language” is absent here.

*Pavilion of Women* is one of Buck’s more characteristic works. As the central character of the novel, the narrative is presented from Madame Wu’s point of view. A sophisticated, aristocratic lady, she has all the makings of a householder and her authoritative voice runs throughout the narrative, giving a dramatic touch.

*The Imperial Woman*, a historical romance is a novel born out of Buck’s admiration for the Empress Dowager who ruled China during the early years of Buck’s life. The omniscient narrator gives a very vivid picture of courtly life. Chinese culture and civilization is extolled to a great level. As Buck says “the strength of her [Chinese] superior civilization until now had conquered every invader” (*My Several World* 34). This is what she tries to present in the novel, and aptly she chooses the authoritative omniscient point of view.

Markandaya’s novel *The Golden Honeycomb* is closely related to *The Coffer Dams* in its technique. Technically she has proved herself as an excellent story-teller. It has a historical background like Buck’s *Imperial Woman* and she speaks of the various castes-Banias, Brahmins, Kshatriyas. The narrative is presented by the author as a story. As the story progresses we have dialogue dominating the narrative. The power the British had on the Indians is clearly
delineated by the novelist. The events narrated cover three generations of the royal family. Through these people Markandaya links the past, present and future. The scenes change frequently and Markandaya’s knowledge of history and the culture of her motherland is revealed. This technique of changing scenes makes the narrative interesting.

The *Golden Honeycomb* is divided into three parts delineating the trials and tribulations that the country went through during the colonial rule. In this novel, Markandaya has included a Prologue, an Epilogue, a Note and Acknowledgements. These appendages serve to explicate the political situation in the country and the ultimate declaration of freedom. The style of the novel reveals Markandaya’s cultural and educational background and her love for her motherland. She proves herself to be a natural artist by choosing a suitable structure for this historical novel.

In *The Coffer Dams*, Markandaya uses her narrative technique with variation. It is not a narrator giving us the story but the characters expressing their views. Margaret P. Joseph feels that incidents are “related with apparent objectivity, using a technique by which she looks through the eyes of different characters in turn” (134). As the omniscient narrator is absent, the characters come into greater focus. There is more of dialogue and the novelist at time resorts to documentation and forceful narration. Markandaya takes us into every
detail of the coffer dams as well as the relationship between the Indians and the 
British. The dam is the central image and metaphor in this dichotomy.

Pleasure City, Markandaya's last novel is closely related to The Coffer 
Dams in technique. It is a comparatively long novel and the narrative develops 
very fast. Markandaya's narration of the events is very spectacular and apt. The 
forces of imperialism which runs strong in the earlier novels is rather subdued 
here. The British and the Indians seem to be on equal grounds.

Markandaya's A Handful of Rice and A Silence of Desire are presented 
through the eyes of Ravi and Dandekar respectively. The male point of view is 
thus introduced and used effectively by the novelist. Ravi the protagonist of A 
Handful of Rice narrates the story as the events progress in his life. The 
narrative moves from the village to the city as Ravi migrates. Here he is faced 
with a new atmosphere and new luxuries which are unaffordable to him. 
Markandaya skilfully portrays the agonies of a common man who is unable to 
reconcile with urban life though he labours hard. She also conveys effectively 
the problems he faces at work.

In A Silence of Desire, Markandaya uses the third person narrative for 
the first time to tell the story of Dandekar and Sarojini. Like in Buck's A House 
Divided Markandaya also tries to look into the mind of Dandekar. The thoughts 
and views of Dandekar are narrated through the occasional comments and
descriptions. All the events are presented from the male point of view as Dandekar experiences it. He prevailed over Sarojini imposing his will on her. His expectations remain the same and he is happy that she is a willing obedient wife. His attitude to Sarojini was a disinterested mechanical one, least caring for her ideas and attitudes. The moments of togetherness was meant for a narration by Dandekar of the day’s doings, “he was not really interested in Sarojini’s day, and he was always grateful to her for keeping her account of it brief” (Silence 28). Markandaya has used a style which evokes sympathy and concern for the characters and what befalls them. She resorts to flashback and self-analysis in order to bring out the emotional content of the characters. This brief analysis of the points of view in the works of Kamala Markandaya and Pearl S Buck establish the fact that these writers are not conscious artists, but natural story tellers with a narrative stance to suit their themes, contents and characters

