CHAPTER-II

MYRIAD FORMS, MYRIAD SCENES

Into the vast sea of human experience,
She dipped deep, and came out with
A handful of pearls: pearls of concern for humanity.

Writing about authors and their works makes it necessary to find out what these novels are about and also to discover the viewpoint of the author and his or her concerns. Another way of putting this is to find out the significant themes that emerge in and through the plots of these novels. An author can treat many themes in a single novel. One should not fail to remember that the themes of a novel are there only because the author intends them to be there. Themes are the author's interpretation and judgment of life and they reveal his or her outlook or idea of life. Themes cannot be looked upon as separate constituents of the novel because they cannot be isolated in that way. Themes emerge through the dialogue, development of character, setting and plot of a novel. It can be said that the significance of all these aspects is the theme of the novel.

A novelist can present a theme in a number of ways. Themes can be expressed through the title of a novel, the usage of symbols and
particular words, important speeches and through the treatment of everyday occurrences. Even the setting of the novel can express the theme of a novel. There are some common themes that are dealt with in numerous novels by numerous authors: they are the themes of love, conflict or growing up. Rarely does an author treat a common theme in the similar way as other authors do. So it becomes necessary to study the author's approach to the theme and the way in which the author handles the theme.

Indian English novel is distinguished by a variety of themes and techniques. The main themes of Indian English novels are – the theme of poverty, hunger, disease, portrayal of social evils, inter-racial relations, the Indian National movement and the struggle for freedom, conflict between tradition and modernity, the theme of East and West encounter and of exploration of the psyche of man.

Most of the Indo-English novelists have written their novels with the avowed purpose of bringing out a transformation in the attitudes and perspectives of the Indian people that may lead to their development in society. They have effectively voiced forth the woes and varied problems faced by the down trodden in the society. They may not have succeeded in solving social problems but they have certainly helped in bringing out a remarkable social awareness among the people.

Kamala Markandaya, with her output of ten novels, has claimed herself a place among the most distinguished Indian English writers. She
deals with a variety of themes in her novels. She depicts life as it is lived. She focuses on the sufferings and financial constraints of the poor and the miserable. She also concentrates on the conflict between tradition and modernity, between spiritual and moralistic values, and also on the practice of vice and dishonesty to climb up the ladder of success in society.

*The Nectar in a Sieve* is a social novel par excellence. It presents the Problems of the rural world, the unmarried mother, the illegitimate child and the poor miserable peasants. Kamala Markandaya describes the conflict between the East and the West in *Some Inner Fury* and *A Silence of Desire*. *A Handful of Rice* reveals the problem of conscience, often faced by the modern man. *Possession* depicts the conflict between the good and the evil. The clash between the labourers and the capitalists is highlighted in *The Coffer Dams* and *The Golden Honeycomb*. *Two Virgins* lays bare the corruptions and the moral degradations arising out of the enticements of materialism in the rural society. Encroachment and the traditional ways of life is the theme of *Pleasure City*. The issue of love and sex, the fallen women, and the double standard of morality for both men and women are also dealt with in almost all her novels. Seldom does she repeat her themes. The range of Kamala Markandaya’s themes is not limited but very vast. She also discusses many themes in a single novel.
Kamala Markandaya has the rural problems as her theme in her *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Two Virgins*. She deals with every day problems of the rural community. As in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and *Rainbow* where the lives of the farmers are marred by the coal-blackened colliers, Kamala Markandaya also presents in her *Nectar in a Sieve* the evil effects of the drastic assault of industrialisation on the rural community. The general reaction to this novel from European quarters is well represented in the observation made by 'London's Weekly' that it records vividly the poverty-stricken, heart-breaking existence of the peasant tenant farmers of Madras province; but in its particular theme the story of Rukmani, her husband and children, there is a universality of love and loyalty that will appeal to readers all over the world.

The most striking feature of Kamala Markandaya's fiction is the concept of cultural continuity in the din and bustle of social, economic and political changes in modern India. In all her novels, Kamala Markandaya explores the impact of change in terms of human psychology. To her, culture means essentially an idea which unites a million individuals and confers on each of them, what Lionel Trilling calls, "an integral selfhood". It thus represents the idea of a unitary complex of interacting assumptions, modes of thought, habits and styles, which are connected in secret as well as overt ways with the practical arrangements of a society and of which, because they are not brought to
consciousness, are unopposed in their influence over men's mind. (125)

The quintessence of Kamala Markandaya's fiction consists of the context of complex cultural values. This concern for individual consciousness and its growth and refinement is the hallmark of Kamala Markandaya's fictional art. The purposive refinement of creative sensibility endows her novels with a certain representative character that marks them out as a significant entity in Indo-English fiction.

_Nectar in a Sieve_ has the subtitle "A Novel of Rural India". It is the only novel of Kamala Markandaya that has a subtitle and it reinforces the effectiveness of the main theme. The title _Nectar in a Sieve_ is taken from Coleridge's famous lines which the novelist uses as the epigraph of her novel. "Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve, and hope without an object cannot live." _Nectar in a Sieve_ is an enactment of these lines. Rural life is like nectar in a sieve. Nathan usually works with hope in his field, but when the crops fail, he loses his hope. So his work without hope there after, is like nectar in a sieve.

_Nectar in a Sieve_ is a comment on human life which is accompanied by hope. There is joy and harmony in the family of Nathan and Rukmani. The placid rhythm of life is disturbed by the townsmen. The process of change under the impact of modernity is too sudden and unexpected that Rukmani realizes it all too soon. Rukmani is indifferent to the changes as long as the joy and the harmony in her family are
intact. But the process of industrialization starts and brings havoc in the life of Rukmani. Hope cannot live without an object. As long as there was land, there was hope. But when Nathan is evicted from his land, hope cannot live without an object. As a consequence of it Nathan dies. Arjun and Thambi had already left for Ceylon. Murugan is lost in the city. There is now only the bitter memory of the past but Rukmani finds an object of hope in her children. The title is very illustrative from this point of view. A.V. Krishna Rao observes:

Thus, in the 'Nectar in the Sieve', a novel of rural India, she dramatises the tragedy of the disruption of Hindu joint family of a farmer owing to the heavy industrialisation – a typically modern aspect of national economics....

Industrialisation, with its main emphasis on urban development and the mechanisation of the means of production and distribution necessarily results in the social dislocation of the family. (67)

In Nectar in a Sieve, through Rukmani, the narrator, the novelist describes the ill effects of industrialisation on the rural society. H.M. Williams observes that the disasters that fall upon the peasants are the combined effect of the impersonal forces of nature and industrialisation. The building of a tannery in the rural area brings sordidness, loss of traditional values, and social degradation. It brings vice, social filth and moral debasement in its wake. Rukmani, who
represents the spirit of rural India, can afford vegetable seeds and even milk for her children, but her placid and natural life begins to change for the worse under the impact of modernity. Rukmani observes “Change I had known before and it had been gradual . . . . But the change that now came into my life, into our lives, blasting its way into our village, seemed wrought in the twinkling of an eye.” (25)

Kamala Markandaya’s Nectar in a Sieve presents the stark poverty in Indian villages and its dehumanizing effect on the people. The theme is touchingly unfolded through the story of the marital life of Nathan, the farmer and his wife Rukmani in a Tamilnadu village. Poverty forces them to wander from door to door in search of rice. Poverty shatters the aspiration of Rukmani’s son Arjun to study, and forces him to work in the tannery. He exclaims, “I am tired of hunger, and I am tired of seeing my brothers hungry.”(51)

The lands of the peasants are destroyed by long draughts and heavy rains and they are unable to get a job to feed themselves. When they move to the city, it also gives them only miseries and troubles. The peasants want work but they have no money with which they can start some business or get some employment. Rukmani says:

But how? We have no money. My husband can till the land and sow and reap with skill, but there is no land; I can weave and spin, plait matting but here is no money for spindle, cotton or fibre. For where shall a man turn, who has
no money? Where can he go? Wide, wide world, but as narrow as the coin in your hand. Like a tethered goat, so far and no farther. Only money can make the rope stretch, only money. (167)

To peasants, there always comes a time of hardship, of fear and hunger. This is the bitter truth of their existence. Sometimes heavy rain, or sometimes drought can turn them into beggars and even when they have plenty of fields, they become helpless. Revealing her despair Rukmani says:

We live by our labours from one harvest to the next, there is no certain telling whether we shall be able to feed ourselves and our children, and if bad times are prolonged we know we must see the weak surrender their lives and this fact, too, is within our experience. In our lives there is no margin for misfortune."(135)

The hunger and poverty of Nathan and Rukmani reminds us of the predicament of Kalo and Lekha of He who Rides a Tiger. Like Chandra Lekha they sell their house hold things to stave off hunger. In both the novels the protagonists have fill faith that better days will come back.

