Chapter -II

The Portrayal of the Western Mis-conceptions of the East and Cross - Cultural Relations

… having debunked the con-men of India, *Karma Cola* an attempt to restore the real saints to their pedestal was a necessity long felt. She has done her penance in a dignified manner.

A. G. Khan
Chapter - II

The Portrayal of the Western Mis-conceptions of the East and Cross-Cultural Relations

India is an ancient country of extraordinary diversities, interesting places and fabulous customs, therefore, religion and philosophy have become the target subjects for analytical scrutiny. In India, spiritualists believe that material wealth is the seat of all evils and this cannot bring contentment to the life. In contrast to this, West has set higher materialistic standards and rationalistic thinking which force them to indulge in eternal quest of serenity. During the assimilation of Western culture, the people of India exhibited exuberant skill and adopted new influences without losing their individuality, unlike other modern countries. This particular trait has attracted lots of Western people to India which has become the sole destination for spiritual seekers to quench their qualms. These contrary values of East and West, show greater attraction for each other, like the opposite ends of magnets.

Eastern philosophy is based on self-liberation which considers life as a journey towards eternal realities, on the other hand Western philosophy is goal-oriented that considers life as a service. For them everything needs to be proved and analyzed. These basic traits are responsible for the creation of conflicts and establishment of cross-cultural relationship.
In Indian writings, East-West encounter has occupied an important area of concern in the works of many eminent writers like Raja Rao, Santha Rama Rau, Ruth Prawer Jhabwala, Kamala Markandaya, Gita Mehta and others. The major involvement of the novelists can be traced out as free love, personal happiness, sex and the eternal spiritual quest. They have tried to portray the human situation in the transforming Indian society under the impact of the West and also with the problems of adjustments.

Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) shows vast treatment of the theme of *Advaita* or non-dualism with metaphysical concept. The work also imbibes the second major theme as protagonist Rama’s pilgrimage. It shows that the novel is also about modern India, in confrontation with the West. Through the protagonist Ramaswamy, the author wants to convey that India has strong philosophical traditions and are inseparable from the lives and thoughts of the people. Whenever immigrants thought of India, they did not think of land but of the philosophies flourished here. Rama, a South Indian Brahmin who had read the Upanishads at four and knows Sanskrit very well when goes to France acquires a reconcilable state. As Iyengar quotes, “… he is variously described as a European brahmin, a French Vedantin, the neo-Tristan and the pseudo-Satyavan” (397-398).

The problem of East-West encounter has been treated more fundamentally by Santha Rama Rau in *Remember the House* (1956). The breakdown of communication and then breaking up of friendship between
Alix and Baba results due to the difference between their cultures. Alix with her Western notions of ambition, success, love and happiness fails to understand the spiritual compulsions. These cultural barriers are brilliantly magnified by the author through the characters’ inadequacies and their individual search for a pattern of living. The work emphasizes on understanding the values of country and exposes the awareness towards basic factors responsible for East-West confrontation.

The years between 1950 and 1980 witnessed a rapid decline of the values established during the Independence struggle. During this period the individuals became a curious blend of native and borrowed elements which can be traced in the prolific number of writings by various authors in different ways.

Ruth Prawer Jhabwala in her novel *A Backward Place* (1965) has presented six characters and different situations resulting from the intermixing of East and West. It concerns the plight of several expatriate European women whose reasons for remaining in India vary. All the six comic characters inhabit a backward place. Etta, an aristocratic Hungarian woman maintains her sophisticated life style, while Clarissa talks about simple life. Judy, a British woman admires her extended Hindu family despite her strict English upbringing. On the other hand Bal, an Indian protagonist holds quite Western aspirations to Hollywood glamour. In this way *A Backward Place* humourously explores the contradiction in attitudes and lifestyles and the interplay between culture and individuality.
Kamala Markandaya, a distinguished writer of cross-cultural relations, has dealt with the dilemma of East-West conflict in many of her novels. In *Some Inner Fury* (1955), East-West confrontation is reflected in the failure of marriage between westernized Kit and typical Indian Premala. Transformation of Mira and the establishment of love with an English government official Richard, shows operating Western influence. *The Silence of Desire* (1960) highlights the conflict between faith and reason. *Possession* (1963) and *The Coffer Dams* (1969) both have intercultural themes and characters with refreshing treatment of subject matter. In *Possession* the author tries to concretize the spiritual power of the East against the glamorous materialistic society of the West. Valmiki and Srinivas who live in England realize their identity and their rootedness through the preachings of the Swami. In *The Nowhere Man* (1973) Kamala Markandaya highlights the conflict in Srinivas who feels torn apart by the East-West contrast. *Pleasure City* (1982) grows on the coastline fishing colony where the lives of its residents are affected by setting up of the new hotel Shalimar. The hotel becomes resting place for the affluent Western tourists who turned to India in search of mental peace and spiritual strength. It sets up an impetus for developing society at the same time destroys an ancient civilization and culture. The author brings forth all these through the pleasures and pains of her native and alien characters.
Like Kamala Markandaya, Gita Mehta too is in the privileged position of knowing both the cultures. Through *Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East* Gita Mehta establishes a cross-cultural link by depicting the strength and the weaknesses of both the cultures. She has portrayed the Western mis-conceptions regarding East along with the characteristics and vision of mystic East.

*Karma Cola* can be read as a brilliant depiction of mammoth exodus of Westerners towards mystic East in search of spiritual quest. India during 1960s and 1970s was flooded with young credulous hippies wandering for soul enlightenment. In the game of aspiring instant salvation they had been entrapped and exploited rigorously by the hucksters. The book produces a wickedly witty satire on thousands of hippies who had been enveloped by the desperate enthusiasm to gobble up Hinduism and had unloaded their wallets into the open palms of crooked gurus.

The author has very diligently dissected the fraudulent hocus-pocus and made a caustic reportage on the charlatans who milked the hippies’ fascination towards Indian mysticism. The picture presented by her shows the urgency of liberation and immaturity in adoption of gurus. The professional gurus thus grabbed the opportunity for minting money and became more materialistic. The characters and episodes are fitted nicely to represent a view of those critical years that had impressed the lives of sensitive human beings and so had changed the very course of the present pitiless materialistic era. Throughout the work she has
produced her journalistic view based on personal experiences. As Chauhan quotes, “She brings the reporter’s keen observation, the journalist’s scrupulous accuracy and ad writer’s passion for colourful phrasing to her task as writer. The gift makes her work eminently readable, even memorable” (150).

*Karma Cola* has been heralded as a fresh new voice in Indian English literature. Gita Mehta has shown her art and insight into Western mis-conception of the East and cross-cultural relations. Her portrayal of East-West encounter is the conflict between the claim of the body and of the mind–of materialism and of spiritualism. She has depicted all these with sheer force, vividness and originality. The work embraces an enormous variety of experiences in the ashrams bringing a cultural shock for both. The central issue revolves around the gurus and their “spiritual bedlams” as Gita Mehta calls them. The process of metaphysical osmosis brings forth the cultural collision between the materialistic gurus and their spiritual casualties.

