CHAPTER - III

ILLUMINATION AND TRANSCENDENCE

- Some Inner Fury
- The Golden Honeycomb
Some Inner Fury

The novel concentrates on the politico-historical forces which are responsible for influencing the life of the individual and the society at large. The system that generates such forces is decadent in one way, society in another. The individual exists as a cog in the social machinery, the two exist like the 'storm' and the 'calm' in harmony by overcoming the contrariness enshrined in nature. This shows that there is a certain higher spiritual principle in the nature of man as well to make the Being rise above the mundane considerations of cultural disparateness, racial hatred and colour discrimination. The self becomes aware of the fact that its existence has a meaning not in espousing the naked barbaric primitive individualism but in being one with the vaster 'we'. The individual is born and reared up within a parochially narrow framework of socio-cultural and religio-moral ambience but his encounter with the outer world could be wholesome and congenial for its full flowering provided he casts aside the masks and draperies and accommodate his interests, experiences and adventures with those of the others. The novelist has used the 'Quit India Movement' of 1942 as a backdrop to show its impact on Indian sensibility. The political dominance of the Britishers and the impact of the western education and value system deeply influenced the outlook of the Indians. India's contact with the west changed man's world-outlook in the sense that outwardly the racial hostility and discrimination of colour and idiom tore humanity apart and destroyed the inner life of man.
The two stories – of Kitsamy and Premala and of Mira and Richard – are not used as a foil rather they have their independent identity and are fused into the body of the novel to show the progression of the self in state of differing socio-cultural value-pattern. Kit’s return to India is symbolic of the self to be of itself in the native soil. His love with an English girl is frustrated therein England by racial hostility and cultural alienation. However, what is tragic about the story is that Kit remains a misfit even in the midst of the native ambience. The house is itself symbolic of his cultural alienation.

“Kit’s house was different: the furnishing had been left in the hands of a European firm, and there was nothing that was Indian about it. There were Wilton carpets on the floor, wing chairs and a cocktail cabinet in the drawing-room, chintzes in the bedrooms, the sideboard held English bone china, and of the Pahari miniatures Premala had collected and the Kashan rugs she had been given there was no sign.”

The marital alliance verges on irony whereas the fact is that Premala is his own choice.

“The girl pleases you? – you think your mother has chosen well?”
“You have chosen well,” he said, “I am very fond of Premala.”

The narrator’s reaction to the choice is illuminating. He “was fond of Premala – we all were. Since her coming he had lost his old moodiness, which was a relief to everyone; the fits of peevishness, of solitary brooding, grew fewer and fewer, he seemed to have recovered something of the zest there had been when Richard was with us. And away from the Club he seemed happy enough in her company: he liked talking to

1. Some Inner Fury, p. 97 2. Ibid., p. 56
her, for she listened well, he was proud of her accomplishments, and delighted in her beauty. What else? What feeling, more than all this, for the girl he would call his wife? I watched him closely, but I could not tell, for he had locked the coffers of his thought and stood vigilant beside them.\(^1\) She finds something hidden lurking deep in his sub-conscious to pervert understanding and love which are essential to sacramentalize marriage, "I watched him closely but I could not tell for he had locked the coffers of his thought and stood vigilant beside them."\(^2\) What separates the self from the self becomes a point of interest. It is, one can say, the impact of the east-west encounter which can be both negative and positive.

Premala is brought up in a traditional household and thus she represents what characterizes the east, the Indian sensibility and its outlook on human relation. She is drawn as modest, innocent, utterly unpretentious and a darling of all. It is her natural generosity that she wins love of everyone she happens to come into contact with. Kit gets a job in the Residency, and is working as a District Magistrate. But by virtue of his western education and culture, he has developed an individualistic outlook on life which is partly governed by the tradition that insists on male-prerogative not to let women share everything as "certain domains belong to men only". The novelist's deep penetrative insights into the individual consciousness is manifest:

"Kit was equally incommunicative: there is a tradition, perhaps not only in India, that women should not be worried, that the best way to ensure this is to keep...

1. Ibid., p. 56 2. Ibid., pp. 56-57
Thus from the start, Kit - Premala relationship is drawn as antagonistic and the reason is simple: the incompatibility of the two opposing set of values, one which is born with, the other inherited. If this drama of antagonism continues to cast its darkening shadows, the being in the two can never be a self-realised entity. Premala tries to mould herself to please Kit's anglicized tastes and fancies. The two are Hindu, born in the same tradition but it is Kit's education in England and its shaping influences on his pattern of life that renders him an isolate, and a study in cultural alienation. His civil service status is thoroughly British in outlook which is at war with the conservative value-system of Premala's upbringing. If Kit seeks solace in clubs and the formal-sit down - dinner and tennis, Premala turns to playing on Veena and reading the Geeta to seek emotional stability. But her efforts to tide over the widening gap between the two are of no use unless the other party feels interested to own herself and individuality as a part of his own self. Kit's indifference and impassiveness to Premala's urges has no logical explanation outside the alienness of his socio-cultural construct.

Mira's adopted brother, Govind, is introduced as a silent revolutionary patriot. The flurry of war in Europe is over, Govind appears without any telegram or information. The Civil Disobedience Movement is in full swing, all around the demonstrations and processions are organized to throw out the political dominance of the Britishers. Govind is a member of the Independence Party and thus his

1. Ibid., p. 117
activities come under surveillance. His sudden arrival throws Premala into a hilarious movement. There is a rich pleasure in her voice "warm, eager, with a note in it that had not been there for a long time." In narrator's view the lives of Kit and Premala would have been fruitful if they had been matched elsewhere – Premala with Govind and Kit with "the silken -haired Sylvia, a girl I used to know" as Kit himself told. The novelist stresses the naturalness of propinquity of Premala and Govind which is seen in the manner she welcomes Govind,

"he had taken both her hands in his, was looking at her as if he could not take his eyes away; as they came up the steps he still held her hand in his. I do not think he had even seen me, or if he had he had forgotten, for as I rose to meet him he started a little in surprise, then he disengaged himself, and put his arm around me."2

It is not that the battle line is drawn between tradition and modernity or what is characterized by the east and west respectively. Premala is ;not a wayward country girl, she as much understands life as Kit does, she has the sensitivity to share each moment of joy. But harmony is not a one way affair. The marital alliance of the two can be made meaningful only when the two selves come closer and if there are any barriers of culture or education they can be easily surmounted in a household where for want of means of sustenance the moral outlook is not perverted. Marriage in a traditional society, if performed to humour everybody, except the principal partners in the union, does not mean the companionship of hearts. If it excludes warmth, caring, reciprocity and involvement, the very fundamental vision gets corroded which is the

1. Ibid., p. 109 2. Idem.
chief concern of Markandaya in her novels.

Since the activities of Govind come under the watch of the Government, Kit as magistrate of the district, comes to know of his movements. Govind's sudden disappearance in the darkness of the night without leaving his address preys heavy on their minds. Mira and Premala are eager to know of him but the magistrate turns incommunicative to their queries.

In line of duty Kit has to keep secrecy about the revolutionary activities, but the tone and the manner in which he brushes aside Premala's urgency speaks of his authoritarian male-egotism which ironically precipitate the crisis. Govind is highly appreciative of Premala's heroic attempts to rise upto Kit's standards to win his acceptance but it is a pity that the more she struggles to fit into the frame work of requirement, forged in alien culture, the more she finds herself exhausted and miserable. In Govind's eye

"...it was the produce of a culture which was not his own- the culture of an aloof and alien race twisted in the process of transplantation from its homeland, and so divorced from the people of the country as to be no longer real. For those who participated in it he had a savage harsh contempt. But Kit did not merely participate in it: he was a part of it; his feeling for the West was no cheap flirtation, to be enjoyed so long, no longer to be put aside thereafter and forgotten, or at best remembered with a faint nostalgia. It went deeper: it was understanding and love."1

Premala's case is an exemplification of commitment in relation and a sincere effort of the self to be assimilated into the otherness of the self:

"If she had not loved Kit so much, she would not have tried so hard to please him: and the very earnestness of her endeavour, the awkward conciliatory

1. Ibid., p. 142
concentration, with which she strove to do the right thing, would have driven many a man more patient than Kit to irritation.”¹

A decade is elapsed and the miseries wrought by the misalliance on her face are noticed with poignant artistic fidelity.