The theme hunger finds an elaborate and a comprehensive coverage in the novels of Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya. The protagonists of Bhattacharya and Markandaya suffer, with all the situational variations, from a common predicament- the lot of millions of
destitute and 'starvelings' living under similar conditions the world over, as a result of imperialism.

_Nectar in a Sieve_ is concerned with the evils of the dowry system too. Rukmani's father, the village headman, has four daughters and "four dowries is too much for a man to bear."(2) By the time they try to marry off Rukmani, her father is reduced in importance and the family is in the grip of poverty, and therefore she is married to a poor peasant.

In _Nectar in a Sieve_, Kamala Markandaya presents the curse of early marriage also. Rukmani, a rural girl, is married to Nathan at the age of twelve. Ira, the daughter of Rukmani is married at the age of fourteen. The evil vogue of early marriages in rural India is regretted by Rukmani:

> I kept Ira as long as I could, but she was past fourteen, her marriage could be delayed no longer, for it is well known with what speed young girls are shaped up; as it was, most girls of her age were already married or at least betrothed" (35).

In _Nectar in a Sieve_, Rukmani who has seen the serene beauty of her village compares the past with the present, when the tannery has been established:

> At one time there had been kingfishers here, flashing between the young shoots for our fish and paddy birds, and sometimes, in shallower reaches of the river, flamingoes,
striding with ungainly precision among the water reeds, with plumage of glory not of this earth. Now birds came no more, for the tannery lay close- except crows and kites and such scavenging birds, eager for the town's offal, or sometimes a pal-pitta, swimming past with raucous cry but never stopping, perhaps dropping a blue-black feather in flight to delight the children.(69)

H.M.Williams, Comments upon the novel:
The seasons come and go, bringing both joy and tragedy, a backdrop to human drama. Life for the peasants exists exclusively at the survival level. Even the poor land they own, racked with drought but loved, is taken from them. Yet Markandaya's picture is not despairing. Human dignity survives especially in the passionate and loyal Rukmani, a brilliantly conceived character who changed from dignified stoicism to acts of near lunatic madness when goaded beyond patience, are made credible, the dignified religious sense of fate in the Indian peasant is portrayed with sympathy.(84)

The customs imposed upon the widows of rural India are very cruel yet they adjust themselves to their conditions. Aunt Alamelu, a widow in Two virgins never tries to cross Appa who is younger to her. She does not enjoy any social prestige as she has not got a husband.
The traditional Indian society has been strongly affected and influenced by the beliefs and convictions of the wisdom of the ages. A Sanskrit saying goes like this:

Moon is the ornament of the sky

Husband is the ornament of a lady

King is the ornament of the earth

Education is the ornament of all.

As the traditional society looks upon a woman who has lost her husband as a woman without any ornament, it does not give any importance to such women.

The novelist shows how the Zamindari system of rural India has created a great havoc in the lives of the poor peasants. When crops perish, Nathan, in order to pay his dues for the land, has to sell “A few mud pots and two brass vessels, the tin trunk I (Rukmani) I had brought with me as a bride, the two shirts my eldest sons had left behind, two ollocks of dhal and a handful of dried chillies left over from better times. These we put together to sell” (74).

*The Golden Honeycomb* also throws light on the evils of the Zamindari system. Peasant Ram Singh, who cannot afford even his daily necessities, is burdened with the double salt tax. In a state of utter helplessness he cries that there is a new levy on them and that the salt tax is doubled. And boldly he adds that it is not a just measure. Ram Singh represents the poor peasants of rural India who suffer from this
cruel and oppressive Zamindari system. He has to restore to the grit to green the peaceful scenes—failed harvest, creeping rot. Ruinous taxes, famished, crying children—before he could renew himself, before he could resume training for the arduous campaign they were developing.

Kamala Markandaya portrays the various problems of the villagers and workers, their poverty and destitution and their miseries in the wake of unemployment. She presents the sufferings of growing children brought up in utter poverty. Poverty leads the sufferers to forget all morality. Affected by poverty, Kunthi, in Nectar in a Sieve, blackmails Rukmani for her visit to Kenny. In Possession, Ellie has to take to prostitution under the pressure of poverty.

The tyranny of custom poses several problems to the people. The dowry system is a bane of the society. The rejection of a barren lady also can cause serious problems to both the society and the individual. The problem of the unmarried mother also is dealt by the novelist. The unmarried mother, to whom the stigma of ignominy, shame and dishonour is attached, has to turn to prostitution. Death and prostitution are the only alternatives left for a seduced and abandoned girl, as shown in Ellie's suicide in Possession and Ira's resort to prostitution in Nectar in a Sieve. An illegitimate child is a symbol of his mother's sin and shame as shown in the case of Ira's child.

Kamala Markandaya succeeds in highlighting the problems of the people of rural India. Like William Morris who condemns
industrialisation, for it destroys the harmony of countryside, Kamala Markandaya also presents the evil effect of industrialisation upon rural beings. The tension between tradition, that symbolizes rural life, and modernity, that stands for industrialisation, is presented in her works and the novelist’s bias towards tradition.

*A Handful of Rice*, Kamala Markandaya's fifth novel, is absorbing and interesting. The main theme of the novel is hunger and poverty. It also deals with the exodus from the village to the towns and the destruction of artisan by industry. Though it depicts Indian themes it is universal in its appeal.

Ravi, the protagonist of the novel, deeply suffers from poverty. He is the son of a peasant. He is exhausted from hunger and poverty, and in order to escape from it, he goes to the city. He falls in love with Nalini, Apu's daughter. He goes with her to the market and sometimes enjoys movies with her. Ravi's love is "love at first sight". At the time of his first meeting with Nalini, he is attracted towards her. He happily dreams about her and ardently longs for marrying her. Ultimately he marries her.

In the city he joins petty criminals headed by Damoder yet he remains a destitute. Pricked by his conscience, he frees himself from the criminal business. After getting married to Nalini, he begins to live in his father-in-law Apu's house as his assistant in tailoring. After the death of Apu, the responsibility of looking after the family falls on him. The
financial condition of the family worsens day by day and Ravi is forced to
give up all his dreams and hopes of becoming rich. Even to earn a square
meal for the family is difficult for him. Under the grip of utter frustration,
towards the end of the novel, he joins a mob that attacks a granary for a
handful of rice.

The novel throws light on the pathetic life of the people who
migrate to the city in the hope of a better life. It also shows that for a
poor man there is no difference between a city and a village. A city is a
man-made jungle full of snares and traps and it offers only
dissatisfaction and restlessness for the poor.

Employment and accommodation are the two great problems faced
by the people living in Indian cities. To his shock, Ravi finds that the city
is full of graduates who are desperately wandering in search of some job.
The problem of accommodation is clearly shown through the small house
of Apu. Many people have to share the same room. Even the newly
married have no privacy. It is shown in the beginning of the novel that
the protagonist Ravi,

had no quarters . . . . it was a matter of chance where he
slept. A bench in the park, an empty six-by-two space in a
doorway, the veranda of an empty house, the pavement, all
in turn had served to be bed down on . . . since he had left
the railway station, the coffee house and its pavement
frontage had become a second house to him.(47)
The problem of growing population also is directly analysed in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. When Nalini is going to have a child, Ravi meets a man outside the house. Ravi confesses to him that it is his fault to have so many children. Now the man, who also has too many children, confesses:

One's easy, two's easy, three and four one can manage,—but when they keep coming—sometimes I tell you, brother, I want to put my hands round their necks and squeeze until I know I'll never again have to think about feeding them, no, never again think them whimper. (126)

The tradition of joint family is quite old in the Indian society. It has both merits and demerits. Some times such families are prosperous and comfortable. In India, the economic condition of most families is very critical because of the large number of dependents. In the case of Apu's house, there are a lot of family members when the earning members are only two.

