CHAPTER III

SOME INNER FURY

Kamala Markandaya

author of NECTAR IN A SIEVE

A SIGNET BOOK COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED
Chapter : III

SOME INNER FURY

Kamala Markandaya is unquestionably one of the most outstanding women novelists on the canvas of Indo-Anglian fiction. An interesting aspect of the modern Indian Renaissance has been the creative release of the feminine sensibility. Her novels in comparison with those of contemporary women writers seem to be more fully reflective of the awakened feminine sensibility in modern India as she attempts to project the image of the changing traditional society. The variety and the complexity of the achieved content of her novels represent a major trend in the history of Indo-English novel. In her novels, Markandaya not only displays a flow for virtuosity which orders and patterns her feelings and ideas resulting in a truly enjoyable work of art, but also rejects the image of national consciousness on many levels of aesthetic awareness. The variety and the quality of the "felt life in her fiction renders it label proof in that it indicates the direction to a plausible resolution of, rather than other definite solutions to human problems".1

She implied largely social and economic background, physical features, dress and behaviour in person in her novels. She has been India at close quarters and has acquired an intimate view of its ideas, ideals and various modes of life. She is well acquainted with western
ideals and modes of life. The major themes of the novels are the social, cultural and economic clash of these two modes. During the bitterness, which had prevailed in the thirties and fourties at the height of the freedom struggle, the writer’s attitudes were mostly biased against the Britishers. Bitter memories associated with the British rule which overshadowed the pleasant experiences with individual Englishmen, disappeared in the fifties. The hold of traditions was gradually relaxing while a new culture was born of the clash between the East and the West and it was merging imperceptibly but decisively. The old social dogmas and society were being re-interpreted with their new found knowledge. The Indian novelist today works mainly against this background. Indian society has always been a group society in which the atomization of the West is still foreign.

The drama in these novels unfolds in the broad social content in which one life reflects another. One sees this in the tension between the new urbanized class and their village kinsmen; between minority groups and those who still seek to hold monolithic barriers; between the young and their middle aged parents and guardians. She is acquainted with the Indian life and is as authentic as her understanding of the Englishmen and their character. She spent a few years studying the life of South Indian peasants before marrying on Englishman and settling down on London. Culture being ingrained in the personality of the
nation, it is visible not only in domestic habits or sartorial concerns but also in beliefs and convictions.

In this novel, for the first time a theme that is to be repeated in later books is chosen, the conflict between English and Indians, rooted in history, realized in political agitation and resulting in racial animosities and social disparities. Unlike *Nectar in a Sieve*, in this second novel the core of the conflict is political, not economical. By portraying the experience of a nation, or an individual representing it, a writer can indulge in his readers a positive scale of values stemming from sense of horror at evil. Violence, therefore, exhibited in all its fury, can provide a deterrent or a corrective. In this novel, Mirabai and Kitsamy belong to a well-to-do and sophisticated family. Govind is their adopted brother. Kitsamy returns from England and brings an Englishman, Richard, to stay with them for a time. Negotiations begin for Kitsamy’s marriage but he tries to evade the issue. Finally, he agrees to meet Premala, a girl who has been brought up in the traditional manner of their community. Both he and Mirabai find the shy and beautiful Premala pleasing, and Kitsamy marries her.

As fate would have it, the reserved and introspective Govind also falls in love with her. He leaves home and gets involved in a party that believes in violent agitation against the British. One of the leaders of the non-violent movement for independence is a colourful personality called Roshan Merchant, who influences Mirabai to stay on with Kitsamy and
Premala in the city, and take up a job on her newspaper. Mirabai finds the new life fascinating. In the course of her works as a journalist she meets Richard again and they fall in love with each other. The year is 1939 and war breaks out. Premala, in the meantime, is finding it difficult to cope with her husband's social obligations and English friends. She turns for fulfilments to a village re-settlement scheme sponsored by British, where she helps an English missionary, Hickey, to run a new school for the village children. Mirabai and Richard go on a holiday together and return to find that political agitation has reached a crescendo in the Quit India Movement of 1942. Govind and his men set the school on fire since it is a symbol of the British rule. Premala is trapped inside and is suffocated to death. Both Kitsamy and Govind, torn by grief, jealousy and anger, accuse each other. In the dark and stormy night Kitsamy is killed – and no one knows by whom. Govind is arrested for the murder on Hickey's evidence, though Mirabai is sure that he is not responsible. His trial in August 1942 ends in a mob uprising.

The court is flooded with agitators who believe the Englishman to be a liar and Govind innocent. They set him free, and that perhaps is the greatest tragedy of all; for his innocence is never proved. In this chaotic scene, Richard and Mirabai are forced to part; for he is English and she, Indian. The plot of *Some Inner Fury* is woven around the Quit India Movement 1942. The theme of the East-West conflict is
dramatized in two ways: political agitation and cultural disparity, both woven together to form a compact plot that moves with compelling force to the inevitable tragic end. There is a marked development in technique in this second novel. Richard and Mirabai fall in love, but find that to belong to two different races in the context of the political situation of the time, spells disaster for their love. While political upheaval separates them, it is racial disparity, which makes Kitsamy leave the English girl he loves and return to India.