“I cannot think of her even now – in the quiescence wrought by the passing of a decade – without flinching, without wanting to shy away from the memory of her, her quiet pained bewilderment, her hurt lost face. A lovely face, tenderly moulded, which never lost its tenderness because she could never learn to be tough, but which gave up, one by one, the lights and colours of happiness.”²

There comes a situation when Premala’s acts of humanistic temper that ought to be appreciated are taken as gestures of the defiance. And it happens when the self is bewildered. Hickey, a British missionary is running a school for the village children. In order to overcome the pangs of loneliness and failure to rise to the standards of Kit’s world, she turns to this village resettlement school project sponsored by the government. One day she brings a waif to her home to adopt her. Kit’s bourgeois temper feels offended. Kit’s dislike of Hickey and his school is rooted in his own victimization by the imperialistic prejudices and colour discrimination of the race Hickey belongs to. The novelist’s socio-psychological insights into nature and its role in shaping the modality of the self is apparent.

“I don’t know how you can stomach it, Prem! All the proselytizing, I mean – after all, the chap’s a missionary, he’s bound to indulge – and really I don’t know how you can stick all that rubbish they put out!”³

¹. Ibid., p. 143, ². Idem. ³. Ibid., p. 153
The vital problem is to secure a place for the child as she is found being abandoned in the school-compound. There is no clue of her parents. If the child continues to find asylum in the magistrate's house, that involves no criticism but Kit takes it otherwise when Premala proposes to keep the child with them:

"Keep her!" Kit echoed, aghast, "Are you crazy, Prem?"

Premala looked up her face was white, there was a sort of wary desperation about her, the look a mother sometimes seems to have whose kittens you are taking to drown.

"She has nowhere to go," she said in a low voice, and then suddenly, passionately, "Please Kit. Please let me keep her."

Kit looked at her startled: he had not seen her so vehement before. "Well, yes," he said, "If you feel so strongly about it. But really, you know, people will think I've slept with the serving maid and this is my bastard and you're just being nice about it."

"Does it matter," Premala said, "What people think? Besides, she doesn't look a bit like you."

"Children don't always show a likeness to their father," said Kit impatiently.

"Bastards always do," Premala answered, smiling.1

The incident reflect Kit's dilemma of morality and value. The town they live is large but the circle Kit moves in is narrow where "infidelity might have been looked on with a tolerant eye, what appeared a blatant acknowledgement of its existence pleased no one."2 In such a narrow world of dubious morality, Premala has no outlet for her pent-up emotions and Kit never realizes the dimensions of disorientation that could push the self to emotional nullity. Kit's attitude to the missionary is largely shaped by racial prejudices. In his own life he cannot shed away the façade of the west but an assault on his own humanity incurs an aggressive denunciation. That is his love-hate relationship with the

1. Ibid., pp. 156-57 2. Ibid., p. 157
Britishers and its dichotomy destroys the essential vision. In the claim of each other's pull he finds no point to stand on. Govind's dislike of the missionaries and their class is for a different reason. The revolutionaries look upon the missionary—activities as extension-programme of the Britishers imperialistic designs.

"Kit's dislike was to some extent superficial: it was more instinctive than reasoned out. To him missionaries were simply impossibly earnest people who belonged to a class one just did not mix with, whose peculiar beliefs and habits were beyond comprehending. Govind's feelings were different, deeper, more dangerous. To him missionaries were not merely men who assaulted the religion which was his, though he might not cherish it, impugning its austere dignities in a hundred ways; they were also white men, who not only set up their alien and unwanted institutions in the land but who, for the preservation of these institutions, invariably sided with those other white men who ruled the country."

The culmination of womanhood is motherhood. Kit is totally insensitive to this aspect of motherly instinct in Premala. She tries her best to accommodate her traditional morality with the newly—acquired sensibility of Kit. She is very fond of Kit and never gives any chance to offend him. It is true that she does not get support and love which she by virtue of being the mistress of the house ought to have it, but the woman in her does not feel dismayed and broken. Nevertheless, she is a study in isolation, insecurity and vulnerability the lengthening shadows of which can make life an ordeal for any woman who has been brought up in a traditional society. Premala is gentle by nature the niceties of which are never obscured and if she is overwhelmed by the harsh realities of life the phase is temporary. The self in her is ever alive to the

1. Ibid., p. 166
situation it has to adjust in. But it is sheer irony that she surmounts
the inner fury of Kit's westernized value-orientation but cannot escape
the fury of the political forces. She is in the holocaust when the
demonstrators set Hickey's school on fire.

Premala is to accompany Kit to the government House party but
she goes out leaving a note that she would be back in time. The anti-
British demonstrations are turning violent, the inner fury of the nation
burst out. The new wing of the Hickey's missionary school is to be
opened on the coming Saturday but it is set on fire. Kit and Mira reach
the sight and saw "that burning building, until the air grew hot and
acrid, full of fiery flying cinders that stung the skin and scorched our
throats and fell smarting on the eyeballs, and we stopped, gasping and
half-blinded. Nearby men were standing in groups, in the rain, brightly,
lividly outlined. Two groups. One of townsman, the other of villagers
huddled together, huddled close together, and in their midst, his clothes
blackened and soaked and clinging to his bony body, a course cloakof
coconut fibre slipping from his shoulders which someone had thrown
about him in compassion, was Hickey."\(^1\)

Govind is also in the midst of the crowd. Hickey is kneeling on the
wet ground, praying to God. On Govind's asking about Premala he gives
a hysterical laugh and ask.

"You're Govind, aren't you! I know, I've seen you. You
loved her - I know that too, she told me! Well, see
what your love has done - your love! Ask your men -
there they are!" He raised himself to his feet and
pointed; his arm, his whole body, were shaking. "They
know- why don't you ask them, what are you afraid
of? Ask them! Ask -".\(^2\)

1. Ibid., pp. 236-37 2. Ibid., pp. 238-39
Premala is also destroyed in the fire. Kit emerges carrying her body in arms. Both Kit and Govind are torn by love jealousy and anger cursing each other.

"She loved you," he said, "You never loved her – you do not even know the meaning of love. You gave her nothing – not even a home. You drove her to the village – you drove her to her death." ... "She helped to build this school," he said, "You knew what it meant to her. You and your henchmen destroyed it, and you destroyed her with it. You are as guilty of her death as if you had strangled her with your own hands."¹

Govind moves violently as if he were the very image of the living god of vengeance. A man in the crowd throws a knife at Kit, the wound is fatal.

"He was lying in the mud a few yards away. Kit, my brother, lying in the rain, in the mud, in darkness but for the lightning. I knelt beside him, and he was not conscious. I took his head in my lap, leaning over to shield him from the rain, and he roused a little. I saw his eyes open and they were bright; even pain, this mighty pin of impending death."²

Thus it is partly the political upheaval outside racial discrimination that add fuel to ignite the 'inner fury', the holocaust of which results in the ruination of the bliss of the world of Kit and Premala. The self in Premala attains illumination by overcoming the incompatibility of everything that is associated with Kit's newly-acquired world outlook. But the Being in Kit gets enmeshed into the inbroglio born of the east-west encounter when in the first place he was looked upon as something different by the Britishers and now he looks upon them as alien which finds expression in his dislike of Hickey.

¹. Ibid., pp. 240-41
². Ibid., pp. 241-42
The second episode dealing with 'Mira-Richard' alliance meets the same fate. But Mira, like Premala, has no problem of accommodation in an atmosphere which is both known and unknown. The political fermentation that rocked the nation had a ruinous impact on the life of ordinary men and women. What an irony that Kit becomes a victim of the indiscriminate blinding inner fury of his own men. Kit's killer in unknown, the knife is thrown at him in the darkness of the smoky fire but on Hickey's evidence Govind is arrested. However, it is again the mob-fury and the power that sets him free in the trial:

"The crowd milled round him, gloating, howling, exultant: they had freed Govind, they had freed an innocent man, they would bear him away with them, the country to which he belonged would shelter him, would never give him up until one day it belonged to him, as one day it would! It would! It would! The crowd was singing the words, it was happy, drunk with its power, its viciousness draining from it with this fleeting, facile victory."1

Hickey's shouts "Guilty, Guilty" being responded lustily by the crowds' fury 'Innocent' shakes Mira which is not her sentimentalism but deep insights into the history that has its own laws of development. Mira's concern for Govind is apparent.