With *Karma Cola*, Gita Mehta had made her debut on the Indo-English literary scene precisely to debunk spiritual Orientals. Her anti-romanticism is a vigorous response of her being Hindu and Indian. She has defined herself, as an “inert Indian” (*KC* 3) who has to witness a further episode of “appropriation” of her motherland by the voracious West. The process to gobble up Hinduism and choking itself in the process has become an anti-sentimental attack to the consumerist Occident.
Throughout the work the author has focused on two categories of gurus: the fugitives and the steadfasts. The fugitives are depicted exploiting their followers in exchange of granting the desired enlightenment and healing touch. The steadfasts are rooted firmly and chase none. They optimistically and confidently adhere to their piece of land, practising yoga in serenity. All the streams of yoga like Bhakti yoga, Hath yoga, Tantra yoga, Guru yoga and Reincarnation are practised by these saints not only for the sake of their spiritual upliftment but also for the whole universe. The book thus provides us with the opportunity to improve our vision of India, cleansing the awkward diaphragm which the Western people commonly use to portray.

The philosophy and spirituality in India has been a long evolutionary process which was cultivated by our ancestors thousands of years ago to be transcendent. In Indian Subcontinent, which includes Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal, nearly a quarter million French, Americans, Germans, Scandinavians, Australians, Canadians, Italians, Southern and Central Americans, British, Swiss and other foreigners were flocking in pursuit of either mind expansion or obscure solution. The reason behind it seems to be that those days the Christian missionaries were not paranoid like earlier ones. They felt adrift in the whirlpool of views by paying cheap airfares. It became a good deal to acquire serenity, simple survival and loneliness for having a lovely time. For them, reason and religion became the targets of popular amusements.
The numbers of pilgrims were increasing day by day and becoming the true misfortune of the great pilgrimage. The Asian embassy had tried to check illegal immigrants but it became a tedious task due to taboos and generosity of the border people. The European travellers maintained their illegal border routes through countryside where polyandry and polygamy were often widespread; the travellers shared their “Apsaras” (KC 23) like women and also admired the egalitarian methods. For years they maintained the illegal border routes with a myth of helping hundreds of people, who might otherwise have found it impossible to enter India in search of immortal souls. The diplomat of Indian government had calculated and commented “The true misfortune is that the numbers are increasing, not decreasing despite our best efforts to teach people that things are not easy here” (KC 21).

Thousands of people found India and the Asian sub-continent a paradise for spiritual seekers. They evaluated India on the top for cultivating the method of transcendence and philosophy. Even science surrendered itself in front of the beliefs and miracles. Every now and then people were talking of “Karma” and congregated to crack Karma nutshells. The work *Karma Cola* probes into the ashram life where spirituality for all, is wheeling and dealing in karma that has turned into the most practical jokes at all. N. Kalaamani says that the novel according to the *Illustrated Weekly* is “a short taut, savagely satirical account of the
hippies and Western star freaks on a spiritual quest in India.” In an interview for this magazine, Gita Mehta says:

> It was the product of my own experiences. I was at university when Ginsberg arrived and there was the business of Dharma Bums. And I came back from university when John Lennon and the Beatles hit India. I had been watching the whole Caravanserai’s arrive and also the anticipation of Indians who said; at last the West is coming to us: at last the rock’n roll show is on. (127-128)

The real action begins when thousands and thousands of loonies wiped away the proprieties of caste, race and sex, by sheer stone and were making merriment wearing bright coloured clothes. Everybody was singing, dancing and speaking in his tongue. They thought of Indian profundity and lead to the real action of popularizing American mass marketing. The Indian government invited the experts to popularize products with the same panache. The competition accelerated between the duo; the king of rock and roll abdicated over Ravishankar and the Maharishi. The sitar wiped out the split reed sex and mantras began fouling the crystal clarity of rock and roll lyrics.

America in search of Nirvana created a massive Eastern market in which everything was for the sale. The vacuum of dissatisfied desires disgorged and succumbed Indian goods routed through America into
exciting accessories for the age like peasants’ skirts with hand-printed mantras, vegetable dyes, lentil soups etc. It had created a wonderful supplication and a beneficiary market for the Easterners with their emblem. It was from accepting the fantasies with a very short haul and later more successfully manufacturing them. With the expansion of home industry mass marketing too expanded, which can be noticed through conversation between a guru and his follower:

“Your watch is not accurate. Take it off and give it to me.”

The boy did so. The guru examined the watch and then returned it to the devotee. The boy was about to slide it back on his wrist when he noticed that the watch had changed. Now it was not only accurate but it also told the time in New York and London, it had a meter for recording the depths of water, and it registered the date. (KC 7)

With the queries of the devotee his Master explained the truth in these words:

“Look at the inscription on the back,” counseled the Master.

The boy turned the watch over and found engraved on his changed and wonderful timepiece the following words:

Guru Industries, Ltd. (KC 7)
Several thousand people, concerned about the future of mankind, were flocking and resting in India for attending two contrast congregations—The World Conference at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi and secondly, Swami Muktananda’s Kundalini Meditation Camp, for seven weeks in downtown Delhi. The World Conference had attracted almost all top Indian authorities and foreign delegates from all the seven continents gathered for five days. Five thousand celibates and numerous non-celibate observers and sympathizers came together under a huge round symbol on which inscribed the motto: “Royalty is Purity Plus Personality” (KC 12), to participate in special workshops and exchanged thoughts and views on several problems like “Truth, Justice and Spirituality”, … “Meditation and Dedication”, … “Moral Code of Conduct for Professionals”, … “Moral Values and the Future of Mankinds”, … “Women and the Future of Mankind” (KC 13). All the people, gathered from every conceivable background, were unanimous on discussing the meaning of karma and the significance of moral actions.

All major hotels, pensions, and flea-pits were busy accommodating floating population of the foreigners. Everyone in the city was looking for the opportunity to grab and earn more money. The Hotel Metropolis which was accustomed to house poor Indians was trying to meet the sophisticated demands of the foreigners through one cranked up gramophone and repeatedly playing a few badly scratched records.
Swami Muktananda’s Kundalini Meditation Camp which was going on at down-town Delhi was not well-organized and attracted uncountable numbers of devotees. The entire three acre lawn was covered with tents for devotees to dwell and sit in meditation for cracking karma nutshells. Unlike World Conference, the Camp had no discrimination of caste and creed which provided a lot to enlighten souls and revealing about themselves. All spiritual seekers were busy taking cosmic energy, vibrations from their gurus. During the evening treat, all disciples were satirically expressed pulling the energy off the film screen. It was a thirteen minutes long home movie of Swami Muktananda’s last birthday which had showed him “… being felicitated by the world” (*KC* 14). Bhagwan Rajneesh, the King of Tantra teacher, when flashed on the screen along with guru, people shuddered with pleasure and stretched hands to pull energy.

In the Conference and the Camp gatherings were structurally different but morally same. Both the places were delivering the acquired philosophy in an artificially generated spiritual atmosphere. During one morning session at World Conference the speaker, a meteorologist, had been asked regarding relevance of war and science by an earnest American student for which the speaker replied converting to the philosophy of meaning fully meaningless:

“Don’t live in the shadow of death, young man”, he warned.
Let us say there is a nuclear holocaust. What will it do? I shall tell you what it will do. It will cleanse the world!

Don’t you understand? We are going toward a post-nuclear, post-Armageddon Golden Age! (KC 17)

Indian ashram and its activities attracted a lot Occidentals to perform karma and to stay for a long time. It was always a matter of research which turned Gita Mehta to express her experiences in the form of Karma Cola. Ashram described by her was like entering a haunted house with necromantic motives. Writers, Housewives, Gamblers, Diplomats and Well-Wishers had same views regarding the perils of the ashrams. The head of the ashram was known as “God” (KC 28) accompanied with matriarch i.e. mother of the ashram. The ashram always had a magnetic decorum to attract more and more foreign disciples.