Poverty is the keynote of Indian villages. Most of the people in Indian villages are poor because the villages do not offer any opportunity to the people to earn a better livelihood. In the villages, "they had all lived between bouts of genteel and acute poverty — the kind in which the weakest went to the wall, the old ones and the babies, dyeing of tuberculosis, dysentery, the 'falling fever', 'recurrent fever'. (12) People in villages live well below the poverty line:
He (Ravi) knew better the economics of village life, knew the superhuman efforts, the begging and the borrowing that went into raising in the train fare, the money for the extras demanded by pride and the standards of a city. His father has managed it once, where many men like him never managed it at all (98).

After coming to the city, Ravi realizes that for a poor man there is no difference between a city and a village. An illiterate or under educated villager is only suitable for manual labour. Even in this field the villager is exploited. Ravi and Apu get only 80 rupees for one dozen jackets while the shop owner gets 125 rupees. Ravi becomes very angry at this and explodes, “he and his likes perennially scratching round for a living, while they sat still and waxed fat on huge peremptory margin”(81).

Poverty gives birth to hunger and starvation. It is a very common to see people beg for a handful of rice, flour and food stuff. In the very beginning of the novel the hero Ravi is under the pangs of hunger. He goes to Apu’s house and says, “I’m hungry, I want a meal. I’m starving” (6).

Being a writer committed to the cause of the poor and the exploited lot in society, Kamala Markandaya directs her energies in exposing the hard realities of life. For example, she feels that hunger affects man not only physically and mentally but also morally spiritually. It makes people to abandon their moral sense and even makes them to question God.
This truth may go to explain the frustrated Ravi's joining the mob that attacks a granary for a handful of rice. Hunger makes the sufferer a rebel who protests not only against God but also society.

Unemployment is one of the burning problems of our country. Ravi comes to the city and very soon he is acquainted with the hard realities of city life:

if there had been a job, it might have been different, but there was no job. The city was full of graduates- the college turned them out in their thousands each year - looking for employment, so what chance had he, with his meager elementary school learning? (26).

In India, people generally want to have boys. In most cases this wish to beget boys is the reason for having large families. Ravi also desires a child:

preferably son rather than a daughter, a little boy who would run after him and call him father, who would look up to him and to whom in time he would pass on his skills, so that he would never have to worry about whom to hand over to like poor Apu (92).

Ravi floats through the indifferent streets as an angry protester; he grows in the under world of petty criminals. Ravi can be compared to mulkraj Anand's heroes and he can be identified as a rising proletariat. Ravi's evolution can be viewed from another angle too; Ravi's shift from
the street to Apu's house is journey from the sub-human world to the human world. He can be compared to Eugene O' Neill's *The Hairy Ape*, who is neither a beast, nor even a full man. O' Neill raises the dilemma of man's total existence; kamala markandaya could not go that deep. Yet the novel can be explained to enact Ravi's quest for human identity. Damoder refuses to help him when he finds that some conscience was still coiling within him. Ravi gets emotionally stirred at his son Raju's death. He goes for certain frenzied acts, but the change within him is getting ground. He feels something like heart or spirit missing in him while others were plucking rice sacks. And at the end his anger ebbs out quickly and the novel ends with a great weariness settling upon him.

P. Geetha comments:

Ravi, coming from the village, full of moral scruples, is exposed to the inviolateness of the city's ungodly war, is not able to make his moral choice and hence he fails miserably in life. Ravi tries to reject his rustic setting. But he is not able to shake off all the moral scruples with which his village background has invested his nature. When he fails to resolve his atavistic instincts and the sophisticated life around him by a determined choice between the nostalgia for the old way of life and the fascination for the new, his fatal irresolution corrodes his moral conscience and reduces his psychic life to shambles. (101)
Though *A Handful of Rice* falls short of the power of *Nectar in a Sieve*, the novelist upholds the basic core of realism with all candour. Ravi floats through the indifferent streets as an angry protester. He grows in the underworld of petty criminals. The novel can be said to enact Ravi's quest for human identity. Ravi had no human identity when he was floating down the drains. Now he works with Apu, marries Nalini, shoulders responsibility but it is the economic strain that crushes down. He lives the life at the survival level but none the less it is at the human level. Rekha Jha observes:

*A Handful of Rice* portrays the socio-cultural economic clash more vividly than the previous novels. Ravi had left his home in the village to seek a better existence in the city and is torn between both values and undergoes a crisis in character. Once again Markandaya gives a graphic representation of an Indian village where its people "lived between bouts of genteel and acute poverty- the kind in which the weakest went to the wall, the old ones and the babies dying of tuberculosis, dysentery, the 'falling fever', 'recurrent fever', and any other names for what was basically, simply nothing but starvation" (12).

*Two Virgins* has the theme of adolescence and growing up, of love and conflict between parents and children, and of the effect of modernity on rural life. It is through the eyes of Saroja, the younger daughter of Appa and Amma that the fortunes and misfortunes of a family are experienced. It is the story of a village girl who is lured by the glamour of
the city and trades away her soul. In contrast, there is another girl who learns from the mistakes of the first one and retunes back to nature.

Saroja is an adolescent girl in a middle class South Indian family. In addition to herself, the family consists of her father, called Appa, her mother, called Amma, her elder sister named Lalitha, her mother's widowed elder sister named Aunt Alamelu, and two elder brothers who are neither named but are reported to be very senior to the girls in age and working in the nearby town.

The novel is divided into six parts: the first part presents the environment in which Saroja grows and a sampling of what she hears, sees and does normally. Action begins in part two: the film director Gupta arrives and he chooses Lalitha for his documentary film. The school mistress, Miss Mendoza, who is well acquainted with Gupta, plays a vital role in this regard. In part three, Lalitha goes to the city for the premiere of the film and is lured by the life in the city. In part four, she comes back pregnant, by Mr. Gupta, attempts to commit suicide but she is saved by Saroja. In part five, her parents and her younger sister Saroja accompany her to the city to persuade Mr. Gupta to marry her. Gupta on the contrary, refuses to marry her and only agrees to meet the expenses of the abortion of Lalitha's unborn child. Part six opens with Lalitha's recovering after the operation. Most of the actions and events centre round Lalitha, her recklessness and the tragedy that overwhelms her. The final section shows the matured Saroja taking the right decisions
concerning her life with the help of her bitter experience. The story is related by an omniscient third person narrator, but the point of view is consistently Saroja's. But the reader is interested more in Lalitha's fate than in Saroja's.

G. P. Sharma says:

In this novel the emphasis is laid on the change on the rural life brought about by the modern money-based civilisation in the country after independence. The changes are marked through the perceiving eyes of Saroja the village girl and of her sister Lalitha of the city.” (97)

Kamala Markandaya has drawn on the consequences of the western influence that has ruined the Indian traditional society and the social evils of this tradition that impeded its progress. The two virgins live with Appa, Amma and aunt Alamelu, the aunt has no husband and therefore no status. When Appa says that joint family is an anachronism, the aunt says, “just tell me to go, I will. I know I have outlived my usefulness. . . . I am only a widow, less than the dust. So do not torment yourself about my fate”(20). The difference in caste kept Mr. Gupta the film-maker and Lalitha the actress in different scales. Marriages could take place only between people of the same caste in India. It was believed to be so important that “the star you wear under has to be in harmony with your husband's, if they are inimical, the marriage was doomed. . . . You could have been allowed to marry in the first place” (205).
In *Two Virgins* the rural life is seriously disturbed by the film industry, a symbol of modernity. Mr. Gupta, a symbol of modernization and industrialisation, brings the din and noise of his party into the village. Amma, a representative of traditional values, "closed the door and unrolled the thatch curtains at the windows", which made the place stifling. The acts of closing the door and unrolling the thatches at the windows symbolize the villagers' attempts to avoid the harmful effects of industrialisation, but they cannot save their countryside from the vices of modernisation.

