Chapter 4
Thematic Analyses of the Novels

4.1 Preliminaries:

Markandaya’s novels are generally related to human relationship. Her novels are thematically wide ranging. Markandaya explains pathetic conditions due to poverty, hunger, conflict between traditional belief and modernity, and clashes between eastern-western ideologies. Her keen observation brought her international fame and recognition. In this novel we find realistic picture of Indian society where people live in hunger, deprivation and often die in starvation. Shyamala Venkatswaran, in her article entitled, “The Languages of Kamala Markandaya’s Novels”, writes;

‘Nectar in a Sieve’ has been her "Magnum opus

and an analysis of it would show her grasp

of village India.”

4.2 The Central Concern of the novel:

i) Nectar in a Sieve: Hunger and degradation

The novelist has shown story of Rukmani and Nathan, the poor peasants. Rukmini of the unnamed village in the state of Tamil Nadu struggles hard to keep fear, hunger, despair and death at bay. Rukmini and Nathan are at the center of this struggle in the novel. The struggle is directly aimed at preserving life. Rukmini was the fourth daughter of the mukhiya of the village. Her three sisters were married long before her own marriage.
The first sister was married in the heyday of the father’s prosperity. Rukmani narrates:

“It was a big wedding, lasting for many days.
The Second sister also made a good match
and was married fittingly,
taking jewels and dowry with her but by the time
Rukmini’s third sister was married, the decline
in her father’s fortune had already been long underway
and so the only jewel she had was a diamond ring.”²

Rukmani’s father is diminished so much that she was married, her husband, Nathan, was a poor farmer by all means but was rich in affection for her. Her husband, Nathan brings her home. Rukmani began her married life in a happy note with a heart singing and with feet that trod lightly as she went about her work.

In the early days of her married life, Rukamini had food in plenty for two people. She and her husband ate well. Rukmini herself was good-natured, familiar with other women like Kunthi, Janaki and Kali. Irwady a daughter was born, and Nathan celebrated the event with all due ceremonies. They continue to live happily but Rukamni realized that Nathan wanted a son as every husband wants the same so she consulted Dr. Kennington known as Kenny, a white man, he helped her and she could conceive again, but she always kept this a secret from Nathan. She gave birth to Arjun, Thambi, Raja, Murugan, Selvam and Kuti. Such a large family soon proved to be burden and they could no longer eat well or save for the future.
Meantime, a tannery was constructed on the maidan of Village; significantly enough meant the beginning of urbanization, with rising prices. Irawady got married but soon she returned for her husband too wanted a son sent her back to her parents. She was barren and could not give him an heir. Rukmini, again, sought Dr. Kenny’s help and as result Irawady could conceive, but by that time her husband had taken in another woman and so he could not take her with him.

The child that was born to her was an albino child i.e. was considered a bastard or sin; even Kunthi charged Rukmini with having an affair with Kenny, blackmailed and exploited her when she was facing starvation. It followed the series of misfortunes, first there was heavy rain and flood, their crop was totally destroyed. Nothing has left to eat they had to sell all their belonging to pay only half of the dues, but they managed to live on till the next crop.

Arjun and Thumbi employed in the tannery, but as they involved in the protest against the owners; they were terminated from the job. Then they left for Ceylon to find jobs with good wages. Nathan and Rukmini were really broken at heart for they would never see them again. It was with Kenny’s kindness that Murugan got service in the city, he too left them. Raja, the young one, employee in the tannery was seen stealing a piece of large skin, he was killed. Nathan and Rukmini could but see his dead body accept their lot it was to be!

The heavy rains were followed by a severe drought. Their full and rich crop was totally scorched and destroyed, they were totally ruined. They had no money and nothing to eat. Rukmani had saved a little rice, and had kept it concealed even from other members of the family. Rukmini managed to feed the family with a handful of rice every day. Kunthi blackmailed her and has taken away half of the hidden rice. Rukmini then came to know that Nathan had immoral relations with Kunthi. Their lot turned more severe that Irawady took to street-walking to earn something and to feed Kutti, her younger brother who was ill and starving.

It was for this reason that she conceived and gave birth to the albino child, whom they called Sacrabhani. Nathan and Rukmani were too conservative to take a new
profession so late in life, not prepared to leave their land till they had no choice but to depend upon their city-living son, Murugan, for maintenance. They could not find it suitable and were not smart enough to fit into its hectic atmosphere. They lost their belongings in the temple, worked in quarry, broke stones to earn their living and finally reduced to poverty, turned old and sensitive to insults.

Nathan died on the way back to the temple from the quarry. It was 'gentle passing' as Rukmani remarked at his passing away. She returns to the village with the boy Puli who had helped them in the city. She loved him as her own child, her son Selvam and daughter Ira welcomes them. Rukmani Prepares to live with Selvam and Irawady who promised her "they would manage." In her village, Rukmani suffers long. But the city, where she has only a very short sojourn, besides giving the direst experience of hunger & alienation causes her the most grievous loss of all the loss of husband who in her own words was rich in nothing except his love for her and sorrows of life. Rukmani comes back to her native village rest of life.

Plot and character are the most important elements in a work of fiction, in fiction; characterization holds such an important position that particularly all the serious novels are novels of character. Her novels contain both the English and the Anglo-Indian characters. One can find the encounters of East and West in her works which represent altogether different philosophies. Individuality of the man is of the great importance to the West, while the East considers individual as the part of common phenomena.

Both Eastern as well as Western characters of Kamala Markandaya advocate their own ideologies and faith in religion, are incomprehensible to the others. Undoubtedly her western characters find the concepts of universal individualism, meekness and active charity quite incomprehensible but all her Indian all men and women characters live normal life full of ups and down. Markandaya portrays peasants, servants and laymen in a convincing manner.

Her first novel, Nectar in a Sieve became very popular because of the elements of realism found in characterization in the novel. She is deeply concerned with the miseries of peasants. Her characters are the victims of the irony of life or fate. What
happens to them is quite contrary to their wishes and expectations. Since their happenings are not desired and unexpected they face sorrow and sufferings.

Rukmani is a narrator and the most dominant character. Through Rukmini the novelist describes the ill effects of Industrialization on the rural society. She is a living symbol of all affection and sympathy. Tough she was tied with peasant who ranks bellow her in status; she does not condemn her parents for this marriage because. Rukmini is aware of the fact that she is lacking fairness and her father unable to give an attractive dowry. She prefers to acknowledge her father’s prestige, as the headman of village, which was diminished Rukmani realizes;

“Perhaps that was why they could not find me a rich husband and married me to a tenant farmer who was poor in everything but in love and care for me.”

Her married life runs very smoothly due to her sympathetic adjustment with her husband. She supports him in becoming an earning hand in the family. When her husband leaves the village she accompanies him. When he falls seriously ill, she earns money to give medical aid by reading or writing letters.

Rukmani’s humanitarian attitude is obvious. Despite facing many problems Rukmani is shown as a woman of courage and fortitude who gives a great specimen of her instinctive love, kindness and sacrificial nature, when she adopts the leper Puli an orphan with whom she returns to her village after the death of her husband leaving him under Dr. Kenny’s care.

Rukmani has compassion, even for animals. It is when she was returning to her towards her new home in Nathan’s bullock cart. She observes bullock being relieved and led to the steam of water and fed them. After that rest the beasts began stepping, jauntily again. Kenny is another character who gets a sympathetic support from her. She extends all sympathy to him. Rukmani is a typical Indian woman whose belief in
Indian tradition is firm. She seems to be a conservative character, since she dislikes Arjun and Thambi’s joining the tannery because they are not of the caste of the untouchables. Being a traditional woman, she is devoted to her husband. She always remains with him despite his unlimited miseries.

Though she belongs to a rich family, after her marriage with Nathan she makes no complaint of the low status of Nathan. Dr. A.V Krishna Rao rightly points out; Rukmani’s calm acceptance of the reality of situation is more an agreement with the traditions of an Indian woman. Rukmani is happy with her husband, loves him his children. Rukmani shows courage, determination, resourcefulness and accepts her fate in adverse course of time.

The heaviest blow of all came when they were asked to vacate their land, because they failed to pay the dues to their landlord. During all these days of adversity she accepted her lot with calm endurance, and did her best to serve and console her ailing husband. After the death of her husband she was left alone, with no one beside her but the boy Puli to whom she had grown attached; she returns to her village with Puli. Ira and Selvam welcome her and mourn with her the death of Nathan. Rukmini terms it as “It was gentle passing.”

Nathan, the husband of Rukmani, is a poor tenant farmer who does not own the land he works upon. As a farmer he is very skillful. He knows to sow, to transplant; to reap; to irrigate or trim the terraces. Nathan is not only a good and skilled farmer; he is also loving and considerate husband. After marriage, during their journey to his village, he consoles Rukmani. He builds mud-hut with his own hands, working at it for long hours. When Rukmani comes to know of it, she is very much touched by his love begins to love and admire him. In the beginning Rukmani knows practically nothing but Nathan is never angry but full of praises, as if he never saw before. He praises her simplecity, natural beauty and intelligence. He considers her kind, lovable and precious woman in his family.

Nathan is a practical man, sensible father. As his sons grow up, he realizes that when a son grows up into a man he must have his own way. He wanted his sons
working on the land, but he never forced them to do so. When Arjun and Thambi decide to work in the tannery, he allows them to do so. Similarly, when they decide to go to Ceylon, he does not stop them. When Rukmani complains about them Nathan says: "Our children must act as they choose to, not for our benefit. Is it not enough that they suffer?"  

Patience is an important aspect of his character. It is seen in his role as a husband, as a father, and as a father in law. He does not even complain when Rukmani fails to give him son for seven years. When Ira’s husband returns her because she is barren, Nathan does not emotionally react to this female tragedy. Instead he says man expects children and it is Ira’s lot that she can not give birth to a child. He remains calm and waited patiently for seven years before Rukmani could be the mother of a male child, but he did not complain even once as he does not complain when Ira’s husband leaves her with them and goes away and takes another woman. "He suffers patiently both at the hands of man and nature, as it is the lot of the poor Indian peasant in general.  

Nathan is typical Indian farmer in his love of his land. He is deeply attached to the land, which he cultivates and takes pride in the full crops, which he grows with the labour of his own hands. He has roots deep in the soil, and when he is uprooted from his land by a cruel landlord, he falls like an uprooted tree and cannot live any length of time. He goes to the city in the hope of finding shelter with his son Murugan failing in that he lives for sometime as beggar on the charity and shelter provided by a temple.  

Then takes to breaking stones and hopes to earn enough to return to their village. But one day drenched in rain, weak, exhausted and ill, passes away calmly in the lap of his beloved wife. Rukmani is deeply shocked by the death of Nathan that she cannot forget him even after a long period. Rukmani says,  

"Sometimes at night I think that my husband with me again, 
coming gently through the mists and we are tranquil together,  
then morning comes, the wavering gray turns to gold,  

there is a stirring with me as the sleepers awake,
and he softly departs."\(^6\)

Nathan appears to be a typical Indian peasant both in his suffering, nobility and integrity of character.

Irawady Lovingly called Ira, the first child of Nathan and Rukmani; she is one of the main characters who are the victim of hunger, starvation and human degradation. She was beautiful, delicate like a lad and grew up into a beautiful maiden. Rukmani herself is wondered at her beauty, and says: "Ira was a fair child lovely"\(^7\) and even the other people wondered at her beauty.