"Now he would never return to stand by his innocence; never, after the evils which this day would unloose, would he be free to appear in a Court as he did now. And though the doors of our home would never shut against him, he would never feel free to knock on them. Life had orphaned him not once but twice. Link by link, he had forged his own chains. Whatever the crowd might sing, he would never be free."2

Mira is the central consciousness of the novel, it is her sensitivity

1. Ibid., p. 284 2. Ibid., pp. 284-85
and imaginative vigour that makes her the most round character. Mira belongs to a rich family wherein the two opposing culture – the tradition and modernity – meet to shape her growing sensibility. That is why she finds the Indian way of life as charming and moral as the western ways of living. Her love and sympathy for Premala is a reflection of her deep affinity with the native culture and her appreciation of the radical outlook of Roshan Merchant, the columnist and a sort of crusader speaks of her own sense of accommodation outside tradition. She is alive to a woman’s predicament in a traditional society and never does for a moment its value system posit a threat to her individuality. It is not only in India, she knows, that women are kept in dark, in ignorance about certain domestic issues. That is why she finds nothing odd about Kit’s dominance of male-egotism on Premala: “Certain domains belong to men alone, and Indian women learn early not to encroach. Kit knew, he don’t have to remind Premala a second time.”

It is not that Richard has been staying with the family for long or that he feels himself lonely and needs someone to talk to. The truth is that the self in Mira is not a bewildered self, it is fully conversant with the implication and the tragic aspect involved in their alliance. The ‘shadow lines’ of race, nationality and colour can sweep away some but not all into the whirlpool of hatred, betrayal and violence. It the black is white man’s burden, so is the white man of the black whereas the truth is that they all belong to one colour which is the colour of humanity. This orients Mira’s belief to keep the piety of relations with Richard

1. Ibid., p. 117
intact. “The conventions of his caste were no less rigid than mine: he
came of a race which had acquired an empire”. Yet both, unlike Premala
and Kit, develop an understanding so as to rise above the evil impact of
the shadow lines. While at the dining table, she does not feel uneasy
and can enjoy both the English and the Indian taste.

“Being with Richard was pleasure in itself: but besides
he knew what to do and say, and took you with him,
so that you were free to enjoy yourself; and moreover if
you blundered he did not mind: and, when your
companion does not mind, blunders lose their
enormity and dwindle and shrink to nothing for
indeed in themselves they are nothing.”

Even Richard does not feel shy to cherish Indian ideals because he sees
in them something precious to bring the self closer to illumination. Mira
and her family are highly influenced by Richard’s changing attitude to
Indian way of life when during their visit to the village, he takes off his
shoes as per Indian custom and sits on the floor to take food. Mira says
with bursting pride, “there is no one like Richard, no one at all like my
love.”

It was the year of 1942. The Quit India Movement generated heat
of hatred, revenge and hostility against the white man. Violence and
killing flared up, the ‘inner fury’ that has been kept oppressed under the
heels surfaced with full force. The office of the Gazette was burnt down.
Govind is arrested for indulging in arson and subversive activities
against the regime and the sentence would be a long and rigorous one.
But he was acquitted on Roshan’s testimony that he “spent the night
with her... and the lawyer made a great play of her being a married

1. Ibid., p. 162 2. Ibid., p. 161
Both Mira and Richard are aware of the direction things were heading to. Richard is a sensible person and can well understand the implication of the tragedy that destroyed Hickey’s missionary project and Premala. All around feelings of suspicion, mistrust and hatred were boiling against the white man. Mira is also not in the dark about the possible obstacles that her wedded life could involve in such a situation. There never was, nor will ever be any other person but Richard to make love. Before the physical ties sacramentalize the alliance they begin to have the blissful tremor of the inner ties of the mind. In their world of love there is no such thing as an isolated man or woman, each is made up of cluster of Appurtenances. The consideration of colour, race and nationality are fragile masks to thwart the flowering of self from one to the other. The self begins and ends between the two, it overflows into everything that belongs to the individual and then it flows back again to serve the core foundation of human relations. Mira’s earnest appeal to Richard to take her away to South is the expression of the self purged of false pride of status, colour and race.

“Take me with you.”
“Darling, I can’t!”
“Why not?”
“I must think of you.”
“I can think for myself.”
“If you weren’t so young —
“Twenty isn’t young. In war time it’s almost ancient.”
“I love you so much,” he said, “If you regretted it later —"
“Why should I?”
“You’ve been brought up differently. I’ve stayed with

1. Ibid., p. 171
you, I know your family. You're not like other women—"
"I'm exactly like other women," I said striving to remain calm. "I have the same emotions, I feel the same things. Do you think the way you're brought up can stop any of that?"

Mira and Richard are unprepared to face the strain of the raging tempest and its fury that could devour them any moment. Despite Mira's assurance that the 'fury' is not directed against the persons like him, Richard develops apprehension of being a stranger: "It is a terrible thing to feel unwanted. To be hated". Richard as an individual is not the target of anger and revenge but of the colour and the race that were acting as destructive force to destroy the sanity of the hour.

"You belong to one side, if you don't you belong to the other. It is as simple as that, even children understand it. And in between? There is no in between. You have shown your badge, you have taken your stance, you on the left, you on the right, there is no middle standing. You hadn't a badge? — but it was there in your face, the colour of your skin, the accents of your speech, in the clothes on your back. You didn't ask to be there? Ah, but you had no option, whatever you thought there was no option for you there was no other place."

Richard is hit by a bomb in the court-compound which is engulfed by the crowd that gathered to liberate Govind. Mira's anguish and misery is manifest. Richard is not destroyed as an individual in the fury of revenge but as a representative of a race of the rulers. "They are nothing to you, cried my heart. Nothing, nothing. If you go now there will be no meaning in anything, evermore. But that stark illuminated moment — of madness? Of sanity? — went, and I knew I would go, even as I knew Richard must stay. For us there was no other way, the forces that

1. Ibid., p. 184 2. Ibid., p. 218
pulled us apart were too strong.1

Richard tragedy is symbolic of the terror of history and the imperialistic character of war that has illumined the self regarding the fact of existence and the evil in man. For Mira it is like drawing nectar in a sieve. She derives immense source of moral courage and endurance from the pains of life. The bliss of wedded love remains unrealized but certainly she has learnt to live with the scar of war and the 'fury'

"What had been given us had been gifted freely, abundantly, lit with a splendour which had coloured and enriched our whole living; it could never be taken from us. We had known love together, whatever happened the sweetness of that knowledge would always remain."2

The loss and the brooding sense of tragedy makes the self move from the particular to the universal. It is not the tragedy of Kitsamy and Premala or Mira and Richard as individual cases, but the anti human forces have been alive ever in the past also to enact such scenes of horror and catch humanity unaware to strike him as an invisible fist in the face. "But what matter to universe, I said to myself, if now and then a world is born or a star should die; or what matter to the world, if here and there a man should fall or a head or a heart should break."3

The Mira-Richard story is an initiation story. The tragedy does not leave her a stoic, she has seen both the positive and the negative power of human heart. She has looked into the mechanism of both evil and good. The self discerns its affinity not in colour but in a part of its own in other's self. If life is swallowed up by circumstances and is reduced to

1. Ibid., p. 285 2. Idem. 3. Ibid., p. 286
halfness, it is not all. The focus keeps changing and with the change of setting and circumstances the son will shine again to show the right path. Mira has seen life in all its 'pleasures of terror' which would enable her to accept life as it comes to one to live by. One can say that her marriage with Richard would have brought domestic felicity but she is not blind to the implication that marital happiness and national cause are exclusive goals in life. She has no regrets and does not look back. The courage and dignity that a realized self bears is manifest.

The three women – Mira, Premala and Roshan merchant – are Markandaya 's reflection of the realized self. They are born with all comforts of material beatitudes and are planted in various life situations to seek self attainment. They begin their odyssey with no preconceived mechanical framework of philosophy. They see and experience life from their own point of view and succeed in arriving at illumination by way of understanding the value of participation, involvement and reciprocity in life. The ideal is attained as the existentialists would have it, not by standing apart in isolation but by getting really involved.

Roshan Merchant is the case of self that has gained awareness to seek fulfillment by being one with the numerous others. It is by way of fusing the contrary pulls of culture, morality, education, religion, rank and status that she makes way to rise above the evil impact and realizes the nobler aspirations of life. The east-west encounter and its 'shadow lines' do not pervert her pilgrimage. She is at ease both with the east and the west which shows that it is one's attitude to the world opening before him and not the disparateness identified with the forces of the east and the west that influences one's strategy of survival. The self is
not in a state of fixity, it is in the flux, in the making and man is, in Sartrean sense, what he makes of himself not what the forces make of him.

Roshan is the daughter of a rich mill-owner, but the richness – pomposity is not reflected in her conduct. She is educated, talented, resourceful, self-assertive and a combination of practicability and imaginativeness. She has sought separation from her husband to seek self realization, she tells Mira and her mother.