The agonizing hopelessness and the painful gloom are the distinctive features of the cities, and they convey the sense of poverty and filth, the futility and helplessness of life. This is the prominent feature of *Two Virgins*. The novel also deals with the theme of adolescence and growing up, of love and conflict between parents and children, of contrast between village and city. G.P. Sharma says about this novel:

> The emphasis is laid on the change in the rural life brought about by the modern-based civilization in the country after independence. The changes are marked through the reprieving eyes of Saroja, the village girl, and of her sister Lalitha of the city. (34)
Uma Parameswaran aptly remarks:

if *Two Virgins* succeeds for some readers, it is because it taps the treasure house of basic human experiences, especially the ever popular one of adolescence in a series of well-worded, well-organized vignettes. If it fails, it is because it does not go deep enough into the human experience it talks about. (159)

The novel is a study of the effect of modernity on rural life and the disastrous consequences that follow it. Commenting on this novel Nissim Ezekiel writes:

Stereotypes of character and situation fill the novel to the brim. Not a breath of fresh air ever relieves the tedium. Mr.Gupta, the film director, Miss Mendoza of the Mission High School, Appa and Amma, the two virgins themselves, all of them are puppets, manufactured for the entertainment of those who know nothing about India. The strength of the novel lies in its technique of narration – the constant use of flashback and stream of consciousness technique-and its action and movement. (Puppet Show- 32).

Kamala Markandaya was born and bred in India but settled in England. She was very well aware of the customs, culture, and various attitudes of both the East and the West. So she is very susceptible to the clashes between these two different worlds and the tension arising out of
them. She has discussed this problem in many of her novels, yet *Some Inner Fury*, *A Silence of Desire* and *Nowhere Man* are the novels that mainly highlight this problem.

The obsessive concern of the novelists of post independence India has been the cultural clashes of the East and the West. Some examples are Santha Rama Rao's *Remember the House*, Nayantara Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy*, and Balachandran Rajan's *The Dark Dancer*. Kamala Markandaya has not only studied the clash but also traced its origin to the very beginning of the process of modernisation without any effort on her part to misrepresent the Indian or the western culture.

*Some Inner Fury* presents the conflict between the English and the Indians through the political agitation. It is a tragedy engendered by the historically important Independence Movement. The heroine Mira belongs to the class of the ruled, while the hero Richard belongs to the ruling class. Both of them love each other passionately but the cultural disparity and political agitation bring tragedy to both of them. Meenakshi Mukerjee observes that the novel ends on the note that the East and the west cannot meet because “the forces that pull them apart, are too strong”.

In *Some Inner Fury*, Mira the heroine recollects a few years of the immediate past of her life. As a girl of sixteen she is studying at the college. Returning home from Oxford, her brother Kit brings with him an English friend named Richard. Mira is fascinated towards Richard
Marlow, the Governor's military aide who also takes a liking to her. Kit
marries a simple girl Premala and moves to his place of posting. Annoyed
by the restraints imposed by her mother, Mira seizes an invitation from
her brother and she goes to his place. There Mira relishes her new
freedom:

I was content enough: for three years, since leaving
childhood, I had not known the sweetness of walking alone.
If I went to the temple my mother accompanied me; it is no
longer permissible to meander through the bazaars – I must
go by car; or if insisted on walking, an ayah or peon trailed
behind me, reluctant ball-and- chain, mumbling complaints
if I went too far or too fast (29-30).

She is drawn towards Roshan Merchant, a rich liberated woman
who has parted from her husband and runs a newspaper, championing
all sorts of causes as a columnist. Mira stays on with her and becomes a
journalist. She meets Richard again after three years of their first
meeting. Both of them want to get married, but her mother counsels
them to wait. Premala, unable to get fulfilment in her married life,
engages herself in the affairs of a missionary school run by an
Englishman Hickey and in rearing an orphaned baby. Mira and Richard
go on a tour of South India and enjoy a brief romance. Meenakshi
Mukerjee comments:
Mira's belief that individuals are more important than their race proves to be naïve. The tide of history apparently can sweep aside the aspirations of the individual men and women. At the end of the novel Mira accepts defeat and admits that the forces that pull apart were very strong. (53)

The nationalist movement gathers momentum. Mira's cousin Govind has become a terrorist. Govind warns Premala of a threat to the school and she rushes there and perishes in the fire that destroys the school. Kit, who hastens to the scene, is killed by a knife thrown in the dark. Govind is charged with the murder. Mira bears witness in his favour. Hickey denounces Govind as the murderer of Kit. A mob disrupts the proceedings of the court and liberates Govind. Mira realizes that there is no hope for her and Richard to get married and she resigns herself to the predicament.

The theme of cultural clashes assumes many dimensional aspects in Some Inner Fury. Govind, Kit and Roshan react in different ways in their attitude to the British way of life and the British relation with India. Govind, the adopted brother of Kit and Mira, deeply hates the British rulers. He has a fanatic love for his country. His attitude is clearly expressed in the following lines:

Govind was not and had never been a part of it. To him it was the produce of a culture which was not his own-
culture of an aloof and alien race twisted in the process of transplantation from its home-land, and so divorced from the people of the country as to be no longer real. For those who participated in it he has a savage harsh contempt (121).

Govind does not appreciate even the genuine missionary who engaged in selfless service of the poor masses:

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 sided with those other white men who ruled the country, and with whom they had little in common.(142).

Premala, the wife of Kit, also cherishes Indian values and she has respect for people like Govind. She often escapes from her anglicized family and to help Hickey in his humanitarian work. Kit is just the opposite of Govind in his attitude and approach to the west. His education at the Oxford University has changed him in everything except his name. He holds the elevated post of a district magistrate and he is in favour of the western culture. He is an alien in his own country.

Roshan is a liberated woman of the modern India. Educated in England, and having the dual citizenship, she feels quite at home in both
the worlds, "born in one world, educated in another, she entered both and moved in both with ease and nonchalance" (121).

S. Krishna Sarma observes:

Mira is brought in a westernised household where they have two dining halls and two sets of cooks, one western and the other Indian, whose members went to European clubs and danced and played, where women folk spoke in English to English visitors, where even Dodamma the orthodox widow could understand English. . . . It is a household which could quietly accept the unorthodox procedure of [the would-be-daughter-in-law] staying with them during her period of courtship; and yet, strangely, Mira's mother is not happy to see her thrown into Richard's company too often, and relatives disapprove of her pertness and forwardness. (112)

The obsessive concern of the novelists of independent India has been the cultural clash of the East and the West. Other examples are Santha Rama Rao's Remember the House, Nayantara Sahgal's A Time to be Happy and Balachandran Rajan's The Dark Dancer. Kamala Markandaya has not only studied the clash but also traced its origin to the very beginning of the process of modernisation without any effort on her part to misrepresent the Indian or the western culture. In her novels she tried to evaluate the direction Indian society has taken since independence. Some Inner Fury records the novelist's resentment against
political bungling by England; Possession flings defiance at the arrogant culture of the west.

*A Silence of Desire* marks a departure from the earlier two novels Kamala Markandaya. It has a symbolic dimension. The setting is a post-independence Indian village. Sarojini, the wife of a sophisticated government official suffers from a tumour. She goes to a faith healing Swamy who is revered by the local villagers but despised by the educated town’s people including Dandekar, the jealous husband of Sarojini. Dandekar sets out to find out whether the Swamy is genuine or not. Sarojini tells Dandekar that she has developed an ulcer in her uterus and goes to the Swamy for treatment as he is endowed with miraculous healing powers. She has no faith in hospitals because her mother had died in an operation of similar disease. Dandekar fails to prevent her from going to the Swamy. He gets disillusioned and visits prostitutes. The opposition of the sophisticated leaders compels the Swamy to leave the place. The Swamy leaves the village and Sarojini submits herself to a successful operation.

*A Silence of Desire* presents the theme of tension between tradition and modernity, between faith and reason, and also the psycho-social adjustment between the husband and wife in an artistic manner. Dandekar, “a second generation city dweller,” imposes a deliberate “silence” on himself and decides not to persuade his wife to have an operation. Owing to his contacts with the Europeans he has a pragmatic
view of life. But basically he remains an Indian and he prefers to sit on
the mat and he is convention bound. But the other side of his rationality
is shocked to discover that his wife is seeking a faith cure for a serious
ailment. Another disturbing factor to Damoder is Vasantha’s idolatrous
worship of the Tulasi plant. In spite of this, he can feel the beauty and
strength of her uncompromising faith: “He had been at pains to bring up
children, with a correct understanding of these matters and to educate
his wife. Not that she did not understand.” (135) Vasantha’s religious
tutelage had been rather more earnest then his own and had answers to
the puzzles which his less amiable, non-Hindu friends sends him “not of
course that she would supply them, until he had indicated that perhaps,
she might” (110).

