



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE, LITERATURE
AND TRANSLATION STUDIES (IJELR)

A QUARTERLY, INDEXED, REFEREED AND PEER REVIEWED OPEN ACCESS

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

<http://www.ijelr.in>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 4. Issue.1., 2017 (Jan-Mar.)

ISSN

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

MULTICULTURALISM AND THE CRY FOR CULTURAL CO-EXISTENCE
PLEASURE CITY BY KAMALA MARKANDAYA

Dr. VINEETA SHARMA

Dr. NALINI JAIN

Associate Professor & HOD (English), S.M.J.N. College, Haridwar



ABSTRACT

Multiculturalism is a universal phenomenon. No country can afford to insulate itself against cultural diffusion. The history of human evolution and the rise and fall of various major civilizations of the world bring home the truth that cultural dissemination has been an integral part of human history. Meeting of two cultures cannot be a petty phenomenon. It is a potential challenge for a writer. In fact, there is enough of creative tension in this. It has far more powerful consequence than atomic fission. The writers, like painters and magicians, try to harmonize the conflicting experiences into a meaningful pattern. The results of the cultural encounter may be varied. To outline it in precise terms, it has been of three significant kinds: acculturation, Deculturation and Transculturation or Co-existence. However, the most pervasive cultural situation in modern society is the Transculturation or the Co-existence of dual cultures. The dialectics of tradition and modernity present this predicament of transculturation in most eloquent terms. Kamala Markandaya's *Pleasure City* beautifully fictionalize the dilemma of a modern India who is neither purely Western, nor wholly Eastern in nature.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

Multiculturalism is an essential ingredient of the consciousness of every educated Indian. What is true of the educated Indian is especially true of the Indian writer because "a writer is concerned with human action and motivation behind human behavior." Almost all major Indian novelists writing in English like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Manohar Malgonkar, Bhabhani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal and Anita Desai have diluted this factor in their different and distinctive ways. Kamala Markandaya is a major novelist who has projected the image of India, before and after Independence, its tradition and change, its modernity, its rural surroundings as well as organization and technology. But what is most striking in her novels is the fact that multiculturalism forms the matrix of her vision. In novel after novel, she explores the impact of change in terms of human psychology. To her, culture means essentially an idea which unites a million individuals and confers on each of them what Trilling calls 'internal selfhood'. Kamala Markandaya has transmuted the encounter of cultures in her fiction. She has given a configuration to the dynamics of cultural interaction in her novels in different ways. The quintessence of Markandaya's novels lies in the fictive

exploration of the human self in the context of complex cultural values. The reasons for this complex vision are several. Her predicament of being an Indian write thus an exposure to dual cultures is further intensified by her personal life history. Born in Madras in an educated Brahmin family, she studied at Madras university and worked for some time in a newspaper in Madras. Later she went to London where she worked as Solicitor's office. There she marries to an Englishman and settled permanently in London as an expatriate. She continued to work under the maiden name although after marriage she is Purnia Kamala Taylor. In view of this basic truth that the novel draws its sustenance inevitably from the life of the novelist as well as from the creative power of imagination, the significance of Kamala Markandaya's own life becomes highly relevant to the shaping of her complex vision of life. The theme of uprootedness, racial tension and prejudice, conflict between tradition and materialism, faith and reason, primitivism and technology, a search for one's true self, the experience of exile and alienation are myriad shades of her fictional prism. Markandaya's fictional corpus reveals its deeper implications if it is explicated from the stance that cultural dualism is her contingent condition, her personal predicament and it is also the constant shaping of her vision. In this quality she is akin to other commonwealth novelists but she carves out a distinctive place for herself by constancy of her concern, candour of her experience and multitudinous responses to cultural interactions that have percolated into the fabric of Indian life.

Deculturation and assimilation are the two extreme wings of cultural interaction. When two cultures encounter, several reactions work simultaneously, but in certain cases a distinctive response outlasts other auxiliary manifestations. If *Possession* rejects the possibility of an artist flourishing in an alien soil, and adopted cultures, *Some Inner Fury* of Markandaya illustrates a movement towards assimilation. Complete assimilation is impossible and no novel by any commonwealth novelist has yet been able to record such an experience. In many cases, however, a co-presence of the two becomes the reality. Ambivalence is a recurring and happy experience because it takes cognizance of both the ways of life, of both cultures. In this age of growing global co-operation and understanding the human cry for cultural coexistence, has become very relevant. If complete cultural assimilation is impossible, total insularity against other cultures is undesirable and smothering for a culture. Culture is a dynamic process and hence it has to grow and change. Kamala Markandaya is also sensitive to this facet of cultural dynamics and thus have articulated the subtle co-presence of two cultures in our life. It can be meaningfully portrayed in terms of the meeting of two races, the ethnic juxtaposition or in terms of two ways of life representing the spirit of the West and the East.