"My husband and I have parted company." ... We haven't lived together for years," she said. "We never squabble like anything when we did, but now – we're the best of friends."¹

This is a levity for Mira's mother but Mira sees in it the rise of something new which her own spirit is aspiring to attain. She feels that "there was something about her that was turbulent and unafraid which you sensed beneath the sparkling surface she presented; and I admired her because she stood alone and thought nothing of it."²

Roshan's honesty of heart and frankness of conduct that the swamy preached to Valmiki (possession) cast a spell on Mira's sensibility. There is no touch of deception, prudery and hypocrisy in her manners. Mira's worship of her as an ideal is based on certain intrinsic values that illumines the self. Mira is highly grateful to Roshan for awakening her mind to the new experiences in life.

"She gave me the chance to go, and I took it: and though I left my home, with its peaceful ordered living, its tender setting in the countryside, its mellow sights and sounds, its myriad scents from syringa buds at dawn to Queen-of-the-night at dusk: though I left all

¹. Ibid., p. 70 ². Ibid., 71
this that I loved to live in a city that was arid and brown, still it was a fair exchange, for-more precious than any of these – I discovered at last the gateway to the freedoms of the mind, and gazed entranced upon that vista of endless extensions of which the spirit is capable."1

Roshan started a columnist for a paper which later she bought. She joined the freedom struggle movement as an activist and was imprisoned for three months. She is thus the illustration of the novelist’s commitment to issues larger than private consciousness and the grievances related to her race. She is endowed with a world-outlook that does not feel scared in face of the barriers of sex, religion, politics and evils of economism. The two concepts of freedom – personal and social – meet in her with no trace of antagonism.

"There was something in her, a flame, a vitality, which drew people to her despite themselves; and this quality, which she possessed so lightly as hardly to be aware of it, enabled her to surmount the barriers not only to race and creed, but also – perhaps even more formidable – that of politics."2

The model of a dam on her table stands as a symbolic projection of her positive view of freedom and creativeness. That is one reason of her confrontation with Govind’s choice of violence to fight the Britishers. She says to Govind

"We want your help," he said to her bluntly, "We need all the help we can get from people like you."  
Roshan looked up: "We? Who is we?"  
"Myself and my associates."

"And who are your associates?"

"Those who interest themselves in freedom," he said slowly, "As I think you know."

Roshan did not reply at once, she seemed to be studying her finger-nails; then at last she said, equally slowly,

1. Ibid., p. 71 2. Ibid., p. 174
“Everybody is interested in freedom ... only, we do not all agree on the means to the end, as I think you know too.”

He nodded: “Differences of opinion are not bars to service,” he said to her, “We need people who can organize, and lead ... not everyone has the gift. We need people who are not afraid of prison.”

Though she has her differences with Govind on certain matters yet the interests of the two is larger than personal. The outlook of the activists brought a radical change in Roshan’s philosophy of life. She wholeheartedly supported the boycott-call of the British goods and “stopped smoking, she gave up, regrettfully, using lipstick, until one joyous day she met an American officer, who kept her supplied with American brands.” But she refused to turn her back upon her English friends and associates because she found them as individuals “pleasing, humane, civilized, charming.” This is a reflection of her humanistic outlook on human relations and the fashioning of self on the line which is not to be corrupted by evils of colonialism and the sordid considerations of orthodoxy.

Roshan fully understands the limitations of an activist in time of turbulence and fury. It is she who came out in Govind’s defence to bail him out when he is arrested. She swears unhesitatingly in the court of law that Govind had spent the night with her when Hickey’s school was set on fire. She is truly a remarkable creation of a transcended self.

Thus the three women – Premala, Mira, Roshan – are the illustration of a self that has arrived at illumination. Each seeks fulfillment in her own way. And if there is failure and tragedy, it is not

1. Ibid., pp. 125-26
2. Ibid., pp. 173-74
the result of their imperfect vision. The evil exists in the system that prompts a wrong value – orientation. It is the aliveness of the self and the acceptance of its limitations that can enable it to resolve the conflicting social muddle and evolve an ultimate outlook on life.

***
**The Golden Honeycomb**

In *The Golden Honeycomb* the canvas becomes wider, a variegated spectrum of humanity representing the divergent facets of the self but in the melee of rank and station, colour and race the fundamental spiritual vision is not obscured. The state is a princely state of Devapur in colonial setting, which is to be succeeded by the illegitimate son of Bawajiraj III and his mistress, Mohini. The issue of succession is not the focal point, the interest lies in how the self rises above another variant of the east-west incompatibility which is manifest in the pattern of relationship between the royal personages and the commoners on the one hand and the native and the non-native on the other. The novel at one level is also an artistic rendering of the dissolution of the state when the waves of democracy and freedom gained momentum. Markandaya sets before us characters belonging to different caste, colour, creed and nationality but their individuality is less perturbed by the factors which destroyed that of the other characters in the earlier novels.

There is Her Highness, the Dowager Maharani, Manjula, Mohini, the concubine to Bawajiraj, Usha, the daughter of the Dewan, and the rank of the commoners is represented by the two girls, Jaya and Janaki. Sophie, the Resident’s daughter makes her presence conspicuous by her dominating influence on Rabi, the would-be Maharaja of the state. Manjula, Mohini, Usha and Rabi share in common the state of heightened consciousness which shows that the distinction of rank or class plays little role in the preservation of self and individuality. It is in this state that the self moves towards social concern so as to establish the right relation with the people outside.
Manjula's majesticity casts an enduring impact on the things to emerge. Her pilgrimage in the story is of initiation that makes the self break the barriers of alien practices and be of itself. She was married to Bawajiraj II at the age of 13. When she is brought to the palace she at once becomes aware of the power-centre controlling the state- the British Resident and the Brahmin Dewan. The novelist digs at the evil practice prevalent in the palaces which is to arrange a wet-nurse for the prince. The state machinery is so cruel that it undermines its savagery and takes pride in its prevalence as if it were the sole mark of their nobility and grandeur. This is outrageous and insulting to the mother-image and its privileges. The thing is also helpless to change the system in the interest of the state and the child, the queen has to bear it so timidly:

"The Maharani weeps from frustration. She places rough hands upon her breasts and squeezes them brutally. The milk spurts out rich and abundant; the bed-clothes are drenched. The waste, the waste,' she cries furiously. 'You expect me to waste this precious fluid! Vandals!' She rips the lacy wraps with which the maidservants are endeavouring to cover her."

The Maharajah comes in on the disorderly scene. He has had to dislodge a score of supernumeraries before he can do so. He kneels by the bed. 'Perhaps they know best,' he soothes his disheveled wife."1

As per tradition in a princely state the education of the prince is to be eclectic so as to harness the interest of the rulers. And thus the suitable arrangements are made for Rabi's education. Mr. Barrington is engaged as a tutor which is the beginning of the process of alienation of the prince from the ancient pride and the glory of the nation. The

1. The Golden Honeycomb, p. 14
education which is imparted to the prince is a distortion of history in the sense that it highlights the British nobility and ignores the humanistic tradition and virtue of the Indian Rajas and Maharajas.

“The chronicles of his own country are, inevitably, curtailed, beginning summarily with the European connection; and of his own ancestral history he is given the barest bones. The plight of his deposed kinsman, the manner of his deposition, are disposed of in a few sentences; but the story of the Great Queen, the human circumstance of her accession in girlhood and early bereavement are so vividly portrayed, the wisdom and benevolence of her rule and that of her Ministers so enthusiastically, communicated, that it becomes a matter of pride to consider himself her subject.”

However, Rabi grows up under the care of Manjula. The child tugs at her sari, she takes him on her lap and tells heroic tales of the heroes which makes Bawajiraj feel uneasy. For him it is the interference with the education of the son:

“Why do you tell him these stories?’...
‘Why shouldn’t I tell him these stories?’
‘They’re so half-baked! They’re only legends!’
‘Legends are the blood history of a country.’
‘He’ll learn history properly, when the time comes for it.’
‘Your kind of history.’
‘My kind of history! History is facts!’
‘How can you be so naïve?’
‘Me – naïve? It’s you! You’ve believed every story your nursemaid ever told you.’
‘Nursemaids are as truthful as tutors.’
‘Do you mean my tutors were liars?’
‘They saw the truth differently.’
‘Facts are facts.’
‘They can be slanted.’

The Maharani takes Rabi to places associated with the past glories of the rulers of Devapur state so as to make him identify with the ancestors.

1. Ibid., pp. 17-18 2. Ibid. p. 48
"Your grandfather, my husband, worshipped in this temple,' the Dowager Maharani tells her grandson. 'And before that his forbear, the first Bawajiraj—'
'
'Who died in the fortress-prison the British put him in?'