Like her mother, Rukmani, Irawady also fails to conceive a child after her marriage. Her husband rejects her and she comes back to her parents. She has to pass the rest of her life as deserted wife in the home of her parents, but she calmly accepts her lot. Later on, she is cured of her barrenness and can conceive, but by that time her husband has taken in another woman and cannot take her back. She does not complain. Her misfortunes do not end here.

The child that is born to her is sickly Albino child, different from the other children. She is devoted mother who nurses the child affectionately, is proud of him, as any mother of normal child would be she suffers terribly but silently.

Through her life story the novelist has depicted the grim and shocking picture of the degradation and corruption that hunger brings. He gives a part of the food that is her share, to her younger brother who is hungry and ill, and latter takes to prostitution to save his life. She sells her body but it is an act of self-sacrifice like that of Tess in Hardy’s "Tess of the D’Urbervilles. Her parents try to persuade her against this sinful way of earning but she clings to it, for she must do her duty towards her starving brother and poor parents.

Dr. Kennington, Dr. Kenny as is lovingly called by the people. He is a sympathetic observer of the Indian scene and representative of the finer traditions of the
west. He plays a significant role in the life of Rukhmani. Kenny is a man of strange nature. He has sacrificed his happiness and pleasures of sweet home for the service of humanity. He serves the poor folk. He cares Rukmani and Irawady of their barrenness. He builds a hospital in Rukmani’s village. Economic difficulties and other troubles do not repress his humanistic fervour and service for humanity. Being an English man he fails to understand Indian's fatalism and their passive acceptance of the cruelty and justice to which they are subjected. As he tells Rukmani:

“I work among you when my spirit wills it.
I go when I am tired of your follies and stupidities,
your eternal shameful poverty.
I can only take you people in small doses”

He often speaks harsh words to them, but his harsh words in themselves are an expression of his love of them. He wants them to stand against injustice and oppression. Dr. Kenny has become one with villagers that he does not consider as an alien here. He considers India as his home and serves the villagers with compassion. He even can’t differentiate between his own country and India.

Kenny feels disturbed about ungrudging attitude of Indians over their misfortunes, he shouts:

"why do you keep this ghastly silence?
Why do you not demand – cry out for help- do something
there is nothing in this country .there is nothing in this country,
Oh, God, there is nothing!"

Dr. Kenny, one of the few English characters, is delineated by Kamala Markandaya as kind-hearted, sympathetic and compassionate.
Kunthi is also one of the major characters in the novel. She is basically different from other women Kali, Janaki and Rukmani. She is pretty woman of considerable beauty but somehow she has married a man who is no match for her. She is the villain in the life of Rukmani. She also represents those rural people who are affected by the glamour of urban life. She welcomes the establishment of tannery in village. Kunthi stands in defense of urbanization and shows her approval of the reopening of the tannery. Kunthi is hopeful about the changes that the industrialization is likely to bring along with it. She dreams of the changing village full of shops, stalls and other new equipments and infrastructure.

The glamour of urbanization leads Kunthi to lead a degraded life and she blackmails Rukmani, she becomes a victim of the commercialization of sex, a typical urban phenomenon she spent a lot of her time making unnecessary journeys into the town where with her good looks and provocative body, she could be sure of admiration and more, from the young men Kunthi is an immoral character whose ways are corrupt. Rukmani’s husband Nathan has immoral contact with her. She regards Rukmani’s notions as ignorance. In fact, Kunthi stands for the modernity and industrialization. She also suffers from starvation. She too faces unlimited struggles of life.

Kali One of the minor characters and the three rustic women whose lives are closely woven with that of Rukmani, she is the wife of Rukmani’s neighbour. It is she who tells Rukmani that Nathan built their cottage with his own hands that he refused to accept any help even from his friends or neighbour Kali is a typical village woman, illiterate but understands the importance of education. Like Kunthi, She accepts the tannery. Kali is kind and good at heart, which extends helping hand to Rukmani in the years of her married life. Rukmani realizes her debt to Kali and Janki for showing her how to milk the goat, to plant seed or to churn butter from milk and to cull rice.

Kali also helped Rukmani during the period of Pregnancy. This generous help and co-operation reveal her essential humanity. Old Granny is, one of the most moving characters in "Nectar in a sieve" She is all alone in the world of with no one to care for or look after her old age. She sits for hours together, selling, peanuts and guavas, but she never complains even though Rukmani stops selling her vegetables to her old
Granny is intertwined with story of Rukmani. She is also known as match- maker. When it turns failure and Ira’s husband deserts her she feels very sorry and blames herself for the tragedy.

When Rukmani is worried about the future of Ira, Old Granny suggests to Rukhmani to arrange the marriage of Ira. She brings a marriage proposal for Ira. When Ira is rejected by her husband. She takes the responsibility of the failure of the marriage on herself. In the same manner when Rukmini stops selling vegetables to her, old Granny does not mind it. She dies of starvation, which is the recurrent theme of the novel. Old Granny remains one of the most moving characters portrayed by the novelist.

Biswa also known as the Baniya and money lender of the village is only a minor character but he serves to fill up and complete the pictures of Rural India presented by the novelist. He stands for evils. Since money lending is his profession, his attitudes are absolutely materialistic. In his treatment of his clients, he is very shrewd. Rukmani remarks in this regard, Biswas, the money lender, has a peculiar kind of Jargon to indicate his matter of fact or business like attitude. He always plans to exploit the rural folk. In the time of scarcity he exploits the rural folk. Rukmani opines rightly that he thrives on others misfortunes. The novelist presents him merely to hint that the rural people are exploited at the hands of moneylenders.

Arjun is the first male child of Rukmani & Nathan. Unlike his father, he is a boy of dynamic nature and progressive outlook. Being tired of hunger and poverty he joins tannery, though his mother does not approve of his job. But he does not care for his caste and his mother’s opposition. Arjun raises voice against the exploitation of the poor at the hands of capitalists. There are slight touches of socialism in him which bring him in confrontation with the owners of the tannery who stand for capitalism. Since he is not passive he leaves for Ceylon to get job in a tea plantation so that he may not stand for traditional rural values. He represents the thousands of rural young men who are disturbed by the impact of modernity.

Thambi is another child of Nathan and Rukmani like Arjun he also revolts against the cruelty of modernization and capitalism. He takes an active part in the strike, which
takes place against the officials of tannery. He declares that he will not yield before the forces of capitalists. He accompanies his elder brother who decides to go to Ceylon. The novelist presents the harsh realities of the miseries of the rural young people through his character.

Shivaji is an extremely minor character who appears only twice in the novel. He is the agent of the Zamindars who are the owners of the land of Nathan. Rukmani calls him 'a kind humane man’ because of his kind-heartedness that Rukmani finds; he is not like other agents.

Ammu is the wife of Murugan who deserts her. She represents those fallen women who are spoiled by their husbands. Kamala Markandaya presents three fallen women; Ira, Kunthi, and Ammu in the novel. Kunthi is wicked and cruel hearted. But Ammu is not. She is like Ira. Nathan goes to city to find out his son, he does not find him. They see Ammu who has been ruined by her husband, Rukmani remarks, "I saw only that she was very good girl, frail beyond most deserted by her husband and doing her best to feed herself and her children” she is a pathetic figure in the novel.

Puli like Ammu, is also minor character who is introduced at the end of the novel. It is Puli who provides Nathan and Rukmani with a sort of protection in city where all are cheat and thieves. He says to Rukmini:

"I have no mother, poor or otherwise. There is no one to worry about me. He is the leader of the pack of the child beggars. He says with hesitation, "I am called Puli after the king of animals and I am leader of our pack. I am as well known as Birla."\(^{10}\)

He is also handicapped, Rukmani notices. "The disease which was rotting his body" Though he seems to be wicked and cruel, he is kind-hearted as he helped Rukmani and Nathan. He comes to village of Rukmani with her after the death of
Nathan. Rukmini calls him adopted son. He is an effective symbol of the triumph of the rural over the urban. Markandaya has skillfully juxtaposed “Spirituality” and “Modernity”. Her novels generally depict the picture rural life but her characters have an attraction for lavish city life.

ii) Some Inner Fury: Passion and patriotism

“Some Inner Fury” 1957, is considered as a political novel. It elaborates the feeling of hatred between the British rulers and the Indians that divides the East from the West. It deals with the theme of clash between passion and patriotism. ‘Some Inner Fury’ has a woman narrator like Rukmani in ‘Nectar in a Sieve’ but Mira is shown completely different, she is modern and influenced by western culture. The novel begins with the arrival of Mira’s brother Kitsmay and his friend Richard from Oxfod. Govind her adopted brother, Premala, who marries Kitsmay, and Roshan, the rich lady actively engaged in revolutionary politics and Hickey, the missionary are the major characters.

Govind becomes a revolutionary in an attempt of escaping his hopeless love for Premala who helps Hickey in his humanitarian work. Mira and Richard love each other, but because of their two different nationalities they fail to unite. The Quit India Movement overtakes, carries them along and finally departs them forever. Richard’s attempt to synthesise India and England by adapting Indian culture is symbolic. He begins to put on Indian attire. But the hatred towards the british rulers prevent Mira and Richard to come together. In the court room Mira denies to go along with Richard. She openly says:

“Go? Leave the man I loved to go with these people?
What did they mean to me,
what could they mean more than the man I loved?
They were my people those others were his.”
Mira’s remark expresses her search for self discovery with the help of which she regains her roots in her home land. She intensly recollects the memories of her early life in her fathe’s home.

Markandaya elaborately describes the separation of East from West because of the hatred for each other’s nationalities irrespective of basic human values. And victimizes the innocent people like Premala and Hickey. Premala is suffocated and dies. Kitsmay dies of a knife wound, Richard falls a victim of mob fury. Mira returns to her home with the memories of the past. Through Mira, Markandaya criticizes the English rulers.

“Some Inner Fury” comes to end with idea of separating the East from the West for the disintegrating forces are stronger that both are being pulled wide apart. “Some Inner Fury”, is essentially considered as the political novel because it traces the historical events during the freedom struggle movements in 1942. But it is also a novel of love between different persons belonging to two races of oppressor and oppressed. The duality relationship did exist in the past. The confused Indians and the shrewd Europeans become the point of the east-west meeting that could never last long. That is why the novels ends in segregation of the two.

iii) **A Silence of Desire: Materialism v/s Spiritualism**

Kamala Markandaya’s Silence of Desire is an attack against the view of foreign skepticism on the eastern faith in general and Saroja’s faith in particular. Markandaya in this novel tried to examine in an ironic way the clash between tradition and modernity within a family. It also describes the conflict between Indian spiritual faith and western modern attitude.

Markandaya elaborates the theme that highlights the elements influencing the society. Those elements are shown effectively through her main characters like Srinivas, a senior clerk, Sarojini, his wife, The Swami, Chari, ex- congress leader turned civil servant, Sastri and Ghosh. Markandaya has very convincingly revealed her ideas through action and consciousness of her characters.
A Silence of Desire is full of conflict between ardent faith and insistence on explanation and behavior representing an attitude towards life drawn from one’s past life, another one initiated by skepticism mainly western. The novelist imposes certain predicaments of identity with which a modern Indian may be faced. In this novel an enigmatic swamy is implicated in the central action and symbolizes as an alternative to a modern materialistic way of life.

Dandekar and his wife Sarojini represent the old way of faith and the new way of reason. When Sarojini learns that she has a tumour of the womb, she believes that she can only be cured with the help of the swami, by faith, she fears as soul-destroying Dandekar’s rational approach to the problem and his sensible advocacy of hospital treatment. But against the resistance of what he regards as her superstitious credulity, his identity as a rationalist seems to be dissolve and their marriage appears to be disintegrating. With leaving of the Swami all the means with which the people were living life come to an end and they had to starve. The protagonist feels guilty for offending Swami and forcing him to leave the village. He goes to meet the swami against his desire for the sake of people who were dying in despair.