Memory is a literary device employed by the ethnic writer to re-create in poignancy and relevance, a past in the present. The dictionary of psychology defines memory “as the function involved in reliving past experiences”. The persistent knowledge of a past filtering into the present resolves into a creative dialogue. It is a relocating of space and time based on imagined realities. Lionel Trilling feels that the pastness in a work of art gives it better aesthetic quality (“The Sense of the Past” 368). In novels like A Nectar in a Sieve, Some Inner Fury, Letter From Peking, memory is not just an image recreated as a static
picture but serve as stories and narratives related to the past. It becomes the life force transforming experience into words palpitating with a new significance and vitality. In the ethnic writer it becomes a means of self-determination and identity in the multicultural society. "...the story begins when the narrator gets into the mood of recollection, and ends when the experience of a whole conscious life lead to a moment of decision to shake off her ambivalent attitude" (R.S. Singh 137).

Memory as technique is typical of women's writing. Rukmani an elderly woman makes a conscious effort to relive her past. The mood of the narrative which is one of gentle nostalgia is set in by the opening paragraph of the novel:

Sometimes at night I think that my husband is with me again, coming gently through the mists, and we are tranquil together. Then morning comes, the wavering grey turns to gold there is a stirring within me as the sleepers awake, and he softly departs (Nectar 7).

Rukmani’s recollections end on a similar note “the days went by, Nathan no longer beside me; no more. Ashes and dust, scattered to the winds, moistened by the rain, unrecognizable.”(188).

Mira, the young lady’s, memory is triggered off accidentally as she sees “the scrap of material torn from Richard’s sleeve” (Some 5). Gerald’s letter to
Elizabeth in Buck’s novel makes her think of her student days when she met Gerald and the subsequent marriage. This letter is a turning point because she “does not know how much the letter will change [my] life” (Letter 5). Here we find memory becoming an indispensable tool to forge out new meaning in the perpetual motion of the present.

Mira belongs to an aristocratic educated Brahmin family and so Markandaya makes the vocabulary and events suit this background. Markandaya has successfully presented the narrative from the Western as well as the Eastern point of view as Mira is very much influenced by the two.

Structurally like Kamala Markandaya, Buck’s stories take the epic rather than the dramatic form:

...that is to say, they are chronological narratives of a piece of life, seen from one point of view, straight forward, without devices; they have no complex plots, formed of many strands skillfully twisted, but belong to the single-strand type, with the family, however, rather than the individual as a unit” (Bentley 798).

The Good Earth, Nectar in A Sieve, The Nowhere Man are novels with a cyclic pattern where life takes a full turn to end where it began The Good Earth is set in a rural landscape similar to the one where Pearl and Lossing had spent the early years of their marriage. This novel is an epic, which covers the history
and life of a Chinese peasant family. It was her love for the country folk and their way of life that prompted her to write such a book. Buck recreates the theme of life's circular pattern. This can be seen in the seasons, the setting, and Wang Lung's transformation over time into the old man that his father was at the beginning of the novel. The circular or repetitive structure of the novel allows the reader to surmise the future of Wang Lung's family. All things that occur in the past will reappear in different forms in both the present and the future.