Still another variation on ethnic understanding reflecting cultural co-existence is explored in Markandaya's novel *Pleasure City*. In *Pleasure City* also Tully and Rikki are archetypes of two different races and cultures and in their relationship we find the twilight of togetherness. They also depart but in their understanding and relationship, the rancour, fury, hatred and anger of racial incompatibility is almost obliterated. Their relationship illustrates that two cultures can co-exist without smothering each other's identity and can enrich each other by a harmonious approach. Rikki is a fisher boy who grows under the native environment of the sea coast living as well as the enlightening impact of Mrs. Rose Bridie who initiates him in to the world of aesthetics through books. The novel makes it quite clear in the beginning.

At no time did Rikki rebel. He took to books as he had taken to the sea. Both gave him pleasure, but the sea had come first- He kept from his infancy a clear, abiding memory of being lowered from his father's arm into a warm, familiar, infinitely blue and embracing element.

"The baby swam. No sooner the water touched than he swam.' The child's father swore to cronies, in accents of pride and joy. These feelings echoed his son's; and to this enduring memory was added another of similar intensity when Mrs. Rose Bridie placed the open, illuminated volume in his hands.(P.5)

Rikki's father dies and the mother also soon departs. Muthu's family takes him in. He is adopted by the family. The whole community had come forward. The community of fishermen has their own way of life. He begins to attend to the call of the sea but the riches of the imagination equally shape him. If Mrs. Bridie has awakened in him beauty of language and literature. Mr. Bridie helps him also to shape up the ravishing pebbles into enticing

design. Rikki's life as well as the life of the community undergoes a change with the arrival of AIDCORP, the Atlas International Development Corporation building luxury pleasure complex. It is the latest form of technology. The impact of technology on the rural world of India was articulated in the first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* through the symbol of tannery. In *The Coffey Dams* tannery takes shape of a dam and in *Pleasure City* it comes up in the form of a luxury complex. The spirit of technology represented in *The Coffey Dams* by the British and European technocrats is embodied in *Pleasure City* by AIDOCORP. "AIDOCORP built anywhere, everywhere, almost anything for anyone, with a virtuosity as dazzling as its politics were bland. To put it plainly, it never allowed private feelings to interfere with business. To put it even plainer, it consisted, with an admirably distilled purity, of purely technological mercenaries." (P.21)

The luxury complex Shalimar is a world in itself. When the villas get ready together with essential ancillaries like restaurant, bar and places of amusement the tourists begin to pour in. It affects different people in different ways. Apu, the headman says clearly: "This is your territory. The water are ours, to a five-fathom depth." (P.26)

The kind of indifference that is observable in *The Coffey Dams* where the Western technocrats encroach upon the tribal's land and uproot them is not to be found here. There is greater amount of understanding and acceptance. There are a host of characters. Mrs. Lovat is fascinated by India and wants to find it out. But her novels are liked everywhere except in India. There is Mr. Boyle the founder of AIDCORP who has affection deep and genuine for India where he had initially made his fortune, but he remembers nostalgically that the sun never sets in the British Empire. There is Mrs. Pearl always conscious of her respectability; Carmen, the Spanish dancer, Valli, the local belle and Corinna, Tully's ravishing wife. The novel portrays all of them, their ways and styles, their whims and prejudices. There is the nexus of understanding between characters belonging to two ethnic groups. Valli, the local belle and Carmen, the Spanish dancer with their professional akinness but more than that, they interest in terms of their culture. At the time of departure of Carmen, Alvarez, Valli takes off her garland and places it over her friend's. Carmen offers her the packet of dark chocolate cigarillos. The exchange of gift is in fact, an exchange of hearts, a meeting of two ethnic identities. Cultural dualism finds an expression through the interaction between them. The talk between them reflects their ways of life, their culture.

"But it is really too hot a dance in the plains", said Carmen, fixing the tortoise shell high, over her proud, shaved map at this time of year. I don't know how you do it'. 'I have to'. Valli helped with the combs. The festivals, you see, come at any time. "Any time?" said Carmen, slowly opening her black lace fan. Being a catholic, she would never know. 'All the year round. Hot weather, any weather,' said Valli. (P.229-30)

But the focus of the novel is on the relationship between Tully and Rikki. Their friendship has deeper connotations; they are ethnic archetypes. Their first meeting is significant; it is a meeting of innocence and understanding. Rikki saw Tully swimming out through the barrier. The evening was calm, there was no danger but coming on it unaware might be jarring. Tully meanwhile was still heading out to sea. Launching off the log Rikki swam to intercept, calling a warning as he went. In fact, in Tully, Rikki finds someone who could respond on the same channel. "Indeed, inwardly Rikki was smoldering seals of wax beginning to melt. After a lifetime (it was barely a year), here was another like Mrs. Bridie. One who could speak if he chose, like Mrs. Bridie, who would lose aside the tools, and stop cursing the obstinate, rusty hinges, and begin telling about cupolas and dornea." (P.46)

