

COMPARISON BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN CULTURES IN THREE NOVELS OF KAMALA MARKANDAYA

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Abstract: The theme of East –West Comparison has been consistently dealt with by Kamala Markandaya who spent major considerably major span of life in England with an English husband. She has been influenced by both the nations' personal, social and religious heritage wrapped in a cultural fold. As such Markandaya's novels delineate a bi-cultural world that include a variety of men and women, both Indian and British having varying attitudes of mutual love and hatred, concern and indifference that continues to be a hallmark of the respective community. In fact Kamala Markandaya adopts an impartial view on across cultural encounter due to her artistic consciousness to explore the comparison and change human psyche in the context of complex cultural values, she is also not averse to the better aspects of the western culture. In her various novels, one after the other Kamala Markandaya explores the impact of changes and the relevance of cultural comparison in terms of human psyche. She wants East –West cultures to be complementary to each other so that the sophisticated and mechanized west may benefit from India's ethical values and the spiritual and philosophical India may benefit from the modernization of the West so that rather than crushing or bearing down each other, their contact nourishes.

Keywords: Culture, marriage, socio-economic, stoicism and spiritual identity.

The most striking feature of Kamala Markandaya's fiction is the concept of cultural comparison in the clutter and confusion of social, economic and political changes in India. The theme of East-West comparison has been consistently dealt with by Indian writers in English in its varied sub-divisions of history, philosophy, sociology, economics and human relationships. Being an Indian who spent a considerably major span of life in England with an English husband, Kamala Markandaya is no exception to this practice. Even though the conventional differences of opinion in most sectors of life like political, social, cultural and technological are fast disintegrating, Laxmi Kumari says :

“ the East signifies a sort of orientation that cares eventually more for the inner and the unseen, the categorical and the absolute. These values are associated with, or may be interpreted as, passivity, stagnation, rootedness and a kind of conservatism that seems

antithetical to progress and material attainments. The west likewise signifies a sceptical, hardheaded, if not cynical, attitude towards the problems of the world” 116

The above statement specifies the area of divergence between the East and the West which obviously finds expression in Kamala Markandaya.

Having lived in a South Indian village and later in England, after marrying an Englishman, Kamala Markandaya has been influenced by both the nations' personal, social and religious heritage wrapped in a cultural fold. As such, Markandaya's novels delineate a bi-cultural world that include a variety of men and women. Both Indian and British having varying attitudes of mutual love and hatred, concern and indifference that continues to be a hallmark of the respective community. To Markandaya, culture means essentially an idea which represents according to Lionel Trilling :

“a unitary complex of interacting assumptions, modes of thoughts, habits and styles which are connected in secret as well as overt ways with the practical arrangements of a society.” 125

The fact is that Kamala Markandaya adopts an impartial view on cross cultural encounter due to her artistic consciousness to explore the comparison and change of human psyche in the context of complex cultural values. Although she is naturally inclined towards cultural heritage of Indian society embedded in Indian values, she is also not averse to the better aspects of the western culture. It is in the vein that Markandaya brings out both the strength and weaknesses of the two cultures. C.D. Narasimhaiah comments rightly :

“Generally her novels reflect her stronger penchant for Indian values as against the spiritual impoverishment of the English society, but Indians are not spared. Actually her good men and women come from both cultures.” 7

Similarly her characters emerge in grey shades from the both the worlds- the East and the West. In her various novels, one after the other, Kamala Markandaya explores the impact of changes and the relevance of cultural comparison in terms of human psyche. In her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* Markandaya chooses of rural culture and its changing values in the wake of intervening industrialization process, a product of the West, in the form of a tannery, to delineate various socio-economic and cultural problems like poverty, lack of family planning, unemployment, prostitution, superstitions, dowry system, evils of the marriage system and so on. The novel portrays the life of village rustics and the process of transformation of the village mainly through Rukmani and Nathan.

Since long, the villagers have lived in their “organic community”. Their inherited wisdom and time-tested ways of living has made them accustomed to the local conditions of life and death. But the establishment of a tannery in the village brings in a new era in the life of the village community. The age old economic and social authority, the mores and manners that

existed over centuries undergo a change due to the impact of the industrial culture of the west. But inspite of the change that crushes down Rukmani and Nathan, inspite of the support and opposition that goes among the villagers for the tannery, a few things reflecting the cultural matrix of the people remain unchanged.