Markandaya narrates events through Rukmani in a chronological pattern in *Nectar in a Sieve*. The novel begins with Rukmani, the protagonist in a retrospective mood and closes with Rukmani at the end of her reminiscences. Natural calamities and innumerable tragedies course through her life. Seasons move at their regular pace and the cycle of life and death continues. The time-honoured pattern of circular journeys is followed and the novel ends with the return of the alienated protagonist. So the pattern of the novel and the life of Rukmani is circulatory. Hence structurally it has a circular pattern like Buck's *The Good Earth*. *The Nowhere Man* takes a full turn to depict the life of Srinivas. It begins with Dr. Radcliffe who examines him and ends with the same doctor pronouncing him dead. Unlike Rukmani, he does not return to the land of his origin.
Buck’s style, like Markandaya’s is most suitable to her character and the situations. Her prose style gives the impression that one is reading the language which is native to the characters. She never uses Chinese words in Italics nor gives explanations. The prose is “grave, quiet; biblical speech full of dignity, in which Mrs. Buck, without ever raising her voice”, is able to render both the deepest and the lightest emotions (Bentley 794). “Similarly Markandaya’s is not a translated language. She does not attempt to adapt the vernacular idiom or tone;... Yet she succeeds in bringing out the texture of the social classes by varying the degree of simplicity and articulation” (Uma Parameswaran “India For The Western Reader” 231).

Like Buck, Markandaya too makes use of straightforward narration with great effectiveness. Language is their strong forte and what Uma Parameswaran says of Markandaya that “the most prominent feature of her early writing is simple and effective language” (Representative Indo-English Novelists 54) is true of Buck also. The language is plain and direct, free from mythical or poetic restraints. Their characters are ordinary individuals rather than the heroic or immaculately virtuous.

The style of The Good Earth is its most attractive characteristic. In writing this novel in the manner of the “old Chinese narrative sagas” she revealed her deep-rootedness in the tradition of the Chinese novel. The prose style of Buck is based on the King James version of the Bible. Buck herself has
admitted “the combined influence of the old Chinese sagas and the King James version” (Doyle 40). The old-fashioned archaic expressions repetitive phrases and recursive images of time which is characteristic of the Old Testament became part of her stylistic form. Expressions like “his heart pained him with longing for that which was passed” (Good 136) is reminiscent of the suggestive grandeur of the simple, almost austere, phrasing of the King James Version of the Bible". (Pradyumma S. Chauhan 123).

The novel is highly descriptive. At the same time it is not excessive in detail, conveying only that which is needed to represent the scene. Many of the customs are described in picturesque detail so that the reader understands very well the marriage ceremony, funeral rituals, food patterns, agriculture etc... in a land so remote. Wang Lung’s eldest son’s marriage which was conducted in haste due to O-lan’s ill-health describes how a maid is prepared for marriage

...on the morning of the wedding day, they washed her clean from head to foot...Then they dressed her in...white flowered silk next her, sweet virgin flesh and then a light coat of sheep’s wool...then the red satin garments of marriage (Good 190).

This descriptive style suits the subject matter of the novel very well. The prose style is simple in keeping with the movement of the story which is slow but steady. It suits the “epic-like qualities of the narrative” (Doyle 41).
times Buck tends to be poetical in keeping with the Biblical style. Carl Van Doren comments on the style of the novel:

Fluent and flexible, it was simple in idiom and cadence, like a realistic pastoral or a humane saga... In *The Good Earth*...the style is regularly supported by the matter. The style gives an agreeable music to the convincing history (*The American Novel* 353).

Moreover through her deft handling of language, Buck is able to convey the best of emotions, whether grave or light. The excitement of the old man over his cup of tea is a fine example of this "he passed into an animal satisfaction, like a child fixed upon its feeding" (*Good* 3). Buck’s description of childbirth in *The Good Earth* is one, which brings the smell of blood to one’s senses. So deftly has Buck handled the scene that Adrienne Rich has mentioned it as one of the rare episodes in history (166).

The style of *Pavilion of Women* is in keeping with its romantic theme. It contains poetic passages describing the exquisiteness of an aristocratic Chinese family. The description and setting of the house is also remarkable. Here we see Buck describing a wealthy Chinese family with the same ease with which she writes about the peasants. The appeal of the novel lies in Buck’s ability to create situations and events to capture the interest of the reader. Alexander Cowie points out that the novel maintains the characteristics of the epic or saga story.
He observes that although saga stories avoid subjectivity and moralising, they contain a strong strain of sympathy toward the characters and scenes pictured.