The same. And before him his father, who was a gallant chieftain. He extended the dominions he had received from his father and handed them down to his children... They put down stones to mark the boundaries, the boulders are still there, you can see them to this day..."1

The pastness of the past has an invigorating impact on Rabi's mind:

"The past advances, reaches into his present. The present elongates into the future in a way he cannot quite envisage, but he sees as a whole the process he has been apt to chop into three."2 He thus develops a philosophy having its own morality of ruling the people under the alien yoke. The state is the 'golden honeycomb' and the rulers are made to hovering around it like bees to suck the sweetness of power without being aware of the impermanence of gold. Manjula becomes conscious of this strategy of the Britishers and moulds Rabi's conscience and sensibility to keep his nativity intact. Rabi knows that the English will not sanction his legitimate ascendancy to the thrown, nor he has the passion to be the ruler of the state unless he is free to rule his own people who are "always hungry".

"I'm not your heir. I can never be the Maharajah. The English won't allow it."

'Ah, my son, my son! Why do you say these things? If I want you to be the Maharajah then one day you will be the Mahrajah.'

Now it is said, Bawajiraj sincerely believes he ha the power, provided Shanta Devi does not produce a legitimate heir. So far she has not.

'I don't want to be the Maharajah.'

'Just pretend!'
'No.'
'All right then, I'll be Maharajah and you be my people.'
'I don't want to be your people. Your people are always hungry.'

He understands the 'gold-gilt' complex and turns to Bawajiraj partly to make him conscious of the declining graph of the state-ancestry.

"I like your throne," he says. He runs his hands over the arms, which end in a pair of carved, gilded, magnificent lions' heads.
'Do you?'
'Yes, it's not a real one, is it?'
'Of course it is! What do you mean?'
'It's only gilt.'
'It's gold.'
'It's gilt. The old one was gold. The British took it away, my grandmother says, from my ancestors, after they were defeated in battle.'
'That old story!'
'Isn't it true?'
Bawajiraj is flummoxed."

Bawajiraj and the Maharani are well aware of the tragic irony involving the rulers' strategy which is to isolate the native rulers from his people by means of creating walls of culture and education. The king has conscience to have the whole system reorchestrated but what he fears is the loss of crown. The Maharani thus questions the arrangement of Rabi's education but Bawajiraj takes it a usual stately process. She has her view about the philosophy of ruling: the ruler first is to acquaint himself with the state and the people he has to rule than to identify himself with the alien – orientation. But such an attitude is dismissed jocularly as something backward – looking and devastatingly hostile to the growth of a new sensibility. The queen is fully aware of the well-being of the state under the dominance of the alien rulers. And thus her

1. Ibid., p. 63
2. Idem.
dislike of the English is not a corollary of the racial prejudices but a display of humanism and a passion to be free.

Manjula remains a power behind the state, the Agent and the Dewan have no easy access to her. They know that she can not be so humoured by publicity. Thus it is she who sows the seeds of rebellion in the masses and instills in Rabi a sense of responsibility that he as the heir owes to himself and to the state.

It so happens that Bawajiraj dies in an accident during a hunting campaign. A cobra frightened the horse he was riding. He fell down and the fall was fatal. His back was broken. Manjula is drawn on the pattern of the great warrior-queens of Indian history and thus she bears the tragic death of the Maharaja patiently like a heroic character. The novelist stresses the grandeur, the royal dignity and the strength of her character.

"The women waiting in the ante-chamber in silence have intended to break into weeping and wailing, but are quelled by her appearance. She is like wax, an unlit candle. No tears have coursed down or marred her countenance. She walks between the women – none dares aid her – and enters her sanctuary"\(^1\)

Manjula preserves her own identity in the face of the assault and battery of the Wily Britishers after the death of the Maharaja. She is brave and remains undismayed till the end of her life. She dies as desired by "no fuss" : "So without fuss he (Rabi) lit the pyre, performing a duty which had skipped a generation to devolve on him."\(^2\)

The two women, Mohini and Shanta Devi are drawn in relation to Bawajiraj III: one happens to be his wife, the queen of Devapur, the

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 25 \(^2\) Ibid., p. 376
other is a mistress. Shanti Devi comes from a family of rich tradition. She is handsome, gentle and her docility is stressed which even "enchants the Agent". But what she lacks is the spirit and insight to look beyond the surface reality which was rather harrowing for Manjula: "Manjula sighs but rationalises: spirited responses are not conducive to happiness under the British Raj and happiness is what she must seek for her son."¹

Since Shanta Devi could not beget a male-heir, Bawajiraj is forced into a series of liaisons with the women until he meets Mohini, the spirited girl from the mountain valley. She is least swept away by the royal, rarefied atmosphere. How the woman is crushed in the grinding mill of the tradition is reflected in Shanta Devi's plight who even in state of legitimacy is pushed aside by the evil practice of having a concubine in the palace.

Mohini is a distant relation of Manjula and was "sent as retainer and companion to the widowed Maharani". Soon Bawajiraj is drawn to her and Mohini stays as a concubine replacing Shanta Devi whom, it is told, the Majaraja never loved for her failure to beget a male child. Mohini is in the state of pregnancy and the manner in which she asserts her individuality is certainly not that of a woman whose relation is not regularize:

"If it's a boy,' he begins. The opportunity to finish is snatched from him. 'If it's a daughter then I can fend for her myself, call her what I like, do with her as I please, she will be mine alone, is that what you're saying?' 'No, no.'

¹. Ibid., p. 22
'A miraculous conception.'
'No, of course I am not saying that.'
'Or if it's imperfect – a cripple or a monster – then I'm the mother, but you're not the father.'
'No, no.'
'But if it's a fine handsome son, then naturally you are the father.'
'Why are you so hard on me?'

Since Mohini is not his lawful wife, it is feared that the Maharaja may not recognize the child as his own. Mohini's tone grows sarcastic:

"Then why can't you recognize the child?"
'I've told you why!'
'The truth is you're not master in your own house.
You're only a nam-ke-vaste king.'
'How can you be so silly?' The Maharajah heaves deep sighs. 'You're a woman, women don't understand these things.'
'I do. I understand very well. I'm not like your other women.'

Mohini gives birth to a male child who on Manjula's suggestion, is named Rabi after Rabindranath, the great poet. But what is significant is that Mohini never lets her individuality and freedom slip from her fingers, the spirit of which is filtered downward into the consciousness of her son also.

The Delhi Durbar held in December of 1902 it is a part of the socio-political life of the British Raj. "The socio-political history of the British in India was similarly studded with Durbars, Jubilees, Proclamations, Depositions, Accessions, Investitures, King-Emperor's and Queen-Empress's Birthday Celebrations, and State Arrivals and Departures." to keep the native rulers under servitude and surveillance. The issues such as – who would accompany the Maharaja to Delhi, what arrangements are made for the royal family – are the points of interest.

1. Ibid., p. 35 2. Ibid., p. 36 3. Ibid., p. 130
Both Rabi and the tutor, the Pandit, it is told, are excluded from the list by Sir Arthur. "He has, indeed, himself suggested Rabi's attendance at the Durbar as an antidote to the indoctrination the boy has undoubtedly suffered on the extended pilgrimage or whatever at the hands of this Pandit. He has coupled the suggestion with a proviso that the Pandit be excluded. The man's presence at a function of this nature will have, the Resident indicates, a disastrous influence on Rabi. The boy's mind is plastic. It is highly desirable he should carry away from the Durbar impressions and interpretations of the most correct kind, whereas the tutor is known for the disloyal slant of thought, word, and deed."¹ This brings out the helplessness of the Indian rulers and shows how their existence was reduced to gaudy puppets. How strange that they can not take with them persons of their like? Mohini also feels that she could be dropped on the plea of her not being a legitimate queen.

"Who will be attending?"
'Well, I shall naturally. And Rabi, I hope.'
'And the Maharani.'
'Yes.'
'And I?'
'You too, I hope. Yes, certainly, you too.'

Mohini is suspicious, of what she isn't sure yet. Led by purest instinct she hunches up her shoulders and conjures up the tall, slightly stooping figure of the Resident.
'Does the Bania Sahib know?'
'I wish you wouldn't call him that.'
'Why not? What does he call me?'
'Nothing.'
'Correct. I'm invisible as far as he's concerned. He can't even grant my existence.'
'It's not like that.'
'What is it like?'
'It's a matter of protocol. Sir Arthur-
'I don't care about Sir Arthur!'
'has to make suitable arrangements-'  
'to put me in my place, is that it? Some hole, for the kept woman?'  
'Mohini, I assure you-'  
'What can you assure me of?'
'If the arrangements were in my hands-'  
'But they're not, are they?'  
'How can they be? Hundreds of miles away? For a durbar in Delhi?'