At one stage, Sarojini discloses that she goes to the Swamy to be
cured of a growth in her womb. The conflict between faith and reason
comes to surface. Sarojini says, “. . . you would have reasoned to me
until I lost my faith, because faith and reason don’t go together, and
without faith I shall not be cured...” (87)

Prof. R. A. Singh observes:

The theme is introduced as a domestic problem but develops
into a consideration of how faith, and the acting out of that
faith, are met. The action it generates provides the general
images of the changes occurring in the society. When he
takes the problem to Chari, Dandekar's private problem becomes a public issue. (11)

The novel has a suggestive title. In the Indo-Anglian Novel and the Changing Tradition Dr. A.V.Krishna Rao observes:

Ultimately all desires are silenced, whether realized or not: Dandekar desires to win back his wife but Sarojini's desire to resort to 'faith healing' is silenced by her acceptance of the surgical treatment, and the dwarf's desire to be attached, is also finally silenced by the characteristic detachment, and his departure. (61)

Prof. Williams comments:

In some ways, like Graham Green's novel of faith and doubt-The End of the Affair, A Silence of Desire is the subtle study of the reality of religious faith and of the opposition between men's modern quest for scientific 'truth' and technological certainty and sense of mystery and the inexplicable in the human condition. (86)

There is cultural clash between Indian spiritual faith and western modernism. The crisis emerges when Dandekar suffers a great deal of mental agony as his wife Sarojini seeks faith cure for her tremour from a Swamy. When Dandekar advises her to attempt for a scientific cure, she replies angrily:
Yes, you can call it healing by faith, or healing by the grace of god, if you understand what that means. But I do not expect you to understand—you with your western notions, your superior talk of ignorance, and superstition when all it means is that you don’t know what lies beyond reason and you prefer not to find out. (120).

When Dandekar goes to the Swamy to plead with him to stop his wife from coming to him, the Swamy says, “Compulsion is the beginning of corruption... It is an eating away of the spirit of who ever does it, and whoever has it done to him. Is that what you want?” (110).

Iyengar says, “Perhaps her most ambitious novel, A Silence of Desire dares the invincible and the writing is competent enough to forge here and there coils of intricate suggestion that almost seems to bridge the chasm between matter and spirit, doubt and faith” (430).

Possession is different from the earlier novels. Its action moves from India to London and back again to India. The narrator of the novel, Anasuya is not the protagonist of the novel. Lady Caroline Bell and Valmiki are the central characters. Valmiki is an illiterate peasant boy with a gift for painting. Lady Caroline goes to the village with Anasuya and meets Valmiki. She discovers Valmiki’s talent for painting and asks him to go to London with her. Valmiki goes to the Swamy and gets his permission to go to London. With the Swami’s permission, he goes to London with Caroline.
Valmiki becomes an artist of international fame. Lady Caroline falls in love with him and she wants to possess him. But Val loves Ellie, the working maid of Caroline. She becomes pregnant by Valmiki and Caroline turns her out without Val's knowledge. The Swamy comes to England to free Valmiki from the clutches of Caroline. Caroline takes Valmiki on a tour of America. After returning from America, Val meets a young artist, Annabel and falls in love with her. After a misunderstanding with Caroline, Val leaves Caroline and starts to live with Annabel. Once again Caroline is successful in breaking their love. She invites Valmiki, Annabel and also Anasuya for drinks. At the meeting, Caroline cleverly informs Annabel about Valmiki's infatuation for Ellie and her pregnancy by Valmiki. Then she discloses that Ellie has committed suicide and shows them a newspaper clipping to prove her story true. Annabel is horrified and she wants to know the truth. Valmiki admits that the child Ellie was carrying was his child and that he did not know that Ellie was going to kill herself. Valmiki confesses the essential truth in all his conscience, as Anasuya narrates:

"I did not do everything I could," he said huskily, but with a terrible clarity as if to be done with shame once and for all whatever the consequences. I meant to go after Ellie and that she was all right. I meant to, and talked about it a lot and I worried endlessly but in fact I did nothing because it was easier not to do. Can you understand that? It is the easiest
thing in the world to let that happen, it only becomes impossible afterwards, afterwards it is the unforgivable. (207)

Annabel gets angry with Val and she leaves him. After going through some bitter experiences in London, Val returns to India and to the Swamy. Lady Caroline tries to take him back with her but in vain. In the opinion of Prof. H. M. Williams that this novel is one of the most forceful explorations of the distortion of India's national character in the British embrace and of her consequent urge to be free.

In Possession the clash is between Indian spiritualism and the western materialism. Kamala Markandaya presents an allegory of the British occupation of India in this novel. Caroline who symbolizes the British comes to the village of Valmiki for some arak, just as the British had come to India as traders. Caroline gets hold of Valmiki who stands for India. Eventually, the Swamy who symbolises Gandhi, frees Valmiki from the clutches of Caroline. Thus the theme of the novel is basically the East-West encounter.

The conflict between the Swamy and Caroline for the possession and control of Valmiki turn out to be the cultural clash. Caroline Bell is a rich, divorced English lady. She is well-born and good looking. She takes him to England, helps him develop his talents, and makes him a famous artist. But when she fails to get on well with Valmiki, she describes it as an old ailment, that India and England never did understand each other. Caroline's western culture makes it difficult for her to understand and
identify herself with India. Val says, “The wilderness is mine, it is no longer terrible as it used to be, it is nothing. . . . Even this wasteland may have something to show, other than what you have seen” (228).

Possession flings defiance at the arrogant culture of the west. Valmiki’s honest answer to Caroline summarizes the novelist’s attitude. Valmiki is not surprised to find Caroline mean, greedy, lustful and cruel nor is he unhappy on this account, but he can not pardon her for keeping him under possession. “None of those things,” said Valmiki, “only one that you wanted to own me and it is not an uncommon inequity” (220). Valmiki liked her for all that she has given him: wealth, patronage, care, confidence and even herself but for all this he does not want to sell his soul to her, to be used like a tiny monkey wearing scarlet trip jacket and gilt leather collar.

The cultures of two countries- India and England, confront each other when Caroline thinks that Valmiki belongs to her and Valmiki returns to the Swamy. Anasuya rightly observes, “Caroline thinks that Valmiki belongs to her and in a way she is right, she won’t let it go. People won’t easily give up what they think are their possession. English never have. . . .(198).

Ramesh Chada says:

His [Valmiki’s] is the odyssey of an innocent and unexposed boy led astray by temptations but returning to a life of serenity and tranquility after a chastening cycle of
experience. . . . Valmiki leaves the Swamy, indulges in carnal pleasures, and returns to the Swamy eager to pursue his spiritual life with a steady mind, dedicating his talent in painting to the divine spirit of the Universe. . . . (126)

In *The Coffer Dams*, though the plot is complicated the theme has a universal appeal. The great dam is being constructed across Wild River in the South Indian High lands. It is being constructed by Clinton and Mackendrick. The story begins with the project having reached a crucial stage at which coffer dams must be completed before the onset of the monsoon. Tensions are already mounting up. Helen, the wife of Clinton, takes a genuine interest in the native aborigines who are being driven out of their territory, for it has been chosen as the site for the bungalows of the staff on work. Krishnan, an Indian working there, tries to create an upheaval by his political affiliation. One of the natives, Bashiam who has some professional training also is working there. Helen takes a lively interest in him. A shocking accident occurs that threatens to destroy all that has been achieved so far. In one of the blasts some natives are crushed under a boulder. Their dead bodies are to be taken out to be given to the natives for funeral purposes. This difficult task has been given to Bashiam, who lifts the boulder with a crane. Thus the dead bodies are taken away, but the jib of the crane breaks and having caught under it Bashiam also dies.
The coffer dams are completed with much difficulty. As the monsoon that strikes continues relentlessly, the tension becomes nearly unbearable. The river is in spates and the coffers have to be breached. Otherwise the whole land-basin is in danger of inundation.