In one of Poona’s ashrams nearly two thousand devotees were living with a five year old little “Buddha” (KC 28). God announced him as “Buddha” for “He’s a very high soul” (KC 28). The little Buddha was living along with a gang of fellow ragged blond urchins of diverse nationalities. An ecstatic acolyte said about the enlightened little Buddha:

When he was a two-year-old baby in Zurich he saw a photograph of God, and fell on his face in front of it….He kept on asking to go to his Daddy, until his parents brought him right here. To Poona. We were there when he had his first
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darshan with God. He flung himself at God’s feet shouting, ‘Daddy! Daddy!’ It was so moving. We all felt really humble to be present. (KC 28)

Unaware of the danger present in dumb orange dresses; the Westerners were at their nadir. The Charlatans developed their own tricks to entrap the devotees and materialize things for them. Americans who had been living in India came under the grip of a crooked guru who was said having supernatural powers and supposed to raise man from the dead. The Charlatans used spirituality as a pitchfork to drain wealth from a particular class. A guru played such a trick with the wife of an Ambassador from a Mediterranean country regarding her leg pain. She refuted with amazement but the master looked at her knowingly and blessed for the betterment.

In another trick the Master walked towards an elderly Ambassador sitting in room chair and gave him a fistful of ash produced from nowhere but in the air. The Guru advised the diplomat to eat it. In the state of curiosity and bewilderment when the diplomat opened his mouth to say thanks, the puckish guru put few grains of ash into man’s upturned mouth and instructed to swallow for his good health. “Swallow, son, swallow. Holy Hash. You will be well” (KC 49).

The divine intercession and supernatural magical power of the Masters or the tricks played by them seem sufficient to draw attention, to drag and surround themselves by the people begging help. In one such
incidence quoted by the author, a large Indian joint family approached the Master and pleaded to save the absent member, who was dead. As per the astrologer’s calculation; the family concluded that it was the untimely death and could be raised back by the divine powers of the Master. In Madras city morgue, the deceased was kept. When the staff experienced a technical hitch regarding the location of the body, the family was baffled and didn’t want someone else’s body. At that time the Master stepped into the inner recesses and located the correct body. Then the proceedings started to raise him from the dead. The atmosphere became clumsy and full of anxiousness, everyone fell at the feet of the miracle worker acknowledging him as God, but all the efforts went in vain. The American disciple, who had witnessed it was asked regarding the greatest miracle of raising a man from the dead in context of his guru, answered boisterously:

Yeah, I saw a miracle. You should have seen that morgue, guys rushing all over the place, clerks, morgue attendants, administrators. Nobody knew where anything was.

I reckon the real miracle was when the master found that body. The rest was peanuts. (KC 50)

Mystic East suddenly became the best marketing entrepreneur of the world. They started offering various courses in levitation and transcendental meditation. India supported world by becoming inspirational source for such courses. A Californian girl was offering a
degree course in Inner Environments. To explore further, she was planning to join the Maharishi’s ashram at Switzerland. The Maharishi was offering courses on levitation for fifteen hundred dollars along with the money back guarantee if fail to levitate. It also helped one to get back in touch with oneself and the mysterious forces of the Universe. It was like rediscovering one’s inner environment, outer aura and Supreme Shanti.

Religious egalitarianism becomes one more type of spiritual incantation. The temple was adorned with the Star of David, the Crescent of Islam and a Crucifix was able to attract a lot elderly Eastern European ladies attired in saris. The guru was nicely dressed in freshly laundered robes and reputed to have miraculous healing powers. He was practising a very unusual form of meditation, in which hands were folded serenely over the belly and the eyeballs rolled continuously. They believed that eye was the focal point of all distress whether it was physical or spiritual. All the faithful followers joined meditation with an ardent belief that they too would acquire healing powers; and started emulating guru. The meditation concluded with the valediction of guru; in which he blessed his devotees and asked for financial contribution regarding two weeks session’s arrangement in Florida. During speech, the eyes of the guru continued to careen in an otherwise motionless face. On this Gita Mehta mercilessly satirizes, “The guru’s powers were sometimes limited to controlling the bodies of others, but not his own” (KC 55).
After the Second World War, India became the successor of a very popular rumor that nausea can be turned into serenity. This resulted in mushrooming of the Trappers’ monasteries that turned their nausea into contemplative silence. It created stampede among the Occidentals. Even the magazine’s column was stuck with advertisement of gurus and their services like “Nirvana for $ 100 a Day….My followers have no time. So I give them instant salvation. I turn them into neo-sanyasis” (KC 102). Sanyasi, in India is half way to be a saint, a man who has renounced the world socially and physically to seek the truth. The strangers following these gave away reflections of aggressive mockery. The Hindus have not incorporated such concept of “neo” or “instant” (KC 103) into the religious vocabulary.

Magazines and articles became strong means to express views on different topics of spirituality and simultaneously drawing attention of the foreigners. One guru, who enjoyed the reputation of a thinking man’s guru, wrote an article and expressed his great concern about the third world war and the meditation. He expressed that the third world war was approaching means the whole generation was sitting on the volcano. So the only thing one could do was to meditate, “Meditate while the time is still there! If the volcano erupts and you die meditating you will know the taste of the deathless!” (KC 103)

For the less intellectually demanding masses, the eternal teenager Guru Maharaj was there. His teachings were going on with all comforts
and illumination at a huge stadium. The stadium scoreboard carried the encouraging eastern message: “ENJOY ENJOY ENJOY” (KC 104). Followers with logic and semantics had another guru to meet their requirements. The guru bolstered up the faith of the followers by promising proof of the existence of God in an indoor football stadium, Delhi. During lecture he informed that in the Oxford English Dictionary there is a word God which proves that the God exists, “It is in the Dictionary. Let those who doubt the existence of the divine look for proof in the Dictionary. How could what does not exist, and then exist in the Dictionary?” (KC 104) Some gurus felt that the dictionaries are inadequate to prove the existence of God. Among such gurus was “the Maharishi” (KC 105); the teacher of the Beatles. This guru had maintained a very lavish style of living. He was staying in the most expensive large suite of Delhi and was clad in the finest silk lungi and white silk shawl. His latest enthusiasm was printed in the expressively printed literature titled “Blueprint for World Government” (KC 105). It was also containing the glories of old enthusiasm and the projections of good vibrations emanating from him and his followers, thus necessitating the power of transcendental meditation.

The huge posters of the followings of Maharishi had been pinned on walls of their places so that his teachings should always be inspiring and motivational. The illustrations on the posters were mostly of Switzerland ashram showing various degrees of levitation along with the experiences
of devotees who found it a pure bliss, complete disbelief, full of excitement and subject of nervousness.

Gita Mehta has quoted dealing style of these gurus through the Maharishi’s eloquent wordy technique of handling different people with entirely different styles like two Italian countesses, an Indian nuclear physicist and an English biochemist.

The younger Italian countess was in India for several months and had been introduced into Transcendental Meditation at Rome. She complained that her mantras were not working and was in need of urgent help. Maharishi with serene smile provided her new mantras and directed to use it for next four days. Like a physician he also advised her to visit his man at Indian centre if the problem persists.

The second Italian countess, a Catholic residing near Vatican City, was a sixty years old lady. She was all alone as her son was dead and daughters were married. She had a staunch belief in the power of incomprehensible words of another religion and of unknown language. She paid the airfare from Rome to Delhi for the immediate and strong urge of Shanti i.e. peace. Specifically she was ready to spend the next few years following the Maharishi around the globe exchanging new mantras for old one, then that was the price of an individual fitting. “Haute couture always costs more than prêt-a-porter” (KC 107).
The Maharishi showed an excellent confidence in handling people of different intellectual levels. Freshly he had succeeded in convincing the military establishment to espouse the cause of transcendental meditation that could turn common men into brave warriors. Maharishi had turned his celestial energy to the problem of harnessing the potential of science.