However, in his marriage to Premala, his Western education and outlook make for cultural disparity, for she has been bred in a traditional Hindu family. The third strand in the theme, that concerning the adopted brother Govind, ties Mirabai’s story in with Kitsamy’s. For Govind unwittingly brings about Premala’s death, tragic in its irony, considering he loves her. Kitsamy’s murder, results in a trial that separates Richard from Mirabai. The volcanic “inner fury” of the nation erupts, destroying the illusion of harmony, with wider connotations of relationships between races and nations. The microcosm of individual relationships is also destroyed by the “inner fury” of love, jealousy and violence. There is no attempt to evade the culminating tragedy or the terrible questions about existence that it raises. The inner coherence necessary for a work of art is maintained. In the war of September 1939, has been declared in Europe and all are filled with “shadows and fears and a sense of the tragic fury gathering across the seas.”
But when Japan wins a number of battles they begin to be aware of the dangers of the Second World War. However, they are more concerned with the national movement in the country. The gulf between the English and the Indian is more realized than ever. That the two nations are hostile and they commit be reconciled is seen in the relation between Richard and Mirabai. Mirabai meets Richard after three years and they fall in love, but ominous rumblings are soon heard. Going to inspect the village together Mirabai says:

“…he said, quietly, ‘Has it infected you too- all this ‘your people’ and ‘my people’? I thought, and I said No. I thought I spoke the truth. I thought there was no region of my mind I could not enter, if I tried. I did not know- I had yet to learn – that no man knows himself,”

Eventually, it dawns upon Mirabai the realisation of the danger of loving an Englishman, when they are entering the town which is caught in the grip of a ‘hartal’ called to protest against the foreign rule, both Richard and Mirabai are bewildered by the eerie silence. Mirabai soon begins to sense the ‘creeping hostility’ around them, and reading one of the “Quit India” banners, she tries to draw Richard away. A bottle of acid just misses him. In her fear, Mirabai says, “I clung to him. Tightly, hold fast, never let go. Let go and you will be swept away. You will go and he will be left, or he will be swept away and you will be lost.”
When Richard asks her “It is safer for me if we’re together”? She does not give a direct answer. There is a sudden change in their relationship, for she is an Indian, and therefore, automatically on the side of the nationalists, while he is of the ruling nation. “…. I knew now a part of it, it no longer repudiated me, and from within its invisible envelope, do what I could, there was no easy reaching out to those who stood outside.”

Richard is outside. She tries to tell him that the agitation is not against him, or balanced, sensible people like him. He tells he:

“It is a terrible thing, to feel unwanted.
To be hated. ”

“……..Do you really think people can be singled out like that? One by one, each as an individual? At a time like this? After today?

No, of course not. There is not a patience, the courage, the time. You belong to the other. It is as simple as that, even children understand it.”

The English believe Hickey when he accuses Govind of murder, the Indians believe Mirabai who asserts Govind’s innocence. And Richard, “Do you believe it… this Englishman’s word against mine?” Mirabai asks, and continues, “I said it, and it was as if I had inflicted some wound on myself. I stared at him, frightened, I saw the blood slowly ebbing his face…” In the trial that follows, Mirabai’s firm belief in
Govind’s innocence rouses in her a surging hatred against the “terrible power of the English”. She knows that the mob that invades the court and frees Govind will break up the tight little island the English have formed around Hickey. Even though his robes proclaim him as a man of religion, his colour betrays his nationality. She knows that the island will be submerged by fierce dark seas of the Indians and all because “there was no understanding”. She prophecies the evils which this day would unloose. For violence is like a hydra-headed monster, producing yet more violence.

In the novel, fate has destroyed her loved ones in the tragic writers before her, Kamala Markandaya shows the insignificance of man in the cosmic scheme; he is not even sport for the goods, unlike *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*. While *Nectar in Sieve* has only tragic insights into the human condition, *Some Inner Fury* is unalloyed tragedy. The protagonist loses all, and has to face the world with stoic endurance. Incompatibility due to cultural disparities is a common reason for tension in marriage and this is another aspect of theme of East-West conflict: acquired, in opposition to inherited culture. Kamala Markandaya’s tragic vision dramatizes the common enough situation of an Indian in England falling in love with a white girl and having to leave her.