Kamala Markandaya brings out both the strong as well as the weak points of the culture of the East and the West by making several references to the Eastern conventional customs, beliefs, superstition and philosophy showing different aspects of human values against the scientific spirit and rationalism of the West. The villagers nurture various superstitions and belief, a bi-product of illiteracy. They do not support the killing of snakes taking them to be scared. Another such continuing belief of the rural people is that they consider to have more children not only a divine blessing but also a fortune in that they will have more hands to support them, thinking the least about providing their children with bread, clothes and shelter from their meager income.

The lack of family planning forces the rural families into poverty and breeds other social evils like beggary, prostitution and crime as in the case of Nathan-Rukmani's family. Rukmani, an epitome of cultural archetypal figure of an Indian wife, who regards husband as God and children as gifts of God, ha several children, but poverty and unemployment snatches her sons Arjun and Thambi, forces her daughter Ira into prostitution. Puli in petty crimes and reduces them to resort to stone breaking and ultimately beggary. Closely related to this is the traditional belief that sons are assets and daughters are a burden upon the family. Not only Nathan expects a male child who would help him on the field, but even Rukmani repents that the first born girl child must be a punishment for her past sins. Another important cultural aspect which Kamala Markandaya takes to delineate through her novel *Nectar in a Sieve* is the confronting philosophy of life and existence which is dipped in the respective convictions of the East and the West.

While the Western philosophy is rational, pragmatic, scientific and as a result materialistic, fatalistic and stoic suffering becomes an accepted creed among Indians. The East believes that as long as man breathes he is governed by the forces of time against which he cannot work any change. Time is the hero who turns even the faults and deficiencies of man to his advantage. At the same time the ceaseless flow of time places men at the mercy of several destructive forces like natural calamities, diseases, plagues, human atrocities and injustices against which man finds he helpless and finally succumbs to it. The West, on the other hand lays stress on reason and believes in overpowering the trials and tribulations by individualistic effort. Rekha Jha comments upon these differences of philosophies inherent in the respective cultures of the East and the West thus:

“In the East, man accepts the forces of nature as invincible. He looks back to the past as a lost golden age and Hinduism conceives of nature as the tragedy of life and evil as ultimately illusory. A strong enough feeling is therefore generated to accept and spiritually overcome the trials of existence on grounds of religion, hence the passivity, stagnation and acceptance. The West, on the other hand, believes that man can strive to master nature through the application of science in the form of technology. He can therefore look forward to an even more perfectible world that is in progress. Man in the West is an isolated individual charged with cherishing and developing his unique potentialities. But in the East man is a member of a strict hierarchical order where each must perform the duties allotted to him.” 8

Thus the idealism, mysticism and fatalism of the East are continuously pitted against the pragmatism, materialism and individualism of the West. Kamala Markandaya here tries to point out that people of the East are by nature passive and submissive to life whereas the people of the West are active and aware of their rights. The success of the West lies mainly in better planning and wider spread of education which in turn opens greater opportunities for all.

It is under such spirit that Western pragmatism represented by Dr. Kenny questions the authenticity of Eastern stoicism represented mainly by Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Dr. Kenny the English missionary has great affection and concern for the Indian people because of which he is always ready to help the villagers in many ways, but when he finds that instead of showing any level of resistance to their sufferings, the rustics have a passive belief in life and are complacent about their ‘rough’ conditions, he feels disgusted with their unqualified resignation, poverty and mute modesty especially when tongue tied, they bear the tortures of life. That is why when Kenny sees Rukmani whom he has helped in her times of need submitting willingly to the vagaries of life, he is filled with desperation and appeals to Rukmani to make efforts on her own and fight out the injustices in order to improve her life. He tries to wake up Rukmani’s silent endurance:

“It is no use whatsoever to suffer in silence. Who will succor the drowning man if he does not clamour for his life?” *Nectar in a Sieve*, 113

Such questions put forward by Kenny express the Western outlook towards passive behaviour related to sufferings. It sounds a message which Kamala Markandaya approves of. Just waiting silently and expecting for conditions to improve is most unlikely to happen. Man must fight the odds for his survival because these are the symptoms of heroic qualities. Markandaya supports this better aspect of Western culture which teaches that if one wants to have happiness and peace in one’s life, one has to work for it. Being good does not mean that one should accept meekly everything for granted. Poverty remains shameful unless it is fought by a man’s courage and endeavour- a lesson which the West teaches. Man must fight, demand and “cry out for help-do something” is what Kenny seems to suggest. Feeling snobbish in scarcity and endurance has no meaning, sound realistic and reasonable to Markandaya.