During one such celebration, both Shanta Devi and Mohini accompany Bawajiraj to Delhi and the mode of communication that goes between the three brings out Shanta Devi's dwindling individuality "to monosyllables and silences". The impassioned murmur rising from Mohini's tent is an expression of her stance of questioning the relevance of Rabi's becoming a cadet. She brushes aside the idea as suggested by the Raja of Krishnapur laconically which at once establishes her sway over the ruling prince.

"It's a frightful idea.'  
'The Corps is meant for –'  
'Lackeys!'  
'-the sons of Princes.'  
'I won't allow my son.'  
'He's my son too.'  
'Only half. Do you think you were entirely responsible for his creation?'

Bawajiraj often plumes himself in this belief. It is not physically true of course, but it is the spirit of the thing that one goes for.  
'Mohini, you must allow me to decide –'  
'Why should you? Why can't I?'  
'I will not put up-'  
'Neither will I.'  
'I have stood quite enough.'  
'So have I. So have I! Do you know what I have to put up with?""

One can come to measure Mohini's status and moral life by her concubage for the reason that she has no legitimacy of relation. She is

1. Ibid., p. 109  
2. Ibid., p. 143
willful and wayward, out-spoken and candid but she is not a fallen woman, representing lustfulness and primitive moral anarchy. She is not a tart having no taint of honour to self and womanhood. As a mistress to the Majaraja she never forgets her status and harbours no illusion to wear the crown rather she spurns the offer of marriage because she is well conversant with the predicament of a woman in polygamy, be it a case of royalty or communality. Even in love-making she is ever watchful that her identity is not to be reduced to a sex object or commodity item having an exchange value. The Majaraja cannot extricate himself from the spell of Mohini’s beauty and regrets his not having known her earlier.

“If only I had known your before!’
‘Before what?’
‘Before my wife.’
‘What would you have done?’
‘Married you. Made you my queen.’
‘And been happy ever after.’
‘Yes. Why do you laugh at me?’
‘Because it’s a dream. No one can be happy forever.’
‘I would have been, with you.’
‘Until the next woman.’
‘There wouldn’t be another woman. I wouldn’t look at another woman.’
‘And I would end up like the rest. Sit in the women’s apartments waiting for my husband to come to me.’
‘No.’
‘Like Shanta Devi.’
‘I give her everything.’
‘Except yourself.’
‘How can I? I belong to you. Why do you torment me?’
‘You are the tormentor. You torment women.’
‘Why do you say such cruel things?’
‘Because of my plight!”1

Mohini has grown under Manjula’s schooling and patronage and

1. Ibid., p. 31
thus the moral being in her is aware of its limitations and of the pattern of relationship between the prince and a commoner. She is not the viper of a character so as to exploit her physical assets to consume a life of wealth and pleasure, it is the awareness of individuality and lucidity of vision in regard to her status that enables her to save the self from extinction. The Majaraja is over insistent about legitimizing his relation.

"Ah, Mohini!" he sighs again. He has taken to pleading with her; it is becoming quite an exhausting business. ‘I beg you, will you not marry me?’
‘No.’
‘It would make me the happiest man alive.’
‘I can make you happy without that. I have no wish to be your official wife. I have no wish to be your second wife either.’
‘Can you not think of the child?’
‘I often think of the child. It is precisely because I think of the child.’
‘I cannot understand your objection.’
‘I’ve explained it to you.’
‘I must say I find it difficult. Even princesses do not baulk at becoming Junior Maharanis.’
‘I am not a princess.’
‘You could be a queen.’
‘I don’t want to be your queen. I want to be free.’

The discussion brings out the honesty of Bawajiraj and Mohini’s purity of passion which is not corrupted by overambitiousness and lustfulness. It is a display of the basic urge and moral sense that make her rule the roost and keep her usual dignity unsullied. She concerns the well being of the state, not of an individual, which is the strength of her character. The interest of the people and their freedom is primary. She prefers to remain a concubine to keep the frontiers of her freedom intact but chiefly to influence the socio-political views of Bawajiraj in regard to his relation with the rulers and with the people at large. Her

1. Ibid., p. 32
status of a concubine has its own merit. The novelist tells:

"Mohini is also Sir Arthur's cross. He has no control over the woman. A Junior Maharani would have fallen well within his competence. A concubine is well outside.

The tight net that restrains the regulars has these holes through which the irregulars slip. Mohini has given tart, vociferous, and repeated indications that she has no intention of regularizing the position."\(^1\)

She is conscious of human reality which she feels lies in being free and thus she urges the Majaraja to keep the stately obligations first before he thinks of hankering after the worldly glory and pursuits.

The idea of freedom ignited by the Maharani Manjula is fully appreciated by Mohini and Usha, the Dewan's daughter what they share in common is plain that the state can not prosper under the alien governance. They represent the very forces of democracy and traditional value and morality. Unless the Indian kings/princes are free in dealing with the stately business, nothing worthwhile is gained in regard to the monetary or territorial benefits. Their powerlessness and failure is reflected when the issue of Rabi's inheritance comes up and the king is summoned for a dialogue before the final award.

As per practice the native kings and princess had to fight war as the allies of the Britishers when there was any need. Manjula and Mohini feel that it is not moral. Their cardinal duty is to fight war to drive away the non-native rulers so as to generate feelings of fraternity and equality among all and foster values to humanize the beast in man. Mohini has learnt from Manjula not to play a flunky to gain royal favour. She has the guts to call a spade a spade. The patriotic feelings and

1. Ibid., p. 111
nationalistic sentiments are strong in her. She sees no grain of justice and sanity in the system that inflicts compulsion on the Indian rulers. The mere façade of royalty divide of power, revenue, management is a travesty of ruling.

Mohini is often locked into a sort of quarrel with Bawajiraj, whenever she finds him bowing to the wishes of the rulers or accepting any legislation imposed to enlarge their area of interest and benefit. Mohini rebukes the Majaraja for not being true to the masses. She reminds him how a peasant has to work three weeks in the field to pay taxes which he can easily abolish straightway in the larger interest of the subjects. But he expresses his ‘limitations’ without explaining as to what they are and what is their source – his own moral inadequacies or the non-native mentors.

"Do you know how long a peasant has to work to pay your tax?"
'Not my tax.'
'It is your tax. You could abolish it tomorrow if you wanted.'
'I can't. I'm not as free as you think.'
'Exactly. You're bound hand and foot.'
'Nonsense. I'm a perfectly free agent but there are limits.'
'What limits?'
'Limits placed upon one by one's obligations.'
'What obligations?'
'Is this the time to go into it?'
'I don't care about the time! But if you want to know, yes, it is the time. High time.'
'Mohini, you know I haven't been sleeping well –'
'It's your own fault. If you had a clear conscience –'
'My conscience is perfectly clear.'

The Englishmen are "civilized" whereas for Mohini they are "civilized

1. Ibid., p. 400
wolves”. It is a high piece of comedy that a concubine’s moralistic stance can approve to be so powerful an instrument to influence the life of the prince and recast the history of the state.

“Do you know how long a peasant has to work to pay your tax?”

‘Not my tax.’

‘It is your tax. You could abolish it tomorrow if you wanted.’

‘I can’t. I’m not as free as you think.’

‘Exactly. You’re bound hand and foot.’

‘Nonsense. I’m a perfectly free agent but there are limits.’

‘What limits?’

‘Limits placed upon one by one’s obligations.’

‘What obligations?’

‘Is this the time to go into it?’

‘I don’t care about the time! But if you want to know, yes, it is the time, High time.’

‘Mohini, you know I haven’t been sleeping well—’

‘It’s your own fault. If you had a clear conscience—’

‘My conscience is perfectly clear.’

‘Then why can’t you sleep?’

So he did try. He closed his eyes. When the strain proved too great he rolled up the shutters and she was still angularly poised, and waiting to re-engage.

‘It takes a peasant three weeks’ labour in the fields to earn enough to pay your tax, do you know that?’

‘Do you expect me to carry all this kind of detail in my head?’

‘Why shouldn’t you? You call yourself the Head of State, don’t you?’

‘I am the Head of State!’

‘Then you should know.’

‘I suppose he told you.’

‘He? Do you mean Rabi?’

‘Of course I mean Rabi.’

‘Then why can’t you say his name? Can’t you get your tongue round your own son’s name?’

‘Don’t be so absurd.’

‘I’m not being at all absurd. Your English friends have that difficulty and you get more like them every day.’

‘Is that so awful?’

‘It’s frightful!’

