Santha Rama Rau has written only two novels in English, but they have won her rare acclaim in the Indian English literary field because of their singular artistic qualities. As a novelist her forte is autobiographical novel with a picaresque form portraying a wandering protagonist. In her treatment of human situation she is concerned more with the existential problem of women in search of their identity than with sociological or political aspects of modern life.

Santha Rama Rau was born in 1923 in Madras, South India. At the age of six she left for England and had her early education at St. Paul's School in London. Later on she went to America and completed her higher education at Wellesley College in Massachusetts. She travelled widely in South-East Asia, Europe and America, where her father Sir Benegal Rama Rau held high diplomatic posts and was above all Indian Ambassador to the United States. Though Santha Rama Rau started writing from her school days, she had no ambitions to become a writer. She, however, got a fillip to continue writing because her compositions were found publishable in America and England. Her earlier works were mostly about her autobiographical reminiscences of Indian life and her fruitful journeys around the world.
these memoirs and travelogues when published as books - Home to India (1954), East of Home (1959), This is India (1954), View to the South-East (1957), My Russian Journey (1959) and Gifts of Passage (1961) - established her reputation as a distinguished Indian writer in English, whose works were characterized by keen discernment of men and women, places and events and their frank and vivid portrayal in gripping and urbane style. In 1960 she brought out a successful dramatic version of E.M. Forster's A Passage to India, which was produced in Broadway in 1962.

Santha Rama Rau’s contribution to the Indian English fiction is based on her two novels, Home for the House published in 1950 and The Adventuress which came out in 1970 after a gap of fourteen years. Though quantitatively her contribution is rather thin, yet it goes to her credit that she has never lost her hold on her readers. She writes not because she has to teach, concern or put the stamp of agreement on any serious issue. She has a happy nature, brimming with the joy of life and she invites her readers to share it through her writings. Her novels do touch the serious and profound themes, but she is balanced and realistic enough to introduce delight as a potent factor. She is intensely interested in people, country, atmosphere and situations and describes them with a keen observation and insight.
Santha Bhattacharyya's first novel Remember The House is an autobiographical one which depicts some of the significant events of her own life through Babu the chief protagonist and the viewpoint character in the novel. Indira Gouray, a young girl, returns to India after her education abroad and is swiftly sucked into the vortex of East-West encounter. She remembers two houses, Kalipur House, the Bombay residence of the Maharaja of Kalipur and her ancestral home at Jalmabad in North India. She deals with strong childhood memories associated with the Jalmabad house and this provides the frame of reference to the anecdotage which begin with the refrain: "Do you remember the house in Jalmabad". The title of the novel derived from this refrain is justified in the sense that it stands for nostalgia for cherished memories silhouetted against the modern European atmosphere of the Kalipur House.

The novel is written in the first person from the protagonist-narrator point of view, with Indira as the narrator. Indira has the basic grounding of the Western education, an open and broad view of society and life in general, an original and reasonable approach to the problems faced by her and an assured manner of tackling these without much furor and fuss. She does not have a submissive personality and the attitude of self-sacrifice generally found in
Indian women. She is ready to explore, to experiment but is realistic compromise when her independent life stable is not viable.

The existential predicament expressed in the culture-shock experienced by India has been revealed in a novel manner. She is in a dilemma because she is both an alien and a native. When she first arrives back, India is for her as much a foreign land as for any other outsider. She had left it at a tender age and continued to have memories of her ancestral house at Jalnabad which provided the formative basis of India's moral education. She herself points out:

In Jalnabad – no one made much of a point about happiness...out debt to the world would be defined, but the promises were all unstated...

It was never suggested that we pursue happiness. We have not been encouraged to waste our time (P.98).

The last line is the key to her character-development which has the paradoxical Indian attitude that the pursuit of happiness results in unhappiness. Desire fires desire and contentment is found in control and compromise. Desire finds out through various incidents and backlashes of emotional upheavals that her infatuation with the western ideals of success, enjoyment of life and her appreciation of materialistic values was temporary. The values
around her are shifted, accepted or rejected as she grows in experience and maturity of thought. This dilemma in choosing her own identity is not solved easily and without disillusionment or heartbreak when she asks her mother:

"Now are you happy?"
"Is happiness what you want?"
She asked me with infinite compassion... "Oh my poor child". (P. 212).

Her confrontation with the changing aspects of her native land leaves her baffled after her return. On the one hand, there is the inhibiting, stifling, age long obedience to worthless customs and rituals, which encourages her to pose questions, seek reasons and offer criticism. On the other, she is horrified with the decadent attitude of the Indian princes and their slow demoralisation. If the Jahnabad house stands for traditional and safe values, the Kalipur house provides the pomp, splendour and vanity of the modern age. The traditional East clashes with the materialist West, when Incira says that it has become unfashionable to buy gasoline from the black market for their long drives after dinner in the early months of 1947. While common people queue up for hours to obtain rationed food, the Rajas and maharajas and their foreign friends simply treat it as a passing fad that curtails their pleasure.
The chain of incidents linked with Jay, alcoholism, debauchery, the family scandal of soiling the state jewels and his gradual fading out from the social circle, further enhances Indira's repugnance for the western-oriented culture. The American couple Courtney and Alix Nichols, represent the western culture in person. Indira meets them at the Kalipur house and they express their enthusiasm to see and feel the real India. They are opposite in character to Jay, full of good sense and brimming optimism, having shown a sympathetic concern for the Indians. They are a contrast to the apathetical and supercilious feudal lords like Jay and his friends. Indira is at once attracted to their 'vitality' and cheerful acceptance of life. It is much later that the truth behind the facade dawns on her, and she admits:

I was struck at the time by the appropriateness of the phrase. It was an appetite, this grasping for experience, this immediacy, this involvement with life. A big healthy appetite, I thought it was only much later that it seemed like greed (p.51).