Inspite of various differences between the two civilizations, each one has something concrete to offer to the other. If the West can provide progressive science and exacting technology to the eastern minds, the East also can share its rich cultural heritage with West.

Thus, novelist has elaborated to a full length how the entire ideology of living life in The East and The West is surprisingly different. The twin shall hardly mingle with each other. Thumboo. E. in this connection observes that the chief thematic tension gets from a conflict between profoundly held belief and reason. Each represents a view of life.

iv) Possession: Conflict between materialistically possessive West and spiritually non-possessive East.
The novel ‘Possession’ deals with the theme of loneliness and alienation which are forms of estrangement. It is the ironic story of Valmiki, the great oriental artist whose art stifles in an alien country. He is unable to adjust himself in a foreign country, though his gains recognition, he loses his spontaneity. A rich aristocratic English woman, Lady Caroline Bell discovers a talent for painting in the south-Indian boy, Valmiki. She takes him to England to re-make him in her image of the great Indian artists.

Valmiki becomes the artist, Lady Bell intends but at the cost of nearly destroying his soul. He feels culturally estranged in the alien land and finds only waste and death in personal relationship to recover his true self he has to break with Lady Bell and come back to India. Kamala Markandaya describes conflict between the materialistically possessive West and the spiritually non-possessive East and between the secular and divine sources of art. It presents the plight of the artist.

The novel dramatizes the search for true identity of Valmiki, nature’s own gift to the world of art in the traditional South India. Valmiki, a born artist, is a “permanent outsider. He feels alienated as much in his native village as in the urbane London. He is a poor, neglected lad, a simpleton, not able to learn even the simple skills their living required. His art has no relevance for his poor family. The members of his family simply reject him.

Possession is slavery what we try to possess is taken away, sooner or later; Valmiki losses Ellie, Annabel and even Minou-the monkey; and Caroline loses Valmiki. Markandaya’s ironic tone persists throughout the novel to bring out the truth that it is losing – and not possessing that shows the way to the fulfillment.

Markandaya implies the ironic tone to stress the futility of human desire for the sense of possession at each stage: Caroline fails to possess Valmiki wholly so also Valmiki fails to permanently possess the pet monkey, Minou. One may tame or domineer over the crude sensibility of a man or an animal like Minou but can never absolutely possess the heart. Moreover, in the perilous act of possession the possessor himself is possessed. Caroline’s urge for materialistic possession is sharply contrasted with the Swamy’s inner influence on Valmiki.
The way she runs after Valmiki to dominate over him, as she is sexually attached to him, is quite opposite to the Swamy’s affection for him with no sense of possession. The Swamy does not block Valmiki’s transportation to London by Caroline as he is free from the desire of possessing him. But Caroline reacts sharply when Valmiki leaves London and returns to the Swamy’s Cottage. She challenges the Swamy to show that materialistic possession is stronger than his spiritual influence on Valmiki: At the end of the novel, the discourse between the Swamy and Caroline rises to a philosophical level, without any suggestion for resolution.

Markandaya describes the sharp contrast by juxtaposing India and England that represent spiritual knowledge and material prosperity respectively. The colonial relation between India and England frames the undertone of the novel. This relation underlies the love-hate relationship between Caroline and the narrator of the story, Anasuya. Like the kind Britain and India used to have.

Margaret Joseph views the story in a symbolic way: "Caroline is obviously England queening it over her colonies, possessor of India, its benefactor and despoiler in one. Val is India, illiterate but spiritually whole, and gradually influenced for the worse by Western society." In Joseph’s view the rebellion of Valmiki is against the struggle for domination. Whereas Ellie stands for the long suffering humanity, the Swami, the typical Indian spirit is contrasted with the materialism of Caroline.

At the later stage of his separation from Caroline, in a fit of pique, he refuses even to cash the cheque sent by her. European education awakens his self-dignity and freedom of life. He declines to lead the life of a caged animal like that of Minou under her evil spell and control. He is basically an artist and his spirit can neither be chained nor restrained. Not all the material comforts of the West can restrain his spirit of freedom. On the other hand, in an attempt to possess Valmiki, Caroline herself gets possessed from which she fails to liberate herself. Her intellectual power and physical charm becomes fades away and possessed by her egoistic self.

In conclusion ‘Possession’ Western culture is useful; finally India’s fulfillment lies in its own nourishing spiritual power.
The adaption of the alien culture has been proved very difficult. Kamala Markandaya has succeeded showing the immigrant sensibility in ‘Possession’ through the character of Valmiki.

v) A Handful of Rice: Starvation, Hunger and unemployment

"A Handful of Rice" deals with theme of urban poverty. Generally, villagers are the victims of poverty; education, good health and entertainment are only dreams to them. Their children are suffering from various diseases. Poverty gives birth to hunger and starvation. The protagonist, Ravi badly requires a handful of rice to satisfy his family's hunger. He knows no laws and is involved in petty criminal activities.

Ravi, the central character of the novel, the victim of starvation tries to escape the poverty goes to Madras with a great expectation of living good life. He realizes painfully that his insufficient education, which does not qualify him for being a clerk, has also deprived him of his ability to resort to manual labour.

He meets Damodar who involves him in his group engaged in smuggling and theft. He drunk during prohibition time, tries to escape a policeman, enters into a house of tailor, named Apu, while he is asleep in the house, Apu’s wife, Jayamma ties his hands and feet.

In the morning she also beats him but on his confessing that he was hungry and drunk last night, she takes pity on him and feeding him, she allows him to go. Next day, he repents, goes to Apu’s house to replace the bars he broke last night to force his way. There he gets attracted to Apu’s daughter, Nalini. Apu offers to appoint him as an apprentice and Ravi accepts the offer so that he remains close to Nalini.

Ravi reforms himself and proves very useful in that house. He gets married to Nalini and settles down to a happy life in Apu’s house. He works hard and business prospers. But he feels sad when he compares his little income to rich He meets Damodar; but finding him living in luxury he feels disturbed He gets all the more disturbed when Damodar makes fun of his poor standard.
Damodar offers him work that involves dishonesty. Consequently, he is torn by a conflict between Damodar’s values and Nalini’s. With each meeting with Damodar, he experiences the conflict between honesty and dishonesty with greater intensity. Subsequent to Apu’s death, he becomes the head of the house, but as he refuses to follow Apu’s principles, his business declines. He becomes violent in his family and the joint family disintegrates. He gets into deep debt. Damodar again offers to help him. Tormented by his inability to resign himself to working with Damodar he makes his own life hellish. His son dies with meningitis. As a result of his son’s death and Nalini’s silent rejection, he becomes angry at the cruel society.

Out of sheer desperation resulting from his unemployment, he visits Damodar again but Damodar again charges him with having “no guts” his integrity does not allow him to join Damodar. That afternoon a riot breaks out and an angry mob indulges in looting a granary. Stones are hurled. His strong morality overpowers him and uplifted hand drops, not obeying the command of the others. We find Ravi is not so very unlike us "his problems, his family, his thoughts and hopes are not very different from ours" It is the measure of Kamala Markandya’s success that she has given her novel this touch of universality.

Kamala Markandaya is unique in the portraiture of her characters. Her characters are well developed and lively. In the opinion of Mrs. Nayantara Sehgal considers her characters as the living human beings. A Handful of Rice is replete with many characters. Besides the hero, Apu and Damodar are important male characters in the novel are Apu and Damodar. The important female characters are Jayamma Nalini and Thangam. All these characters are skillfully drawn. They are life-like and are able to draw our attention towards them.

Ravi the hero of the novel is a vagabond involved in petty criminal activities. After leaving his village he tries find an employment in this big city. But he is unable to get a job and joins the group of petty criminals. He finds shelter from the police in Apu, the tailor’s house.

Despite his vices, Ravi is still in his primal state as for as philosophies are concerned. His love and compassion is reflected in his actions. He falls in love with
Nalini at first sight. She is daughter of Apu. Ravi offers Apu to help in his chance to meet Nalini. Ravi loves Nalini truly. He wants to marry her – But before marrying her, he wants to be respectable, he prepares to be and to repudiate all in his life that was unworthy.

Finally, he marries Nalini. Even as a wife he loves and cares for her. He is an ambitious young man. He wants more money to fulfill his desires, when Ravi sees rich people driving cars; he also wishes to have cars and to drive them. He likes to show off like rich People. So often he goes to the sea beach and prefers a coffee, it gives him a sensation of living in high society. Though Ravi wants to be rich yet he does not like the idea that the poor are only to suffer and the rich to rule over them.

Social injustice and the feeling of inequality always make him angry. He loses his temper when he looks at rich people and their dazzling life. He is angry by nature also. He is easily irritated. Sometimes he quarrels Puttana and Nalini. However, Ravi never neglects his work. Even after Apu’s death he works hard and fulfills his responsibilities. We are wonderstruck to see that he rapes his mother-in-law.

As Ravi leaves his village and migrates to the city, he always has the feeling of ruthlessness. He does not possess a house, he does not earn separately. Sometimes he feels very lonely and remembers his village "No friends, no fields, no relatives" Ravi has had a different awareness of life’s meaning and value. His belief was, "That life could be sweet, that it was, that life could be sweet, that if it was not it should be made so."12

It was this belief that made him get out from the slowly decaying human existence to which most people in villages are condemned.

Towards the very end of the novel, his belief and values i.e. Sansakara, restrains him from throwing the jagged brick at the glass Pane of the showcase of the fashionable shop named Eve dealing into Ladies garments. While another man from the retreating crowd throws a brick at the showcase and prompt him to throw his also. Ravi’s hand drops.
Damodar is supposed to be the representative of smugglers and black – marketers and other anti-social elements of society. He is criminal and is the head of a gang. He manages to steal money from business communities with the help of the members of his gang, when Ravi comes to the city, without money and any support. He doesn't get job, meet Damodar. Damodar forced him into the criminal world and teaches him many things about crime. Damodar provokes Ravi to steal and even to grease the palms. It is the company of Damodar that Ravi also begins to visit the prostitutes. Even after his marriage, whenever Ravi is frustrated, he goes to Damodar to seek his guidance.

Damodar is involved in Criminal activities for a long time and he successfully escapes the gripe of the police. He has deep concern for money. He can do anything to earn money. He earns money by illegal ways, and calls it decent money. He suggests Ravi that; "if you like decent money, you know where to come. Of course, you’ll have to get rid of your beggar mentality first; otherwise you will never want decent money.”

He advises Ravi and Says, “if you want what I’ve got. There is no other way really, as things are grabbing or go under”

After Apu’s death, Ravi has a lot of burden on his shoulders. He is unable to support his family. He goes to Damodar asking him to give him any job. Damodar cruelly says, "Anything, are you fit for anything? And tells him that he is too late, he has no job for him. Damodar cruelly retorts, “You’re empty. No heart, no spleen, no light, no guts, “He has no goodness no kindness and virtue.

Apu, Ravi's father-in-law, is a skilled tailor. He prepares very beautiful garments. He gets an order for work from memsahib. Apu always keeps his customers in good humour. Being the chief of a joint family Apu has to manage all the household affairs. It was Apu who ran the business, who took the decisions, who held the household together. He is an affectionate father. He loves his daughter, Nalini, and spends much money in her marriage. He trains Ravi for tailoring and even pays him monthly. As Apu does not have any son, he has a keen desire to have one. When Nalini gives birth to a male child, he becomes very happy.
The main cause of it is that he wanted to hand over his business to his son and before his death he passes his business to him. Apu is a virtuous and sweet natured man but his own close relatives betray him and hurt him. He is even discarded by his wife. Throughout his life, he works hard to support his family and finally meets a tragic end.