The author shows her sympathy and sentimentality over such instances in Mirabai’s account of the photograph she finds among Kitsamy’s things. He is withdrawn about this girl he used to know. After
his marriage he leaves home with his new wife and Mirabai finds in the 
confusion in his room, evidence of heavy smoking and in the 
wastepaper basket “the photograph of the girl with hair like silk my 
brother had known. It had been torn right across, once only and thrust 
savagely down.”⁸ Premala tries her best, but finds difficult to adjust to 
Kitsamy’s westernized life-style. Govind suffers on her account and tells 
her, “It is not a vital matter… this of moving among the English.” Her 
repeated failures and mistakes make her more nervous and inhibited 
and Kitsami more bewildered and disappointed.
Mirabai sorrows over the beautiful sister-in-law with “her hurt lost face 
….. 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.”⁹ Premala turns to the village for consolation and since she 
is accepted there in her own right, it soon becomes her world, “for she 
could find no place in the one her husband inhabited”¹⁰. Kitsamy’s 
parents had maintained two sets of rooms, one furnished for English 
and one for Indian guests. Like others of their class they served liquor 
and meat to the English, but kept to traditional fare and rituals 
themselves. Kitsamy, however, with his understanding and love of the 
West, furnishes his house completely in English style with nothing that 
was Indian about it. The house-keeping is done by English-trained 
servants.
Premala’s Kashan rugs and Pahari miniatures are not to be seen and though Kitsamy is proud of her skill in playing the veena, he has no liking for Indian music. The difficulties arising from such tensions are commonly experienced (as well as fictionalised) today. In fact compared to the story of Richard and Mirabai this theme has far greater relevance to the contemporary social context. There is, in the working out of the plot, a strong sense of inescapability from fate. When Govind, knowing he is falling in love with Premala, wants to leave home, the very fates seemed aware of his problem and tried to help him. He is advised to stay on by short-sighted and well meaning parents and:

“the fate once flouted grew thereafter malicious….. they flung their trammels wide and caught us all and drew us in together until none of us could break away, not one. There was no escape from those triple-meshed nets.”

'Triple' reminds us of the Three Fates of Greek mythology. Mirabai describes the last evening the family is together, before Govind’s activities and Premala’s unhappiness produce the catastrophe: “And if we had, what then? We should still have gone our way, moving in orbits we ourselves created, and could not help creating, because we were what we were”? The tragic vision focuses on the inevitability of the terrifying forces whose shadow stalks the characters till it catches up with them at the end. The idea of controlling fate is
repeated in connection with Premala’s work in the village, due to which Govind does not see her when he visits her house. Premala says:

“Perhaps it is as well.

Was it as well? If she had stayed away because of him, given him her company, would the chain in the sequence of events have been broken and all of us spared what followed? Or would it have meant merely another, more deadly, chain being forged? After so many years, the question still remains: and if the choice had been placed before us then, perhaps it would have been beyond our strength to chose. But, of course, there was no such choice.”¹²

When Govind is freed by the mob without proving his innocence, Mirabai says: “Life had orphaned him, not once, but twice. Link by Link, he had forged his own chains.”¹³ In this case, the author seems to show that Govind, of his own free-will, has determined his own character. The political drama enacted in 1942 is now part of history and thereby authenticates the personal drama to which it provides the frame work. Just as in Walter Scott’s novels individual lives are moulded by political, and personal struggles for power, in Some Inner Fury the characters meet and are separated or killed because of national events. Another method of authenticating the story, is the succinct marking of the calendar, that builds up the tension and urgency necessary for the
inexorable march of events, as the characters are impelled into the final catastrophe. Explicit references are made to months and years, thereby anchoring the action in a historical and social reality; for when dates are specific, the events seem to be true.

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, time passes slowly, a leisured unfolding of the seasons, consistent with the placid routine of rural life. In *Some Inner Fury*, the terse references to months and years are consonant with the taut description of Mirabai’s development from inhibited adolescence to liberated womanhood, from careless placidity to tragic emotion. The same disinclination to specify the exact geographical location noticed in *Nectar in Sieve* is seen here as well. Kamala Markandaya neatly evades the mention of the regional language which would indicate the area of India in which the novel is set, when she says “…of the two films showing I had seen the English one and the other Richard would not understand”. The town boasts of only two theatres; it is on the plains with the river not far away; it is one hour’s drive from the coast: it has two clubs, one of which is meant only for the English and upper class Indians and there is a historical cave on the hill nearby. While custard-apple, pomegranate and sapodilla may be found in different parts of the South, sandal-wood trees seem to point to Mysore and its surroundings.

The holiday route taken by Richard and Mirabai is easily traceable. They drive south in the heat of the plains and on the tenth
day come to the borders of Mysore. They then go further south to Kanyakumari, on to Mettupalayam, (unnamed but identifiable) and then the Nilgiris – its bus service and the mountain-railway being vividly described. A road that “corkscrews” down, takes them back to the plain. Leaving on Saturday, they reach the Presidency town on Sunday for work begins on Monday. This town though not named can only be Madras, for it is day’s journey from the hills, and boasts of a Government House with grass “as green, the England said as the grass that grew in England” and “wave after wave of colour the cannas in their brilliant beds, vermillion and yellow and red”.

In pre-independence days Government House balls were often held at the present Rajaji Hall, then called Banqueting Hall, and one such is described at the crisis of the story. Critics have noted resemblance between this novel and Nayantara Sehgal’s *A Time To Be Happy*, in the historical background and characterization. While Sehgal’s introductory paragraphs are factual with a description of location that gives the story solidity of background, Markandaya’s introduction smacks of sentiment. But with her unerring gift for artistic selection, she produces a compellingly told tale. Sehgal on the other hand, leaves one with the impression of nothing more than an “interesting social document”, crowded with too many characters who distract our attention rather than focus it on the main issue. Markandaya’s characters are few and gain in depth and intensity. While
the first person method is used in both books, point of view is controlled through out narration by Mirabai in *Some Inner Fury* with none of the digressions that destroy the unity of Sehgal’s novel, marring her technique.