The vitality and clear sightedness of the Nichols hypnotises her and she feels nearer to them with her European educated background. But a second culture-shock awaits her, when she finds the great difference between appearance and reality.
The incidents which bring out the prejudices, vanity and shallowness in both the husband and the wife are neither over-emphasised nor turned melodramatic, but are full of significance and realism. Alix wears a sari to prove her love for India to the American women, but she is horror struck when Indira talks about the arranged marriage. Alix is determined to discover the poor and the lowly Indians and she claims to understand them and sympathise with them. But she is hysterical when a leper beggar accidentally touches her. Courtney Nichols kisses Indira to have just a bit of fun and leaves in a state of utmost turmoil.

Indira understands then that the individualism bordering on selfishness, the grab and grasp attitude, the vanity of over-ambition and a hunger for cheap sentimentalism constitute the vulgar aspect of the Western culture. Hence, a confrontation arises between 'tradition' and 'modernity', between the age-old, tested and tried Indian values and the superficial needless aping of the baser values of the Western culture. It is here that her background of Western education comes to her rescue and she learns to accept the saner values and reject the execrable ones belonging to both the cultures. Not all Americans are moulded on the cast of Nichols, nor is every Indian formed of Jay's clay.

Indira's journey to Chennur at this time, gives a
completely new turn to her life. In Chennur, she is faced with the traditional Indianness of her family. As in the novelist's own case, the influence of her grandmother makes a lasting and tremendous impact on Indira's mind. It is this influence which teaches her to seek for permanent values and reject the glamorous and deceptive ones. It saves her from wallowing in self-pity when the young school teacher Krishnan expresses his plans for going to Madras and get married. As M. Mukherjee remarks:

'Sambha Nama Nau intends to convey that Baba's sudden interest in the South Indian school teacher was merely a fancy based on the Western conception of love, and did not have any basis in reality. At the end Baba's marriage with Hari, the steadfast, undemonstrative old friend, approved of by the family, is in fact the triumph of traditional values over a temporary infatuation.'

Indira is neither bitterly revengeful, nor totally frustrated, but falls back upon the attitude of compromise and surrender. She forces herself to remember: "not love, not happiness, I repeated to myself, not even doing good, not caring, not life" (P.212).

This detached and stoic outlook is a legacy of Indira's mother who even though she finds it difficult to continue her life as the wife of a political worker, overshadowed by his occupation, does not leave his house to achieve any
material comfort. She rather finds solace in religion and faith and seeks her redemption through her guru. She tells Indira that when she left her home, she was more afraid of the emotions raging within herself unleashed: emotions like love, anger, desire, affection and pride. Almost anyone comes to a moment in their life when they feel that the part that belongs to other people is finished and they must discover the rest (p.60). Love becomes destructive and attachment an instrument for causing deep anguish in the loved ones. Distance, therefore, together with non-attachment is a necessary part of a fruitful companionship in personal and social context.

Indira also relinquishes her possessive desire over Krishnan and returns to Bombay. Shortly afterwards, her father dies and again she is imparted the fundamental lesson that death is not the fearsome object it seems to be. It does not finish, or explain or even alter very much. One has to learn the terms of one's life and live according to them. Her natural flair for adjustment as an Indian combined with her acquired disposition of inquisition and rationality based on the European educational background makes her an excellent recipient of the best of both cultures. Indira's marriage with Hari marks the end of the quest for identity in the realization that her ethos like her own creator's is deeply rooted in India.
The novel thus ends on a definite note of optimism and promise, even though Indira has her share of frustration and disillusionment in life. The East-West encounter as treated in this novel is more complex than what is usually found in other Indian English novels. It is not concerned merely with the case of English people versus Indians, or the American couple showing distaste for India. It is the gradual maturing of a Western-educated person, who learns through culture-shock and personal experience that the basic principles of each culture remain the same, if looked at from an unbiased point of view: Culture of good sense, reason and tolerance, on the one hand, and aesthetic sensibility and curiosity in anything that interests and envelops human mind, on the other. Thus the East and the West may not meet on the same ground with the same outlook, but most emphatically, they need not pose a challenge to each other either. A basic compromise is always possible if viewed and approached with tolerance and cooperation. Traditionalism is not always painful, nor is modernism doubtful.

The existential predicament of a young adolescent girl is portrayed with sympathy and keen insight. Indira struggles with paradoxical set of values and is frequently puzzled about the truth. She observes with concern a the rootless
Indians who live the restless, superficial life, plunging into a circle of garden-parties, races, dances, sailing in somebody's yacht to avoid boredom and so on. She is equally frustrated by the narrow, confined conservatism exhibited by those, who are fearful even to let a single ray of Western culture filter through their closed and barred windows, engaging superstition, blind faith and meaningless rituals and customs in their dark rooms. Both prove goalless for her and in her mounting desperation, she turns to her grandmother for guidance.

Her years of schooling abroad do not come into clash with the traditional lessons given by her grandmother on the rights and privileges, duties and responsibilities of the daughter of a decent Hindu family. There is a natural adjustment of values because she has seen the best and the worst of both the worlds. She is able to shake off the artificiality of both cultures and achieve a balance between the Eastern and Western outlooks.

Santha Rama Rau's art of fiction is saturated with the comic spirit and conforms to the form of the social comedy of manners. In *Remember The House*, she has, sometimes used the stream of consciousness technique of interior monologue and flashback, when Indira remembers the house at Jalnabae, but, on the whole, she follows the direct narrative method and
the viewpoint of a social comedian to describe characters
and situations.