The two scientists, an Indian nuclear physicist and an English biochemist, were being captured by the Maharishi’s sophistry and the power of explanation. He explained the scientific method of levitation and wiped away all the obsessed thoughts of magic or hypnotism.

…“after all,” continued the Maharishi, “what is there in levitation? In meditation we teach people to go below the layer of the conscious mind to their center. The center is where the energy is totally concentrated. So what is there magical in all this? We teach our students that by concentration through meditation they can create an impenetrable field of energy between the ground and their bodies. The greater the field of energy, the higher the meditating man can rise. It is simple Q.E.D. (KC 108)

The Maharishi further explained that for thousands of years there had been a continuous search for the essence, the particle was nothing but only Shakti i.e. Energy. His enthusiasm covered the self-consciousness of both the scientists. He advised that it was the need of hour to settle all
moral issues and achieve whatever was possible. The Guru blessed them and initiated before concluding: “In six months I am inviting all the top scientists of the world to a conference to discuss. I hope you will join us. My secretary will give you the details” (KC 109).

Crooked gurus were many who befooled people through their techniques and their greater charisma like Indo-European Charles Shobhraj. In India Shobhraj was being arraigned for the attempt of murder of an entire French tour group and was also wanted for murders in Bangkok, Malaysia, Nepal and Indonesia. He was a real debonair and got magnetic attraction. Despite his terrible crimes, college girls and the intelligent women were mad over him:

I go to the courts every day, but the magistrate and the police won’t let us talk to Sobhraj. I managed to get a photograph of him last week when he was coming out of the court. I just yelled, ‘Charles! Charles! Look at me!’ He turned around and I have a beautiful picture of him smiling. I’m thinking of blowing it up into a poster. (KC 169)

Not only Easterners but also Westerners played part of Guru to fulfil their requirements. Allen Ginsberg was a self-proclaimed American Guru, who reached Calcutta to release his generation from the American dream. He took a Sabbath and reached India in search of spirituality which turned into spiritual bedlams.
In India there are gurus who show real mysticism and are far away from publicity and recognition. India is thus called the country of sages; Rishi Bhoomi. There are sages for every seeker and every skeptic. An English aristocrat discovered a real guru in a remote village of Andhra Pradesh. He was famous for his urine which changed daily into rose water. Hard travelling put the Englishman locate the correct remote village. At morning meditation, guru relieved himself of his first miraculous micturition. Disciples were waiting to get the blessings of guru in form of his effulgence. The content smelled like ordinary urine and the Englishman who drank the entire contents too remarked it like ordinary urine. Indians are keen on defecation not only physical but also spiritual. Purification is possible only after recognizing the body as the temple of the soul and one who desires Nirvana must have to evacuate bowels regularly.

Some gurus of India even evolved their own cult like “The Anand Marg” cult. Sarkar, an ex-minor bureaucrat from Calcutta evolved his own philosophy by blending socialism and Kali worship. This gained popularity all over the world and especially in Australia. It was rumored that the Anand Marg cult had “execution squads” (KC 165), which were responsible for the falling bodies of the subcontinent. This became seismic when the wife of the guru denounced him that he was not an egalitarian but a pervert who had sodomized young boys. The wife’s allegations became a frame for the repressive government to imprison Sarkar and his several senior leaders, “the Avadhoots” (KC 166). It also claimed people
to ponder that philosophy sometimes can be as lethal as cancer. Hindu minded people were killing or being killed in the name of philosophy like the Dutch who died of terminal cancer.

Sarkar, who was jailed in Bihar, denied any knowledge of killing inside and outside India. He charged that some other cults indulged in black magic were performing all these for benefits of their own or for benefits of political masses. With close observation a free lancer photographer found Anand Margis a group of helpful people, who ran their own dispensaries, had crèches for poor babies and had community centers. Their chains were spread all over the world and were teaching the mind bending techniques; initiated by the arts of ancient India.

India had been hailed as a paradise by the spiritual seeker to get oneself unwinded from the worldly affairs and to enlighten the soul. Occidentals felt that it had the capacity to refresh a weary traveller and fill again with new point of view. “India as the new magnet for the new despair. When you’re tired of winning come lose with us” (KC 78).

People were coming from all over the world to India. This process of exploring India can be traced chronologically. Looking three hundred years ago we can find that Columbus discovered America looking for India and The Beatles discovered India escaping from America. So, there is a tenuous relationship between India and America. Years ago they visited here so that their grandsons could afford to be indiscreet and dabble
in the murky waters of Indian thought. This time they were back again to tread into the Indian caste system.

Earlier in the nineteenth century Aldous Huxley struggled with Vedanta and dared to expand his mind and William Butler Yeats collaborated on translation of the Upanishads which affected the Western intellects and forced them to think “… in that East something ancestral in ourselves, something we must bring into light” (KC 67).

People were apt to follow their heroes like the populists, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones who became the pacemaker for the faltering Western heart. They started rushing for mantras and applauding Buddhism in the film. Moreover they had the blessings of gurus who assured them that eternity was a clinch and the way was easy. The first wave of disciples was the models, stars and good looking personalities who became the unbeatable advertisement for the healing powers and immortal complexion. This worked and when the trade routes were well-established, visitors were dispossessed Monarch, Count, Dukes and Noble ladies. This brought with them the new scales of height for ashram guru to remark: “Religion is not for the poor” (KC 69). Citizens of various Western Nations were growing acquaintance with the mysteries of East and settling for the spiritual knowledge. Germans were the fastest developing community in India. They seemed to be serious a lot regarding Hinduism and put things altogether. Unlike French and British they loved to go and
dwell in the mountains, the Himalayas. Being patient, they were waiting for the twilight of the Gods amidst the shrilling wind.

The Swiss from Switzerland revealed about life that it was like a jigsaw puzzle; disordered and scattered. One would never be able to view complete picture except putting pieces here and there. Just to clear the insignificance of life, the Swiss turned towards India.

The Canadian boys were paranoid and could be caught along with notebooks writing accounts of all penny expenses, far from reality and practicality.

Unlike Germans, Swiss and Canadians, French were very much religious. They were always asking for the pictures and statues of Lord Shiva. They showed the national predilection for the Great Ascetic sitting naked on the mountain top, with his only accessory the Third Eye. They were the great worshipper of Him and knew all mantras along with their meanings:

When they come to me, the Francesi, I can hear them under the breath chanting *Shiva-o-ham, Shiva-o-ham*. I asked one, ‘Brother, do you know what you are saying?’ Immediately he gave the reply. ‘I am saying I am Shiva.’ He knew the meaning of the mantra all right. Can you beat it?” (KC 76)

All those Western pilgrims who came here to explore about themselves faced many hardships. These hippies had very dark, small and
soddy dwelling places, poor gestures, shabby dresses and wore dry life style without any emotions. Gita Mehta has described that their faces had sunken eyes, hollow cheek bones, angular bodies, limp with exhaustion, despair, was forcing one to think that they were not more than dead men, pretending to be humans. One such character Jasmine accepted herself as a hippie and told about their discovered places i.e. Afghanistan, Nepal and Goa.