‘Civilised people.’

‘Civilised wolves. No, not wolves. I like wolves.’

‘Mohini, you’re so prejudiced—’
'So would you be, if you were in your right mind. And if you want to know. Rabididn't tell me. It's common knowledge, the smallest bazaar urchin. You'd know too if you weren't sorarefied.'

No, no one in the kingdom. Bar one, Say two. Nowadays the Dewan had lapses, forgot he was a salaried employee.

'I sometimes wonder,' Bawajiraj was inspired to say, 'if you are in your right mind.'

'I am. We are. It's you. Your mother would have been ashamed if-'

'Please leave my mother out of it.'

'Why should I? Your mother was my guardian. She warned me not to take up with you.'

'Then why did you?'

'I loved you.'

'What did she say?'

Bawajiraj could not restrain his curiosity. His mother had always been a mystery to him.

'She said we were incompatible.'

'But we're not! Couldn't have been closer. Couldn't be closer, mostly.'

'That's flesh.'

'Are you telling me it's not important to you?'

'She meant spirit.'

'I have reason to think that my spirit-'

'It's monstrous. I thought not, but I've changed my mind. You're a monster to your people.'

'I think I can safely say that my people --'

'Your people! They were. Now you can count your people on the fingers of one hand and all of them are toadies. They're Rabi's people.'

'Of course they are. I rejoice at it. In due course, when I'm gone. It's the natural order.'

'Now,' cried Mohini. 'I mean now.'

And trembled. As one must when the natural order is upset. As did Bawajiraj, though not for himself.

'Have you,' he said, very quiet and anguished, 'no respect at all?'

'For what should I have respect?'

'For me. For me as occupant of the gaddi.'

Her tears were flowing. Huge drops of a total misery, welling up out of an anguish hardly less than his.

'You cannot command,' she said. 'Highness, you cannot command respect.'

'I'm not commanding. I'm asking.'

The Maharaja desires to secure the Summer Palace for Mohini

1. Ibid., pp. 400-402
which is the royal palace of Shanta Devi and thus a formal permission is to be sought. Shanta Devi's has no second choice though she is the royal queen but she knows the ways of the world governed by male dominance. To the queen's query if he needs the palace for his own use, the king has no courage to tell the truth.

"Is it for your use?"
"Not strictly speaking -'
'For your paramour then. For you and her.'...
'For the child.' He offers her nervously.
'If you like.'
'It's true.'
'It's for her.' Shanta Devi raises her heavy eyelids to confront him. 'A love-nest for her and her son in which you will be welcome. That's what you want. That's what you're asking me for. Why do you ask? I don't want to know. Take what you want. You will anyway. You always do."¹

The third woman to rise above the appearances of royal trappings and limitations is Usha, the Dewan's daughter. She also shares the patriotic feelings and sentiments as initiated by Manjula and later voiced by Mohini. Since her father happens to be the Chief Minister of the state, the revolt of his children, she knows, might land him into trouble. But there is no confusion and vacillation in Usha's mind because she also holds group loyalties higher than the individual considerations. If the Dewan has his own obligations for the state, so has Usha her own philosophy in the larger interest of the country.

Usha has to stage a play in the Durbar Hall of the Palace. It is a creation of her own mind to rouse mass consciousness. The theme is the portrayal of the plight of the common man under the rule of tyranny.

¹. Ibid., pp. 42-43
Mohini had earlier brought it to the notice of the Maharaja but he was helpless to initiate any decision of his own. Usha uses stage as a platform to register protest which shows the rise of the forces of the democracy and freedom. The play is symbolic of feminine consciousness which is essential to generate feelings of respect to one's self. The individual has to come to terms with reality so as to seek self realization. Usha's status and rank in the state-hierarchy is of distinction but her outlook on life is that of a commoner, she has all the privileges of a royalty but they are of no interest unless the self feels free to be of itself.

The Maharaja persuades Usha to invite the Resident, Alfred Buckridge, Esquire.

"This play that the children are enacting, on the stage which is the Maharajah's dais, his own golden Throne a prop by gracious permission, is morally unexceptionable in that it is divided uncompromisingly between Good and Evil. The Rulers, evidently, are Bad, while the ruled are very Good. No one is left in any doubt as to who is what. The King and his Guards lurk behind masks of such evil genius that even hardened adults wince. His downtrodden subjects, who do not wear masks, in contrast offer, above their peasants' tatters, such young and flower-like visages that it positively wrings the heart.

The action is brisk. In Scene I the Good, but poor, are ground into the dust by unjust demands. In Scene 2 the Good, dusting themselves off, armed only with righteousness, the challenging the Bad king. In Scene 3, the finale, the Bad Rulers are won over, and mumbling behind their masks promise to do better in future."¹

The child actors well projected the revolutionary spirit implicit in the play. The play was reacted the way as they expected. It is evidently found morally offending to the ruler's sensibility whereas there was

¹. Ibid., p. 351
nothing so objectionable. The novelist tells

“So well was it done, indeed, that the company, convinced of success, retired flushed and triumphant to the wings. Nor were its members made aware of the ripples that spread, or the wrangling that followed. No one, after all, however incensed, wanted to massacre children. Some, it is true – notably the Military attaché – flitting back to robust earlier days, found themselves endorsing old customs, like holding noble children hostage for their parents’ good behaviour. But on the whole they exercised restraint and took it out on each other.”¹

The Maharaja calls the Dewan and the purpose is very clear: the transference of responsibility of sanction of the play for public show so as to escape the wrath of the rulers.

“In the worst possible taste, Minister. Granted the play was Usha’s... but some responsibility, as parents.. Quite appalling, considering the public nature of the performance.’

‘If I may be permitted,’ the Minister took refuge, ‘the suggestion for public performance in the Durbar Hall was entirely your Highness’s.”²

The Resident lost temper and burst upon the Dewan. “Is it necessary, Minister to use children to fight your battles?” The minister feels outraged but he is helpless to utter his curses. And the Resident goes away and fears that the repeated performance of the play might incite the feelings of revolt and disenchantment within the state of Devapur. Thus he thinks it as a matter of policy to dictate a Memorandum to ban the play.

“Under the authority promulgated by the Dramatic Performance Act, 1876 (check that, will you Krishnan) all further performances of the Play (get the name, Krishnan) are forthwith forbidden as being likely to incite feelings of disaffection within Devapur State.”³

1. Ibid., p. 352  2. Idem.  3. Ibid., p. 353
The honesty of expression and lucidity of purpose as put forth in Usha's play stir Bawajiraj's conscience. He too shares the vision of self rule but he is caught in between the two worlds – the world of the rulers and of his own men. The anguish and the inner tormentation comes on the fore during the discussion of the stirring as created by the performance.

"Mohini was sullen, which was unusual for her.
'I'm no judge of these things. The child asked and I obliged, that's all.'
'They were monstrous.'
'They were meant to look fierce. That's all I know. That's all I can tell you.'
'Tell me this then. Are we monsters? Those of us who re born to rule, and do our duty as we see it? Is that how you see me?'
Mohini did not; but she would not budge, some flint in her son! Which set her against this man who was, almost, beseeching her.
The play was about monsters,' she maintained, sourly."1

However, realism is introduced when it is learnt that the play's performance is banned. But it is repeated at least a dozen more times in private places which are beyond the access of the Resident and his staff. The Dewan too feels slightly disturbed and calls his daughter Usha for interrogation. Usha assures him that no one suggested her the idea of the play. "I just thought it up. I don't know why. Why didn't you find it interesting?"2 Thus the Dewan also appreciates the play and is happy within to see his daughter grow up into a Being having seeds of self-sufficiency. The performance ignited the spark to the degree that the ice- factory workers come out on strike. Bawajiraj thought it to be an open revolt against the state which is gaining force by degrees. He wanted

1. Ibid., p. 352
2. Ibid., p. 353
Rabi to initiate the dialogue with the strikers since his sympathies were for them. The king also felt slightly uneasy at this behaviour of the Maharaj Kumar but since the strike was called off, he reconciled to the situation.

“His Highness? Are you on speaking terms?”
‘Why not? You are.’
‘I’m his son!’
‘Well, we are. My forbearing nature allows it.’
‘Or his.’
‘Or his. Anyhow he asked me to his croquet party.’
‘Bribery.’
‘Reward. He’s so grateful the ice strike’s been called off.’
‘Will you go?’
‘No.’
‘Why not? They can be fun.’
‘Too many English,’ she said honestly.

It made him sit up, and oddly enough it was a speech of the Dewan’s that rose to the surface, words which, from injections of truth, prevailed at times over his own convictions of schism.