Meenakshi Mukherji points out that nowhere in this book, “not even at end of the novel, do we come back to the initial point. The reader is left wondering how to relate the beginning with the end. Such flows can be attributed to the basic confusion of the point of view.”¹⁴ In Markandaya’s novel, however, the mention of reddish dust stirred up by the mob, neatly ties the end in with the beginning, Mirabai finds the torn part of Richard’s sleeve with dust still on it “not reddish hot….. as on that day, but faded …..”¹⁵ The questions raised in the reader’s mind by the first two paragraphs of Mirabai’s story, have now been answered by the train of cause and effect moving implacably to the end. Just as Rukmani begins her story in time present and then slides into time past, Mirabai also starts with the discovery of the little silver box, and with this visual reminder, slips into the flash-back, thus moving into the actual story. She is the central figure and hers is the point of view. Young and sophisticated, she is accustomed to the dual life-style, the two worlds of upper class women in British India, and adjusts easily to either English or Indian ways. Because she is in some way connected with the other major characters, she is most suitable as narrator and we see everything through her eyes. Her brother Kitsamy is also connected with
all the characters, but as Premala’s husband and victim of the ‘fury’, he obviously cannot be the protagonist. Kitsamy as an ICS officer, works for the British Government in India.

Govind, the adopted brother of Mirabai and Kitsamy, works against it. Both of them love their sister, and confide in her sufficiently for her to be in a position to tell the reader their thoughts. Thus, we know of Kitsamy’s feelings for the “silken-haired” English girl, and of Govind’s love for Premala. Mirabai gets to know Kitsamy’s wife Premala, well enough to perceive her unhappiness and to get grieve over it. It is through Kitsamy that she meets Richard as well as Roshan. Roshan introduces Mirabai to go journalism and the re-entry of Richard into her life is thus naturally brought about, since she is asked to report on a village in which the British are involved. In the same context of the village, Mira gets to know Hickey, the missionary and through her Premala, is introduced to him and his work in the village school; and there she meets her death.

As a main character of the novel, therefore, Mirabai functions as a kingpin and is thus most suitable as narrator. There is such lyric sincerity, such passionate grief and rebellion in her narration that with no difficulty we believe in her story. Her character (like Rukmani’s) has little to do with her personal tragedy. She and Richard are victims of circumstances and despite her protests and questions she can do little to fight it. Mirabai’s pain and bewilderment are but a reflection of
countless other nameless victims of terrorism or war in this country. A calamity which they have done nothing to bring about destroyed them. The fruitlessness of her struggle to escape makes her an excellent example of a character filled with the knowledge of the tragedy of existence in an apparently indifferent universe.

In Mirabai, Kamala Markanday’s tragic sense seems to brood over such questions as the determining of character, the inescapability of Destiny and the insignificance of man. As Sewal says, “many a modern artist is his own tragic hero.” In this novel she makes an attempt to fictionalize these questions. In one of his letter, Conrad writes; “What makes mankind tragic is not that they are victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it ….. As soon as you know of your slavery, the pan the anger, the strife- the tragedy begins…..”. This is what makes Mirabai the most tragic character in the book and a development on Rukmani’s meek acceptance: her consciousness of the pain and terror of it all, her awareness that things could be different.

Tragedy occurs when an individual is helpless and blameless, a victim of the blind irrationality of the universe. This describes Mirabai’s situation in Some Inner Fury. Just as Rukmani has to continue living after seeing so many of her loved ones die, Mirabai, has the same experience. Kitsamy is murdered, Premala accidentally killed, Govind becomes a fugitive. Death does not rescue Mirabai from the pain of living. As in the other novels, the tragedy seems to be to continue living,
for it is more terrible than death. The fate of Kitsamy, Premala and Govind hinges to a great extent on their own characters. Mirabai's fate is unmerited. Anguish is experienced not by Kitsamy and Premala who die, but Mirabai and Govind who live. Govind, living but banished, an outcast because he is not legally proved innocent, is more tragic than Kitsamy. Life, Mirabai says, has orphaned him not once, but twice. For he is an adopted child and this knowledge has helped to make him a silent, withdrawn, sensitive type, who never forgets that Kitsamy is the son and heir and he dependent on the kindness of his foster parents. Under the reserved exterior, turbulent forces heave, however, and find expression in the nationalism that turns him to violent agitation that is the opposite of Roshan's Gandhian methods.

The wild and overgrown garden where he confides in Mirabai, symbolises his own character, just as Roshan's character find its symbol in the model of the dam she keeps on her table. Govind's tragedy is double-edged; the arson his henchmen have indulged in, has killed the girl he loves; and accused of murdering his foster-brother (his rival in love as in politics), he is not given an opportunity to prove his innocence. In the eyes of all except Mirabai, he has not been vindicated. The characters in this novel can be placed in contrast with each other. Kitsamy is all that Govind is not and he never attains a tragic level. He has solidly realized: gay, impulsive, good-looking, insolently impatient of tradition and not interested or capable of
compromise of any sort. He never fully realizes the extent of Premala’s unhappiness because of a certain lack of imagination. He is merely bewildered by Premala’s inhibitions, while it is Mirabai who suffers for them both: “I don’t know what is wrong with her. Is it me? Do you know?” he asks her and she thinks - “Oh Kitsamy, beloved, staring at me like that, with my mother’s eyes and owns too. So puzzled. So pained..... what is this devilish dispensation that gives clear vision to all save those most needing it?”