A starving hippie; an English girl was sitting outside a Benaras hotel with her sketchpad, pencils and few sketchings. Her hand made exquisite pictures of temples, burning Ghats, Rajput Palaces and Moghul architecture were all exhibited for sale. She invited the narrator up to her place after acquiring picture. After forty minutes walk along with ignoring beggars, hawkers and overflowing gutter they reached a small dark room. The room led to crowded courtyard and a narrow staircase and ultimately to her room. She was sharing room with Latin, French and Australian persons. All of them had very poor opinion about her and treated her badly. They abused her and slapped into the floor for selling her company in exchange of few pennies. The Australian amongst them addressed that the British had damaged a lot without showing any mercy so she deserved to be treated like this:

Yeah, she says she feels guilty about the Opium Wars and her grandfather living in the red sandstone palace in Delhi, and how nobody did anything for the poor. A lot of these Brits are
like that Bleeding hearts. Let him beat her up if that’s what she wants. What do you care? (KC 73)

In search of serenity people sometimes adopt some unusual way which creates hassle amongst others. An American student just before boarding, in Tehran Airport at American World Airways flight consumed acid. He claimed himself as a sadhu in his past life. After sometime, inside the flight he started stripping off his clothes and became more tedious and unmanageable. He started running naked, up and down in the locked economy section. With great difficulty and medical assistance the flight personnel managed to dress him and to calm him. The doctor who treated him commented, “We have a lot of these cases. They are harmless people who want a little attention. But more than that, they want reassurance that they are still human beings from other human beings” (KC 87).

A rich tax specialist felt tired of his life and opted to the life of a hippie. He chose a very unusual path of devotion. He had an altar decorated with statues of Krishna, Ganesha, Devi and colourful glass paintings of Indian Gods. All these deities inspired one to perform *karma*; as is also stated in Bhagvad Gita.

His dwelling place thus became centre for performing karma. Charas seemed to be a good metaphor for action along with smoking chillums. It was disrespectful to heat dope at the sacrificial flame but for them all these
actions were devotional and brought solace to their souls. Philosophy of karma has been explained with its American mis-conception.

A closer inspection into the lives of natives can help one to know about proliferation of English speaking people in India. During the fifties one could hardly find any English speaking person and if there, could be easily identified among the crowd. Only the great Indian personalities had the privilege of using it but it cannot be denied that they were not the prey to the fractured prose of America. Such an example was placed forty years ago when great patriot Sarojini Naidu called Mahatma Gandhi as her “little Mickey Mouse” (KC 98).

By the sixties modulation accelerated and people started giving preference to the explosive shorthand of America.

In the decade of seventies everyone including elderly Indian politician started using English with perfect linguistic confidence. Both side of the world was learning new words. Westerners started exhausting words which were borrowed twenty years earlier like Karma, Sadhana, Nirvana, Tantra and Sanyas.

In India terms such as energy, power, shakti etc. were all associated with philosophy for nearly four thousand years. It is ironic that America was using these terms with great comfort and frequency for which we felt hesitant and giddy. Occidentals had taken our most complicated philosophical concept as a part of their every day slang.
In Hindu Pantheon “Karma” means a routine which holds your interest until you get over the stage. The most popular dialogue on *karma* can be read in The Bhagvad Gita. In Gita Arjuna begs a reason from his charioteer, the Lord Krishna, to battle against his elders, teachers, friends and family members. Then Lord Krishna explained him about the path of action and its necessity in one’s life. He further stated that no one could aback from the battle field as the path led to peace and liberation. “Because you are bound to act. Only action will save you from the bondage of action” (*KC* 100).

The term Karma was felt as a sort of vibrations and Krishna as a doe-eyed pinup. With the proliferation all over the globe and ability to understand necessity the user generated accommodation as per the requirements:

“I can’t visit London anymore. The Karma there is too heavy for me.” Says the Iranian hairdresser.

“I crashed my car last night. I have bad Karma,” says the Mexican student.

“That dude’s dangerous. He has heavy Karma”, says the Harlem drug dealer.

“Craps – it’s a low Karma game,” explains the American gambler’s girlfriend.
“My daughter is called Rani,” says the German mother. The
night she was born in Goa my friend and his lady had a
daughter in Los Angelos and they called her Rani. We have
such close karma. (KC 100)

Tourists and people from West were flocking towards East in order
to perform karma and reveal about themselves. They all congregated in
various gurus’ ashrams to cherish the celebration of realization that they
were waking and at the stage of christening. Their ultimate target was to
seek release from the wheel of existence for which they were ready to do
anything the guru asked them, even to adopt maladroit Indian social
arrangement.

During earlier times English nannies of Indian dynasties refused to
wrap their tongue around our heathen names or great Sanskrit names and
were casually reduced to diminutives as Pats, Pearls, Roses and so on. But
the scenario today is juxtaposed. The spiritual seekers who find themselves
restless despite many meditations show no arrogance regarding the
nomenclature and go for opting new mythological names voluntarily and
intelligently. As per them it will help them in changing their identity and
to get rid of the wheel of existence. Conversation of English and American
male devotees with an American girl shows the same:

“What did you call him?”
“Abhimanyu, Bhagwan–that means God–gave him that name. Mine is Yuddhistra. Over there,” Essex pointed at a large maternal Swede straight out of the lead role of *I Remember Mama*, “‘That’s Ma Saraswati.”

“Oh. Wow. Far out.”

“What’s your name?”

“Joanie.”

“JOANIE?” shouts California in disbelief. “That is really far out.”

“What an odd name,” says Essex. (KC 31-32)

Transforming oneself from monomania of the West and adopting multimedia of the East sometimes becomes a painful business like sex change. Thousands of years ago sages of India who lived in forests came up with the Upanishads. Their curious sweat for years enriched the Hindu concept and insisted for verbal transference rather than the written form. The thought and reason behind this was that only the eligible pupil of qualifying wisdom will be able to grasp and handle it.

Every action and attitude in India is considered educational. Some is done for the efficient health i.e. with materialistic perspective and some for the soul i.e. with spiritualistic perspective. Indian temples adorned with great sculptures attracted lots of Westerners. Khajuraho, a collection of
temples with brilliant sculptures of male-female figures depicting the basis of life were tackled as erotic figures, attracted Western art lovers. Researchers frequently visited such places to study about Indian culture, philosophy and scriptures. But they were a few in numbers. In general people believe that the motives of the foreign tourists to see the great erotic temples are not cultural but prurient. During touring season foreigners housed under tents to re-enact portrait motifs displayed on temple walls, for the paying customers.

The uneducated and unaware tourists were on the path of breaking down all visible and invisible barriers which might lead them to never healing wounds; but they were moving forward with a great zeal thinking them on the path of spirituality. The famous great Bom Jesus Cathedral of Goa, which flowered during Portuguese imperialism, is famous for its architecture, decorum and miraculous mortal remains of the great Jesuit saint and missionary Francis Xavier. The Saint’s body has been intact there since the sixteenth century and is displayed only once in every twelve years. Thus the miraculous Cathedral becomes one of the significant worship places in India. Goa, is also famous for its world famous beaches. Its Calingute beach was used by little Indian Christian school girls for their daily catechism lessons. Suddenly, with the arrival of hippies the scene changed completely. The beach was flooded with hundreds of naked bodies of various nationalities and could be found coupling in the sand. A few avant-grade hippies were actually mating with
the monkeys although it lacked eyewitnesses. After a strong agitation from parents, priests and public the Municipal Corporation decided to bring this perversion to a halt. Procession marched with written slogans as “Ban Breast feeding of Monkeys on the Beach” and “Lot’s Wife Go Home” (*KC* 90), this compelled authorities to reach the beach and personally stop orgies:

Thus the Corporation avoided creating a national scandal, and succeeded in creating a national sport. Goa now has two unique attractions. The beach, for the tourist who wants cheap thrills, and the Cathedral, for the tourist of religious bent. (*KC* 91)

Another beach of Goa i.e. Anjuna Beach became a centre of attraction as it had a complete life, anything could be transacted whether it was food articles, foreign goods, mythological items or so on. It became a ground of all small-times smuggling deal, ruled by a foreigner like a feudal king. His business was to gather foreigners, use their wits and train them as narcotics agents which can be expressed through the following. “He’s a very heavy dude, I’m warning you. They say he’s had three men killed already. I mean he *runs* Goa, man. The dope. The ladies. Everything. All the cops are in his pocket” (*KC* 171).