Jayamma is Apu’s wife a fat, middle-aged woman who sat nearby, half fearful, half ferocious. As Ravi has tried to enter her house forcefully, she beats him cruelly and indiscriminately. She violently hits him on the face splitting an eyebrow. Apu is shocked to see Ravi’s condition and asks to look after him. Jayamma is a greedy woman and has tendency to dominate and dictate. She has full control over her daughter and Ravi. Sometimes she treats him very badly and reminds him that he is nothing to them, but a Vagabond. She has no love, affection for her husband, Apu. She may be contrasted with Nalini.

Nalini, the heroine of the novel, is very beautiful. She is young, pretty and small white teeth. Ravi loves her ardently. Nalini is not ambitious like her husband, Ravi. She is satisfied with what they have she is very obedient. Before marriage she obeys her mother. If her mother allows her to go to the market with Ravi, she goes. After her marriage she obeys her husband. She always listens to his commands and never protests against him.

Nalini is anxious about her husband’s regard. She doesn’t bear her mother calling Ravi Vagabond. She is peaceful and hard-working by nature. She can’t sit idle. Often she is busy in knitting. Nalini is very tolerant. After giving birth to twins, she takes up her household tasks without fuss. Sometimes when Ravi is very angry he beats Nalini, but she never complains and endures it quietly. She has love for her sister. Thangam as her husband is jobless, she feels pity for her.

Thangam, Apu’s elder daughter, has no signs of decency on her face. She often teases Ravi and tells him indecent jokes. Her marriage is not a happy one. For her husband, puttana is unemployed. She often quarrels with puttana for money. Thangan, like her mother, is fond of enjoying the processions, fairs etc. and she is mean enough
to cheat even her parents. Her husband steals all her father’s savings and she knows everything about that.

After a month she leaves Apu’s house and joins her husband with her children. She wants to live a good and comfortable life but due to her poverty she is unable to do so. It is obvious that in A Handful of Rice Markandaya has shown great dexterity in the portrayal of characters. All her characters are well developed and life-like.

vi) The Nowhere Man: A Sense of non-Belongingness

In The novel ‘Nowhere Man’ Markandaya deals with the theme of conflict between West and East. This has been done with new perspective. She portrays painful condition in which the migrated Indians had to live in England during India’s pre and post independence.

Srinivas knows that he was made an outsider despite of the loyalties he has shown towards the country where he lived for fifty years. He thinks himself nowhere man if he is cut off from England.

The unexpected death of Seshu and Vasantha was aa shock to him. Srinivas, after the death of his wife becomes desperate .Vasantha was inspiration for him. He lost meaning in life and finds no purpose in further life.

On the other side, there are people who are able to understand the process of history and the genuine spirit of the times. They are, Mrs. Pickering, Mrs. Fletcher, Mr. Glass, Dr. Radcliffe and the constable Kent. Mrs. Pickering feels extremely sorry for the misconduct of her son and even apologizes to Srinivas on behalf of her son.

"Nowhere, he said to himself, and he scanned the pale anxious eyes which were regarding him for reasons that might drive him out a nowhere man, looking for a nowhere city." He is an erewhon man who cannot break the transitory turmoil. Thus he is paralysed in addition to his disease. The "non-personness" reduces him to nothingness. Life is something overwhelmingly powerful which he cannot master. And therefore in him we find "A certain type of neurotic personality which has a tendency to
become physically ill and to wait, consciously or unconsciously for an illness as if it were a gift of the God." His life comes to an impasse.

These people stand for the highest British traditions. Kamala Markandaya’s frequent return to the idea of west-east conflict, chiefly of the Indo-British meeting and her masterly treatment of it in great depth and seriousness shows her genuine worries for man’s universal existence. She knows that cultural pride, sharp political disagreement, colonial domination, racial consciousness and the subsequent tension kept the twain apart. Unlike other writers who are of the opinion that the gap between the East and the West can never be properly bridged.

Kamala Markandaya seems to suggest in her novels that cultural and political synthesis and a compromise between the two modes of living are always possible. She endeavors to establish the point that a harmonious union and lasting relationship between the East and the West can be established only through mutual respect, appreciation and understanding and not through domination. The Nowhere Man undoubtedly proves to be a testimony of the novelist’s widening awareness of contemporary developments in race relations at the international level.

Markandaya in the novel attempts to convey the idea of meaningless racial animosity, violence will be fatal to whole mankind. Markandaya describes racial violence and aggression and convincingly emphasizes the need for patience, fraternity and racial harmony. Among Indo-English women novelists, Kamala Markandaya enjoys a remarkable position because she presents various themes in her novels. The novelist tries her best to manifest the common problems of Indian farmers. Nathan and Rukmani represent Indian farmers who are bound to face boundless miseries of life.

Markandaya does not repeat this theme and she describes the East-West conflict in Some Inner Fury though this theme is repeated in her seventh novel The Nowhere Man. A Silence of Desire deals with tension in religious beliefs and scientific truths.

He thinks of committing suicide but Mrs. Pickering doesn’t allow him to do so. He is surrounded by all the odds and ins in his life, first, it is the leprosy that affects him and then Fred brings him trouble by setting his building on fire. He is unable to bear shock
and he passes away. He becomes “Nowhere Man looking for nowhere city” He says to Mrs. Pickering with pleasure, “This country now. My country! I feel at home in it, more so that I would in my own.

Srinivas who was brought up in India has his roots there, but Laxman who had never been to India, is brought up in Christian school, and has to look for his roots. He is neither English nor Indian. He has a crisis of identity. People like Mrs. Pickering do offer a soothing explanation,” 'It would be a dull world, very dull indeed, if all had pale skins and pale eyes'. That's all very well, but can't you see that’s just what England doesn’t think' he cries in exasperation. 'Then it is England’s loss’ says Mrs. Pickering and Laxman has nothing to do except pick up the pieces of his sanity and depart.”

In A Handful of Rice novelist throws light on the problems of urban India. Ravi, the hero of the novel, faces the problem of unemployment. It is very difficult for him to lead a life of honesty without money. The novelist also realizes the fact that many times evil person achieve prosperity and the good people suffer. Damodar, a criminal gets marvelous success because of his illegal ways of life. He asks Ravi to give up lawful ways. Ravi finds himself in a mental conflict. Mrs. Markandaya also highlights the psychological conflicts of her characters.

A Handful of Rice is the best example of the inner conflict of an unemployed young person. She deals with the psychology of teenagers regarding sex in Two Virgins. Kamala Markandaya deals with the various themes in her novels. With her present output of ten novels she has become one of the most distinguished and established writers in India today. She portrays life realistically, concentrating on the sufferings and financial constraints of the poor and the miserable, on the conflict between the traditional values and the modern values, between the spiritual and the materialistic values and on the practice of the vice and dishonesty as a ladder to all success in society.

Presenting the problem of the rural world, the unmarried mother, the illegitimate child, and the poor and miserable peasant, the Nectar in a Sieve is a social novel. She describes the conflict between the East and the West in Some Inner Fury and A Silence
of Desire. A Handful of Rice unveils the problem of conscience, often faced by a modern man.

Possession is concerned with the conflict between good and evil. The clash between labour and capital has been highlighted in The Coffer Dams and the Golden Honeycomb. Two Virgins, lay bare the various corruptions arising out of the enticements of materialism in the rural society. Pleasure City got, for its theme the encroachment and the impact of western technology on traditional ways of life. The question of love and sex, fallen women, and the double standard of morality for both man I woman have found their place almost in all novels. Thus the range of themes is not limited but it is very vast. She seldom repeats the themes of her novels many times. She discusses various themes in a single novel.

Markandaya deals with the every-day problems of the community. Her depiction of these rural folk is not partial. She creates peasants who show the truly human characteristics of self-delusion, pride, self-destruction, meanness, mixed with endurance and magnanimity. Like in D. H. Lawrence’s Sons Lovers and Rainbow where lives of the farmers marred the coal-blackened colliers, Kamala Markandaya also presents evil effects of industrialization upon rural beings. The tension between tradition, that symbolizes the rural life, and modernity, that stands for industrialization, is presented in her works. Nectar in a Sieve presents drastic assault of industrialization on the countryside.

Through Rukmani, the novelist describes the evil effects of industrialization upon the pleasant rhythm of rural India. H. M. William observes that the disasters that fall upon the peasants "are the result of the combined impersonal forces of nature and industrialization." In Two Virgins the village life is greatly disturbed by the intrusion of the film industry. Industrialisation not only mars the natural beauty of the countryside, but it also creates various problems like alien population, prostitution, labour unrest, dearness and increase in diseases.

In ‘Two Virgins’ Markandaya describes the conflict between urban and rural civilization. Her rural beings desire to lead urban lives and the city-bred people want to lead rural lives. Rural people bewildered by the harsh realities of their lives, are affected by activity of the market, as bustle that worked up each time nearer a town, and the
lights strung along the street like necklace. Poverty and hunger in rural areas have been described by the novelist in detail. Rural people often face the devil of poverty and hunger. Nectar in a Sieve reflects the stark poverty in Indian villages and its dehumanizing effects on the people.

Hunger forces the rural people to eat grass and Nathan and Rukmani realize, "that hunger is a curious thing; at first it is with you all the time, walking and sleeping and in your dreams and your belly cries out insistently, and there is gnawing pain as if your very vitals were being devoured."

The Indo-Anglian novelist tends to describe the conflict at the level of ideology as well as people of two countries. Markandaya born and bred in India, and settled in England is very sensitive to the clash of East and West and the tension born out of this clash. Though in every novel of Mrs. Markandaya, this problem has been discussed, Some Inner Fury, A Silence of Desire and The Nowhere Men highlight this problem.

Some Inner Fury deals with the conflict between the English and the Indians through the political agitation. It belongs to the Quit India Movement of 1942. The heroine, Mira, belongs to the class of the ruled, while the hero, Richard belongs to the ruling class. Both of them love each other passionately but the cultural disparity and political agitation bring tragedy to both of them. Meenakshi Mukherjee observes that the novel comes to an full of disappointing notions that the cultures can not blend in each other for the dividing lines are very dominant.

A Silence of Desire deals with the clash between faith and reason. The novelist opines in the novel that the West has withered this faith highlighting it with talk of ignorance and superstitions. In Possession, Mrs. Markandaya throws a fresh light, on the East-West theme. She depicts an allegory of the British occupation of India. On every possible occasion her characters use the same expression as were used to signify the relationship between Britain and India. Caroline, who symbolizes the British, comes to the village of Valmiki for some 'spark' as. The British came to India in the very beginning as traders. But she gets hold of Val who stands for India. Later on Swarni, symbolizing the personality of Gandhi makes Val free from the hold of Caroline.

Thus the novel basically deals with the East-West conflict. Margaret P. Joseph points out that the novelist presents a micro-cosmic depiction of England’s possessive
dominance and greed for power over India. In the Nowhere Man the tragedy of Srinivas occurs because of the racial prejudice of the English and his loyalty to his nation. Throwing light on the racial prejudice of the novel The Nowhere Man P. P. Mehta points out that it is the first novel of racial problems in England. The tension between the western and the eastern outlooks is further described in Two Virgins.