George Meredith has said that comedy depicts men and
women in society, that the setting of comedy is primarily
urban and that the comic writer presents a social and
cultural outlook with a view to measuring man's behaviour
against an accepted norm. Ethel Hameau also reveals her
characters by trying them on the touchstone of normal human
standards. Hari's conduct is to be judged against a norm,
rather than an ideal, and this norm often approximates to
a sense of proportion rather than a value.

When Alix Nichols meets reality in the shape of the
leper, she is shattered beyond reason at this grotesque
vision of Indian life. Trembling and hysterical, she seeks
protection from her American husband. At this point it
becomes clear that her love of India was anything but a fasci-
nation with the glories of nages and maharajas. This
incongruity in her character is discerningly portrayed in
short, swift strokes. Courteny Nichols makes a pass at
Indira and regards it as a non-serious piece of fun; Indira
is jerked into reality by the shallowness of his nature. It
is painful for her to realize and accept the superficiality
and selfishness in her American friends. Even she herself
strikes a pose of incongruity when she has a half-hearted
attempt at a love affair, that, fortunately for her, turns out to be a one-sided affair.

Miss Nau is more amusing than critical in her character-painting. She is reasonable and objective in her observations, hence there is no bitterness in her presentation. The comic sense is always there to rescue her characters from launching into tirades or remonstrations. Even when the gradual elimination of Jay is described, there is not a single attempt at either denouncement or justification. Similarly, the widening difference between Indira's parents and her mother's leaving the house, is painted in sympathetic colours, more in consideration than in criticism. Santha Nama Nau's good natured humour takes away the sting of criticism when she describes the anglicised Indians at Jay's party:

Under the canopy of roses, scarcely noticing the Japanese musicians with their dark sad faces shining, with their white dinner jackets padded at the shoulder and nipped at the waist, their art of desperate nativeness, the series and shadow danced... the meaningless steps were all performed gravely and without abandon... distantly thumping under the dance music and the shuffling sandals, one could hear the sea (P.13).

Miss Nau has chosen a theme which is easily amenable
to the treatment by her favourite comic mode. Indira's life story by itself cannot rise to the peak of emotion because she herself is a character of prose and reason. She is able to diffuse and discern, criticize and appreciate, maintaining a balance through her sense of humour. Like Jane Austen, Miss Neu also uses the form of domestic comedy without a overt desire to reform society. Her plot is simple and is shorn of sub-plots or extraneous events. Since it is a first person narrative novel, all the situations and characters are placed around the protagonist, Indira, and viewed through her eyes. Her experiences at Kalipur House, Jainabai House and Chennur provide the theme. The past is lived through her memories, the present is experienced and seen through her active participation in different shores of life and the future is anticipated through her musings and reflections. It is the author's technical skill which leads her to sift vital issues for treatment at different stages of the story so that she may reject the minor and superfluous ones however ornamental they may appear to be.

A keen psychological insight enlivens her characters, whether they are major or minor ones. Indira, the protagonist, is obviously a pen portrait of Miss Neu as a young girl. The flowering of an adolescent girl into full bloom of maturity is described with sincerity and
tenderness. Experiences, thrilling and disgusting, mark her way, leading to an adult and balanced approach to life. She moves through different roles in her life like a conscious actor submitting herself to the ups and downs with controlled emotion. At the end of her life odyssey Indira finds herself a transformed and mature woman.

Sufficient attention is focused on other characters around Indira, though the colouring is a little subdued in these portraits. Jay, Krishnan, Hari, Indira's parents and her grandmother, the Nichols are all rendered alive and real by a few strokes of her skilful brush. Indira's reactions to their conversations and actions is never over-dramatic in any sense. They are foils and sounding-boards for her, to be viewed with ironical amusement and a kind of detached sympathy.

Even the minor characters like Shalini, the Maharani, the Principal of the Chennur College live in our memory by just one or two vivid and suggestive touches. The caricature of the English-speaking Principal is a successful attempt at broad-based humour.

Miss Neu's character delineation scarcely, if ever, rise to the peak of poetic power, but it has a built-in strength and stability which is rare to find. Her characters
are down to earth human beings with their feet solidly planted in reality. Their manner of speaking, dressing and eating is distinct stamp of their individuality. Even little streaks of habits and mannerisms in their expression provide them verisimilitude to life. Alix's compelling whisper: "Oh hurry go watch them fall in the sea quickly" (P.13), vividly expresses the telegraphic urgency of the American language. Indira's thoughts are conveyed in clear and cool public school English, with a style fluid and precise. The principal of Chennur speaks in kind of stilted English aptly highlighting his character. Miss nau's language has been compared to that of F. Scott Fitzgerald by a renowned critic:

Santana nau nau resembles Scott Fitzgerald not only in similarity of mood, theme and situation, but also in the balanced modulations of her prose the sensual accuracy of her descriptions; the nostalgic rhythms; the artistic harmony with which the sentimentality of the occasion, the youthful sentiments of the narrator and the detached empathy of the author are blended yet separately identifiable.2

She uses the Fitzgeraldian terminology like 'magical intensity' or 'desperate neatness' and vividly paints the character with sure and swift expressive strokes. When Alix first says "India is her meet", Indira is at once struck
with the appropriateness of the word, relating it to an appetite for reality at first. Later on, she realizes its implication as greed, thus bringing out the basic quality in the American girl's character.

**Remember the House** definitely lacks some basic ingredients of an outstanding novel. The plot is paper-thin and does not present any mature interaction on love, physical or spiritual. Unlike Markandaya, Miss Han's characters never reach that dizzy height of romantic inspiration and exultation. Indira is attracted towards Courtney but is confused, rather than shocked by his brazen misbehaviour. She is in love with the idea of falling in love with Krishnan but lacks the ardour to express herself in spite of opportunities a galore. Even when Krishnan tells her about his marriage plans, she is frustrated no doubt, but it is not a tragedy that cannot be lived through. Her marriage to Hari is based more on solid considerations, rather than on mutual attraction and love.