The beach had a big flea market in a grove of coconut palm trees. Destitute foreigners might be seen displaying their illegal belongings for
sale. Over six or seven hundred barters took place from the displayed items. The beach had become burning ghats for Indians to watch other losing their dignity. Scantily dressed men and women could be seen roaming and leaning into each other. A Brazilian boy who was studying priesthood, in a state of mortal sin, had decided to sell out the Bible and the Missal. Being entraped in the Dutchman’s messy plan he became his whore, then his courier and smuggled drugs thrice, simply to earn money to get back his passport and to return to Brazil. Thus the Anjuna Beach became a service centre for all the foreigners and the best place of amusement for the Indians.

The most liberated city of the world, Calcutta, too attracted hippies to come and liberate themselves. Here the people could be noticed in their original characteristics i.e. naked and had no hang ups. An American poet, who had observed India, made a movie with a setting of a whorehouse and pronounced it free. A self-proclaimed guru Allen Gingsberg, who was on a Sabbath, encircled by people interested of an orgy. The participating public was informed on every orgasm and the faithful leered at the feet of master demanding answer of various questions. Being unable to answer the guru left Calcutta. Even the government was struck by the nudity and busted the young poet for violating the obscenity laws.

Benaras, the city on the banks of River Ganges, has its own charm of being the most holy confluence. The hippies and the other foreigners felt it as becoming more amounts with doping of drugs like morphine. Benaras
had originated the special route to Nepal, China and Tibet not for the business but for the Hindu learning which was lined through Western world trade on white poppy of India. The whole Western world used Indian fields and proved themselves as skilled merchants. In Benaras, outside the temple, people of all types like pilgrims, pathfinders, vendors, widows, tourists, beggars, mendicants etc. could be witnessed. Other than beggars the mendicants were Sadhus and Hippies. The hippies, the pathfinders discovered the burning ghats to reveal the mysteries of life. Tourists were increasingly looking to India for this experience, and was probably the only country which allowed tourists to treat death as a spectator sport. It was very awkward to watch bargaining for the cremation and negotiation at every stage of corpse burning until it reduced to ashes. The hippies found it to freak out on eternity and the smoke from the funeral pyre was used as metaphors of living and dying in India. People started improving their vision by taking mind-seductive drug like morphine to heighten their serene experience and enjoy blissful life.

*Karma Cola* embraces an enormous experience in the ashrams bringing a cultural shock for both. The central issue in the novel moves around the gurus and their “spiritual bedlams” as Gita Mehta calls them. The novel informs us about the cultural collision of the East-West encounter, the materialistic gurus and their spiritual casualties. In the great Indian Epic Mahabharata the game of dice reflects the bitter consequences of “a game” felt in the “real life”. The great Pandavas who staked their
money, their country, their wife and their royal line lost everything including liberty with the roll of dice and were forced to face exile.

A Scandinavian girl, who desired to taste the deathless, led to misfortune and became speechless and was silenced by the incoherence. The girl was sharing house with an irate Indian photographer due to non-accommodation in an overcrowded ashram. She had been in India for last three years and underwent many forms of meditation which snatched her language relieving her past and even primal screaming, far behind. She all the time sat in front of her guru’s photograph and hummed the two notes over and over again like those of Buddhist monks. After tolerating the girl’s humming for seventy three hours the photographer said to the narrator:

If she doesn’t stop at midnight I’m going to ask her what’s happening, whatever damage it does her immortal soul. I shall put it to her plainly. I am going to say,

‘Why are you still humming, woman? Don’t you know the words?’ (KC 110)

A French girl, who eloped from France, reached India and set off for mountains to find a guru to enlighten her soul. In the city of Haridwar she throws away her passport into the river:
I chose and threw my passport into the river. As the passport hit the water, will you believe this? From those very ripples appeared the face of my guru, laughing and calling my name.

I knew then that I had chosen the right path, and I began my real search for the Teacher. (KC 130)

Ultimately she completed her search and surrendered completely to the holy ascetic which was marked with the birth of two children. She was dwelling in the jungle under a tree just behind the Delhi University. The villagers had different views regarding her; some thought her as an incarnation of Goddess, some as a witch and some as insane. Unexpectedly she lost her guru and one year son when their daughter was only two months old. The local police officials had charged her of murder and then left due to lack of evidence. This whole incidence completely shattered her but she always showed great belief in her master and his teachings:

The guru had prepared me to face this trouble. When our son was born he warned me, ‘This child is mine. He must come with me when I leave my body, so we may work together in our next incarnation.’ I wept but the guru consoled me, ‘I shall give you a daughter to comfort you when we are gone. You will need comfort when the world accuses you of killing us.’ See where he died. Under this tree. (KC 128)
The French girl thus lost herself in India looking for the path of renunciation and was also entrapped in the state of insanity.

Two Christian nuns followed Hindu Sadhus in the mountains. They spent sometime roaming along with gurus in the mountain ranges above Rishikesh and ended mysteriously. Through investigation it was concluded that money might be the cause of their death. The suspected guru was found to be a tantric and would have gone for the ritual killing.

Another incidence can be traced from the introduction of the book. An American girl, through her spiritual mentor, reached into a cave of high Himalayas where she was administered food laced with drugs and was assaulted sexually. For weeks she was kept as a drugged sexual prisoner by her teachers, until she managed to escape back to the place where she was promptly hospitalized as mad.

The Ashrams which were flooded with the sophisticated devotees from U.K., Canada and other wealthy Western countries, too showed the activities which considered marriage not in fashion and bourgeois. The guru was considered giving teachings on sex and the local population regarded them as orgies.

An older Indian woman, who was known as ‘Ma’ and considered as the embodiment of the guru; a multitasking personality, was busy relaxing discomfort among the ashramites. Being humble she was busy taking care of the devotees. In this spiritual beauty parlour every now and then Ma
bent under the desk and pat away part of the devotee’s anatomy that was immediately available for benediction. The lady being busy with two different devotees continued to the business at hands. During these healing sessions other disciples were queued up waiting for their turn.

A young sardar who was not an ashramite was attracted towards an Australian nymphet with attractive physique. After three weeks chitchat on cosmic energy and others, the youth’s lust overpowered him and he attempted to get in touch with her body. This incidence drew attention of many devotees who forcibly threw him out. At this he started screaming at Ma’s office for the solution: “Get the Guru. Tell him I must become a devotee now! It’s very urgent!” (KC 146) Mother of the ashram gave her verdict in favour of the importunate Sardar. She said: “If he wants to be near the girl, that’s beautiful. He will be made a member of the ashram at the evening devotions when Swami initiates the new devotees” (KC 146).