The East-West conflict is very popular theme of Indo-Anglian novels but Kamala Markandaya depicts this clash more sincerely than the other novelists of her age. R.K, Badal states "No other writer is so much concerned with the difference of ideas, ideologies, thoughts and philosophy of the East and West as Kamala Markandaya."

In her novels Markandaya reveals the problem of conscience. The problem of conscience is one of the strongest themes of her fiction. A Handful of Rice is fine portrayal of problem dealing with conscience. It is a tragic commentary on the conflict between idea and fact but Ravi becomes the victim of his own conscience. The story of his inner struggle makes an interesting and convincing study. P. P. Mehta opines, “It must, however, be admitted that qualms of conscience which Ravi felt in taking up again the life of degradation have a ring of truth and carry conviction.”

The novelist presents the inner conflict between the past and the present existing in human beings. In her novel, The Nowhere Man Srinivas, the tragic hero of the novel prefers solitude, after the death of his wife. He is torn by the conflict between the past and the present. He suffers till the end of his life due to the problem of conscience.

Among Indian-English fiction writers, Markandaya is one who deals with this damaging aspect of the East-West encounter with a tragic vision. This tragic vision is an outcome not only of her cultural heritage but also, as Margaret P. Joseph puts it, "the psychology of the writer, the sensitivity of an introspective nature, the perception of the artist, the probing mind of an analyst, the anguish of the tender-hearted, who recoil from any form of cruelty and suffer vicariously with other is the Zeit geist the spirit of the age. Her work is part of what she herself calls the "literature of concern"." Kamala Markandaya, a native alien herself, handles the exploration of this theme of East-West encounter with great fervour.
Markandaya deals with the problem in *Possession* — "Undiluted East had always been too much for the West and soulful East always came lap-dog fashion to the West." She shows that human characters in her novels "to connect" but fail to do so fully. She probes into this gap that hinders the reconciliation of the East and the West. From such a theme automatically springs the "displacement" of characters and milieu. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, the displacement is from a village to a town; in *Possession*, Val is taken to England by Caroline Bell from India; in *The Nowhere Man*, Srinivas leaves India and settles in London.

There were some Asians who migrated to the West, because they thought their own countries still groped in the middle ages. They believed that the East cannot accommodate their physical and mental capabilities. They thought that the Western countries would open vast vista of advancement before them. They hoped that horizon of their experience would enlarge in the company of western thinkers. Each one of the immigrants had fancied individual progress and affluence. The reality was different. They were a dispensable lot in white majority who either pushed them aside shrewdly or employed their services to their benefits. Even after the tenacious hard work the white people never accepted them as equal in status. These few easterners who outshone locals were either publically demoralized or discouraged. The final outcome was frustration, disillusionment and displacement.

The novelist realizes the impact of materialism over spiritualism in *The Coffer Dams*. She states how the machines that man made to help him, are governing him. Irony is one of Markandaya's strong tools. There is irony throughout the novel in key movements. Bashiam, the "detribalized" is Helen's doorway to communication -with the tribal; he who did not want to have anything to do with his origins has to be with them time and again, including risking his life to save their lifeless bodies; he who had misgivings about the "whites who used native bodies for their curiosity ends up making love with a white woman at her initiative; if Bashiam is in love with Helen, his act could be condoned, but we are not given any indication of this. Helen, whose intellectual curiosity leads her to seek Nature and the tribal, leaves her intellectual equal for someone who evokes her instinctual side; and when she realizes that her liaison with him was more physical than abstract, she loses both bonds and both of her lovers.
The deepest irony, as I say often enough, is that Nature that could have put arrogant Clinton in his place by destroying the dam instead lets up and saves the dam at the eleventh hour. Menon and Rao point out the force of Markandaya’s images. "Markandaya’s fictional world in The Coffer Dams has a tinge of poetic abstraction but the abstractions are always reined to reality by means of concrete, effective images. Nature as Protagonist is a theme that runs through Markandaya’s novels. Markandaya’s descriptions of the storm and of the jungle show Nature’s beauty and power. Dam-building as Core of the Novel

The Coffer Dams is about a cluster of characters who are of the same heroic mould -- Clinton, Mackendrick, Helen, Bashiam -- but each follows a slightly different drummer. Howard Clinton is a builder with a steel will who drives everyone -- himself most ruthlessly of all -- into completing a project. In his single-minded pursuit of a goal, Clinton reminds one of Ayn Rand heroes. He is determined to pit his strength against the "formidable natural hazards of the scheme" of building a dam across one of the untamed rivers, and nothing is going to prevent him, not the tedious red-tape of government action, not the proverbial unreliability of rail and road transportation, not the sullen rebelliousness of workers, not even, as it turned out, the savage fury of the monsoon. Clinton is motivated by a kind of ambition that transcends the material.

Markandaya’s final identification is with Helen, but she has made Clinton strong enough to accept that his view is perhaps as valid as hers. "There are some things one has to do," Bashiam says towards the end; and Helen repeats the same words a little later. It is a principle that all three follow. Clinton is a builder. There are some things one has to do, and with Clinton it is the building of this particular dam exactly as per plan. There was something about the project that had begun to inflame Clinton. Partly because it would be a testing of strengths: his own, his men's, their joint accumulated power against the formidable natural hazards of the scheme that he must finish the project on schedule.

The dam is important to Clinton as a challenge. But as with the ancient code of chivalry where only equals can challenge each other and always duel with equal weapons, Clinton has an admiration for the river that he has challenged. It is so easy to see Clinton as a heartless tyrant that I plan to spend some time swimming upstream to
show that he is one of the heroic men with many of the characteristics Markandaya endows on her composite ideal man as she moves through her novels. Clinton endows others with the same qualities that he treasures — Markandaya’s principle that good people differ in degree not in kind, and that the average individual is intrinsically good.

Clinton is challenged by the apparent unattainability of the goal; and he figures others would be too. His drawings and imagination help him hold on to his goal; he figures others too need something as tangible as his blueprints. He gives them flags — "a visible symbol of his belief in this hazardous enterprise ringed with doubts and pious hopes in other men’s minds" Mackendrick is surprised at this act of imagination that he had not thought possible in Clinton. Mackendrick has worked with Clinton for years, and yet he does not fathom the depths of this man. But Markandaya does.

The novelist concludes in The Coffer Dams that those who have accepted vast change have a continuous disturbance in their hearts, that marred the peace of their mind, and those who have not accepted the in a state of interruption of peace due to the conflict existing between the spiritualism inside their heart, and the materialism of the outside world.

Another important theme of Mrs. Markandaya’s novels is the problem of jealousy, suspicion and faith. A Silence of Desire is the most delicate novel in this respect. It describes the decline of a family, after its being stricken by jealousy and suspicion. Dandekar and Sarojini are husband and wife. Sarojini has tumour, so she visits a Swami because she has faith in him. Dandekar doubts the character of his wife and under the impact of jealousy he loses his happiness. Sarojini does not want to lose her faith in Swami, so she refuses to stop her visits to Swami.

In Possession we also observe the evil effects of jealousy in the character of Caroline. She tries to possess Valmiki physically and spiritually. When she fails in her mission, she becomes a prey to jealousy. The novelist finds that jealousy, suspicion and faith play very important roles in human life; that is why, and she makes them important themes of her novels.

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sufferings and financial constraints of the poor and the miserable, on the conflict between the traditional values and the modern values, between the spiritual and the materialistic values and on the practice of the vice and dishonesty as a ladder to all success in society. Presenting the problem of the rural world, the unmarried mother, the illegitimate child, and the poor and miserable peasant, the Nectar in a Sieve is a social novel. She describes the conflict between the East and the West in Some Inner Fury and A Silence of Desire.

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In Nectar in a Sieve and Two Virgins, the novelist also describes the conflicts between urban civilization and rural civilization. Her rural beings desire to lead urban lives and the city-bred people want to lead rural lives. Rural people bewildered by the harsh realities of their lives, are affected by activity of the market, as bustle that worked up each time nearer a town, and the lights strung along the street like necklace." Poverty and hunger in rural areas have been described by the novelist in detail. Rural people often face the devil of poverty and hunger. Nectar in a Sieve reflects the stark poverty in Indian villages and its dehumanizing effects on the people.

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The Indo-Anglian novelist tends to present the clashes between the civilians of two countries as well as the ideology of two cultures. Margret P. Joseph rightly pointed out, "Mrs. Markandaya born and bred in India, and settled in England is very sensitive to the clash of East and West and the tension born out of this clash." Though in every novel of Markandaya, this problem has been discussed, Some Inner Fury, A Silence of Desire and The Nowhere Men highlight this problem more intensively.

Some Inner Fury deals with the conflict between the English and the Indians through the political agitation. It belongs to the Quit India Movement of 1942. The heroine, Mira, belongs to the class of the ruled, while the hero, Richard belongs to the ruling class. Both of them love each other passionately but the cultural disparity and political agitation bring tragedy to both of them. Meenakshi Mukherjee observes that the novel comes to an end with the underlying message that the cultural blending of the East and West is almost impossible because of the forceful disintegrating elements. “A Silence of Desire deals with the clash between faith and reason.

The novelist opines in the novel that the West has withered this faith highlighting it with talk of ignorance and superstitions. In Possession, Mrs. Markandaya throws a fresh light, on the East-West theme. She depicts an allegory of the British
occupation of India. On every possible occasion her characters use the same expression as were used to signify the relationship between Britain and India. Caroline, who symbolizes the British, comes to the village of Valrnniki for some ‘spark’ as the British came to India in the very beginning as traders. But she gets hold of Val who stands for India. Later on Swami, symbolizing the personality of Gandhi makes Val free from the hold of Caroline. Thus the novel basically deals with the East-West conflict. Margaret P.Joseph points out that the novelist presents a micro-cosmic hold of British over India.

In the Nowhere Man the tragedy of Srinivas occurs because of the racial prejudice of the English and his loyalty to his nation. While throwing light on the racial prejudice of the novel, The Nowhere Man, P. P. Mehta points out that it is the first novel of racial problems in England. The tension between the western and the eastern outlooks is further described in Two Virgins. The East-West conflict is very popular theme of Indo-Anglian novels but Kamala Markandaya depicts this clash more sincerely than the other novelists of her age. R.K, Badal states "No other writer is so much concerned with the difference of ideas, ideologies, thoughts and philosophy of the East and West as Kamala Markandaya."

Markandaya reveals the problem of conscience. The problem of conscience is one of the strongest themes of her fiction. ‘A Handful of Rice’ is fine portrayal depicting a problem of conscience. It is a tragic commentary on the conflict between idea and fact but Ravi becomes the victim of his own conscience. The story of his inner struggle makes an interesting and convincing study. P. P. Mehta opines, “It must, however, be admitted that qualms of conscience which Ravi felt in taking up again the life of degradation have a ring of truth and carry conviction." The novelist presents the inner conflict between the past and the present existing in human beings.

In her novel, The Nowhere Man Srinivas, the tragic hero of the novel prefers solitude, after the death of his wife. He is torn by the conflict between the past and the present. He suffers till the end of his life due to the problem of conscience. The novelist realizes the impact of materialism over spiritualism in The Coffer Dams. She states how the machines that man made to help him, are governing him. The novelist concludes in The Coffer Dams that those who have accepted vast change have a continuous
disturbance in their hearts, that marred the peace of their mine, and those who have not accepted the of a state of interruption of peace due to the conflict existing between the spiritualism inside their heart, and the materialism of the outside world.