There is no frenzy of emotional despair, no total sacrifice for the cause of love, no spiritual upliftment in the realization of love, and no fierce possession of mind and body by the lovers. The novel shows the difference between the Markandayan approach of a mature woman even when describing the passions of Meera, an adolescent girl in
Some Inner Fury and the autobiographical approach of a young writer like Miss Hau on the threshold of mature experience, still a little inhibited in baring her soul to the inquisitive eyes of the outside world.

Even the wedge between Indira's parents cannot present that artistic pathos, effortlessly expressed by Anita Desai in similar situations faced by Milose's parents in Voices in the City. The characters are a little too controlled in emotional expressions. Obviously, Miss Hau lacks the intensity and experience to reach that peak of emotional height.

The Adventuress is quite a different kind of novel. The autobiographical element is evident here in the shifting of scenes and situations through the different Asian countries, the writer has visited. She takes the reader through Japan, the Philippines, and Shanghai on almost a guided tour. But the autobiographical element ends here because the heroine Ray is quite unlike the author as we know her and as she portrays herself in the earlier novel.

The theme deals with the East-West encounter in an unusual way; the novel presents a confrontation between the materialistic Americans and the enigmatic Japanese; between the victorious and the vanquished; between a country that has
lost its childhood in the chaos and confusion of a hurried development in painful maturity, and a country that has taken thousands of years to perfect its knowledge in every sphere; between the glamourised vulgarity and inherent refinement. The Americans in the post-war Tokyo symbolise the Western attitude of ambition and greed for power, individualism and crue vanity. Materialistic as they are, they treat and solve their problems without any scruple for humane feelings, Cavalier-like, they name their Japanese women, kept for temporary pleasure, "softly", thereby expressing a kind of shallowness tainting the very core of their lives. The restlessness in their life is a substantial predicament which they are unable to tackle neither practically or emotionally. In spite of all their comforts, affluence and superiority, they feel lost, somehow off balance, when they face the Japanese with their inscrutable countenances and enigmatic behaviour. It is as if the roles of the conqueror and the conquered are reversed in some subtle invisible manner.

The Japanese in particular, and the Asian in general, have centuries of patient waiting instilled in them through suffering and suppliance. They bend like the grass to let the storm pass over their heads till the opportunity arises to make them assert themselves. Emotions are never let out of hand to provide the enemy with an advantage. This
singular quality is best illustrated when Colonel Paterson takes leave of his own 'softly'.

Last spring, and it had been raining and the thing that touched him most had been the terrible, unquestioning resignation. No arguments, no reproaches, no pleadings, just 'Indigo waewa ni narimashita...'
a phrase that he had come to know, through many repetitions in the previous months, had the rather stately meaning 'I am beholden to you in many ways...'. His goodbye present of shoes and two American dresses from the J. K. had remained unopened on the torn tatami of the shabby little Japanese room. She had bowed very formally when he left. (P.71).

The story is divided into four chapters, each having a significant title. The main title, "The Adventuress", reveals the theme clearly. It is a picaresque kind of adventure story woven around the protagonist Kay, who steps from one picquant situation into another. She does not hesitate to change her personality according to her advantage and to escape from embarrassing situations. She manipulates the Americans to extract money and goods and keeps her cool to make inroads into their sentiment. She is ready to go to the extreme step of physical relation in order to escape from Japan as an American wife, and leaves on Charlie Beaver to leave his wife and children.

But Beaver comes to know of her deception and after she...
She manages to escape from Tokyo and return to her native country the Philippines, as a refugee. Immediately upon arriving, she destroys her travel documents so that the police may not keep an eye on her. She meets a wealthy Filipino lady at a church who seeing her desperate condition, takes pity on her and absorbs her in the family. Kay manages to earn her livelihood through her paintings and by playing hostess in clubs later on.

Chance again makes her homeless and she is left in Manila to depend on her own resources as best as she can. Once again she is desperate to leave Manila, she seeks the aid of an Englishman Jeremy Wilson by way of marriage (proposed by herself), only to have the formality of being his wife to enable her to escape from Manila. Her plan is to travel as Mrs. Wilson to Shanghai and then apply for a divorce or even leave the husband without formal separation. She reaches Shanghai as desired and planned, and begins to look for a job and prepare for the divorce.

She meets an American, Marius, settled in Shanghai, who offers Wilson ten thousand dollars to flyout a shipment of penicillin to the Red Army. The corruption in this venture staggers Kay but she takes this op ortunity to use such an influential man to arrange for her divorce papers, if she
can convince Jeremy, on her own, to undertake the job. All goes well, but a complication arises when Jeremy refuses to sign the divorce paper because he is in love with Kay.

Kay is, however, bent upon her freedom and she uses the most cruel notion on Jeremy. She concocts a lie and confesses before Jeremy her guilt of adultery. She tells him that behind this back, she has regularly shared Marius’ bed, even though it is a completely false statement on her part. Jeremy, speechless with shock, signs the papers.

Kay forces herself on Marius’ generosity and reluctantly, he agrees to let her stay for a few days in his house. Those few days stretch to a period of six weeks and by the Newyear’s Eve in 1948 she prepares to accompany Marius to America as being fails before the onslaught of the Red Army.