Mrs. Nand Kumar observes:

The theme of Kamala Markandaya’s ‘The Coffer Dams’ is material versus spiritual values, the theme of Tagore’s ‘Mukta Dhara’ and Bhabani Bhattacharya’s ‘Shadow from Ladakh’. The novel is well-constructed and the end is satisfying. The hysteria that can be generated by the political time, serves against idealistic entrepreneurs resulting in the victimization of innocent aborigines is well brought out. The novel seeks to lay bare the human problems so conveniently forgotten by the plan protagonists in Heavy Engineering industries. (158)

Thematically, the novel may be interpreted in several ways. To some it means the East-West encounters, and to some it means the clash between tradition and modernity. But the facts remains that it is a complex novel that stirs our thoughts. The novel shows that the author has seen and understood the world in its true colour.

The Coffer Dams presents the conflict between the British technicians and the hill tribesmen of India. The tribal people who worship the river as a god have been dislodged from the site of the dam
and as a result conflict arises between them and the authority. Though working together on the same project, the British and the Indian technicians remain hostile towards each other. Krishnan, the Indian engineer, disagrees with the Englishman Clinton and feels bitterly hurt:

    Brushes us off like flies, he thought, hurt and insult like splinters under his skin, despise us because they are experts and we are just beginning. Beginners, he repeated bitterly; barred from knowledge and power as from the secrets of a master guild; and the memory of those neglectful years lay in deep accusing pools in his mind. But it is over now, he said to himself. Our day is coming. The day when they will listen to us (19).

Whenever anything goes wrong with the project or whenever English officials and their wives face some inconvenience, they blame India and their people. In transporting the crane to the site, Ravling remarks that they have been slaving away at a thankless job in a thankless bloody country. Of all the Englishmen Mackendrick alone is capable of understanding the changed attitude of Indians in the post-independence period. He observes:

    That the days of ostentation were over- gone with their proponents the British, and their lesser copyists, the Maharajas. It was the day of the common man, and the common man was done with the flummery . . . who adopted
the panoply and pomp of an English archbishop would find himself heartily jeered in any Indian town (62).

K.R.S. Iyengar notes:

In *The Coffer Dams* (1969) Kamala Markandaya, returns in a sense, to the theme of her first effort at fiction, *Nectar in a Sieve*, but of course her art, in the intervening years, has grown sophisticated and writes now less from the freshness and compulsion of spontaneity rather more from the assurance of her mature craftsmanship. Tagore in his *Mukta Dhara* and Bhabani Battacharya in *Shadow from Ladakh* have sharply focused the confrontation between material (or technological) and human (or traditional) values, but the theme is no doubt capable of being handled with endless variety.” (433)

*The Nowhere Man*, published in 1972, is the story of human understanding and relationship. It depicts the life of an Indian who settles in London, and whose rootlessness is at last brought home to him by the display of naked racialism in the English community that had sheltered him for over fifty years.

Srinivas and his wife Vasantha are forced to leave India, because their families are suspected of underground activities against the British rule in India. They move to England and their two sons are born there. The family falls into disarray with the advent of the War. Lakshman and
Seshu get enlisted in the army but Seshu’s sentimentality gets him discharged from the army soon. He becomes an ambulance driver but unfortunately dies in an accident due to a German shell while discharging his duties. Having completed a meritorious service in the army, Lakshman marries an English girl and settles down in Plymouth as a businessman. Vasantha’s separation from her two sons, one dead and the other living apart added to her ailment from tuberculosis speedens up her death. Now Srinivas is disoriented. Mrs. Pickering, an elderly divorced lady grows sympathetic towards him. Each gets adjusted to the ways of the other. Unfortunately racialism is at full play in 1960. Srinivas’s house is burned by his racist neighbour Fred Fletcher. Fred dies in the flames he himself has kindled but Srinivas is saved. Greatly shocked at this incident, Srinivas also dies later on. The novel is a strong plea against all kinds of violence. Srinivas represents millions of men who for some reason leave their own roots and fail to strike roots in the alien soil, and as rootless and restless individuals.

*The Nowhere Man* is a powerful novel and it reveals a new strength in the author’s understanding of human motivations. Uma Parameswaran observes, if *Nectar in a Sieve* says, “Bend like the grass that you may not break,” (101) *The Nowhere Man* shows that though “one will not break under nature’s storms; it can be and is broken by the lawn mower creations of man in urban and global society” (103). The novel is invested with powerful insights into individual minds as well as the
attitude and experiences of Indian immigrants who build a little India around themselves wherever they may be. It says that violence kills the innocent and the hater kills the hated. "Structurally the novel has an undulating pattern with its points of view shifting from the omniscient author to the observer." (106) Uma Parameswaran further opines:

Nevertheless, Markandaya never chooses a single point of view for long but achieves closely woven narrative structure by interior monologue judiciously mixed with authorial observation and dramatic dialogue. The past merges into the present and the present points to the possibilities of the future. (107)

Srinivas and his wife Vasantha are fairly typical Indian immigrants carrying Indian habits, dress and belief to an alien land and living peacefully but without assimilating the culture of their adopted land. Vasantha keeps a handful of Indian soil and a bottle of Ganga water with her and makes a little India at her home. For Srinivas and his son Laxman, there is no Indian soil, no Ganga water. They are the nowhere men.

The clashes of the philosophies of the East and the West becomes necessary to generate conflict and therefore not superfluous. In *The Nowhere Man* when Vasantha receives the shocking news of her son's death, she is visibly upset momentarily and must be shielded from the public eye by an English neighbour. But she has "elements in her that
would keep her upright, not only now but later, when the blows were not imaginary and crowded them or so it seemed. It was just that it took some time and calling upon some inner recourses.” (31-32)

In *The Nowhere Man*, Srinivas faces the cultural clash. He is an old man of seventy, who has spent nearly two third of his life in England. He has come to look upon it as his own country. A day comes when his neighbour says him, “you got no right to be living in this country.” When Srinivas replies that he is English by adoption, he is assaulted. He realizes that if he leaves England, he has nowhere to go: “Nowhere, he said to himself, and he scanned to pale anxious eyes which were regarding him for reasons that might drive him out, a nowhere man looking for a nowhere city” (241).

Srinivas ponders over his situation as an alien, whose manners, accents, voice, syntax, bones, build and way of life, all of him shrieked alien. He tells Mrs. Pickering “The people will not allow it. It was my mistake to imagine. They will not, except physically, which is indisputable. I am to be driven outside, which is the way they want it. An outsider in England. An actual fact I am of course, an Indian” (242-243).

Ultimately, Srinivas is pushed out of England by the clash of culture and he gets reconciled to his lot. It becomes clear from this analysis that there is no meeting point of two cultures, two races or two view points. Markandaya views the differences in the tradition and values of both India and the west, as a neutral observer. She likes them to be
complementary to each other. She thinks that the west may be benefited by the spiritual values of India.

As a broad minded Indian, Kamala Markandaya has brooded over the essential bond between the East and the West. The one is complementary to the other. In the words of Swamy Vivekananda, “we have to find our way between the Scylla of old superstitions, orthodoxy and the charybdis of materialism, of Europeanism, of soullessness.”(73)

*The Golden Honey Comb*, unlike her earlier novels, is a historical novel. It clearly and decisively establishes Kamala Markandaya’s reputation as one of the leading novelists of today. This novel creates a sense of history in the reader’s mind. But she uses the facts of history as the growth of individual consciousness. It deals with the interaction of British and Indian peoples, spreading over three generations. Bawajiraj, the third of his line, is the benign Maharaja of a rich and prosperous Indian state which he rules with the help of his Brahmin Prime Minister and a British advisor in the shape of the Hon’ble the Resident. But he is a British puppet as a result of the education he has received. At the age of eight Bawajiraj receives a pony of his own and an English tutor. Kamala Markandaya highlights the element of puppetry motivating the appointment of an English tutor:

The education of an Indian prince and future Maharaja is adjusted too important to be left any longer in the hands of an Indian, however learned. The information that the pandit
can impart is suspect—not from any intrinsic shortcomings which have been detected in the man, but because a particular representation of fact is required to produce those attitudes of esteem and admiration which in time will result in loyal and acquiescent rulers (17).