Another important theme of Markandaya’s novels is the problem of jealousy, suspicion and faith. A Silence of Desire is the most delicate novel in this respect. It describes the decline of a family, after its being stricken by jealousy and suspicion. Dandekar and Sarojini are husband and wife. Sarojini has tumour, so she visits a Swami because she has faith in him. Dandekar doubts the character of his wife and under the impact of jealousy he loses his happiness. Sarojini does not want to lose her faith in Swami, so she refuses to stop her visits to Swami.

Kamala Markandaya understands well the inner conflicts of human life. Her characters belong to the middle class families. She depicts their psychological problems. She knows how to deal with the problem of conscience of middle class people. Her characters face the problem of conscience to a great extent and result is that their psychology regarding the way of life is misshaped. In Nectar in a Sieve Rukmani’s son leaves the village and hopes to make a better living in the town. He can be Ravi, the hero of the novel, A Handful of Rice that presents the problem of conscience in depth and detail. The novel is a record of the contest between the moral values and the material values, as practiced in life.

Ravi has to face unemployment and frustration, and also encounters with the police. One night, while drunk in the prohibition time, he escapes the pursuing policeman by making his forceful arrival in Appu’s residence. When Appu questions him why he did not say ‘meal’, instead of ‘wine’, he replies, “I did not want to buy reason, I do not want to buy reason. What I wanted to buy was something quite different, something that would stop me from thinking about tomorrow because the more I think of it; the sicker I get of it.” Ravi knows that life was a battle in which the weak always went under; he accepted the fact that the man who did not do all that could keep on top as a fool.” He is attracted towards Nalini, the daughter of Apu. He becomes an apprentice tailor under Apu, and is married to Nalini.

After the death of Apu the burden of supporting his family falls on his shoulders. Material necessities are too many for him to fulfill. His business declines and he is
unable to meet even his daily needs. He dreams of buying "a bed, a nice new sari for 
Nalini, material for some smart new shirts for himself, a safety-razor and sundry other 
essentials and luxuries, the list of which grew longer daily Ravi, who has got an 
unflinching faith in the moral values of life under the influence of his wife, has to suffer a 
lot, while his friend Damodar, who does not believe in them, lives in luxury. When Ravi 
goes to verify the rumours of his growing prosperity, he finds him rolling in wealth and 
luxury. He is disturbed by Damodar’s values and Nalini’s.

The struggles of conscience which he faces now are the core of the novel. Damodar 
condemns his way of life, and asks him to adopt the immoral values of life. He 
says it in an ironical way; "If you like decent money, you know, where to come, of 
course, you’ll have to get rid of your beggar mentality, first, otherwise you will never 
want decent money, will you." Ravi now tries to follow the advice given by Damodar but 
finds unable to do so. Margaret p. Joseph points out; "Each meeting with Damodar 
pitches Ravi into the thrones of a moral struggle and his urge to adjust to the other 
esthetic principles is in proportion to his increasing inability to do so."

Markandaya realizes the impact of materialism over spiritualism. Man is 
becoming a machine in the name of progress. The machines that he made once to help 
him, are governing him now and the sounds of machines are the music of his life in 
which peace and love stand nowhere. Those who have accepted this vast change have 
a continuous disturbance in their hearts that has marred the peace of their mind, and 
those who have not, are also in a state of interruption of peace due to the conflict 
existing between the spiritualism inside their heart, and the materialism of the outside 
world.

In The Coffer Dams the novelist describes Helen, the English lady, whose 
husband, Clinton, under the impact of machines, has himself become one of the regular 
machines, having no ideal and no love for nature. She wishes to lead the life, led 
thousand years ago, on account of her inclination towards nature and simplicity. She 
suffers a lot in her own house as her husband lives there. The contest does not end 
only in her ideas, but she forgets the duties which a true wife owes to her husband. Her 
problem of conscience takes her to Basiam, an Indian, and she does not hesitate in 
having physical relations with him. She is bewildered by:
"The people who work in our factories, they have forgotten what the fresh air is like our animals. We could learn from them, but we’re Christians. Then they do not know about sunshine or rain either. Sometimes they cannot move, poor things. We do not allow them to do this in case they yield one ounce less of their flesh. Where is our instinct for pity blunted? We have cut ourselves off from our heritage. We have forgotten what we know, where can we turn to, to learn. A million years accumulating, and we know no better than to kick it in the teeth."

The novelist stresses the conflict between spiritualism and materialism that victimizes people like Helen. K. R. Srinivas lyengar points out: The novel as a whole is a deeply disturbing protest against the onslaught of modern technological ruthlessness against simplicity and humanity of an earlier order of life.

Markandaya’s novels have described all the strata of Indian life. Her characters, not towering personalities like those of Shakespearean tragedies, nor their tragedies are wrought by tragic flaw or impersonal forces as in Hardy’s novels, but they are common men and women pursued by inexorable economic forces and social injustice which toss them till they break to pieces.

Markandaya uses her ironic vision to describe the various social problems ranging from poverty, hunger, moral degradation, complex relationship, and the conflict between the ideologies of the East-West. In Nectar in a Sieve she discusses the poverty of Indian villages. It is the story of the conjugal life of Nathan and Rukmani, the peasants. Poverty forces them to wander from door to door in search of rice.

A Handful of Rice begins with the problem of food. She also presents the problem of beggars. In her novels, under the pressure of hunger and poverty characters have to leave their native villages in search of food and they meet a tragic end. In Nectar in a Sieve, Arjun and Murugan leave for Ceylon to get jobs. In Possession, Val is permitted to go with Caroline because his father "has got seven other." In A Handful of Rice Ravi has to leave his house because he had to live in dire poverty.

The novelist also presents a realistic picture of the crowd of unemployed graduates through the eyes of Ravi in A Hand/id of Rice. In The Nowhere Man, Srinivas often hears about "those families whose sons could not get jobs." The conflict between the poor and the rich finds good expression in the novels Markandaya’s fictons. She
portrays the main characteristics of both classes. However, she feels particularly at home in the description of the lower middle class. Some of her best heroes and heroines belong to the lower stratum of society. She tries to stress that the poor should not be looked down upon. They should have an honourable position in society.

She depicts the lower classes both in urban and the rural settings. She has also presented the arrogant nature of both the classes. In *Nectar in a Sieve* the couple go to the tannery to see their sons, they find its gate closed. Their sons return with angered faces at dusk. When Rukmani asks what the matter is, they reply in brief, "We asked for more money, they took from us our eating time." Later on they go on strike in the tannery. Then firmly decide, "We shall not go until our demands are met." On the other hand the tannery officials declare that "those who did not return to work would be replaced." Thus the conflict ends with the defeat of the laborers.

In *A Handful of Rice*, Ravi prepares clothes with labour, sells them for Rs. 80 per-dozen, while the rich shopkeeper doing no work that he could see, got Rs. 125 for one. It shook him." The lack of understanding, sympathy and cooperation between the rich and the poor is the root cause of the conflict between them. Millie who represents the capitalists in *The Coffer Dams* never likes to think of the half-baked technicians and the tribal savages among whom her present lot was cast. In this connection Margaret P. Joseph remarks, "When Ravi and his parents eat peaches in the palace, it is pointed out that a labourer who has picked them has to labour for one month to earn as much as the fruit in the basket has cost. The labourer cannot think of displeasing his Maharajas.

Markandaya lays emphasis on the fact that the clash between the rich and the poor is the result of inequalities in society. The depiction of this class draws her sympathy. Most of her major characters like Rukmani, Nathan, Ravi, Apu, Val belong to this class. She never forgets that the tragedy of this class is the result not of a tragic flaw in a man’s character or of man’s primal fall from grace, but of imbalanced structure of the entire society.

The novelist thinks that customs are the manners and rules of society, but when they do not change with time, they become tyrants. Markandaya implies her ironic vision in her novels, such customs as become the cause of the miseries of her characters. Among these customs, the dowry system has been described in detail in her first novel,
“how a girl is unwelcome in the family and explores the reason behind the traditional view”, i.e., the dowry system. In A Handful of Rice Thangam gives birth to two girls who received a cold welcome not only from the male members of her family, but also from her mother. The rejection of a barren lady can pose a more serious problem to the society and the individuals.

Markandaya’s presentation of barren ladies and their rejection by society is very vivid. Ira in Nectar in a Sieve is discarded by her husband for she is unable to give birth to a child. The novelist knows a fact that Indian society is a caste-ridden society. Rukmani opposes her sons, joining the tannery because they do not belong to the caste of the untouchables. In The Golden Honeycomb Ravi and Vimala love each other but since there is division of caste so they have to separate. Joint family is a feature of Indian society. Apu in A Handful of Rice and Srinivas in The Nowhere Man suffer because of custom of joint family.

The clash of personalities occurring in a joint family is primarily responsible for its failure. Hinting at this, Markandaya presents the changing values of Indian small town or village and finds their material in the excitement, strain, and the clash of temperaments involved in living under the same roof in a joint family. The novelist shows the Zamindari system in her novels. In Nectar in a Sieve Nathan has to sell everything because he has to pay the dues of the Zamindar. The Golden Honeycomb presents the helplessness of Ram Singh, the farmer who struggled throughout his life to pay the wages.

The problem of disabled persons has been touched upon by Markandaya. Several characters in her novels are physically handicapped, in Nectar in a Sieve Ira gives birth to an albino child. In the same novel Puli have no fingers but only stumps. The disease which was rotting his body has eaten away nail and flesh to the first knuckle, In Silence of Desire the Swami is guarded by a dwarf. In A Handful of Rice Kannan has "lost" an eye. In a way it was still there, but it looked greyish and putrid somehow, like decayed selfish and it had shrunk so that the lids around it were horribly puckered."

In The Nowhere Man Srinivas becomes the victim of leprosy. His case is referred to the hospital for tropical diseases. Nalini’s head grows large in Two Virgins. Despite their physical abnormalities, Markandaya’s characters try to avoid the dejection born out
of such conditions. They are hard workers and pleasant; if these characters lose their heart, it is due to other problems. The novelist has depicted them in such a realistic way that sometimes they look stronger than ordinary persons.

The culture and values in the East has been influenced and at the time created crisis by the West. This is why the East-West encounter has become one of the major themes in Indo-Anglian literature. The Indo-Anglian novelists presented the encounter between these two societies of east and west at individuals and their ideologies. Mrs. Markandaya has presented this clash in her novels. According to Margaret P. Joseph, "she is particularly sensitive to the clash of East and West and the tension born of this clash." In Nectar in a Sieve, eastern attitude to sufferings is summed up by Rukmani, and the novelist shows its clash with the western outlook in her meeting with Kenny, the English doctor.

Some Inner Fury deals with the conflict between the English and Indians through political agitations. Though Possessions highlights the problems of possession it throws a fresh light on the East-West theme. Through the description of the major characters like Valmiki, Caroline, Swami and Anusuiya she depicts an allegory of the British occupation of India. In A Handful of Rice, the novelist’s presentation of the rural and the urban world shows the impact of the conflict between the East and West. The tension between the Western and the Eastern outlooks is further described in Two Virgins. Markandaya’s character influenced by western culture, believes in the power of science to improve the material conditions, and promote progress and equality amongst all men. They criticize blindly the traditions of the East. The novelist is well aware of the limitations of both the Western and the Eastern ways of life, but on the whole, despite her permanent adoption of western ways of life, she favours the Eastern outlook.

Markandaya has commented on the evil of war. Markandaya presents the problem of war in her several novels. In The Coffer Dams Clinton, one of the major characters of the novel hated war. In The Nowhere Man the novelist tells us about the consequences of the War. She presents the historical Second World War between Britain and Germany. At that time it seemed as if it were India’s war too; at any rate the factories were turned from assembling tractors and locomotives into producing cannon
and round shot and in the town — even smallest towns, recruiting officers were thick on the ground, spirited men who spoke in ringing tones of the nobility of war and sent forth their assistants who smothered walls and the trunks of trees and the corrugated iron of men’s urinals with stirring posters.”