The title of the novel is suggested in the conversation between Mrs. Moreno and Kay where the former tells Kay on the eve of her marriage: “And now you will begin a great adventure” (P.192). Kay ventures through the sequence of events leading the life of a 'softly' and then escaping to her native land and seeking shelter in 'The House of Strangers'. After some time she runs away from that house by the queerest of the misfortunes and jumps into a marriage of convenience that leaves her alone in 'The Wide Mosquito
Het'. She then manipulates her divorce and at last seeks a glimpse of 'beauty, reason, Virtue' in Marius' company and house that ultimately makes her life worthwhile. The plot is, thus, a string of events, some brilliant, some shadowy and some subdued with Kay forging the link in between. The structure is not a strong point in this novel because there is no particular beginning or end, no development of the plot in the real sense in spite of Kay's so many adventures. The novel is cast in picaresque mood.

The story is singular in a way because it does not follow a set pattern. It has a tragic undercurrent follows a comic strain throughout. Perhaps this characteristic is best expressed in the description of Kay's paintings: "The pictures were clever rather than profound" (p.109), wherever the plot demands the sincerity and nobility of a tragic vision to ensure the depth and height of emotion, the novelist changes the pattern suddenly and pursues a zigzag path of practical wisdom and cool reason.

Even the incident in which Kay accidentally steps over a dead child and tears out its intestines with her high, slender heels and begins to retch as she recognises what obstructs her steps, does not rise to the height of tragic emotion, but is dwarfed by the comic interplay of words between Jeremy and herself.
'Will you go straight to bed?
Take an aspirin or something
and go to bed. Suddenly, Kay
laughed 'you'll do that
I'll take an aspirin.' She
turned to David Marius standing
in attentive silence. 'Thank you
for dinner, Mr. Marius.' He
gave her his quick, wicked grin
and fugitive bow.
'My pleasures, Mrs. Wilson!', (p.245).

Perhaps the incident is intended to reveal the shallowness
of an English man and the selfishness of an American,
contrasted with the undercurrent of emotion in the Asian
woman. The novel thus fails to express a serious criticism
of life and simply provides a chain of palatable and
unpalatable events from a young girl's life whose only aim
in life is "to stay alive" (p.139).

Miss Rau chooses her protagonists with deliberate care
and forethought. Like Jane Austen she is more at home in
painting women characters. Indeed in _remember the house_ and
Kay in _the adventures_ are more effective characters than the
male portrayals. The woman characters possess more vivacities,
realism and individualism in character portrayal than are depicted
by the male characters. The philosophical outlook found in
the character of Kay, the heroine is painted very brightly and
convincingly. The changing variations of her name, Kay, Catelina,
Katerina, Katherine and Kate has a symbolic significance under-
lining several dimensions of her personality in different
situations. A Filipino by birth, she is given shelter by a Japanese family in Tokyo, at the time of the Pearl Harbour bombing. In postwar Japan, she desperately clings to safety and comfort by marrying the American beaver. The money she has taken from him by feeding him a lie about her Japanese benefactress, is intended to payback the young man, who saves her by taking her as his wife earlier. When beaver accidentally stumbles over the facts, he immediately repulses Kay, thus, making her a 'softly'.

Kay loses her bet with life but undaunted, searches for another place to pick up a new identity. This search continues till the end and still her goal seems to be far off. Thus her existential problem is two-fold, first, she has to solve the riddle of her identity and to find out the true meaning of living in a world full of intrigues, deception and cunningness. Secondly, she has to continue her journey through this civilized jungle to reach somehow, somewhere her goal of "beauty, reason, virtue". Her physical journey thus has a symbolic significance with humans as well as spiritual connotations.

Jobuo tells her that she cannot decide her fate as simply and easily as she wishes. "When you give a man back to the world to sorrow perhaps or misfortune - you accept his life and what happens to him. You are responsible and
he has claims on you" (P.60). She is, however, determined
to buy her freedom back with money and firmly refuses to
believe in 'Destiny'. But later on, she realizes, standing
alone on the bridge over the Sutiea river that "she had been
engaged in a battle, bravely fought perhaps, but
unquestionably lost" (P.62).

All through her life, she faces similar battles,
sometimes she seems to be winning, may be it is the last
one, but defeat overwhelms her time and again:

Kay had never been given to self-
analysis, to questioning her
motives or assessing any but the
most superficial practical reasons
for her actions, but somewhere
along the way she had come to
draw an inexplicit, undefined
distinction between two aspects of
her experience of living:
situations and people. The first
she found treacherous and
sometimes explosive. In the second,
she had learned to have more
confidence. With people she found
room to manoeuvre or manipulate,
anyway she expected to be able
to establish an orderly exchange
if one were willing to pay for
their assistance in whatever
currency, emotional or literal,
that they valued (p. 211).

Her philosophy of life is to gain whatever she needs
by paying the price demanded with complete honesty on her
part at least. It is this philosophy that enables her to
begin her life afresh after every crushing blow. It is this philosophy again that moves her ahead with the blind urge for survival and endows her with unique optimism even when she is caught in the most adverse situations. In an answer to Marnie's question whether anybody can be happy, she tells him confidently: "Certainly, I am happier now than I ever have been" (p.293).

Certainly the two heroines, Indira of *Remember the House* and Kay of *The Adventuress* possess some identical traits of character. Both are practical, fearless, reasonable, independent and have ample sense of humour. Both are reluctant to show the usual feminine attributes of high emotion, innate romanticism, idealism, and sensitivity amounting to neurosis sometimes as are found in the heroines of *Anita Desai*.

