

Religious Elements in Kamala Markandaya's Novels

K. S. NARAYANA RAO

ONE of the unique features of the Indo-Anglian novel written by Indian writers living abroad is their return to ancient Indian heritage with a strong sense of sentimental attachment and peculiar feeling of satisfaction and pride in the rediscovery of India's religious philosophy and spiritual strength. Writers like R. K. Narayan who have never been separated from the country too long seldom go back to their ancient culture in their writings, and others like Mulk Raj Anand who have lived abroad but returned to India and settled down there do not experience, insofar as their writings show, any sense of alienation. Indeed, they become critical of some of the unhappy aspects of the social life of India, having been exposed to Western social values. While there have been instances of Indians who have returned to India and developed a feeling of "home-sickness" for the West, including some Indo-Anglian writers,¹ in general it may be said that even among those who were educated abroad but who returned to India to live there, like Nehru, there have been men who have rediscovered India's ancient, spiritual and philosophic heritage with an ardour rarely equalled.² But returning to the self-exiled Indo-Anglian novelists, I must say that the stuff of which their novels are made is almost wholly Indian, partly because that is what they are most intimately familiar with and partly because the separation from their homeland produces a strong tie to it, and the writers look back with a longing, which they had not had before. By contrast, no Christian writer that I know of among those who have gone abroad and lived in a different country reverts in his writing to the Bible or the Judeo-

Christian heritage, although he may show his sense of exile from home, Indian or other. This reaction of longing to cling to the past of India is generally true even of the Indian students who go abroad. Spiritually, and often physically, alienated in a society of which they can never wholly become a part and confronted by uncertainties, doubts and loneliness, they seek to be securely anchored in the steadfast and firm philosophy and wisdom of their ancient heritage. In fact, an Indo-Anglian novelist recently wrote a novel dealing with this problem of Indian students abroad.³ In an article, she went on to say that she enjoyed writing this book greatly and added, "Yet emotionally they [Indian immigrants in London] were, if anything, more Indian than the Indians at home."⁴

Among the self-exiled Indo-Anglian writers, Balachandra Rajan, Raja Rao and Kamala Markandaya are good examples of writers who exhibit this feeling. While the first two were educated in the West, Markandaya was never educated abroad. Born and brought up as a brahmin with all the implications of strong traditional ties but married to a Britisher and living in London, Markandaya must have experienced profound emotional experiences of tearing herself apart from her traditional ties and must have intensely felt the longing to return to India now and again, both physically and imaginatively as in her writings. Unlike Raja Rao, who is essentially a philosophic writer and like Rajan, who is basically a secular kind of writer, Markandaya is by and large a secular writer. But the fact that at least in two of her novels she returns to the ancient culture of India is a very significant fact.⁵ While it is difficult to determine which novel was written when,⁶ her first published novel (though said to be the third written), *Nectar in a Sieve*, carefully omits any reference to religion or even fate (the Hindu doctrine of *Karma*, a term so common in the daily expression of Indians), though there is so much of suffering in the story to which the central character resigns herself, suggesting that the primary emphasis

of Markandaya's stories is secular. In fact, most of her characters (except in two or three novels, where we come across some brahmin characters) are drawn from the lower caste groups, who while belonging within the Hindu fold of the society have not had at any time special religious obligations of the kind of the priestly caste imposed on them. As a matter of fact, one does not become aware of any religious group identification of characters in her novels except in a casual way and except also when a comparison is forced by the situation of the interaction of the characters of two groups. The two primary religious groups we hear of are the Hindus and the Christians. We rarely hear of Muslims in *Nectar*, and there is one quick and casual reference to Muslim women, who remain behind *pardah* or veil.⁷ Of course, we come across some references to Muslim characters again in *Two Virgins*,⁸ and these references are to the customs of the Muslims as understood by some other characters, sometimes erroneously, in which case another character might offer a corrective. This novel has even a Sikh character, but nothing is suggested of the religion of the Sikhs. The characters of a religious group which appear in any novel seldom draw our attention as emphasizing that religion; they are seen integrated in the plot of the story as reflecting a society of diverse religious faiths but each group living its own life. Thus, no character in *Nectar*, for example, ever shows an awareness of the Western doctor, Kenny, as anything but a doctor and a Westerner. There is not the slightest suggestion that he is looked on as a Christian. But two of Miss Markandaya's novels are an exception, though: *A Silence of Desire* and *Possession*, for they contain the character of a holy man, a Swamy, symbolizing the ancient spiritual world of India, and in two other novels the author deals briefly with Christians and their customs in a Hindu setting; these are *Some Inner Fury* and *A Handful of Rice*. The last novel, *Two Virgins*, has an important Christian character, and comments on her and her faith by other characters are

interspersed throughout the story, often in comparison with Hinduism, though neither Christianity nor Hinduism is a major theme of the novel. Almost all the stories of Miss Markandaya generally affirm the ultimate triumph of the spirit in the face of all odds and sufferings and the temptations of the flesh. But *A Silence of Desire* and *Possession* do so in more than a general way.