Premala’s gentle unassuming ways, win friends wherever she goes. Because of her loving, tender nature she tries her best to please her husband. In her increasing alienation from his world, because she cannot adjust to his standards, in her loneliness and frustration she turns to the village and the baby she adopts, for fulfilment. Incompatibility of character has a part to play in the tragedy, for if Kitsamy had compromised, or Premala adjusted, she would never have gone to the village. Mirabai says, “To her, goodness of heart was almost the sum of perfection....” but like Rukmani, she accepts uncomplainingly all that life sends her. Like Rukmani, therefore, she is pathetic rather than tragic. She is a contrast to Mirbai on the one hand and to Roshan on the other; for Roshan is sturdily defiant of tradition whereas Premala cannot break away from it; Roshan is incurably optimistic, everlastingly resourceful, at ease with the Eastern as well as the Western world, a symbol of modern India, as Premala is a symbol of
the ancient. Both try to serve their country, Premala quietly, Roshan flamboyantly. But Roshan, even in jail, is not even a pathetic figure. Richard and Hickey are contrasted as well. After Mirabai falls in love with Richard, he exists for us only in relation to her. We never see him in others' company or conversing with other characters.

Thus, he is rather a shadowy figure. However, inasmuch as he typifies a balanced and sane view of people and events, inasmuch as he is objective and self-disciplined, he represents the norm of ideal behaviour and is Mirabai's good angel- a man at ease and on equal terms with all men of whatever colour or nation. Like Kenny before him, "he functions as the author's mouthpiece; but unlike Kenny, he is of greater structural importance to the plot. We are never told whether he is alive or dead at the end of the book." All we know is that he is separated from Mirabai. He is never a tragic character, but his role in this story makes Mirabai tragic. In contrast to Richard, Hickey the other Englishman is zealously dedicated to his work to the point of fanaticism. He, too, is of structural importance to the plot as Govind's accuser and the cause of the mob uprising that brings separation to Richard and Mirabai. She never learns whether Hickey is "liar" or "mad-man", or as Richard suggests, merely mistaken in his opinion of Govind because of the confusion on the night of the fire.

But it is Hickey who sets in motion the forces that tear Mirabai's world apart from Richard's; who is instrumental in churning up Mirabai's
hatred against the British and their power and it is he who thus aligns her on the side of her countrymen. The Novel *Some Inner Fury* moves swiftly into the narrative mode, but once we have acquainted ourselves with the story, a closer re-reading would yield rich dividends in the matter of understanding Kamala Markandaya’s use of language. Apparently straight-forward narration can assume subtle nuances of meaning when the multiple associations of certain words are considered. A garland is a symbol of welcome, but also of marriage and Mirabai garlands Richard. The priest arrives late to bless Kitsamy’s home-coming and the words a “this auspicious start to a new life” assume irony in the context of later events. But this is not all. Apart from racial prejudice, the political position of the ruler and the ruled was in fact, a big stumbling block in the way of mutual understanding and mutual respect between Britain and India. “The growth of English power in India and brought about not the union of cultures which Markandaya had dreamt about, but a hardening of the positions which was soon to assume the Kiplingesque dichotomy.”

As a result of growing nationalism the racial and social tension between the races went on mounting, embittering the relationship day by day. While the period after 1935 in India for the British novelists was, according to Allen Greenberger, the Era of Melancholy, it was for the Indian writers the Era of Nationalism. On the one hand, it mellowed and softened the British attitude towards Indians and on the other, it made
the Indians more and more militant and chauvinistic in their nationalism. Against the backdrop of the Quit India Movement *Some Inner Fury* deals with the romantic infatuation between an Indian girl Mirabai and a British official Richard Marlowe. It is “essentially a novel of love, the two individuals who love each other belong to the different races and the ruled and the novel studies the impact of the troubled nation spirit of the early forties upon their love.”

In fact, their romance is ruined by the political reality of the times. Richard is a handsome Youngman “a creature of gold,” “the skin as tight and firm as a silken sheath. A body that might have been sculptured-though not from marble and smooth, lean, flanked, its lines and surfaces clear cut, unflawed and a warmth to it- such a warmth that could wrap you about gently or make you melt, or set you on fire and burn with an incandescent heat itself.”

It is this irresistible charm in him that makes Mirabai fall in love with first sight. And quite unconsciously, she garlands Richard instead of Kitsamy on their arrival from England. But more importantly, Richard is liberal, sensitive and sympathetic. “Kamala Markandaya has warm appreciation of the Englishman as an individual, he is a gentleman to the core and is free from any feeling of racial superiority.” But this gesture on the part of Richard endears him to Mirabai who is all admiration for him. Her highly complimentary remarks are, “I think it is very sensible of him to dress for the climate- even if he had to borrow
servant’s clothes”. Moreover, Richard puts up with the sultry heat without any visible sign of displeasure or discomfort on his face: “He stood in the open, careless” of the shielding palm, bareheaded, with his skin flaming where the sun left upon it.”