However, there is one aspect of Indian culture which the materialistic and liberal West has always underestimated and is unable to understand the philosophy of fortitude which is instigated by the spiritual force and which is achieved and mastered by one's affirmation and faith in the will of the supreme. This philosophy is a unique characteristic feature of Eastern culture and has been an everlasting enigma for the West. When the mysterious tides of time with its uneven flow, sometimes expanding and sometimes contracting, dashes its onslaught, it uproots realms and towns to ruins and ruins to dust. It is then when fatalism and stoic suffering consequently become an accepted creed.

Rukmani faces the problems and ordeals with immense courage and an unequalled stoic fortitude. She knows that one never gets a complete world. If there are times of hardship, fear and hunger they are "years of plenty" too. What cannot be avoided has to be accepted. This is one of the truths of our existence. Rukmani is also of the same faith. Her serenity, calmness and stoic acceptance of the inevitable help her endure her fatality. While her total surrender to time seems irritating to Dr. Kenny, to herself, it was a deep-rooted faith in God's immanent will. She believes that,

"We are all in God's hand and He is merciful... Nothing is unbearable and man's indomitable spirit can help him surmount the tribulations by endurance." *Nectar in a Sieve*, 50

This type of patience helps old Granny to live alone in meager living. While it is due to Rukmani's belief in providence that dire poverty and cruel starvation do not dry away her humanity. A woman of spirit, she accepts the loss of her son in the tannery like a true stoic. Her words,

"What compensation is there for death?" *Nectar in a Sieve*, 95

make the officials of the tannery realize that no amount of money is sufficient enough to compensate for death. Observing Markandaya's vision of life in presenting a woman's self in an unadventurous social milieu Ramesh Kumar Gupta observes :

"The role of Rukmani as an unsplit self is not a gesture of civility extended to tradition by the novelist but the reality made potential by the nature of the culture in which she lives." 31

Thus Rukmani's acceptance of life and nature inspite of the trials and tribulation in her life is an obvious expression of affirmation and faith. Both Nathan and Rukmani face the same hardships, but ironically Rukmani outlives Nathan. Madhusudan Prasad points out in this regard,

"*Nectar in a Sieve* says that one must have in life. Faith is a great sustaining power with which one, like Rukmani in the novel, can brave any hardship or misfortune and even draw '*Nectar in a Sieve*.'" XVII

Faith to steer through the stormy sea of life is what the East has taught Nathan and Rukmani. Forbearance which is a remarkable trait of the East is characteristic of them.

On one hand Kamala Markandaya disapproves of superstitious practices and primitive living conditions of the rural people, while on the other she also brings out the strong and positive points of the culture of the East. One is the spiritual reckoning of the East against the more rational and calculating aspect of the West, and the other is marriage. In the East,

marriage is religious ceremony where both the partners are knotted not only for one life, but also for lives to come. It is viewed as a relationship that goes on for infinity. On the contrary marriages in the West are understood to be a contract made between two people and last as long as one partner finds it convenient living with the other. Kenny's efforts in injecting a sense of realism into Rukmani's thoughts is applausive and appreciable, but ironically with all his Western rationality, Kenny could not save his own marriage from breaking down.

Kenny's attitude to home and family stands in sharp contrast to the Indian cultural tradition of family. He regards wife, children and home as an impediment, as a chain which does not allow him a freedom which he desires, and the consequences is as expected:

"My wife has left me. My sons have been taught to forget me." *Nectar in a Sieve*,¹⁰² is all Kenny has to say about his married life to Rukmani. But Rukmani has a different view altogether about home and hearth. Home to her is a "Capsule of kinship" and bond of eternal love and affection. No sacrifice appears too big for Rukmani which cannot be made, and she really makes it to prove. In spite of all miseries, she is always with Nathan till he breathes his last, as for her sons, it is they who leave her either by migrating to distant places or through death. Rukmani is irritated to learn that Kenny's wife has left him. She is filled with fear at the very thought of such breakage of homes, a common event in the West.

Cultural comparison is treated in *A Silence of Desire* in the conventional beliefs and pragmatic approach through husband-wife relationship. Dandekar and Sarojini are husband and wife. Dandekar works as a clerk in an office with Chari and Ghosh, and has a modern outlook while Sarojini is a traditional housewife. Their married life with three children goes on smoothly till one evening when after returning from his office, to his utter surprise Dandekar finds his wife absent. Sarojini's lame excuse to Dandekar for her absence make him more suspicious. Sarojini ultimately discloses the truth that she has developed a tumour in her uterus and goes to the Swamy for treatment. She also tells Dandekar that she has no faith in hospitals because her mother had died during an operation for a similar malady and that she believes that the Swamy can cure her by his miraculous powers. This forms the crux of the situation where the husband and the wife display the cultural patterns with respect to the extent of freedom and importance of duty in the Indian social surroundings.