Markandaya explains local customs, seasons and rites in detail which suggests that she is writing for a foreign audience. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani tells us that Ira...” Called him ‘Apa’ which means father...(15). This practice of explaining local words reveals that the novelist has a non-Indian reading public in mind. Descriptive passages abound in the novels of these writers. Customs, land, harvest, marriage, birth, funeral, villages, cities are all beautifully delineated with the deft use of words and phrases. The scenes are brought alive before the reader as Rukmani’s excitement at her daughter’s marriage or the description of childbirth in *The Good Earth*.

Similarly in *Pavilion of Women* Buck details death, burial and mourning. The death of Tsemo, Madame Wu’s son in a plane crash, is so poignantly pictured that it invokes the empathy of the reader. Even though there was no body to mourn over, the rituals of mourning were carried out, “A coffin was brought and prepared, and into it were put Tsemo’s possessions which he had loved best” and “grief allowed everywhere to go on unchecked” (356).

Markandaya’s *A Handful of Rice* is significant as a proletarian novel. Through characterisation and situations the novelist is able to convey the average Indian’s tragedy. The scenes where Ravi yearns for a little privacy, or his desire...
to possess the simple things of life like a bed, a bicycle have, been poignantly conveyed by Markandaya. It is her deft handling of theme that has made this narrative proceed smoothly. Markandaya seems to have the Western audience in mind. Her use of language is deft as a native speaker's. There is vigour and vitality in the choice of words. The novel begins abruptly and ends similarly leaving the readers with the same sense of dissatisfaction as Ravi. Buck's *The Good Earth* can also be seen as a similar proletarian novel highlighting ordinary human beings suffering and surviving natural calamities and economic disaster.

*The Mother*, one of the finest novels by Buck was widely acclaimed for its "architectural unity" (Conn *A Cultural Biography* 167). Though the style is simple, it is appealing. Description predominates the first part of the novel and tends to be monotonous at times. In fact the style becomes so flat, the reader is left thinking that it could have been more poetic and varied. Probably the simplistic style is in keeping with the plight of the universal mother caught in the movement of time.

The theme has universal appeal and hence worthy of appreciation. But the narrative being too lengthy lacks excitement and variety. The only scene which rises to pathetic heights is when the mother beholds her daughter's dead body. This scene is so well conveyed by Buck that it is able to move any mother to tears:
“Died” the mother whispered and said no more. Her heart stopped, her breath was gone, she had no voice... Then the mother ran and knelt beside her maid and stared down at the still face and sunken eyes and at the patient little mouth all the face she knew so well (Mother 156).

Peter Conn feels that this scene “not only recalls Dickens’s techniques, but also embodies what might be called Pearl’s Dickensian morality” (168).

Markandaya has experimented with syntax in The Coffer Dams making it difficult for the reader. According to Ramesh Mohan the novelist has used Tamil-resembling structure of sentences (Indian Writing in English 200). Whatever be the reasons for this new style, Markandaya seems to have a more experienced view of life as well as a better acceptance of English ways and people. This is seen from the manner in which she handles the English language. Each individual speaks the language based on his social level.

This Proud Heart is a novel where Buck deals with a woman who is a genius. Susan Gaylord is in many ways a reflection of Buck herself. Yet Buck has not effectively delineated Susan. If the mind of the character had been dealt with more deeply, using innovative techniques rather than Buck’s mode of external narration, the qualities of the genius would have been better exposed. Paul Doyle feels that the stream of consciousness method could have been
successfully used here (89). We get details about Susan’s greatness through the other characters in the story. But this will not suffice to build the picture of Susan as a genius. The use of language and style does not elevate the theme to a state of uniqueness. So in technique, style and language, the novel falls short for such a lofty theme.