Richard’s adaptability and liberality is seen again when he and Mirabai go to a Brahmin restaurant and Richard takes off shoes and sits on the floor like everyone else as if he had been used to it all his life. He pleases the cook so much with his praise that the man keeps popping in and out with fresh delicacies. No wonder, almost bursting out with pride Mirabai thinks, “there is no one at all like my love.”

Richard has also learnt many stories from the Mahabharata in his eagerness to appreciate India and its culture. Richard is the idealized version of his beloved, the heroine-narrator.

“Mirabai painstakingly shows that her beloved Richard is an Englishman in a million, a veritable Fielding. Richard avoids the English community, is remarkably at home with Mirabai’s family, relishes Indian food and clothing, knows stories from the Mahabharata, and is uncommonly gentle and gentlemanly in pressing his love for Mirabai.”

Though, passionately in love with Richard shows utmost caution and restraint in his physical advances to her. He has almost imbibed the Oriental approach to love in which the body is thought to be subservient
to the spirit. Richard wants to make sure that their love is not mere infatuation but a long lasting spiritual experience. When Mirabai wonders at Richard’s self-restraint he explains to her, “A man does not take a girl the moment he feels attracted to her, if she means anything at all to him. A man does not lightly lie with a woman when it’s the first time to her especially, if he loves her. It is better to wait for her to come to him.” Naturally, before their love is consummated, they identify themselves with each other in course of their six-week ‘honeymoon’ tour. Richard experiences in the “sweep and surge of love” with Mirabai a merger of all nationalities and identities. “Racial and cultural differences do not in any way interface in the novel with happy sex and love relations. The minds of Mirabai and Richard work in perfect unison and they are able to establish positive relationship at these levels.”

Richard has no parochial consideration of ‘your people’ and ‘my people’. a noted critic H. M. Williams opines:

“Mirabai and Richard never sacrifice their loyalty to their respective communities, but seek in love a relief from the eternal tormenting struggle of ‘your people’ and ‘my people’. When they are lovers and are planning to get married, they believe that they have succeeded in asserting the claims of individual human nature and passionate love against the claims of race, politics and family.”
But when they are faced with a crisis, they rationalize their love by giving in to hard realities of race and community. Richard’s attitude is purely realistic in that he holds both the man and the moment responsible for their estrangement. His words are, “Not people like us and not in times like these”. Surely, there exists the gulf of the ruler and the ruled and the times are the most turbulent years of the freedom struggle. As usual personal relationship is Kamala Markandaya’s forte. She seems to imply that:

“personal attraction coupled with genuine open-mindedness to each other’s people and culture brings them close to each other on the personal level, but politically and culturally, no nation can tolerate the domination of the other. The passions and aspirations of an individual are sacrificed for a larger cause.”

This reminds Margaret Joseph of the novels of Walter Scott: “Just as in Walter Scott’s novels individual lives are moulded by political and personal struggles for power, in Some Inner Fury the characters meet, and are separated or killed because of national events.” However, the reader’s curiosity to read Richard’s parting words or see his parting gesture, remains. The other important British character Hickey, in the words of Mirabai is, “a man toiling among people not his own, in a country not his own, for the good as he saw it and for a reward which most men, far from envying, looked at with pitying if not scornful eyes”.

Like Kenny he is devoted and selfless worker for the poor and the helpless. Unlike other missionaries he seems to regard the service of man as service to God. Thus, rather than propagating Christianity his aim is to serve the villagers with single-minded dedication and to ameliorate their fate. Even amidst material prosperity “many women live with harrowing feelings of psychological insecurity, lack of personal status and a sense of alienation.”

Though, better equipped with education and wealth than their counterparts in the earlier novels self-fulfilment becomes a distant and unattainable goal to the women in Some Inner Fury. It chronicles the repercussions of the freedom struggle on the lives of the educated, upper-class women. Premala epitomizes the traditional concept of upper-class women. Hailing from a conservative Hindu family she tries to remould herself to her husband’s modern, anglicized tastes “though she tried desperately, she plainly found it difficult to adapt herself to him.”

She sacrifices all aspirations for personal freedom and happiness, yet she fails to bridge the cultural gap between herself and Kitsamy, her husband. Mirabai, her sister-in-law, feels sorry for her: “If she had not loved Kitsamy so much, she would not have tried so much to please him.”

Hedged in by the traditional Indian spirit she prolongs her anguish and frustration. Her unfulfilled maternal feelings find an outlet in nurturing an orphan child. School work releases but there she meets
with her tragic death. As Srinivasa Iyengar opines, “she is symbolic of Mother India who is compassion and sufferance, who must indeed suffer all hurts and survive all disasters”. Through, her Markandaya projects the bewilderment and vulnerability of traditional Indian women confronting a culture in flux. Despite her being a victim she shows a streak of inner strength in her attempt at saving the school on fire risking her own life. Torn between her western oriented husband and her own conventional upbringing she sublimates herself through sacrifice: “Her silence is stronger than all rhetoric, her seeming capacity, for resignation is the true measure of her unfathomable strength.”