‘They’re here, interwoven,’ he said. ‘You can’t write off the past just like that. We think English, many of us. We’ll get them out in the end, they won’t be the first ones we’ve ushered out, but there’s no point in hating them while they’re here. It’s so corrosive, such a waste of energy.’

‘Hate,’ said Usha. She was so shocked that her face was quite bloodless. ‘We don’t hate. We leave that to princes and emperors. It’s just better not to have friends in the enemy camp, that’s all. It avoids unnecessary suffering.”

Rabi is thus another case of transcendence. He is the heir to the state of Devapur but his world-outlook is not obscured by evils associated with the class of nobility. His attitude to the British is influenced by Manjula and Mohini. The Mutiny of 1857 and the manner in which it was suppressed make the British look ‘traitors’ in his eyes.

1. Ibid., p. 420
"Traitors!" The Pandit almost bellows. (In this company. But there are things one has to do. The effort turns him grey.)

'What did they do?'

'They – He trembles. He has been warned against democratic nonsense, and here he is embarked on treason. They acted against the country,' he manages.

'In what way?'

'They put down an uprising of the people.'

'Was the Mutiny an uprising of the people?'

'It would have been. But they stopped it.'

'Why?'

'I suppose they didn't think.'

'Why not?'

'Soldiers are trained not to think.'

'My father's a soldier. He's Commander-in-Chief of Devapur State Forces.'

'Hush, Rabi.'

Rabi allegiance to the common man is symbolic of the birth of a new conscience which is reflected in the discussion with the Maharaja, the issue being the revolting performance of the play. Bawajiraj asks,

"What is all this nonsense, Rabi?..."

'Your Highness,' he said then, 'We feel –'

"'We', cried the outraged Maharajah, 'Who is "we"?'

'Ve, the people,' said Rabi, without display, but very plainly. 'We feel that insupportable levies and treaties must be rescinded, whatever the consequences. We shall continue the struggle to that end.'

'In the process you will tear the State apart,' said the furious Maharajah.

'Not! We,' said Rabi, who was equally furious but more contained. 'We rajahs and nawabs have rent the country apart for a century and more and in the process traders and soldiers of fortune have been elevated into emperors. The people are attempting to repair the damage.'

And folded his arms, which by now were solid with assurance.

It convinced the Maharajah that he had on his hands not an errant heir but a disruptive subject on a scale and of an order worse even than anything he had suspected. Jails, even, flitted through his mind,

1. Ibid., p. 155
but no, there was the rebel's mother, not to mention the Devapuris. His people, who were now, apparently, being coolly and formidably subverted.1

His relation with the two commoner girls – Janaki and Jaya – is a manifestation of a self the purity of which is not sullied by the falsity of rank or class. How is it that the women coming into his contact do not surrender their individuality in spite of the fact that he happens to be a prince? It is so because Rabi's own vision is essentially humanistic, not narrow and parochially biased against antagonistic class. In his eyes there is one class which is the class of Man, irrespective of colour, creed, status and religion.

Janaki is a nine years old daughter of a sweeper in the palace who never turns blind to her status. She is well aware of the fact how the act of 'overreaching' brings moral ruination. Rabi himself has developed a proletarian attitude to the commoners under the eclectic education of her mother, Mohini and the Maharani, Manjula. For Lady Copeland, Janaki seems to be hardly human which is not something unusual. The Lady's attitude to the class of Janaki is governed by a few imperatives which the British have carpentered to deal with the Indian exigencies.

"An assortment of rags, it seems to her, blown in by the monsoon wind. But no. The sodden bundle is human. It is a girl, wild-eyes, wild fingers clutching her gown, there are sooty smudges all along the hem. With worse to come. Petrified though she is Lady Copeland can feel... And Janaki, for her part, has only the language, also specially minted to meet her situation, of begging and blandishment."2

But for Rabi, Janaki is a rich specimen of nature having the sensibility

1. Ibid., p. 416
2. Ibid., p. 175
to feel and see as humans do. His nearness to the commoners crates a revolution in the sphere of thought.

“If you're going to shout, Rabi, we can't discuss anything.’
'T'm not shouting. No more than is necessary to make you hear.’
'Your parents have managed all right.’
The effort! Have you any idea? I don't want you to struggle like My mother.’
'Did she struggle?’
'Fiercely. I realize that now.’
Frankly, I'm not keen.’
'If you want me to pay court to win your hand, just say so.’
'I don't want anything so ridiculous. I don't want the British to have any levers on me either, or on my children.’
'What British, what levers! What do you think we're all doing, playing games?”1

Rabi’s socialistic leanings and ideological commitments find expression from the start in the purity of love. Rabi takes pleasure in meeting Janaki rather than spending time in palatial pleasures. “So he hurries – at last, at twilight, he is free – to the shrubbery behind the stables where Janaki has promised to meet him. It is a spot chosen by joint acclamation because here, unobserved, they are left alone. Otherwise tasks are found for Janaki, who is not paid for leaning on her broom. Or Rabi is taken by the hand and led away to pursuits more fitting than gossip with an outdoor servant girl.”2

One day Rabi pins down Janaki on the ground to count her ribs and then he shows his own to bring out the contrast between the ill-fed and the well-fed, between the rich and the poor. This is an expression of a serious urge to minimize the gap between haves and have nots.

1. Ibid., p. 460 2. Ibid., p. 126
"All right, Rabi. Show me your chest."

The ribs. Just look at the ribs," says this bone-conscious body.

'All right, I'm looking.'

'Can you see them plainly?'

The fact is, Rabi, your ribs don't show up all that much.'

'I know. Exactly. That's what one should be aware of constantly.'

It is so novel that Janaki is moved from indulgence to curiosity. In her view such preoccupations do not belong in the realm of people like the Maharajkumar.

'Why?' she asks.

'Because it gives one a standard of comparison.'

'Really?'

'Really. Panditji pointed it out to me.'

'Well, you're doing all right then, aren't you.'

'But the people aren't. Hundreds of people. I saw them, they looked terrible.'

'I daresay.'

Janaki, indifferent, draws her flimsy bodice around her.

Rabi fings it apart again. The thin mull wings are now definitely wrecked.

'You aren't either, are you. Are you.'...

'I'm all right, Rabi, Really I am. Now don't you go worrying your head about it.'

And she draws his head onto her breast and plants generous kisses on it, for all the world as if they were equals, an illusion which the thick, sheltering shrubbery fosters and even, perhaps, turns into fact."

In spite of the fact that the two represent the rank and station of a patrician and a plebeian, the dialogue is leveled with life which is a sure sign of a transcended self. The subject of discussion is the train that is designed, especially to take the Maharaja and his entourage to Delhi.

"We shall be traveling a thousand miles!' he tells her impressively.

'A thousand! Are you sure?'

'Well, hundreds anyway. We shall be on the train all night.'

'Fancy that! Won't you be tired, sitting up all night?'

'We shan't. We shall lie down.'

'On the floor, Maharajkumar?!

1. Ibid., p. 112
'On the floor!' he scoffs at her. 'On beds, of course.'
'Beds? In a train?'
'It's a special train. It's the Devapur State Special. It was specially made for my father.'
'That explains it then.'
'Yes, He designed it himself. He chose everything he wanted, except the paint.'
'What paint?'
'On the outside. He couldn't have the colour he wanted.'
'His Highness can have anything he wants!'\(^1\)

But Janaki disappears one day in the darkness of the night. Rabi could not give the gifts of a sari that he promised to bring for her from Delhi.

Jaya, the daughter of a mill-worker in Bombay, is the second girl to represent the class of commonality. She is married but for the last five years, it is told that she has been living all alone because her husband was imprisoned for taking part in union activities. Rabi goes to Bombay to collect the delivery of the Cars Rolls Royce. Jaya herself was on strike but hunger broke their spirit.

"There was a girl who helped me, a millhand. She was on strike too. It didn't last long, they were broken in the end. They didn't really expect anything else, she told me, because that was how it had always been for the empty, she told me, because that was how it had always been for the empty-belly race. That's what she belonged to, she said. Not this or that caste or craft, or sex, or anything. She belonged to the empty-belly race. A race that would always be defeated. I feel afraid when I think of that, yes."\(^2\)

He is injured in the worker's demonstrations and Jaya escorts him to her humble dwelling in the colony of the textile – workers which is one fine illustration of transcendence and the attainment of the fundamental spiritual vision: the nobility being one with the

---

1. Ibid., p. 127
2. Ibid., p. 462
commonality. The openness of the two selves is manifest that draws each other closer to the vision. Rabi's philosophy of life is shaped by humanistic concerns not by what he inherits.

***