Commenting on the fact that a total separation between the individual and his culture is an impossibility, Lionel Trilling observes :

" it is not possible to conceive of a person standing beyond his culture. His culture has brought him into being in every respect except the physical , has given him his categories and habits of thoughts , his range of feeling ,his idiom and tones of speech. No aberration can effect a real separation : even the form that madness takes are controlled by the culture in which it occurs." XII

Trilling's observation helps us to understand better the cultural ambivalence of Dandekar.

Though the influence of the western culture in his office and his contact with the Europeans has developed in Dandekar a realistic and scientific outlook on life, at heart he remains an Indian who prefers sitting on a mat at home and is convention bound. Dandekar's behaviour appears to be to the psychological study of culture patterns by Ralph Linton, who says : “ Although all the members of any society may not have first had experience of all the patterns within its culture , all of them will be brought into contact with many of the same patterns and these patterns can be treated as constants in studies of personality formation.”³²

Dandekar's personality is based on a similar pattern . He accepts , without conscious awareness, the cultural pattern of a faithful, obedient wife in the form of Sarojini and the dominant husband which he is himself .As a conventional husband he feels that Sarojini should occupy the place of a conventional responsible wife who performs her rituals and remains at his beck and call- a culture pattern that is still operational in the Indian mode of life.

Markandaya shows this cultural duality in the responses of Dandekar. To Dandekar, Sarojini is an embodiment of cultural identity rooted in Indian religion and rituals, and as long as she stands pure and preserves Dandekar's concept of domestic security and does not hinder his individual professional life, he is a happy and complacent man. But no sooner does he discover that his wife is no more a duty-bound domestic lady, and that she goes to exercise personal choice in seeking some kind of faith-cure for a serious ailment from a Swamy, the other side of him , his rationality and his conventional belief of being a bread-winner for the family, is shaken. Dandekar thus hangs between the two ambivalent attitude- partly Eastern and partly Western. He accepts the tradition of his own culture as it ensures him a security and a sense of belonging. He professes rationalism in thought and action because it allows him to exercise freedom in all matters and hence he gets disturbed due to the reason that bound-up in socio-cultural beliefs Sarojini resorts to a Swamy for her cure.

Sarojini, as an orthodox Hindu housewife follows the culture of traditional religious code of faith and other conventions. She worships the *tulsi* plant with total devotion considering it a symbol of the Almighty and derives spiritual strength. It is her illness which derives her to despair and she pursues her own idea of a cure though it might go against Dandekar's opinion. Faith cannot be tested on any pulpit of argument. She is confident that without faith her illness cannot be cured.

Markandaya focuses on the point that even though a person tries his best to separate himself from his basic culture, it does not really happen. In spite of all his rationalism and modernism Dandekar feels the beauty and power of Sarojini's uncompromising faith:

“Her religious tutelage had been rather more earnest than his own and she often had answers to the conundrums which his less-amiable Non-Hindu friends set him- not of course

that she would supply them, until he had indicated that perhaps, she might.” *Silence Of Desire*, 120

Initially, Dandekar is disturbed at Sarojini's idolatrous worship of the *tulsi* plant which to his modern logistical mind merely a plant was not meant for worshipping. Yet even in his rationalism he submits to her faith:

“It was a symbol of God, whom one worshipped and it was necessary that God should have symbols since no man had the power or temerity to visualize him.” *Silence Of Desire*,5
Seen from the view point of Sarojini, it may said that

“Hindu culture allows the woman the necessary freedom to be truly herself in a religious, heroic or aesthetic sphere. This culture gives her the necessary protection.”
A.V.Krishna, Rao & Madhavi Menon, 54

This awareness on Dandekar's part makes him all the more hopeless. He realizes that the power he is fighting is such that he cannot prevent Sarojini's belief in the faith in the faith cure. He decides to talk to the Swamy, but on meeting the Swamy, he realizes the vastness of the Eastern culture against the Western limitations which sought for the material or physical. He comes to accept the fact that there was another sphere of life, the spiritual aspect, which the more materialistic and rational West could not interfere with, and whenever it did, it gave rise to conflict.