In Letter From Peking the prose though simple in style is occasionally poetic. Romanticism which Buck rarely experiments with, is well handled. Moving from the uneducated language of the Chinese peasant, Buck introduces the well-educated Gerald with his learning and scientific background. For its emotional content this is a novel that captures the heart of its readers.

The Nowhere Man is Markandaya’s most artistically mature novel. Here the narrative is so visual that one almost sees the events as they happen. The story does not move forward at a steady pace but is interrupted now and then to tell us about the past. Srinivas’ migration mingled with his unsettling sets the mood of the narrative. Here she records the inner workings of the mind. Flashback and interior monologue are effectively used by the author. As a nowhere man he is in search of a place for himself. With this novel Markandaya proves herself as a diasporic writer. She is able to identify the source of racism rather than attribute it indiscriminately to one and all.
Markandaya’s style like Buck’s is simple and effective. With good command of the language, they exhibit a mastery making the reader feel it is native to the characters whether Indian, English or Chinese. Neither do they use translated language, foreign words in italics or mingling of vernacular. Yet by varying their language to suit the social class they are able to bring out the best of emotions. The plot is unravelled at a steady pace with no digressions. Secondary plots are quite rare. The language is poetic at times, but the narrative progresses continuously without any lapse of time or action. So even though the narrative lacks depth, it is compensated by strong phrases and the single-mindedness of purpose. At times their style becomes reflective, in fact philosophical as in the case of the Mother of Buck and Rukmani of Markandaya. Here are two mothers overcome by the tragic issues of life.

The other novels of Buck discussed here namely *The Devil Never Sleeps* have no new aspects as far as technique is concerned. Buck follows the same narrative mode and seems to lack artistic balance. As a story, the novel is appealing and attractive. *Mandala* set in contemporary India deals with the spiritual motif which is characteristic of Indian sagas. Mysticism and romantic intrigue plays a significant part in the narrative.

Ramesh K. Srivastava in his essay “Kamala Markandaya’s Style” says that “If Markandaya’s style is the image of her mind, it is also the image of her
characters, events and actions which it attempts to portray” (*Perspectives* 71)

This is especially relevant when seen from the context of Markandaya’s essay “On Images”. Dorothy Blair Shimer feels that Markandaya’s imagery is not in the literary sense but in the sociological sense. In this context it is significant to note what Markandaya herself says about images:

... images...are intrinsic to literature,... images are largely what our actions are governed by. They are regulators of our conduct toward each other, and through us they broaden to regulate the conduct of nation to nation. These images are basically quite simple. They are my pre-conception of me, and they are important not because of you or me, but because we, in the mass, become nation- states. They shape the patterns of behaviour of nation to nation, and they provide the yardstick which nations apply to each other, and against which they measure themselves (357).

Markandaya uses a number of images from everyday life to convey meaning. The most frequently used are images of animals, birds, insects etc... as when Ira in her happiness is compared to a bird (*Nectar* 119), Puttanna is called “a blood-sucking leech” (*Handful* 96). To describe the rootlessness of Srinivas she compares him to “a crawling caterpillar”(218). These animal images are not found in Buck. She rarely uses comparisons, metaphors or symbols.
Symbol and irony are used by Markandaya occasionally. The title *The Golden Honeycomb* symbolises the wealth and prosperity of the royal family. At the same time it is a cage which imprisons them. In *The Good Earth*, Buck makes use of the two opposing seasons to symbolically represent Wang Lung’s life. He is at the end of his life, just as the book has come to an end and the season for growing is complete.

Kamala Markandaya has a great sense of commitment to her art. In her talk ‘On Images’ Markandaya declared that “the didactic” novelist is a poor novelist. She enjoyed writing like Buck and was an artist in the true sense because she says:

I do write re-write and polish endlessly...I could not tell you how I know when to stop, having achieved the effect I wanted. I simply know that that is just right. And then I stop being haunted. (Joseph 216).