Manjula protests that her son should learn about his own country first, echoing “sentiments adrift in the atmosphere, which are saying at the nation’s consciousness”. (17) But the British Political agent overrules her. Bawajiraj learns what his British overlords want him to. Bawajiraj sired a bastard named Rabindranath (Mohini is not the lawful wife of Bawajiraj III). The novel attempts to recreate the life of a native prince from his conventional birth to his fulfledged manhood during the early part of this century which witnessed the awakening of nationalism and the decay of the feudal aristocracy.

H.C. Harrex says that there are “different predicaments of identity” in the novels of Kamala Markandaya, and each of them is “affected by the East-West clash of codes that is part of modern India.” (203)

Around Rabi, the protagonist of the novel, converge on other themes of East-West encounter, in the form of the relationship between the Maharaja and the Resident, and also Rabi and the Resident’s daughter. The novel also throws light on the generation gap between the father and the son, the father being loyal to the British and the son being a nationalist. The theme of freedom in love is reflected in the character of
Mohini. She is rather contented with the illegitimacy of her only child than surrender her freedom to become a junior Maharani. Mohini desires a life of freedom from curbs and adverse forces that would work against her in the position of Maharani, and therefore, she declines it.

"I don't want to be your queen, I want to be free".

"Am I not free?"

"Of course you're not free".

"As for as I'm aware".

"You're aware of nothing. The British have tied you up hand and foot and you don't even know it. Do you want me to be shackled like you?..." (32).

As the result of the education he receives from an Indian pundits, Rabi becomes aware of the plight of the common people. Having illuminated by his mother and grand mother about the ignominy of foreign rule, Rabi shakes himself out of the feudal complacence, when he finds his father bow and lower himself before the alien ruler in the famous Delhi Durbar of 1903. Now his life takes a turn towards a non-conformist goal. Piqued by unhygienic condition of the poor people, he passionately launches a project for water supply, which is staunchly supported by the Brahmin Dewan. Rabi has already deviated far from the loyal path when he refuses to fight for the British in the First World War or to fill in one of the decorative posts around the Viceroy. After his frustrated emotional involvement with Sophie, the daughter of the
Resident, he realizes that the woman for him is the spirited and nationalist Usha, the youngest daughter of the Dewan.

The final scene shows the Maharaja yielding to public pressure, and offering sops to the populace in keeping with the times. Sir Arthur and the Dewan see the necessity of changing the attitude of the establishment to popular demand. Mohini is successful and it would seem that the spirit of independence which she symbolises triumphs at last.

Arthur Pollard says:

Rabi's history is a progress to understanding and to action in a movement that takes him from admiration of his father with unquestioning acceptance of the status quo, through the influence of his mother and pandit to a rejection of his princely role and assumption of the leadership of popular protest. . . . (24)

Excluding The Golden Honey Comb, all the other novels of Kamala Markandaya are preoccupied with social and economic problems of Indian people and their intercourse with the English men, who ruled over them for nearly two centuries. In a way she interprets India to the western world. Her novels, even when she depicts political struggle are never documentary and they are never bizarre. They have a life giving force and make themselves immensely readable.
A Pleasure City offers a significant variation on the usual treatment of the East and West interaction in the Indian English novel. A.V. Krishna Rao rightly points out that “the time is ripe for a proper permanent friendship between the east and the west but it depends on the effort of the human race to make allowance for one another”. (213) In the relationship between Rikki and Tully which bears the major burden of this theme, confrontation and tension resolve more than usual understanding and affection. That Rikki makes a lot of mosaic is plain enough. When the pleasure complex Shalimar starts blooming and the presence of Tully infuses life into Avalon, Rikki gets another opportunity to build another mosaic. Rikki has a keen sense of beauty and he is gifted with an overwhelming sense of honesty. He is another Valmiki whose inspiration and aspiration blossom after he comes into contact with the west. Mr. Bridie and Tully are the other artists in the novel. Anu Shukla observes:

The novelist reveals the same care, delicacy and skill in handling them which Rikki reveals in handling his treasures of pebbles and stones. It is remarkable that the novelist here is not so much interested in the clash of wills as in mutual connection and harmony. (64)

The novel consists of multiple episodes about Mr. and Mrs. Bridie, Tully and Rikki, Corinna and Ranji, Valli and Miss Carmen, Appu and Amma, Mrs. Pearl and others. Most of these episodes take the qualities of
a cameo and stick to the mind like small polished stones. Taken together, they present vivid and colourful mosaic. The mosaic motif is associated with the artist theme in a double manner. It tells us not only about the art of Rikki but also of his creator. As Anu Shukla says the author, “herself weaves a mosaic in the novel. It is a mosaic of the parallels, and contrasts, past traditions and present ambitions and strivings, east and west and dream and realities and dissonance and consonance.”(267)

There is no finer or more fitting way, which could resolve the East-West encounter than providing in the style of writing the unique traits of harmony. The artistic value of Kamala Markandaya’s writing is validated by the moral aim to right the wrong. The solution lies not in total absorption but in overcoming strong prejudices out of a genuine love for each other as people. The integrity of both sides can be maintained so that contact nourishes and does not overwhelm. The universality of the issue extends beyond the symbol of two disparate cultures, one pragmatic and rational, the other orthodox and traditional. Their coming together to modify each other is a lesson extended to all humanity. It is only with this spirit of give and take that any viable relationship can be established. In the relationship between Rikki and Tully which bears the major burden of this theme, confrontation and tension resolve into more than usual understanding and affection. Rikki looks upon Tully as a sort of ‘guru’ or a god. He looks after the pumpkins in Avlon for Tully and
contemplates their profusion with satisfaction. "Every blossom was already a fruit, ripened by the sun, a bloom dusting the skin. Piling them in his mind he saw the mellow pyramid as an offering or even a thank-offering laid at Tully's feet. (121)

Kamala Markandaya has dealt with the theme of uprootedness in this novel also. In *Nectar in Sieve* we have the tannery coming as a giant. In *The Coffer Dams*, a British engineering firm partnered by Clinton and Makendrick set out to build a dam. The tribesmen who had occupied the site near the proposed dam have to be forced to shift to a less convenient place. In *Pleasure City* AIDCORP, the Atlas International Development Corporation, "were to build a pleasure complex which at the blueprint stage, with rare unity, and not entirely cynically, go to be called Shalimar by everyone concerned"(20).

Kamala Markandaya's early novels present the agony and ecstasy of cultural changes, but her later novels deal with the personal relationship in a different context. Besides the main plot, concerning Rikki, there are sub plots dealing with Zavera, Corinna, Tully, Boyle, Cyrus and others. The average character's apparent sense of aloneness vanishes. The boredom is shaken off and they find solace with others. It is discernible that each character ends up concerning Rikki. It is against the environment that the characters have to contend. They have no problems whatsoever among themselves. In the end there is an optimistic attitude in each of Kamala Markandaya's novels. *A Pleasure City* also has
the same note. The departure of Tully from the Shalimar is unbearable for Rikki:

he had always accepted that there were limits to Avalon. Expect that Tully had invaded too strongly to be silenced now, the permeated fabric returned him, the halls and the corridors were echoing, the mansion throbbed with his presence. Rikki wandered in and out of the rooms, looking, listening, not really surprised by what he heard. Tully had given Avalon life, it belonged to him. The throb was a measure of what it was about giving back, a natural return (34).

Rikki and Tully go on a picnic and enjoy the lobsters Rikki’s mother has cooked for them. Rikki wishes that it were not Tully’s last picnic and Tully too wishes so. The parting scene is moving:

‘Well, so long, Rikki,’ said Tully.