Thus both Sarojini and Dandekar are caught in a complex dilemma. It is the Swamy ultimately who resolves the dilemma by departing from the pace quietly. Thereafter Sarojini too, agrees to undergo the operation but as she asserts, it is not because she has developed faith in doctors but because the Swamy has advised and assured her that she would be cured by an operation. She tells her husband :

“I am not afraid now of knives or doctors, or what they may do. All will be well. He said so.” *Silence Of Desire*,154

The world of *A Silence of Desire* is thus presented in close contact with the reality of a changing India caught between the cultural web of the Eastern conceptions of responsibility to the family, society and tradition and the Western concept of individualism of thought and activity. In delineating this continuity of culture, the novelist does not take a one sided view for that would mean a celebration of superstition. On the contrary, Markandaya takes a balanced and reconciling approach. On one side while she shows how Sarojini's faith blinds her to her familial duties, on the other Dandekar's rationalism corrupts his behaviour. While she asserts the importance of a man's behaviour, his or her belief in spiritual force, she also advocates the importance of scientific achievement. While Sarojini accepts the scientific spirit of the age (though implicitly), Dandekar too shades the physical nature of his desire and with the realization that the rational should not take the traditional culture for granted, that his wife is an essential part of this world. Existence of culture cannot be ignored at the cost of modernism. Thus Kamala Markandaya seeks reconciliation between science and superstition, between progress and heritage.

Possession like *Some Inner Fury* discusses the continuing cultural dualism of the East and the West manifested in the two independent principles of mind and matter, the former represented by Indian spiritualism and the latter by the Western materialism. While both the principles have their respective identities that are carried since generations, the former seems to have a winning upper hand over the latter in the view point of Kamala Markandaya. The cultural heritage manifested in the spiritual values of India is so deeply rooted that India has been able to avoid successfully the foreign interference on her religion and philosophy for centuries with the help of the moral strength imparted by the vital force of spiritualism. Those who try to break this norm have either not been able to do so or if they have, they are redeemed but only after they have paid dearly for it as it happens to Valmiki in *Possession*.

Val, a rustic goatherd living in remote skirts of a South Indian village, has grown up in an atmosphere of constraints and regulations of a socio-cultural India. Sighted accidentally by an English lady Caroline who recognizes immediately his rare but unrefined artistic talents, he is taken by her to England where he is dragged into a world of unbridled freedom, luxury and license of Caroline. As a result, Val becomes irresponsible to his culture, tradition, to his art and to himself. After initial signs of showing some reluctance, Val gradually moves away from the divine purpose of his art and becomes a willing slave to the materialistic aspects of the Western culture under the patronage of Caroline. However, this does not last long. The Swamy, an embodiment of worldly detachment and renunciation, under whose shelter of spiritual guidance, Val had been passing his life in India, acts as a redeemer for Val's tainted living, and leads him back to the initial dedication and realization of the true purpose of art. On the contrary Caroline's efforts to possess Val both mentally and physically by tempting him with glamour, money, fame and sexuality fails miserably. Caroline is under a misconception that someday or the other she will be able to draw Val back to the superficial world of the West.

This continuity of struggle between the cultures of both the nations brings to the readers mind a significant aspect about India's attempt to progress. As Harish Raizada observes:

"...in it's onward march to progress ... whether India has to cut itself off from its root and shape itself in the image of the materialistic west or seek its growth from the life-giving springs of its own culture." 53

Having been transported into the western world of sheen and shine, Valmiki graduates in Anglicization. But the spiritual hold of the Swamy is yet not lost completely. Val can feel this even when he is deeply engrossed in Caroline's world. Val admits this to Anusuya:

"He (Swamy) is always near, in the spirit." *Possession*, 61

Being separated from his native spiritual roots Val suffers from loss of inspiration in the absence of the Swamy and fails to exhibit his artistic talents fully as he is unable to paint. It is then that Caroline realizes her smallness in comparison to the magnitude of the Swamy's hold over Valmiki. She becomes aware that though she has possessed Val as a physical entity, she has very little influence over his creative ability. But the maneuvering Caroline finds a solution to this. She gets her South-Indian cook write letters for Val on behalf of

the Swamy. The counterfeited letters work wonders upon Val and he is inspired to paint again :

“Now I am happy... I feel good – here – I work again, much work.” *Possession*, 62

Thus it is quite apparent that to seek monetary gains from Val's artistic talent, the West has to come under the protection of the East. It is the spiritual values of India in the form of the Swamy that serves Caroline's purpose. Rightly observes Madhu Joshi :

“..... In spite of his initiation into Caroline's world and his obvious attempts at conforming to the rigid codes of her society, it is the Swamy's opinion of him that he values first and foremost.” 77 Gradually Valmiki becomes westernized by hastily picking up the mannerisms of the Western culture in Caroline's world. He kisses Anasuya on the cheeks when earlier he had regarded her as his sister and brought her “Parijata” flowers. His basic source of inspiration for painting is no more spiritualism but the “Western aestheticism of physical beauty” which Anasuya sees Val changed into a westernized person mixing freely and feeling quite at ease with English people, she is convinced that Val is now a totally changed personality. But it should be noted that the sparks of Indian culture is still ignited in Val's heart.