Markandaya is decidedly a socialist in her novels. She is highly angered by the social injustices and tyranny. Though her presentation of the poverty-stricken people, or the East-West conflict may appear exaggerated to the later generations, the responsibility of a novelist to describe contemporary social injustices and problems, has been fulfilled by her very sincerely. Like Galsworthy or Mulk Raj Anand, her characters belong to the middle class section of society. Problems like poverty, unemployment, and the clash between the rich and the poor drive them to a state of helplessness.

She presents the natural and wild beauty of the village, but she never ignores the harsh reality in the form of poverty that crushes the villagers completely. Like William Shakespeare she presents the life of princes and kings, but unlike him. She also depicts the differences between the prince and his subjects, especially lower classes.

Kamala Markandaya has got international recognition as a novelist. Her first novel Nectar in a Sieve brought great fame to her. In all novels of Markandaya we observe the element of realism. About the realistic theme of Nectar in a Sieve John London’s Weekly states, “the first novel of India recalls in its savage power an authentic atmosphere of that great novel of China, The Good Earth: It records vividly the poverty-stricken, heartbreaking existence of the peasant tenant farmers of Madras province. But in its particular theme the story of Rukmani, her husband and children there is a universality of love and loyalty that will appeal to readers all over the world.” In her every novel she deals with the realities of society. Her main purpose is to present social problems which are closely related to human life. The realistic problems of her novels can be placed under three categories.

Under the impact of Mahatma Gandhi who vigorously advocated rural reconstruction, the rural India becomes the focal point of fictional observation for the novelists of pre-independence and post-independence eras. Kamala Markandaya is a keen observer of life in villages and small towns. Charming pictures of country life and
varied experiences of the rural folk have been described by her. The excellent history of village life has been given in her novels.

Rural customs are responsible for the miseries her men and women, Like Ira. In Nectar in a Sieve the industrialization mars the happiness of the village life. As shown in Nectar in a Sieve, Rukmani’s joy of married life gets ruined by the advent of tannery. The lack of education accounts for the lack of understanding in the villagers. The impact of nature, in the form of rain and drought, brings calamities to the rural folk. Generally, they love rural life. But some of them desire to lead urban life. For example, Murugan and Ravi leave their villages hopefully for the better prospects in city.

An analysis of the various social problems has been given in Markandaya’s novels. The sufferings of the villagers and the workers, their poverty and destitution and their miseries in the wake of unemployment have been described by her. She has also presented the problems of beggars in her novels. She realizes the sufferings of growing children brought up in utter poverty. Poverty can lead people to moral downfall. The sufferers forget all morality when they are the victims of poverty. Under the impact of poverty Kunthi in Nectar in a Sieve blackmails Rukmani for her visit to Kenny. In Possession Ellie has to take resort to prostitution under the pressure of poverty.

The conflict between the rich and the poor classes finds a good expression in her novels. However, she feels particularly at home in the description of the lower middle classes.

The clash between the rich and the poor brings about calamities to both the classes. Inequalities in the whole structure of society are responsible for the various sufferings and problems.

The tyranny of customs poses several problems to the people. For example, the dowry system is the bane of the society. The rejection of a barren lady also can pose a more serious problem both to the society and to the individual. The controversy t between the socio cultural set of principles of the East and the West has been described by Markandaya. She has shown the loyalty of the Eastern people to their country, and their turning away from the West.
Her novels confirm that the East and West cannot easily meet. The problem of the disabled has also been presented by Markandaya. War is the result of the clash of the fighting instincts of a few members of ruling class. Several people are killed for no fault of theirs, during the period of war.

Markandaya has described various moral problems in her novels. The problem of the unmarried mother has attracted her notice. The unmarried mother, to whom the stigma of ignominy, shame and dishonour is attached, has to turn to prostitution; the novelist has also presented the problem of prostitution. She takes sex as an essential thing in life. She believes in love that is full of sex. Many of her characters indulge in sex with anyone unmindful of all canons of morality.

The problem of conscience has also been discussed by her. The inner conflicts of man have been well portrayed by the novelist, through Ravi, the hero of the novel in A Handful of Rice. The novel is a conflict between idea and fact. The novelist conveys the message that the good continue to suffer and the bad prosper.

The question of rehabilitation of a fallen woman in the society has also been discussed by Markandaya. Death and Prostitution are the only alternatives, left for a reduced and abandoned girl, as shown in Ellie’s suicide in Possession and in Ira’s resort to prostitution in Nectar in a Sieve. An illegitimate child is a symbol of his mother’s sin and shame, as shown in the case of Ira’s child.

The novelist lays emphasis on the uniformity of moral standard for both men and women. The erring man is to be condemned as much as the erring woman. The cruel and hypocritical society allows double standard of morality. In fact, she depicts the pathetic, heart touching conditions of Indian society. Some critics have opined that she has fictionalized the sociology of Indian society, but the fact is that her approach is absolutely realistic.

The themes of most of the novels of Mrs. Markandaya are based on love and sex. She has been criticized for the outspoken language used for the description of sex, but the fact is that she neither ignores sex nor overemphasizes it. Being a realistic novelist, she cannot let sex out of her social picture. The novelist does not believe that "love can ever flare up suddenly like a miracle between two people who know nothing about each other. Love is something that may spring up between a man and woman
who have been brought together by desire of sexual attraction. She does not measure
sex from the social viewpoint. Fairly she sees it "as essential in determining the
relationship between a man and woman as food is to life."

Markandaya does not idealize her characters. They are life-like beings to whom
sex is very common. In this respect she follows the belief "to conceive of grown-up
people is to conceive of the shining reciprocal fact, sex, without which adults are still
children."

Like Fielding, Mrs. Markandaya presents sex as one of the major weaknesses of
her main characters. In Nectar in a Sieve Nathan establishes sexual contact with
Kunthi, a rustic lady. Ravi in A Handful of Rice finding his mother-in-law alone, rapes
her. He forgets all morality when "he held her and his excitement grew with her
movements, her arms and breasts were soft and pulpy under his hands". Caroline in
Possession is thirty-two years of age, but she indulges in sex with Val, a seventeen-
year old boy who was brought up by her when he was only ten years of age.

Valmiki, too, is interested in the painting of "a nude Caroline lying in a pleasura-
ble swoon on a sandy beach in the sun."Caroline’s white arms encircle him as if he were
hers" gives her moral judgments as to how "this is just how she had held him long ago
when he was a boy and she established her claim to him as plainly as if flag in hand she
were registering property rights." Besides, "there were other reassuring props, the
disparity in their age, the differences of race, over all their long association and close
peculiar relationship which would bring an unpleasant whim of incest to a carnal union
between them." Like Tom Jones, Valmiki tries to enjoy different tastes in sex. He falls in
love with Ellie, the maid servant, and after some time, she becomes pregnant by him.
Later on, he gets his abode in the arms of Annabelle an eighteen-year old girl.

Valmiki and Annabelle are "closely locked from mouth to leg to joints until the firm
white legs flared away from under him. Both were naked and their bodies moved as if
they were a unity, with a beautifully articulated urgent rhythm." Bashiam in The Coffer
Dams has the same type of contact with Helen, the wife of Clinton. He takes her "on the
string bed, moving the quickening beats, until he felt it drive through him and heard her
shuddering cries, which were more abandoned than his own"
In The Nowhere Man Srinivas falls in love with Mrs. Pickering, a divorced lady. He makes sexual contacts with her who "had thickened and aged and could not, she accepted, be expected now to please any man." In Two Virgins Mr. Gupta and Lalitha associate sexually to the extent that Lalitha becomes pregnant, and the doctors sucked him out, said Lalitha, bit by bit. Through Saroja, the novelist judges the episode morally, and conveys her message, "It is a sin to bring an unwanted child in this world. It is sin to cause suffering to an unborn child".

Markandaya has presented the problem of the unmarried mother with a touch of sympathetic understanding. Like Mrs. Gaskell who advocates more sympathy and honour for an unmarried mother on the part of the society, in her novel Ruth, she pleads for such a woman. She thinks that an unmarried mother should be given social respect even without marriage. The illegitimate child should not continue to be a matter of shame for her. A lady who is pregnant by someone before marriage, has only two choices—death or prostitution.

Ira in Nectar in a Sieve after being rejected by her husband because she is childless, "flouts the moral code and disobeys her mother" by taking to prostitution to save her family from starvation and poverty. This corrupt step brings forth an albino and unwanted child begotten in the street of an unknown man in a moment of easy desire." Ira does not take this as a mark of shame with her child. She is "happy as a bird with her son, singing to him, playing with him, clucking and chuckling as if he were the most beautiful boy any woman could have." But, in the eyes of the society, "a child conceived in an encounter fares no worse than a child born in wedlock-having no future."

Markandaya rebels against voice of prostitution. She presents the world of prostitutes, analyzing the reasons that lead them to adopt such ill-reputed profession. The evil of prostitution is not the inborn flaw in a lady. But she is compelled to have it, either by the social injustice in the form of starvation, or by her sexual desire. In spite of their fully surrendering to the man who provides only a few coins to them, the prostitutes are dealt with roughly.

Markandaya's depiction of love emotion in her characters is not as strong and deep as that of Thomas Hardy. Unlike Tess who ruins herself, after her separation from Angel Clare, Mrs. Markandaya's lovers and beloveds can forget each other and go in
the arms of another. Ellie’s attempt to commit suicide in Possession is the outcome of the fear of her shame, dishonour, and ignominy as she becomes pregnant by Val. Her separation from Val has got nothing to do with it. He too, is not much affected by it, and does not hesitate in falling in love with Annabelle.

In Some Inner Fury for Richard and Mira, the considerations of Your People and My People take precedence over their love. If their love had been as deep as that of Tess and Angel Clare, any of them would have lost their identity to achieve its fulfillment. But when they separate, their love seems to be based not on a sincere emotion but on a compromise that is violated in itself, "for she is an Indian, and therefore automatically on the side of the nationalists while he is of the ruling nation."

In The Nowhere Man Srinivas is unable to respond to the love feeling of Mrs. Pickering as he always lives in his past Mrs. Pickering, after his death, neither becomes mad like Ophelia in Hamlet, nor does she shed tears, because the emotional harmony between the two was not total.

She does not idealize her characters but she throws sufficient light on the weakness of her characters. In the same manner the villages and cities of her novels have not been idealized. Dr. A. V. Krishna Rao also thinks of the realistic approach of Markandaya, when he remarks: "The fact that none of the protagonists in her novels—Rukmani, Mira, Sarojini and Valmiki, runs away from the hard realities of life by choosing death as the final solution is a vindication of the traditional values of Indian culture, namely, acceptance and tolerance, Indeed her realism is purposeful and her intention is to awaken polite society to the real problems."