Traditional Indian society does not leave much scope for an individual to transcend the role boundaries. Yet, Roshan Merchant of the same novel withstands the conflicting social forces and seeks independence. Outspoken and educated she stands as a contrast to both Premala and Kitsamy. The most striking and autonomous among Markandaya’s heroines she bestows her outstanding qualities upon her less fortunate sisters around her. From a columnist she becomes the owner of the paper she is writing for. Her magnetic dynamism appeals to the conventional Premala. Her quest for identity and autonomy cannot be separated from her desire for national independence. Though not an advocate of terrorism she does not restrain from vouching a sound alibi for Govind, Mirabai’s brother. No other woman would have sworn in the court that he had spent the night in question with her. With
her simplicity, calm and composure she can even control a violent mob. Her foreign education does not distance her from her people, but instills in them the need for personal as well as national freedom.

Mirabai appreciates her: “born in one world, educated in another, she entered both and moved in both with ease and nonchalange.” She is indeed a remarkable human being. Apart from Premala and Roshan, Markandaya portrays another educated woman engaged in the war between tradition and modernity, romanticism and realism and aspiration for personal freedom and patriotism in Mirabai, the objective reporter of her family tale. Her rich Hindu background and exposure to western life style equip her with the knowledge to select the best from both Indian and British culture. Like her pro-British and anti-British brothers she too is torn between her passionate love for the English official Richard and her patriotism.

Despite their deep and lasting love for each other she is mature enough to understand the hindrances to their union. It is a love between two individuals who happen to belong to two different races. The rigidity and orthodoxy of her own society help her to understand the conventions of her caste. When Roshan rises above the narrow confines of family and society Mirabai finds it hard to eschew her private happiness in the name of patriotism. Yet she knows as he says forlornly: “you belong to one side- if don’t, you belong to the other”. There is no in between. She shows immense courage in her decision.
But she has no regrets for “they had known love together; whatever happened the sweetness of that knowledge would always remain.”

Had they been united they would have risen above racial and cultural disparities through the purity of their love. Since India is a land where religion, rationalism and mysticism go together most novels with an Indian background have a religious figure, a sanyasi. Most often he functions as a social leader also.

The orthodox pattern of life in a Hindu family provides in its basic values and tradition code a contrast to Mirabai’s later life in the city. Richard sends the plaster figure of a goddess “hurting down the rock face, which I would not have done - but was glad he had ….. and now the silence shivered and fled”. This does not augur well for their luck, despite the ivory and gold replacements he sends her later. Just before Kitsamy ties the thali around Premala’s neck, she turns away and prays fervently, silently, unmindful of the priest and people watching. She “emerged from it with her face pale and clear and serene, and turned to Kitsamy and bared her throat for the necklace he held, and smiled at him as if he was the only one there.”

In the baring of the throat one is reminded of sacrifice, the victim offered for slaughter, the total surrender of self. Premala later becomes a victim on the altar of East-West conflict. After one of his confrontations with Kitsamy, Govind is shown in a wilderness, unbounded on one side, with tall coarse grass and thorny bushes and tangled twining creepers.
flourishing around the bushes and trees. The verbal choice has the function use of illustrating Govind’s nature which inclines to violence and wildness. In the same way, Roshan, the nationalist who is “not really interested in destruction” has on her table a “smaller plaster model of a dam…. Constructed with beauty and precision to the last detail…..” Richard exists for the reader only in relation to Mirabai, the narrator, whose love for him is doomed. Hence the language used in connection with him is usually highly emotional and often foretells directly or indirectly, trouble to come. The hint of approaching tragedy is seen when she tells him:

“I wish we could be together all the time”

“we shall be soon”.

…… I believed him, believed he was right: as if love were a talisman that would somehow keep us together, protecting us against war, the world, everything; as if a million others, believing this had not already been undeceived.”

Mirabai is an educated, sophisticated girl there is no inconsistency in the use of poetic language, such as in this description of the river: “…..the silver river sand shaped in ripples and waves as the cool weather water had left it”. A more obvious example is found later in the alternative line: “… the gutter, glutted, began to gulp and gurgle as they ran”. In the novel, the development is seen in the exploitation of
images. Mirabai visits the prison and “... when I looked up at those steep converging walls... I could feel a dry slow suffocation insidiously beginning...”

They find Premala lying dead through asphyxiation and her face is discoloured with her struggle to breathe; “… and I knew she had fought for breathe, for her life”. Mirabai says later “..... the oppression was building up once more, the air was heavy and still; it was like trying to breathe under a blanket.”

In the distance she sees “the first faint outline of storm clouds” and the stormy trial is about to begin. When crowds collect outside the court; “You could not see them yet but you felt them, felt that weight, the power, felt the pressure of air moving before them like a wall and bearing down on the court from all four sides.”

Apart from the context which shows Mirabai’s highly strung nerves and her great sensitivity, claustrophobia has structural significance. Govind accuses Kitsamy of driving Premala for her suffocation as if he has actually strangled the bare throat she once offered him, for it is lack of harmony with him that her to the village.