Kay is, however, more dynamic and resourceful than Indira. She takes some unusual steps when she tries to wrangle her bargains. Her first meeting with Beaver shows deliberate planning and cool execution that shows an unusual worldliness and practical wisdom in a young girl of her age. In the succeeding meetings, she cajoles, excites, and exhilarates Beaver so much that he falls passionately in love with her. She even chooses the place and the moment when they become lovers. And yet, though it seems to be so
trite, so hypocritical and cunning a manoeuvre on Kay's part, it is not only that. In fact she finds a kind of release, an amount of freedom from tension in Beaver's company and she is so grateful at first and sympathetic afterwards, that she might have begun to love him earnestly if given time.

Even when she reveals her half-truth-half lie story about her marriage to Nobody, she is completely unemotional and calculating to produce the right effect.

"Dear Sue, I know American you are, you don't understand - do you? The moment of, no hope, a defeat. When you know - she turned directly to stare at him - 'when you know there is no future for you. I married him in that hysteria before he was sent overseas because he wanted me to. I didn't care and he thought he was going to die. And you didn't care if he died. That's not what I said, but in fact I didn't (p.50).

Other similar tragic scenes leave the same impact of worldliness on the reader. Her description of her mother's hatred for her, so skilfully rendered with the exact amount of calculated time effect, eventually turns Mrs. Moreno from a cynical foe to a determined friend. She proposes to Jeremy Wilson, another unusual action for a girl even in the Western society, after leading him on the garden path, after
days of tactical manoeuvring, because he is the answer to her problem. She believes in desperate remedies for desperate maladies and is completely honest when she points out the difference between 'proposing' and 'laying a proposal'. It is a business transaction between two adults and she treats it as such.

Even when Mrs. Moreno presents them a weekend of honeymoon and May has to play the part of a newly married bride, she is unperturbed and takes it in her stride. At the bridal suite talking to Wilson, she non-chalantly reveals her relation with Beaver:

'Love me? Yes, for a while, then he found he didn't. Did we have an affair? Yes, for a while then that too, ended.

—Are you still in love with him?
—Oh no', she said, 'not at all'.

she might have been replying to some polite inquiry as to whether she felt chilly and would like the window closed. 'Any way it seems a long time ago...' (p. 197).

In Shanghai, Jeremy embraces her and instantly she is alert, stalls him, goes to the toilet to take out the fat pad of money sewn in her jacket so that no undesirable questions may be asked. In her bargains, there is no room for confidence and she adheres strictly to this rule. The
most unfeminine action on her part is her forcing Jeremy to
sign the divorce document by destroying his love with a
swift and cruel blow. Any woman and an Asian woman at that,
would have taken pity on his deep and sincere feelings, even
would have been ready to sacrifice her own desire. But Kay
is a bargainer, through and through; honest though she is:

'Have I ever lived to you? She
saw Jeremy begin to shake his
head and continued quickly -
'Well yes, I have - in bed. But
that has only by way of saying
thank you'. She laughed and
watching Jeremy's stricken,
ragged face, added almost
tenderly, 'I was - very
grateful, you know' (p. 286)."

In Marius, she meets an equally honest, bargain-
hunter and is comfortable on her home ground of reason,
opportunity and paying the due strictly according to the
conditions.

Kay is, therefore, an unusual heroine with beauty and
brains. Her lack of emotion or at least the demonstration
of high feelings is a conspicuous characteristic. This very
quality gives her an inner strength and endless reserve of
fighting spirit to survive with optimism for a better future
always. A Filipino by birth, she has learnt the Japanese
language, and knows Japanese customs, traditions and social
manners so well, that she is frequently mistaken for a native.
She is interested in literature and art, and loves music, dancing and painting. A brilliant conversationalist, she is a successful club-hostess in Manila. She is an ideal woman with sound practical sense and aesthetic qualities.

Unlike Indira in *Remember the House Key*, does not have happy childhood memories or wealth of tradition to fall back upon, at the time of crisis. Out of her numerous stories, one thing becomes clear, that she is a runaway child from home. There must have been tragedies of death, accidents, shocks and destruction which leave her a spiritual orphan. Perhaps that is why she is materialistic in her values and cannot understand "love for love's sake". She decides that a husband is the lesser evil by any reasonable count and "she had no doubt that she could provide for one of them an equitable exchange of worldliness, charm and dutiful respect in return for security. She did not consider happiness. In a certain sense, she was not selfish" (P.109).

It is this quality in her that accounts for the razor-sharp honesty in her dealings. With the four men, Beaver, Jeremy, Marius and Nobuo and the two women, Lola Luisa and Mrs. Moreno, she has used minor lies or unimportant subterfuges to conceal her motives at subtle ambiguities for self protection, but she has never deceived them on vital matters. She has never uttered the sentence 'I love you' to any one
of these men, even when she shared their lives. When she takes advantage of Lona Luisa's misconception about her relatives, she takes care to reveal it afterwards.

Kay invites criticism but never scorn for her actions. She rises high above the usual feminine heroines through her heroic courage and innumerable spirit, for her bid to live an independent life through constant and ruthless struggle. Like her creator, Kay also is an Asian woman with European background, having the best qualities of both the cultures.

Other characters - Robo, Weaver and Wilson have been painted in vivid but short strokes. The Japanese, the American and the Englishman present a cosmopolitan approach to characterization. Each of them have their typical qualities of race and religion. Each has struck a business deal with Kay, the enigmatic woman. All of them gradually surrender to a one-sided love affair, from which, they emerge defeated and desperate. They are all bounded by their destinies. David Marius is the one man who can read and understand Kay as the palm of his own hand, because he possesses the same qualities as does Kay. Marius also is the one man, who does not fall in love with Kay and keeps the art ofship going with a mixture of business-tact and pleasure. He can provide Kay with her kind of happiness and is satisfied if she is. It is an affair without bondage.
or regrets on either side. Marius admires Kay for her handling of Wilson, even though he realizes the ruthlessness behind it. He himself never reveals any affection for Kay but treats her as an equal who needs help.