Kamala Markandaya is primarily a humanitarian novelist. She loves each of her characters, whether good or bad. She does not laugh at them. Her large-heartedness, humanitarian sympathies, abundant kindliness, good nature, and generous pity, reflected everywhere in her description of various social problems. In her treatment of social problems, she aims at achieving the welfare of the entire humanity. To her, man is a puppet in the hands of malignant fate which is out to thwart his efforts and rob him of any chance of happiness. He seldom contributes to the moulding of events, but events, on the other hand, mould him: Therefore he deserves pity, and sympathy.
A continuous struggle between man and fate can very well explain the human situation in Markandaya's novels. Man is ranged against impersonal forces. Even the wicked characters are so much the creatures of circumstances that they are far more pitied than blamed. Fate is the common enemy of all in a just vision of human life. Rukmani and Nathan in Nectar in a Sieve suffer for no mistake of theirs. They are not poor in the beginning, but it is chance and other impersonal forces that make them meet their tragic end. Poverty comes to them on account of the heavy rain or drought that affects the produce of their land adversely. When they need rains, they have to face drought or when they fear rains, the most heavy rains fall on their land. Thus fate tugs at them, first, in one direction, and then in another.

Rukmani is "innocent and has no personal hand in any of the misfortunes which befall her and her family. Fate bludgeons her. She does not contribute to the moulding of events; events on the other hand, mould her." Thus such characters become the victims of fear, "fear of the dark future, fear of the sharpness of hunger, fear of the blackness of death." In the same novel neither Ira nor the society is responsible for her barrenness, but it is her fate that ruins her life.

Ravi in A Handful of Rice leaves his village in the hope of leading a better life. It is by chance that he reaches the house of Apu where he falls in love with Nalini. He learns tailoring under the guidance of Apu and marries Nalini, but chance again causes terrible havoc in his life and Apu dies. The responsibility of meeting out the expenses of the whole family falls upon his shoulders. Not only this, fate again ruins him by the death of his son.

The novelist keenly observes the miserable condition of the poverty stricken family. She notices that these people "cannot provide for future." In Nectar in a Sieve she realizes that "hunger is a curious thing, at first it is with you all the time, waking and sleeping and in your dreams and your belly cries out insistently, and there is a gnawing pain as if your very vitals were being devoured and you must stop it at any cost, and you buy a moment's respite even while you know and fear the sequel. Then pain is no longer sharp but dull, and this too is with you always, so that you think of food many times a day and each time a terrible sickness assails you and because you knew this, you try to avoid the thought, but you can't, it is with you."
Her characters, who adopt immoral ways of life under the pressure of poverty, are more to be pitied than blamed. Ira and Kunthi escape poverty by falling in the vicious net of prostitution. "The sad recourse of Ira in Nectar in a Sieve to prostitution in a desperate attempt to save her dying little brother is a relation of how immorality is born out of sheer poverty."

The novelist takes poverty as a curse which obstructs the progress of life. It is a sorry state of affairs "in which the weakest went to the wall, the old ones and the babies, dying of tuberculosis, dysentery, 'the falling fever', recurrent fever’ and any other names for what was basically, simply, nothing but starvation." In A Handful of Rice the death of Ravi's son in the absence of medicines presents the novelist's sympathetic attitude to the problems of the poverty-stricken people.

Markandaya's portrayal of her major characters evinces her humanitarian outlook. For example, Rukmani is a living symbol of all affection and sympathy. The daughter of a village headman, she is married to Nathan, a poor tenant farmer who ranks below her in status. But she does not condemn her parents for this marriage because she is aware of the fact that "without beauty and without dowry it was the best she (her mother) could do." She acknowledges "that his prestige was too much diminished. Perhaps that was why they could not find me a rich husband, and married me to a tenant farmer who was poor in everything."

Rukmani’s married life runs very smoothly due to her sympathetic adjustment with her husband. She never complains to her husband of anything. She also supports him in becoming an earning hand in the family. In the novel when her husband leaves the village, she accompanies him. He falls seriously ill; she earns money, to give him medical aid, by reading the letters. But her efforts go to dogs, and her husband dies.

Rukmani’s humanitarian attitude is obvious in her adoption of Puli, an orphan. At the end of the novel she takes him away to her village. Kenny is another character who gets a sympathetic support from her. In the whole of the novel, whenever she meets Kenny, she extends all sympathy to him. She is highly shocked by what Kenny says about himself. "My wife has left me. My sons have been taught to forget me." She fails "to imagine this woman who could after so many years renounce altogether her husband, break the bond that must surely have existed despite his long absences."
Thus Rukmani’s patience and simplicity, her submission to her fate, and her tolerance and acceptance of the ups and downs of life easily win our sympathy. According to Margaret P. Joseph “Rukmani has the capacity for suffering and accepts it, and because she faces trials with courage and dignity, one is tempted to call her tragic.”

Ravi’s deteriorating business, after Apu’s death, affects his temper also. He becomes rude and insults his wife. He starts drinking when Nalini informs him of the coming baby, he, instead of feeling happy, begins to push her into the room to show his unwillingness.

In Possession we also observe the evil effects of jealousy in the character of Caroline. She tries to possess Valmiki physically and spiritually. When she fails in her mission, she becomes a prey to jealousy. The novelist finds that jealousy, suspicion and faith play very important roles in human life; that is why, and she makes them important themes of her novels.

Thus, in her novels Markandaya discusses various themes. She becomes an observer when she notices some problems of society. In many novels she has tried to present the solutions of these problems. H. M. Williams points out in this connection, "Kamala Markandaya treats of the themes of tragic waste, the despair of unfulfilled or ruined love, the agony of artistic ambition, the quest for self-realization and truth by the young—all themes popular with European and American novelists of recent decades (Camus, Soul Bellow, Updike). To these themes she has brought the extra dimension of India, a contemporary India racked by confusion, violence, convulsive, and social and political changes.

In this regards, Margaret P. Joseph has rightly pointed out that the thematic pattern in Kamala Markandaya’s novel explores the suffering arising out of "the struggle between the tradition and the modern, the individual and society, or one race and another" and "the difference between things as they were, as they are, and as they ought to be between the ideal and the actual or between the East and the West. Further she observes that the literature of concern necessarily gives rise to images arising out of physical abnormality in characters, images of the dispossessed and of racial prejudice and cruelty to animals. The novelist herself has this to say on the racial prejudice: "I do detest racism in any form just as I detest cruelty to any living being ...."
Besides the contemporary themes, the east - west encounter is one of the recurrent themes in the Indo-Anglian literature. It acquired fame and prominence due to the linguistic reasons. The socio political aspects were associated with its continuous creative challenge. Englishmen’s presence in India as colonizers for over one hundred fifty years was historically significant fact and so was their language. During the British Raj, Many Indians went to the European countries for various reasons. The glamorous education and the liberal ways of life attracted thousands of easterners to the west. Sometimes the immigrants from the east were able to survive there. Many times they were disappointed.

The physical migration of the westerners to India was also indispensible in the face of their regime in India. They were sometimes puzzled by the life here. Sometimes the deplorable human conditions here distressed them. Thus, the two come together, the rulers and the ruled, the advanced and the backward. The west always tried to comprehend the mysterious east and the east also attempted to look with admiration to the west. Trough such a dialogue, the encounter acquired substance in actual life.

There are certain reasons for the rise and development of this theme in Indo-Anglian literature. First, the very medium of English language, of its creation necessitated the inclusion of western characters like Kenny, Caroline, Kim, and Mrs. Fletcher their attitude and aspirations in the primary phase of the Indo-Angilan writing. There is a creative tension concerned under the physical association between the two nationals. The ruled class and ruling class writer, their opposing social, cultural, political and educational backgrounds provided a variety of creative experiences to the sensitive writers of the Indian subcontinent.

Second important reason of the existence of this encounter in Indo-Anglian literature was our hidden desire to introduce ourselves properly to the west. The Indian writers attempted to delineate the best and the worst amongst us. As a subject race we tried to present our case to our masters through literary endeavors. Indian literature in this way became lingua-franca to communicate with east and the west. The third important reason that directed Indo-Anglain writing in the past was our constant awareness of the English readers in India abroad. Thus, a continuous interplay of the
two over the centuries prompted Indo-Anlglian writers to deal with theme in depth through various angles. Thus a first was historical reason, second a literary one and third amounted to a political strategy.

The Presence of two cultures in one’s mind forms a wider and therefore a saner basis on which to originate the quest for identity and that the discordance between their cultures can be creative as well as merely confusing. The western could never think of Orientals as real human beings. The Easterners could never perceive westerners as mere human beings. The Easterners were looked upon as brute, inhuman and ghostly beings by the Westerners. On the other hand they were thought to be undefeatable, infallible and super human by the easterners. Such assessment did give rise to creative tension in the sensitive writers.

Despite of various differences between the two civilizations, each one has something concrete to offer to the other. If the West can provide progressive science and exacting technology to the eastern minds, The East also can share its rich cultural heritage with the West. The East-West encounter demonstrated the neat, calculating and professional western citizens, who bullied the westerners. Their knowledge of science and universe provided them with an upper edge over the eastern simpletons. Indians were viewed as beggars and underestimated. The quality of relationship did exist in the past. The confused Indians and the shrewd Europeans became the point of the east-west meeting that would never last long. That is why the novel ends in ultimate segregation of the two.

There were some Asians who migrated to the West, because they thought their own countries still groped in the middle ages. They believed that the East cannot accommodate their physical and mental capabilities. They thought that the Western countries would open vast vista of advancement before them. They hoped that horizon of their experience would enlarge in the company of western thinkers. Each one of the immigrants had fancied individual progress and affluence.

The reality was different. They were a dispensable lot in white majority who either pushed them aside shrewdly or employed their services to their benefits. Even
after the tenacious hard work the white people never accepted them as equal in status. These few easterners who outshone locals were either publically demoralized or discouraged. The final outcome was frustration, disillusionment and displacement. The confrontation between the two groups has been caused due to various factors. The first and foremost important reason was that the Western group could not forget the fact that it was the sovereign occupant of this vast subcontinent for centuries together. The ruler-rulled ethos continued to direct their dealing with the Eastern group. The widespread illiteracy, devastating poverty, overpopulation, premature deaths and epidemics made them underestimate the strength of the East. They were not prepared to believe that these countries were also aiming towards modern civilization. Through the novel ‘Nowhere Man’ and ‘Possession’ Markandaya has presented the realistic account of the experiences of Indian immigrants.

Markandaya presents one of the basic points of confrontation between the East and the West is their contradictory approaches to man-woman relationship. The Western people believed that a person could keep his identity in spite of the marriage ties. They permitted a woman to assert her rights and not to be a slave to her man’s whims. Marriage does not necessarily deprive them of the liberal ways of personal life. The East has a slightly orthodox approach to man-woman relationship. Man- Woman relationship in the Indian subcontinent cannot have any other dimension besides the one contrived by marriage. It necessarily amounts to matrimonial relations and excludes any other possibility of relations. Under such diametrically opposite stand points, the meeting of the east and west in marriage is bound to create scores of problems for both.

To conclude the thematic analyses of Markandaya’s novels shows that ‘Nectar in a Sieve’ elaborates the underlying theme of poverty, hunger, starvation and endless suffering in human life. ‘Handful of Rice’ is considered as the sequel to her first novel for its recurrent themes are also poverty, hunger in rural villages, and unemployment and demoralization of urban city dwellers. In ‘A Silence of Desire’ Markandaya examines the clash between tradition and modernity within a family.

The novel ‘Possession’ reveals the theme of loneliness and alienation. Markandaya uses ironic tone to stress the futility of human desire for the sense of
possession. In the novel ‘Nowhere Man’ Markandaya deals with the theme of conflict between the West and the East. It depicts the Indo-British interaction through the experiences of Srinivas, an Indian immigrant in Britain. Thus Markandaya’s themes are varied but strongly dealt with social, cultural and psychological problems with new perspective.

4.3 References:

1. Literary Criterion,1970.P.57
4. Ibid, P.199.
5. Ibid. 9.
8. Ibid, P.34.