Figuratively too, he has strangled her spirit, her identity. She symbolises the nation that is being suppressed, and Kitsamy, the I.C.S. officer, represents the English who suppress it. Unlike Roshan, whose freedom cannot be restricted even by prison walls, Premala, to all intents and purposes free, is restricted by the husband she loves. The sub-conscious rebellion at restraint finds expression in images which
may group together for they develop the basic symbol of claustrophobia into specific metaphors. A nation is dominated by a foreign power; young people are restricted by orthodox customs; tradition prevents inter-racial marriage. Richards sleeps with the sentinels of his consciousness withdrawn. The servant accompanying Mirabai is a reluctant ball-and-chain; anger “blew open the gates of defiance; but while they swung wildly…. the wind died and in the lull I heard the gates shut.”

Kitsamy has “locked the coffers of his thought and stood vigilant before them”. “There are many keys that unlock the gates of men’s liking.” Like a hat, so has fact “to be trimmed and boxed ….” Certain images are repeated in different contexts. The darkness of revolt is gathering. Similes quicken the abstract tragic fact into a concrete tragic image: “the unadmitted truth fastened upon us like a vampire, sucking from us the life-blood of love.” When Kitsamy dies. Mirabai feels the years “like ashes in my mouth”. When Govind is rescued by the mob, “there was nothing but ashes in his face,” for his innocence has not been proved. Fear finds different images, particularly that of a tower “… the lurching tower of fear”. Reminding one of a snake coiled in its hole, “fear began to stir, I felt its prickling preliminaries”, later, “its slow black unwinding…….”. Such concern over the choice of words is an all important factor in projecting the tragic experience. A failure in this direction will result in unintentional comedy, as the following passage
from B. Rajan’s The Dark Dancer will show: “He groped his way out of
the embryonic naggings of the advancing light into the bathroom and
the wash of normalities …… He oscillated his head against a
toothbrush….put it lethargically on chiseling terms with a razor.”

In Kamala Markandaya’s projection of the tragic, there is absolute
harmony between concept and execution. Her imagination leaps from
idea, to image analogous, to idea, and then moulds it into appropriate
language. Richard tells Mirabai he has to go away. She says: “The
happiness of a moment before seemed a mockery. Capped and belled
it jeered at me.” Not only is Mirabai’s disappointment evoked but also
the wider context of all her losses, by the time the story reaches its
conclusion. Thus, the mind darts from the idea of mockery to the image
of the mocker, the jester who wears cap and bells. With the repeated
use of ‘never’ Mirabai mourns one more calamity, the freeing of Govind,
who, with his name not cleared of guilt, will be as dead to his family as
Kitsamy actually is:

“Now he would return to stand by his innocence;
ever, 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….. whatever the
crowd might sing, he would never be free. He knew it, and I
knew it, and he went with them.”
Repition of words helps to stress the tragedy of the story and the use of the main word “fury” reinforces the title with its suggestion of turbulent forces clamped down and finally erupting with all the fierceness of a volcano. It rises to a crescendo in the following passage:

“I had known love, and fear, and now I knew what it was to hate. The wave surged over me black, blinding; I felt myself borne on those dark, lashing waters helpless, but not weak, full of a fury, and I wanted to turn on him and shut with all my fury…. but in that moment Richard moved, very slightly, and I turned to him and his eyes were quietly upon me, watchful, calm and sanity came back and hatred died, and with it went the fear and the fury.”

The school is set on the fire by agitators as a protest against the British, and the sight is described in language of tremendous power. The fury of the flames is represented in a metaphor implying sexual union with a grotesquely apposite analogy and a vivid sense of colour and movement.

“I closed my eyes. I could not watch that final consummation. I felt the ground quake, felt the heavy blasts of air flung back in waves from the crash, heard the roar that followed and as it subsided a deep, long drawn sigh like a sucked in breath. When I opened my eyes again the school was a mangled burning heap above which rose
sparks and streaks and streams of fire, red and white and orange and purple, like flowers in the night and the wondering eyes of the child in my arms were full of their brilliant beauty."⁴³

Williams says about this passage: “The symbolism of storm winds and the suppressed furies breaking out… reinforces Mirabai’s awareness of being caught up and destroyed by blind forces.”⁴⁴ Thus, of all the characters, therefore, Mirabai’s is the most fully realised tragic character in the novel. She is aware, not only of the tragedy of the situation that poises her between two worlds, but of the whole human predicament.
1 Madhusudan Prasad, *Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya* (Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1984)


3 Ibid. 138.

4 Ibid. 214.

5 Ibid. 215.

6 Ibid. 218.

7 Ibid. 264.

8 Ibid. 87.

9 Ibid. 143.

10 Ibid. 157.

11 Ibid. 77.

12 Ibid. 168.

13 Ibid. 284.


18 G. S. Amur, “*Meadows Taylor and the Three Cultures*”, The image of India in Western Creative Writing (Delhi: Sterling Press, 1980) 09.


23 Ibid. 61.

24 Ibid. 197-198.


31 Ibid. 97.


34 Ibid. 73.

35 Ibid. 126.

36 Ibid. 199.

37 Ibid. 122.

38 Ibid. 281.

39 Ibid. 215.


42 Ibid. 280.

43 Ibid. 244.