The conversation between two sweepers brings-forth the views regarding gurus. The author has intensely satirized the class of people who had lost everything including their souls beneath the ministrations of the guru. A lovely red haired girl stroked the hedges lasciviously with her hands, put her bare arms along the thorny bushes and started swaying her body sinuously. On asking the other sweeper woman told as she was bathing in the guru’s energy who resided behind the trees. People believed that his shakti was so strong that could be accessed through the walls. After watching the whole episode the sweeper woman commented, “No,
sister. I don’t believe in the guru. He is playing games with these people. Look at this girl. Has he given her peace or has he just made her desire stronger?” (KC 148)

Many nuns and priests were eschewing the Christianity and taking up Hinduism in order to explore consciousness and clear confusions about morality. Out of perplexity of the inner voice and atmosphere of the ashram they chose to opt the path of hippies which might help them to be in disguise among the crowd of spiritual seekers. Those who moved towards more progressive ashrams discovered themselves as a love object and as proselytes. In the ashram who were in sexual meditation especially Roman Catholics felt a heavy guilt for breaking the taboo to fornicate with a nun. The chaste women anxious to get rid of the burden of ego, and also of the Christian vows felt themselves as a new martyrdom for a new era. Some nuns during their highly secret lecture for Christianity damned themselves by copying the public pillorying as, “My dear, we are all accused of being lesbians. Or frustrated old women. The thing those young people say to us!” (KC 157)

The author Gita Mehta through the Sanskrit couplet wants to explain the need and importance of social decorum forced upon the people. In the Hindu epic Ramayana; Sita, the perfect Hindu woman, had to remain inside the barrier line in order to be protected. Breaking barrier might become dangerous for her. But her anxiety for a golden deer created trouble and she was abducted by the king of underworld. The reason for
this seems that her desire to believe was very strong. The Sanskrit couplet comments, “When the times are bad / The mind is moved to madness” (KC 157).

In Indian ashrams gurus provided all remedial solutions to their followers. They had developed all hooks and crooks in the name of spirituality. The therapies they used were the teaching therapy and the sex therapy.

In the teaching therapy disciples had to learn love and they had to release the love mechanism in them by any trigger available. The guru further stated that they might love him as a father, a mother, brother, a lover, a husband or any other relationship but, this therapy didn’t prove to be progressive.

The ashram guru felt that the main problem of the West was about their fear of impotency. According to the guru foreigners still had an adolescent approach towards sex and the society was deeply competitive in the upheavals of sexual revolution setting into sexual competition. This made them an object of derision. In the sex therapy, the guru through his motivational preaching included the Westerners and put them into the path of action rather than sexual fantasies. From the works of Freud and Jung the guru had made the following interpretation: “There is no sin but self-loathing. The Self is God. If you loathe your body you loathe yourself.
Go toward your body, go toward your desire, and then go past them. The
death of desire is the birth of Atman” (KC 149).

Being Westerner the disciples were not able to grasp the real
meaning of Indian guru’s words but being sincere the devotees hanged on
his every word and mis-interpreted it. During teaching session the guru
consoled his Western devotees to meditate on their dual sexuality. This
had been the most serious perception of Tantra Yoga. The disciples
immediately assumed it as a command to become homosexual and when
the guru allotted men household job for searching female element in them
they took it as a sexual simile and started searching for their homosexual
selves. This whole situation put Occidentals into confusion regarding
sexuality. Thus the intentions of the guru to concentrate on the problems of
the lust remained unresolved, and they found themselves indulged in the
lust which put them again into the state of perplexity regarding their sex
and their sense of impotency.

The East and the West are two opposite ends of the world and show
contrast in thought, behaviour and attitude. The Easterners are always
unquestionable and perceive without arguments but the Westerners being
skeptics argue and refuse to believe. The Easterners emphasise on
endurance while the Westerners emphasise on conquest:

The Easterners are engrossed in multiple possibilities of
salvation; the Westerners are immersed only in their own ego.
The Westerners can never grasp the Hindu concept of Maya which enables the Indians to make “Mind blowing affirmations” while they themselves are lost in a “plethora of contradictions” So, it is the fate of the west to be cracked against infinity. (Parsuram 235)

The people who visit India should know that the Eastern experiences are not easily accessible but need almost total re-education. The gurus, who ignored these primary differences, unknowingly made the Occidentals face serious difficulty in grasping Hinduism; its meaning, their spiritual words and enlightened thoughts.

In *Karma Cola* Gita Mehta has wittingly managed to show how picturesque simplified versions of Hinduism became a sort of do-it-yourself mysticism in the hands of the beginners who seemed to shop in a market of mysticism. Karma being one of the fundamental kinetic ideas “bring us directly to the core of Indian spirituality” (Eliade 3), became a metaphysical soft drink to be exchanged with the physical one. This immediate need of spiritual transformation, experiences of ashrams and their spiritual bedlams blurred the image of immensely rich reality of India and Hinduism.

From the beginning to the end the author has characterized her vision and portrayed India. At a glance it reflects that her views are objective and more like a Westerner but with deep infusion one will be
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able to resolve her Indianness and to reveal that the prime concern of Eastern wisdom is the annihilation of narcissism. The myopic visions of Occidentals make them unable to penetrate its surface and explore the vast arena. Thus *Karma Cola* gives us an opportunity to improve our vision of India and cleanse the awkward diaphragm which the Western people commonly use to portray.

Gita Mehta in her *Karma Cola* has suggested Hinduism as a long devotional service to the transcendent Lord. “The enlightenment she tried to pass on to the West must have prompted her to probe deep into the intricacies of Hinduism that needs reinterpretation in a language that the modern world can comprehend” (Ramchandran and Khan). It is a multifaceted metaphysics of diverse perspectives. She has also explained the in-depth meaning of commonly used words of the Westerners, through an ashram recluse. “Psychology” according to him is nothing but the state of mind, “Maya” is an analysis of fantasy and illusion and lotus position of the Buddha is the sexual truth copulating with the Goddess of Energy. Indian ascetics after long dedication succeeded to grasp the spirits of the Holy Scriptures and presented it to the general people in their simplest form to attain transcendence. In Bhagvad Gita transcendence is described as a level of spiritual attainment in which it is being opened to all aspirants to get control over the materialistic desires. In *Karma Cola* all philosophical paths of Hinduism have been discussed along with a steadfast guru to establish Hinduism in the world map and prove India as a
land of sages. In an article by Ramchandran and Khan, A.G. Khan comments about *Karma Cola* as “… an attempt to restore the real saints in their pedestal was a necessity long felt. She has done her penance in a dignified manner.”

The various path of yoga discussed in *Karma Cola* are, “Bhakti Yoga, the meditation of adoration. Hatha Yoga, the mediation of physical endurance. Tantra Yoga, the meditation of the senses. Guru Yoga, enlightenment through the Teacher. Reincarnation, enlightenment through rebirth” (*KC* 186).