The two major women characters, Lone Luisa and Mrs. Moreno are representatives of a bygone era of feudalism. Traditional and rigid in their conventions, they nevertheless have kind hearts and patient bearings towards fellow-human beings. Lone Luisa's handling of Angelita's problem shows the real mettle in her, which gains respect from even Kay. Their old-world traditionalism and serene charm reminds one of Indira's mother and grandmother in her the house. They act as counter foil to Kay's modern and materialistic personality that changes its values and roles according to place, need and opportunity.

The minor characters in Tokyo, Philippines and Shanghai are an important part of presenting the local colour in the novel. The Japanese eating-houses and their proprietresses, the young Japanese boys and girls and country women seeking from the American soldiers cash for services rendered to them. The Americans engrossed with the problem of their 'softies' the diplomatic missions with their hundreds of queer problems, the American wives, left for long periods, getting frustrated and suspicious and above all
the children, and grow to adulthood before they even have a chance to enjoy their childhood, bring out vividly the post-war Japan in vigorous strokes.

The Asian charm is presented in the characters of the young Filipino girls and their lovers, and is contrasted with modernity in the high brow members of English clubs, the rich, careless foreigners and their wives who turn the war into a picnic. In Shanghai, the rich hotels and their patrons present a sharp contrast to the homeless poor Chinese children living on the footpaths.

The dialogues, banterisms and social customs are potent and successful enough to introduce the local colour of each different place. The Japanese characters greet and bid farewell in their characteristic language and manner. The Filipinos and the Chinese are distinct from the Japanese through the barest of the hints, but are definitely in sharp contrast with the Europeans and Americans, who use 'honey' and 'baby' at random. When the Asians use the English language, there is a peculiar twist that at once sorts out the source of their knowledge: "Often the newcomers would mimic the sad little pompon girls' refrain, 'arro, arro, ci ci, Please. How much, you say, long time, short time?"
Santha Rama Nau's characters have a tendency of anticipating each other in a dialogue, this gives a new direction to dialogue-writing. Jeremy tells Kay: 'Just possibly, it has escaped your attention, but you should know that there is -

- The girl back home -
- Margaret ... she need never -
- Know is what I said' (p.155).

Jeremy even swears in the characteristic British expression, 'what the hell...' The descriptive power of Miss Nau's language is unrivalled when she sketches the seascape of Japan and the landscape of the Philippines. It brings into vivid life the cities, houses, streets of three countries, Japan, the Phillipines and China. Each particular characteristic of natural and man-made scenery is brought out in sharp relief. An unforgettable scene is that of the sea-side cottage and the inn at Chiba, where Kay, for the first time realizes that she has an attachment for seaver. The fish mongers with their baskets of fish of many colours, the racing on the moonlit beach, the singing of the fisher women as they hauled their boats in the evening, move the readers to a creelace of contentment, a lane of the lotus eaters.

Nau is equally forceful in describing the awful and
creating an atmosphere of tragic terror. The restrained
description of Kay's head-long collision with the dead body
of a child in Shanghai, jerks us back into the jungle world
of the civilized nations:

'Kay was the first one to step
off the ridge to cross to the
car, but some invisible
obstruction caught at her feet.
She stumbled and fell to her
knees on the filthy cobbles,
hearing as she fell, a soft
explosion as of a half imitated
balloon, and then an almost
inaudible hiss as the
inconceivably sickening smell of
rot and corruption began to rise
from the gutter... The body of
a child lay in the gutter, its
swollen belly, ruptured by
Kay's high heel, flattening
slowly as it released its
gaseous burden of human
decay, sinking to the level of
the rest of the emaciated
frame and the other garbage
that choked the gutter.'
(PP. 243-245).

Miss Rau's descriptive power lies in her understating
the emotional aspect and complete control over which and
structure of sentences. She never uses words for ornamental
touch, nor does she indulge into melodramatic expositions.
A clear, concise and precise description, from a level-
headed and keen-sighted mind like Miss Rau's, is a
delightful exercise in literature.
Humour and irony play a great part in her portrayal of characters and situations. She has a kind of dry masculine humour, broad-based and not too high brow. It is more situation oriented than concerned with character delineation. She uses her dialogues as glittering and sharp weapons of wit. She can be light-hearted or chillingly ironical by the mere turn of a sentence, using puns and changing words:

"Any thing you say, say O.K. Oh, say!"

The drudge that was Seaver's married life is painted in a few revealing ironical touches:

'In the years during and since the war, he and Susan exchanged many letters, from Army camps in America, from Australia, from New Guinea, from Japan. She had soon worked out a formula. She used to keep a diary which she mailed to him once a week. In it she recorded her daily activities, the health of the girls, items of news about friends. Each instalment ended, we all love you and miss you'. He had soon fallen into the pattern thinking it wise of her to save them from easy emotionalism. He, in turn, described his food and living conditions... he always ended, with 'I think of you and the girls all the time' (P.10).

Miss Seaver's creative instinct is flexible enough to administer a cosmopolitan touch to her novel. The Indianness
of the novelist is never emphasised, she is more interested in herself as a writer than an Indian writer of novels in the English language. In *The Adventure*, the heroine is a Filipino girl, and Indian characters or situations are not incorporated at all. Miss Nau is as much at ease in this getting as she is with the essentially Indian one in *Remember The House*. Her novels preserve a universality that can be understood and enjoyed by any English speaking person, anywhere. There is not that conscious leaning back on Indianness through themes, characters and dialogues as is found in other Indian English novelists. As R. Ramachandran points out:

"...against these writers with a regional flavour, there are a few others with suave and competent styles whose English neither betrays their own origin, nor gives any indication of the regional identity of characters they create. Santha Noma Nau, Ramala Markandeya and Malguntkar offer examples of this kind of writing. All of them are undoubtedly as much at home in the language they write in, as any educated, cultured native speaker and their fictional characters could come from any part of India."  