Just as Caroline cannot separate himself completely from her social superiority and remains the typical representative of her race in pride, egoism, possessiveness and exploitation, Val too remains in essence an Indian in his liberty, honesty and simplicity. Anasuya who watches him closely realizes that in Val,

“..... there still remained, for good augury vestiges of a cold and watchful inner eye, as disdainful of others as of himself.” *Possession*,110

Even though Val is deeply dipped in Caroline's Western world of sensual and sensuous pleasures, the Swamy's influence is not yet lost on him. This is seen in the comment made by critics on his paintings who feel that he

“paints as if unknown to himself he had glimpsed beyond the horizon, the transcendent powers of universe, and the refracted light brings a hint of the power and the nuance into his own painting.” *Possession*,159

This proves beyond doubt that the detour into a foreign culture had yet not corrupted Valmiki's artistic sense which still retained the divine qualities.

The essential Indian spirituality is further seen in Val's concern for Ellie, his adherence to principles of innate goodness and his compassion for Minou, the monkey. After Ellie leaves Caroline's house with her yet to be born child (from Val) Val repents and curses himself. Even though in dire need of money, Val is resolved not to sell Ellie's nude paintings, nor does he accept money from Anasuya on the pretext that he will not be able to pay it back. This stands in sharp contrast to the affluent Caroline who not only wants Val physically but also intent to make money from his art.

British contact may have blunted Val's prejudices but not his belief that “animals aren't created for men”. Val cannot think of leaving the ailing monkey, Minou whom he has bought from the shop and therefore, finds himself responsible to Minou. The compassion of Val extends from flesh to beast. Caroline never experiences this guilt which Val feels for Minou – a telling

comment on the nature of the two cultures. Minou's death and his burial done by Val is symbolic of Val's end of a superficial life. He realizes the stark reality that his straying has not brought him any satisfaction or mental peace. This realization perhaps incites him unconsciously to return back to India, to his own culture, a choice which the helpless Minou did not have.

After nursing Minou who eventually dies of pneumonia, Valmiki returns to India and his village cave with Anasuya but only after having paid the price of spiritual degradation. Rightly remark A.V. Krishna Rao & Madhavi Menon in this regard :

“His crisis is thus representative of the East being possessed by the West until Eastern culture identity is itself under a threat.” 72

And truly Valmiki's cultural identity of spiritual awareness is threatened by the sophisticated and materialistic West. But Valmiki cannot completely sever all his ties with the past oriental values which he has observed from his spiritual guide, the Swamy. Consequently he returns to the Swamy and takes up once again the art of painting and offering his artistic creations as 'homage to God'. He returns to the point, from where the formidable Caroline had uprooted him, renouncing all the Western enticements and pleasures, to find peace of mind and soul in artistic Creativity. K.S.N. Rao observes very truly that

“Ultimately Val realizes that wealth cannot bring inner peace and that Val's story shows the belief that creative talent is to be used for the divine if one is to achieve inner tranquility.”45

That art is divine is a primary concept of Eastern origin and Valmiki's return to his sense of native identity, though “possessed” by the West for a time proves the point that,

“While a brief contact with the West may be good for India's sophistication and modernization, its ultimate fulfillment can be possible only through its nourishment by her own spiritual values.” Harish Raizada, 53

Thus in her effort to project the continuity of cultures, Kamala Markandaya presents Valmiki as a product of the culture of a nation deeply rooted in its spiritual identity.

She wants East-West cultures to be complementary to each other so that the sophisticated and mechanized West may benefit from India's ethical values and the spiritual and philosophical India may benefit from the modernization of the West so that rather than crushing or bearing down each other their contact nourishes.

The novels of Kamala Markandaya not only describe this cultural conflict vividly but they also contain the idea that the Indian life with its deep rooted cultural backdrop survives the onslaught of modernization and inspite of adherence to and cultivation of new values.

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