In the simplicity of narration she is like another Indian novelist Bhabani Bhattacharya. Adopting the traditional form of story-telling, she resembles Manohar Malgoankar in that both are conservative. This is in keeping with the nineteenth-century narrative fiction which was simple, direct as well as conventional and traditional. Structurally too the novels of Markandaya, like those of Buck, are not complex or involved.
Naturalism is a feature of the novels of Kamala Markandaya and Pearl S Buck. Buck’s Chinese environment made her absorb their naturalistic attitude to life. Moreover she was a great admirer of Dreiser which might have influenced her as a writer. In order to convey these naturalistic motions and to be understood by her readers, she has chosen the direct mode of narration. A naturalist novelist is furious at the ills of the society which he/she poignantly pictures. So she creates angry young men and women. But she has no solution to these problems. Kamala Markandaya a true social-critic stops with being a naturalist but Pearl S Buck goes a step further extending her naturalism to a propagandist approach.

After the 1930’s Pearl started her humanitarian activities which made her novels more subjective and functioned as vehicles of propaganda. Her plots became quite interesting but there was no progress in the technical aspects. As it was plain narration, there were no complexities of meaning or structure involved. But they were thought provoking since she wrote about contemporary issues faced by people all over the world. This offers very little scope for analysis and evaluation in the modern literary context. Through her art, she was determined to speak truthfully to the world. About Buck’s literary abilities Elizabeth Janeway says that “her readership is secure. She has something to say and says it with lucid ease. If she lacks the warmth of humour she makes up for
it by the warmth of sympathy. If she has a mission she can also tell a story" (qtd. in Doyle 152).

Buck has not been very innovative or modern in her narrative methods. She did not use the usual artistic feature like myth, archetype, stream of consciousness or symbolism. This is because she followed the old Chinese novel in every detail where only events and characters had any significance. She became increasingly deft at plot construction and handling language. Hence her novels do not convey any extra shade of meaning than what she intended.

Her method led to over plotting at times as the story required a number of incidents. As Paul Doyle says “it almost appears she is telling a bedtime story in serial form” (141). This happened in her later novels while *The Good Earth* and the other books possess greatness which will be remembered for generations.

The writings of Buck and Markandaya have an universal appeal. Both of them disliked didacticism but believed in working for universal brotherhood. Buck’s various social concerns and humanitarian activities clearly reveal this. Markandaya in her essay “On Images” makes the same point when she says... “literature provides the resonance that lingers in the mind long after the last headline (has) fled from the memory. While it lingers, there is neither black nor white, nor capitalist nor communist. There is only the human brotherhood.”
This is the basic philosophy that Markandaya has evinced through her writing and her experiences in life. And as she has emphasized imagery in literature has a great function to perform in developing or negating thought and understanding.

The foregoing analysis in this chapter shows that Buck and Markandaya are traditional in their narrative outlook. Being excellent story-tellers they resort to the traditional methods rather than being modern. Buck resorts to the method of Chinese novel writing while Markandaya makes use of the developing trend of the novel where the story was given prominence. Markandaya wrote mainly for a Western audience where as Buck wrote for the ordinary people, any person who could read and enjoy.

Their narratives convey the philosophy of the novelists clearly. At the Sterling Conference in 1972 Markandaya makes her stand clear:

So far I have suggested that one’s culture and one’s ethos and one’s roots are fairly hardy and fundamental. So they are... but these near- fundamentals become purely external when set beside that luminous and extraordinary cortex that exists in all of us...[Which] extracts the truth of such universals whether experienced or not...I mean being able to feel what the other man feels when he’s going through something that you haven’t been through. And you can’t really do that until you have cut through
the culture, and the clothes, and the colour of the skin, and other such comparative externals. The imaginative process[is] a process of paring away of externals to arrive at a perception of essentials. (qtd. in Uma Kamala Markandaya 48).

The similarity in the themes and techniques used by these novelists belonging to diverse geographical and cultural milieu strengthens this view.