‘So long,’ said Rikki, and turned away his face so that Tully should not see him crying. Not that Tully would have looked, except that he could see, without looking. Grief smears on cheeks too young, really, to take them. He too was having difficulty, as he let in the clutch. He would not have thought it possible to feel such pain. Bunched, like a fist in his throat (340).
In *Pleasure City*, like in Markandaya’s third novel *A Silence of Desire*, the omniscient narrator gives an account of the development of the smooth relationship of the central character Rikki with the Bridies in the childhood and Tully in his adolescence. The story is presented in the reminiscent mood. In *Pleasure City* Kamala Markandaya is chiefly concerned about the breakdown of the personal relations. The novel enquires into the catalyst character as it changes man’s attitude and ideologies or shapes their destinies. There is the optimistic attitude that the new can learn from the old to forgive and forget and live together. Unnecessary pain and anguish can be overcome in the larger interest of humanity. While saving Corrina, Rikki breaks his leg and is hospitalized. Unlike the different attitude of Caroline of Possession or the English women customers of Ravi in *A Handful of Rice*, Corrina is different: “She too felt that something was broken down, and said quite simply, I’m sorry, Tobby. About Rikki, I mean. It was unforgivable. I must have been mad” (317). Later as soon as she recovers, she has many things to do before leaving; first is to make peace with Rikki. And “she did, with an unassumed humility and courage. As for him, he found he could continue to hate her, now that she was leaving” (319). When both the husband and wife Mr. and Mrs. Tully drive to the airport, it is of the boy they speak.
Madhumita Ghosal points out:

With the arrival of Tully, Rikki's imagination "soars to blissful heights to the extent of expressing a desire to visit Tully's country and experience at first hand, all the joy and the splendour the British missionary couple had outlined for him in his childhood (253).

As the result of the lack of proper study of her novels, some critics opine that Markandaya could not reveal the psychological aspects of her characters. On the contrary, the problem of conscience is one of the strongest themes of her novels. In *A Handful of Rice*, she presents a fine portrayal of the problem of conscience. It is a tragic commentary on the conflict between idea and fact. Ravi becomes the victim of his own conscience. The story of his inner struggle makes an interesting study. In *The Nowhere Man*, Markandaya presents the conflict between the past and present of the protagonist Srinivas. After the death of his wife, Srinivas prefers solitude. He is torn by the conflict between the past and the present. He suffers till the end of his life because of the conflict of conscience. In *The Coffer Dams* Markandaya shows that those who have accepted the vast change, have a continuous disturbance of their hearts, that has marred the peace of their mind, and those who have not accepted, are in the state of interruption of peace due to the conflict of spiritualism exiting inside their heart, and the materialism of the outside world.
Another important theme of Kamala Markandaya’s novels is the problem of jealousy, suspicion and faith. *A Silence of Desire* delicately describes the decline of a family after the entry of jealousy and suspicion in it. Dandekar and Sarojini are husband and wife. Suffering from a tumour, Sarojini visits a Swami for faith cure. Dandekar doubts the character of his wife and being tormented by jealousy, he loses his peace of mind and happiness in life. Not willing to give up her faith in the Swami, Sarojini refuses to stop her visits to the Swami. In *Possession* also we witness the evil effects of jealousy in the character of Caroline. She tries to possess Valmiki both physically and spiritually. When she fails in her attempts, she becomes a prey to jealousy. Markandaya is deeply aware of the important roles jealousy, suspicion and faith play in life. That is the reason for her making these human attributes important themes of her novels.

Besides the themes analysed above, Markandaya also has treated the theme of the fallen women in detail in her novels. Her portrayal of the fallen women is realistic and sympathetic. She has stressed on many occasions in her novels that the lack of uniformity of moral standards for both men and women is mostly responsible for the miseries of women in society. H. M. Williams makes the following observation of the thematic pattern of Markandaya:

She (Kamala Markandaya) treats the themes of tragic waste, the despair of unfulfilled or tragic love, the agony of artistic
ambition, the quest for self-equalisation and truth by the young, all themes popular with European and American novelists of recent decades, (Camus, Saul bellow, Updike) (84).

To these themes she has brought the extra dimension of India, a contemporary India, racked by social and political changes by confusion, violence sand convulsion.

Uma Parameswaran also has given a similar opinion:

Kamala Markandaya’s themes are not new but this weakness becomes strength because the Indian setting still has the attraction of novelty for the western reader, and universal themes set against Indian background are welcome. (76)

V. K. Krihsna Rao opines:

Markandaya’s contribution to the indo- Anglian novel lies essentially in her capacity to explore these vital, formative areas of individual consciousness that project the image of cultural change, and in her uncanny gift of inhabiting the shifting landscape of an outer reality with human beings whose sensibility becomes a sensitive measure of the inner realities it responds to the stimulus of change. (86)

All the novels of Kamala Markandaya are peopled with a small number of characters and all of them present the adult world. When
there are children, they are either background entities or active background characters. Kamala Markandaya’s world is essentially a world of grown ups and in the case of a boy like Valmiki in Possession his importance is that he is a boy who is leaving his boyhood behind him. Most of the grown up persons are women. Often the importance of the woman is seen in her role as a mother or even more importantly as a wife. In every novel there is always a second woman character, marked by beauty or power and almost rivaling with the principal woman character.

Every novel has at least an ‘alien’ character. The alien character might be a foreigner, a northerner or the figure of a swami, who has willingly chosen to remain out of the normal way of life. The alien character produces some disturbance in the stories. Thus there is the Englishman Kenny in Nectar in a Sieve who becomes a source of anxiety to Rukmani, if only because the others do not understand his relation with her. The character of Biswas, apparently a northerner who is disliked by every one in the story, also can be added to this list. In A Silence of Desire, there is the figure of the Swamy who turns out to be calm and collected, like a stone thrown into a placid pool. Ghosh, the northerner, is generally disliked by all. In A Handful of Rice, there are no aliens in the formal sense of the word. However, Damoder threatens to break up the peace of Ravi’s life. In addition to an alien character, there
is in every novel a freak character, like an albino child, a dwarf or a cripple.

None of the novel is named after any character in the stories. The titles seem to emphasize an idea, a theme. Sophisticated families of westernized Indians, ultra modern woman, orthodox grannies, Swamies, artists and prostitutes are authentically portrayed in her novels. The beauty of Kamala Markandaya’s style lies in its natural fusion of the personal and the political, the individual and national, and the traditional and the modern. She admits the importance of the physical and material needs, but she prefers to idealize life while also depicting sympathetically the existential anguish of her characters. They are either devoted to the amelioration of poverty and superstition-ridden Indian society like Kenny in *Nectar in a Sieve*, or admirers of Indian culture for purposes of exploitation like Caroline in *Possession*. But they all share racial arrogance and hatred for India.

Several critics have tried to identify autobiographical elements in her novels but it is difficult to say for certain how far she has revealed herself through her novels, for no autobiography, biography or collection of letters of Kamala Markandaya is available, as Madhusudan Prasad has stated. Nevertheless, Margaret P. Joseph asserts that Kamala Markandaya is essentially a committed author:

She may be called the conscience of her generation.

Committed to the belief that wrongs must be righted, she
has a moral aim that validates her work; and if the moral is often the same in different novels, it only confirms the zeal of the novelist. For the writing of socio-literature implies not merely a measure of idealism, but a measure of optimism as well, a belief that solutions are possible. . . . (218)

Avadesh Kumar Singh declares:

Kamala Markandaya's is the literature of disapproval (and not of consent), of existing injustice, social inequalities, exploitation, cruelty, irrational attitudes, disintegration of the individual, erosion of social values, crass culture of capitalism, colonial imperialism and so on. (117-18)

Creative writers should have a high sense of observation of what is happening around them, especially to write novels about society. Kamala Markandaya has an inborn ability to observe people and the happenings around her.

H. M. Williams states that Kamala Markandaya's fiction explores "the anguish of the human and personal in modern society, dominated by processes, machines and speed – by the tyranny of the impersonal" (83). Joseph says that Kamala Markandaya's "tragic vision" produces "a literature of concern" (218).

Thus, the analyses in this chapter clearly show that Kamala Markandaya has dealt with a variety of themes in her novels. They include sufferings of the rural community, miseries of the urban
society, poverty and hunger, clash between materialism and spiritualism, East-West encounter, conflict between tradition and modernity; the problem of adolescence and growing up, uprootedness, the quest for identity and the conflict between faith and reason. The textual evidence and the critical comments presented above throw considerable light on the thematic pattern of Kamala Markandaya, highlight her concern for humanity, and justify her prominent position in the world of Indian fiction.

The next chapter throws light on Kamala Markandaya's interest in the formation, growth and development of the mind and character of her protagonists. It analyses the later novels of Kamala Markandaya so as to trace the bildungsroman strain in them and how the dreams of the protagonists are defeated by the hard realities of life.