Unlike Mulk Raj Anand, Miss Nau does not take recourse to the usual devices of Indianized diction: literal translation of vernacular words, idioms, greetings and swear words in her own use of English nor does she believe in coining of new hybrid
works like Raja Rao or Shobani Bhattacharya nor is she interested in the direct use of vernacular in dialogues like *Anand*, or changing the English spelling according to the pronunciation of characters to express Indianess. This is particularly striking in her novel *Remember the House* where the setting is Indian. In *The Adventuroussa* the Japanese characters do betray their origin but the children are primarily harsh caricatures of the inhabitants of war-torn city.

Miss Raw is more a novelist of entertainment than of instruction. The strain of deep philosophy, however, runs through her novel, *The Adventurous*. The most striking feature of this philosophy is that it never even once passes adverse judgement over Key's unscrupulous character and actions. She accepts the view that man is never perfect and that there is always a distance between the ideal and the practical. Religion, faith, ideals and beliefs are based on one condition only, and that is, to survive and have free room to survive. Matthew Arnold would have condemned Key outright, for apparently she is no better than a deceiver, liar and opportunist to the core. But is she really so ? The ironical thrust of this question introduces that irritating little piece of doubt, and the novelist is successful in posing the basic idea that to survive is man's basic religion. Key expresses this very belief in one of
"An old woman crouched in peasant clothes, shapeless and familiar and beyond personal or place. She or someone just like her had always sat, her head covered, her hands busy, a basket beside her, just outside the doorway of a hut, in a post of infinite weariness. Yet the bare feet so solidly placed on the ground, the determined mouth and the undeluded eyes suggested a sort of stamina beyond physical health or optimism. She was a figure from some timeless order of life not accusing, not forgiving just implacably surviving" (P.179).

To survive, it is essential to compromise, at least on some fronts. An iconoclast is always a solitary figure, but the ordinary human being is always pressurised into adjustments, changes and self-delusion by the social instincts. Thus Kay believes in the Japanese saying: 'Yesterdays enemies, today's friends' (p.344).

Kay is frightened and disgusted with the ignoble aspects of the modern civilization. An Asian through heritage, she views with concern its pursuit for selfish happiness and greed for materialistic achievement. In the ruthless jungle, of modern civilization, where the dominant rule is survival of the fittest, there is no chance for the weak, the friendless, the unloved and the cast-away. Kay
tells Wilson and Marius:

"It isn't that I haven't seen dead bodies before - I mean after air raids - and things... but they mattered... somebody every body cared... people spent hours and hours digging through the ruins of the houses... And even the dead bodies... oh, God they were respected... somebody mourned... they weren't just rubbish... I am not talking about the dead, I am talking about the living..." (p. 244).

when Wilson refuses to fly the shipment of penicillin to Peeking, Kay asks him: "Does it matter to you which lives are saved" (p. 251)?

A staunch pacifist, Miss Rau finds war the most deadly weapon of the modern civilization. Death and destruction cannot be mended, and in the end it becomes immaterial who is responsible for what, for we are all cogs in the giant wheel of self-annihilation.

Marius's office has a piece of calligraphy which shows three Chinese idiomograms representing beauty, reason and virtue. Together they symbolize the Jade. Marius explains to Kay the inner meaning behind the symbols:

- 'Like reason, Jade cannot be destroyed. And then like the purity of virtue it cannot be
soiled. At least, that what the Chinese immortals thought. We moderns could give them plenty of evidence to the contrary about either reason or virtue, but they weren't concerned with facts, only with the truth' (p. 256).

Miss Hsu's philosophy is lucidly explained in these few sentences spoken by Marius. Her values are timeless and unadorned because they are based on truth.

The apparent rust of day-to-day living obviously cannot taint these values, as Kay characteristically shows through her thoughts and actions. Talking about Sakiko's old uncle, Kay tells Beaver: "In his absent way, he took care of me, somehow gave me an assurance that another invincible layer of life continued beyond the war and the dying and the chaos around us" (p. 37). Miss Hsu is an orientalist at heart and puts her faith in the age-old tradition of patience, hope and peace. Death is certainly not the end, it is rather a mighty transformation. She believes in the immortality of soul and reshaping and recycling of death and birth as predestined.

An optimistic writer, she throws open the doors of a storehouse of enthusiasm and goodwill for fellow-men in her novels. Kay is neither bitter, nor regretful about her experiences, for she believes life is a many-splendored
thing to be enjoyed as long as one is fortunate to possess it. Kay is wonder-struck at the opportunity to go to her dreamland of America and begin life anew, even though it comes to her through the devastation of war all around. Both Indira in *Remember the House* and Kay in *The Adventuress* are left on the threshold of new adventures at the culmination of the novel, bubbling with renewed faith, self-confidence and joy.

Miss Ray is surely not a unique writer in her field of Indian English fiction. But elegant and graceful as she is, she captures the reader's interest with effortless ease. As R. Ramachandran remarks:

"Her penetrating insights, her involvement and detachment by turns with her material, her all inclusiveness, her sophistication and facility in the use of language in all make her endearing to her readers.

Her subjective yet unprejudiced approach lends a kind of informal charm similar to that expressed by the personal essayists of English literature. It is commendable indeed that both her novels have been accepted as good and enjoyable reading with enough food for thought by critics and laymen alike. By her very attitude of neutrality in her literary mode. She has been able to carve out a place for her novels in the Indian-English literary field."
REFERENCES


3. M. Mukherjee, p.175.