Rikki's imagination finds strength in Tully's company. His relationship with almost all characters is positive and cordial but in Tully he finds emotional reciprocation. It is the human quality in Tully that strikes the responding chord in Rikki's heart. When he presents him a rare flower which has only one bloom in each season, and comes back to his sister, he tells Valli he is as human, as you are. This feeling that he is a human being brings him close. Tully hits inherited Avalon, a building which is now in ruins. It was built in the days when India seemed embedded in empire forever like a jewel set in Celtic gold. Now it has fallen apart and needs renovation. The hill on which Avalon was perched provided ample views. Rikki has been frequenting

it and watching the landscape. He is fully acquainted with the whole surroundings and lie appreciates the glow and beauty of the marbles that have given Avalon its structure and design. Tully appreciates and encourages his interest in mosaic designs. Both of them participate in the beauty and enchantment of the whole landscape from the PROSPECT POINT.

They sat perilously, one at each end to prevent the rickety structure see-sawing, peering at a dense thicket of well-grown cacti. But under the intensity of their gaze the solid object lost its certainty, its uncompromising outlines wavered and grew fluid, the thicket, insert with splintery sea-blues, dissolved before their eyes to reveal a wide, cut-sapphire expanse of ocean. (P.82-83)

Tully reflects a racial consciousness and a pride in the fact that his country has ruled over India. He expresses his view that he likes order and cannot remain in ruins and tells Rikki:

I like order ... that was one reason, perhaps the only respectable one, why we look over your country, to impose our order on what seemed to us your confusion. (P.79)

There are other places when Rikki becomes aware of the difference in their attitude and way of life: "At time like these Rikki felt the division between them, between one man and another, their minds, their reach and sway, the reality of the distance between himself and Tully." (P.147)

There are such moments when Rikki becomes aware of the basic difference between them, their attitude to life, their culture and heritage, but in totality Tully's character is human. The reconstruction of Avalon is contrasted against building of Shalimar, the Pleasure City. The character in Shalimar fails to realise that colour makes no difference to basic humanity. On the other hand, for Tully the inter culture colonial experience of India is ingrained in his consciousness. It has been in his family for generations and therefore, he can open out to receive and understand the Eastern mind. Rikki's, statement made before his sister Valli sums up the whole difference. He is the son of Sophie Copeland who has figured in the earlier novel, *The Golden Honeycomb*. Avalon which he inherits grows on love, care and understanding in clear contrast with Shalimar which grows on money, expertise and subjugation. Tully's commitments in the shape of his profession draws him away from Shalimar and Rikki once the project is over.

Tully-Rikki friendship is an extension of Richard-Mira, Srinivas Mrs. Pickering and Helen-Bashiam relationships. They are Markandaya's metaphors of interracial interaction at different joints of history in India's life. Despite Rikki's assertion that "there is, an ocean between us," yet the understanding between the East and West has deepened. When Tully goes away, Rikki wanders in and out of the rooms of Avalon and finally rushes; to the Prospect Point:

Rikki's step quickened. He would hurry, and get to Prospect Point in good time, and settle down to watch. The views from there were matchless- not to be had from anywhere else, as he and Tully had often agreed. (P.341)

Tully is gone, but his spirit hovers, his love and tenderness, his human elements continue. The sharing and participation in the landscape, the infinite together enlarge the characters into symbols of humanity. They are creatures of twilight, the meeting point of two cultures, two races into the fabric of humanity. They are living, breathing metaphors of the perception of human essentials transcending the surface barriers of race.

Yet another subtle but significant articulation of cultural coexistence is forged through a co-presence of two ways of life, the materialistic and spiritual, the mystical and empirical in our social context.

Notes & References

1. Markandaya Kamala, *Pleasure City*. London: Chatto&Windus 1982. print. (All subsequent quotations are from this edition of the novel and they are indicated by page no. /no.s in parentheses.)
2. Markandaya Kamala, *Some Inner Fury*. London : Putnam & Co. 1955.print.
3. Shekharam K.R. Chandra, "*East And West in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya*", In *Critical Essays on India Writing In English* (Ed.) M.K. Naiket. al, Dharwar, Karnataka University Press, 1968.(P.68).
4. Rao A.V. Krishna, "*Continuity and Change in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya*", *Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya*, (Ed.) Dr. M. Prasad, VimalPrakashan, Ghaziabad, 1986. P.6.

5. SehgalNayantara, *A Time To Be Happy*, Bombay, Jaico Publications, , (1973). P.147.
 6. B. Rajan, *Then Dark Dancer*, Heinemann, London, 1959, P. 165.
 7. M. Mukherjee, *Twice Born Fiction*, Arnold Heinemann, New Delhi, 1971, P. 83.
 8. Iyengar K.R. Srinivas. *Indian Writings in English*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House (1973). P.32.
 9. MalgonkarManohar, *Combat of Shadows*, Hind Pocket Books, Delhi, (1968), P.116.
 10. Desai Anita, *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Hind Pocket Book, Delhi, (1971), P.38.
-