A Silence is the story of a man who puts his carnal pleasures and personal comforts above spiritual values and therefore becomes unhappy. He longs for peace in life, "the quality he longed for above all" (p. 220), but has forgotten that he is at conflict with the powers of the spirit. When he dogs the steps of his wife, Sarojini (whom he suspects of unchastity), to the *ashrama* (or the sacred dwelling place of the holy man), the dramatic interest of the novel shifts from the psychological to the psychic. The main thesis of the story is the confrontation between carnal desires and spiritual detachment, the conflict between the physical yearnings of the body and unquestioning devotion to the holy. There is a continual battle between the two with the spirit finally asserting itself over the body. The story begins with a direct reference to the *tulasi* plant (held sacred by the orthodox Hindu) before which Sarojini offers to say her prayers to God but which Dandekar ignores, although as a brahmin he has it especially enjoined on him to revere it. The symbolic value of the *tulasi* plant is a very apt one in the story. The change from the fresh *tulasi* plant held in religious respect at the beginning to the withered, neglected plant at the end describes, in fact, the moral decay of Dandekar. As in the story of *Possession*, here also we have the figure of the Swamy, symbol of the spiritual pursuit of life; and just as Caroline finds the Swamy in that story an adversary, Dandekar in this puts himself in direct opposition to the Swamy. He finds that his wife's devotion to the holy man is too great to make her undergo an operation for a growth on her womb. When he realizes that it is impossible to make her abandon her spiritual

pursuit, he tries to rid the town of the Swamy and his associates. The departure of the Swamy from the town, however, is not a victory for Dandekar. In his direct, face-to-face confrontation, he is unequal to the Swamy in arguments and finds that he has no case against him (p. 200). Dandekar's plaintive confession before his officer Chari concedes the strength of the spirit against that of the body. Chari quietly notes it:

In this country the body had long taken second place, forced into that position by a harshness of circumstances which it would hardly have weathered without the sustenance of the spirit; by a harshness of climate, in which a consideration for the body would have been the purest painful folly; and by the teachings of a religion, itself perhaps shaped by these, which sought to turn the eye inward and find there the core of being. (pp. 198-99)

When the Swamy leaves the town of his own volition, Dandekar goes to the *ashrama* only to see disintegration and disorder, symbolized especially by the withered *tulasi* plant, and feel guilty.

In the centre of the courtyard where he had seen them worship it stood a *tulasi* tree, neglected, its leaves shrivelled from lack of water, the soil dry and crumbling in the brass [pot]. He turned from the *tulasi* to the faces of the people he passed, and, with a shock, thought he recognized there the same disintegration. Averting his eyes he hurried by as quickly as possible and found himself in one of the larger store-rooms. (p. 221)

However, this disintegration does not mean that it is a defeat to the power of the spirit. On the contrary, it is an object demonstration of Dandekar's sin. He has his selfish objectives fulfilled but stands spiritually humbled. His own wife drives this point home to him:

"Because there were those who wanted him to go," she answered him directly, yet gently enough. "Because his presence caused controversy, and he wanted to end it. And after all he was not like us, he had no attachments to keep him in this or that place [;] . . . it was the people about him that formed an attachment to him though it was against all his teaching."

At that moment, if it had been in Dandekar's power to bring the Swamy back, he would have done it. (p. 216)

When the dwarf insultingly flings down the silverware which Dandekar's wife had donated to the *ashrama*, Dandekar is at the last too ashamed to pick it up. He walks away. He has won a fight but lost a battle. The overall significance of the story attesting to the *real* victory of the spirit is brought out at the end of the novel in a dialogue between Dandekar and his wife:

"You will be cured. Even without him, even though I know you haven't much faith in hospitals. I know you will."

"I know," she answered. "He said I would be, and not to hold back when the time came. I'm not afraid now of knives or doctors, or what they may do. All will be well. He said so."

Her face was confident, serene. He's achieved the impossible. Dandekar thought: . . . He has done what I couldn't do. So I am to be humbled: beholden once more to this man of all others." (p. 218)

Possession, like *A Silence*, is a novel which affirms the supremacy of spiritual powers over the temptations of material forces. There is considerable suffering in the story, and death figures as an important theme. Two characters in this story, Lady Caroline and the boy prodigy, Valmiki, are subjected to varied sufferings. The troubles of Caroline stem from her excessive erotic desire. A rich woman, not lacking anything, full of pride and patronizing spirit, with an insatiable thirst for sexual satisfaction, she acquires and loses a talented boy. Her material instinct clashes with the spiritual pursuit of the Swamy and she suffers a checkmate. Implicit in her birth, breeding and character is the fact that she cannot accept defeat gracefully even when her adversary is a spiritual figure, and therefore she becomes at the end of the story a lonely figure, striking a discordant note on the solitary peaceful hills.

Valmiki's sufferings are even greater. His is the life of a boy whom temptations lead astray and who returns to a life of serenity and tranquility after a chastening cycle of experiences. Like the youngest disciple of Thompson's story, who goes away from the Lord Buddha, becomes en-

tangled in a passionate attachment to a girl and finally returns to the Lord now confirmed in his ascetic pursuits,⁹ Valmiki leaves the Swamy, indulges in carnal pleasures and returns to the Swamy better able to pursue his spiritual life with a steady mind. The youngest disciple has now burnt away all his impurities and is ready for acceptance by the assembly. Likewise Valmiki undergoes the experiences of being allured by the glittering world of passion and possession, finally finding true happiness in self-abnegation and non-possession.