The Krishna consciousness Ensemble showed the path of Bhakti Yoga; one of the disciplines of Hinduism for self-transcendence. In this ensemble the devotees were dressed in the brightest splash of colour, and in their teeming density were shown enchanting “Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare Rama, Hare, Hare” (*KC* 84) in the middle of the rush hour amidst the populous twin city of Bombay. The group was reeling and rocking on the chantings of *Hare Krishna, Hare Rama* without any glimpses of strains. Thus the Bhakti Yoga has been elevated as the best path of devotional service which leads to eternal bliss by complete surrender. It can be estimated by the lines; “They have no trains to catch, no mouths to feed, no sick waiting to be attended. They have only to say their beads over and over again, salivating salvation into the dust” (*KC* 84).
Hath yoga had been practised by a large number of Gurus to get control over their bodies. Through a recluse of Rishikesh and a sadhu of Benaras, Gita Mehta has presented the real miracles of India which is not meant for marketing. The real picture of India lies in the hands of such anonymous holy spirits. Outside one of the Rishikesh temples there laid a naked man covered with ascetic’s ash, on a bed made up of nails and jagged steel for last twelve years without uttering a single word. Beside his head he propped a broken slate written that his body still felt some pain and discomfort but he was doing so in order to meditate on the universal Absolute. The body’s capacity to endure pain would also extend the capacity for pleasure and gaining control was not suppression but transcendence.

Another example of hath yoga delineated by Gita Mehta is of a practising doctor who turned into a sadhu due to the monotonous routine of fulfilling body’s demands. An American scriptwriter came to India to wrestle with his uncontrollable sex. During his stay in Benaras, he put his dilemma to a meditating sadhu, who was buried in mud up to the waist. During conversation the sadhu displayed the real control over one’s body. The naked fakir exhibited his insouciant sexual control and said:

Desire is the seat of all confusion, my son. It clouds the reason. It produces the immoderate response. The body is exhausted unnecessarily….
Are you perhaps from America? I have noticed that such things are an obsession in that country. But do not worry. Yours is not a rare condition. The world over people is enslaved by sex. This enslavement leads to your childish complaints. See the excited condition of my body. See the motions of my left hand. Yet I sit here calmly, concentrating on your problems….

Learn this from India if you learn nothing else, my son. The flesh is the only battlefield. Wars are won by the soul. The mature man seeks to understand his nature until he understands Nature. (KC 58-59)

The American was frozen in disbelief and cited his experience as a miracle, he came across in India.

In ashrams teachings of Tantra yoga had also been practiced by the disciples. The aim of such teachings was to find the roots of their energies. They used sex and death as their basic metaphors. They were ardent believer of the fact that the perfect synthesis allowed the human mind to attain eternity in the form of sexual union or in physical communion with death. Teachings of Tantra were going on in the ashram to get rid of one’s hang-up and fruitless energy. According to them “… a man must rid himself of his anger if he is to understand the truth. We know how anger blinds a man. That it is fruitless energy” (KC 36).
In the Eastern Tantra teachings the under training disciples might not be able to escape from the vortex of sensuality for the negations of immortality. In Nepal, a five or six years old child was chosen as incarnation of the goddess till puberty. A lifetime pension was awarded to her and her family until she lost her virginity. She was prohibited from indulging in her sensuality. Through this they propounded their myth which established two aspects of the Goddess, the benign mother and the savage female.

In India, the father of touch therapies used very unusual meditation for simple pleasure; they used the hitting and thrashing technique. They believed that by this technique one might be able to release his fruitless energy. The participant disciples were locked into the leather-padded cells and in the state of spiritual excitation they were provided with a two feet long stick made of thick wood covered with rubber padding and wrapped in green coloured cloth; the colour of peace. During one hour long meditation session the door remained firmly barred from outside and the disciples’ violence caused many injuries. Some of them became badly injured unaware of the fact that they were not playing at violence but were being violent, which would help them to become fearless. “But any fool knows that where there is violence there will definitely be injury. Now, poor fellow, he has a broken arm to remind him” (KC 37).

Thus the process of learning dharma and revealing mysticism in ashram became a difficult task for disciples as it demanded
self-indulgence. Occurrence of casualties was a routine for them as tranquility and serenity could be acquired only after chaos. Matriarch of the ashram who witnessed casualties on a regular basis answered the narrator with endearing frankness:

But Ma, suppose in one of your meditations I discover that I really enjoy violence and never want to give it up? Supposing I decide my karma is homicide?

“Well, my dear. Some of our devotees get these mad ideas. Then we have to do something.”

“What do you do?”

“Put them in the hospital, give them pills,” Ma said soothingly.

“Does the ashram have its own hospital?”

“No, No, child. The city hospital, where the nurses can give them injections and tranquilizers,” The matriarch paused for a moment. “Sometimes they get better and come back to us. That is very beautiful.”

The suspense was becoming unbearable.

“Ma, what happens to those who don’t get better?”

The matriarch laughed.
Oh, them. We sedate them, put them on a plane and send them back to their own countries.

That is beautiful, too. (KC 38-39)

Another type of meditation which was being performed by the devotees in the ashram was the reincarnation meditation. This most arcane meditation technique demanded a lot of practice along with gurus. The guru too required great training and self-knowledge, before the devotee might safely embark on it. In one of the articles Massimo Introvigne, Professor of History and Sociology of Religious Movements at Torino University, Italy, highlights the fact that:

The tragedy of the Occidental way of conceiving reincarnation (Not to be confused with the tragic and noble, reincarnation doctrines of the great Oriental religions) lies in its representing a cheap attempt or dream—to escape from the seriousness of the moral choice and human responsibilities of our daily living. Reincarnation becomes therefore “A joyfully permanent vacation” or “a technique of postponement”. (Micheli 139)

The meditation starts with staring into mirror without blinking and without taking notice of the tears streaming down the cheeks. After half an hour, if the person doesn’t faint, past life materializes in the mirror through a series of images. “It’s kinda nice for your ego running a movie in which
you’re always the star, but it can be dynamite for some people. I personally knew one girl who went nuts doing it” (KC 40).

The author has reported casualty of a lady who underwent this meditation and lost her mental balance and became completely schiz. During regression the wife saw herself as her husband’s mother in the immediate past life. Clinched in the grip of guilt and being incestuous mother and raising children by her own son, she left everything. In the state of perplexity, she became crazy and never learned about her family again.

All these branches of great Hinduism became the practical jokes being perpetuated in Indian ashrams. Through Karma Cola Gita Mehta has given a message in a simple sentence stating that in India for every seeker there is a sage. Its main implication is that the validity of a guru lies in the authenticity of the disciple’s spiritual quest. Another highly spiritual word “Leela” adopted a philosophical name for payola systems which are used to buy time against time. Meditations and spiritual techniques, a part of dharma had been squeezed into bribery system in return for the unofficial promotion. Jung had alarmed all the white men to be cautious in India. He had said: “It is quite possible that India is the real world and that the white man lives in a madhouse of abstractions” (KC 186).

Kipling pointed out India as the grim stepmother of the world. The whims of the West were easily translated into revelation by India, but Gita
Mehta has rightly claimed that the sacred knowledge can be attained through the teachings of guru only and even in Upanishads it has been mentioned “Sacred knowledge in the hands of fools destroys” (KC 28). She further suggests that one may become a realized soul simply by developing oneself to the infinite consciousness of inner delight. “Those who dare and who do not self-destruct are sometimes referred to as ‘realized soul’” (KC 191).

Gita Mehta has concluded with the words of Nietzsche who a century ago said: “… steering westward, hoped to reach an India” (KC 193). It has raised a query, whether it is possible to reach India while steering towards West. Under such conditions one will not be able to attain the goal and wreckage will be the ultimate destiny. To overcome this one must have to co-ordinate his thoughts and actions. Finding destiny is like fear of the dark water on both the sides. So, the time is to rejoice, applaud and perform karma with perfect co-ordination. It may provide us with an opportunity to “… go from zero to hero” (KC 193).

An American poet Wallace Stevens reminded West that “… the last illusion is disillusion” (KC 188). On this, the Indian Guru explained them about their last illusion that they are tourists here in this world and their souls have to go back home.