But in the face of suffering and death, especially in the face of death, in this story, there is no flinching on the part of the characters. Death holds no terror for them. Part of the explanation for this lack of terror comes from a realistic attitude toward death and part from the fact that this story is instinct with the thoughts of the triumph of the spirit. Flitting through the story is the figure of the Swamy, almost imperceptible but not unfelt, elusive yet very real. The Swamy is the symbol of the spirit and its victory over the physical aspect of life, its lure and its temptations. He is the spiritual *guru* of Valmiki, in whom is mirrored the conquest of passion in life, the greatest conquest of all. He embodies after a fashion the great Bhagavad-Gita teaching of non-attachment. Strictly speaking, he manifests in himself detachment rather than non-attachment. For the Swamy is not an anchorite but an ascetic. The narrator describes him in these words:

The true Indian ascetic — and in my mind I had no doubt the Swamy was one — is not a parish priest, a missionary, a revivalist, concerned with keeping tabs on a human being to plot his spiritual progress. His whole aim is to achieve detachment from the world: and even if the Swamy could not completely master his heart, it seemed unlikely he would seek to continue an earthly attachment by letter-writing. There are, however, exceptions: and perhaps, I reasoned, the Swamy was one, unable to snuff out all feeling for the boy despite the austere demands of his creed. But it was oddly disquieting — like seeing a meaningless jumble of lines, where one had expected a clear picture. (p. 61)

When Valmiki goes abroad, the Swamy's interest remains unabated. The narrator remarks on his continued interest in the boy:

Valmiki's attachment to the Swamy seemed undiminished, if less emotional than when he had been a child. It was to some extent certainly reciprocated; and perhaps it was his human tie, tenuous though it was, that had led the Swamy to forsake his isolated life in the realization that he was yet unready to meet its austere demands. Yet the link had been slight, or severely controlled. (p. 140)

The Swamy himself is sure of the spiritual power's asserting itself in Valmiki eventually, and he assures Anasuya, the narrator, that it will be so:

"He came to me as a child," he said. "He was my disciple, during the formative years. Nothing will touch that. Where other men despair, he will turn to God, unlikely though it seems to you now." (p. 98)

When Anasuya sees him first on the hills in his posture of meditation, she is convinced that he is an authentic type of Swamy:

He was deep in meditation when we came, a thin, muscular figure with not an ounce of spare flesh anywhere, not a stitch of clothing on his body, a man probably of middle years, though he looked younger; in a meditation so deep that his closed eyelids did not so much as pucker, his pose alter by a fraction of an inch, at our noisy approach. (p. 28)

In the true spirit of a real ascetic he is humble, and at one time he even admits that he may have made a mistake (p. 98). Not only do the few inhabitants of the isolated hills look up to him but even the city people, for he brings peace and tranquility to them. "They craved tranquility," says the narrator, "he embodied it: the two had come together" (p. 97). In all this portrayal of the holy man of India, Markandeya is not only accurate but trying to uphold the right image of an Indian holy man, who without losing his human touch still remains a detached man, an image removed from the constantly seen fakes but distantly modelled on the ideal of the ancient past.

Caroline is the antithesis of the spirit for which the Swamy stands. She is the impassioned expression of all that the life of the Swamy negates. At first she ignores him, then gradually realizes that he is a sort of competitor for the boy's allegiance and finally looks upon him as her true adversary (p. 101). For the hills and the life on the hills, she has nothing but contempt. She thinks the hills are not the place for Valmiki and they cannot keep him long:

"Do you think," she said furiously, "you can keep him here with your cant forever? Hold him, keep him, exploit him like this?"

"Not for ever," [the Swamy] answered. "It is a lesson we all in time have to learn. But now he is at peace, and satisfied." (pp. 223-24)

She then declares that she will come back and claim Valmiki from the Swamy, who now becomes troubled. It is a tantalizing duel between the relentless, though hopeless, pursuit of the flesh by Caroline and the compassionate concern and philosophic detachment of the Swamy.

As for the boy, Valmiki, he has no serenity of mind or tranquility of spirit until he returns to the hills. Till then he is caught in a whirlpool of emotions and passions. When he finally returns to the abode on the hills, nothing touches him but what is truly the radiance of the inner spirit. The same soft hands that gave him pleasure before and excited his imagination no longer arouse those sensations when at the end Caroline touches him. Had he not gone through the experiences of the world, his mind would have, in all probability, reverted to the passions of life, like a fly to a pot of jam. A reformed sinner makes a better saint than an untouched anchorite. This novel lacks the moving power of *Nectar* but it affirms in artistic terms that wealth does not bring inner quiet, the happiness of the inner spirit. Lady Caroline is at the end still a woman in search of peace and happiness. She never grows up in the real sense of the term, never really reaches a higher level of understanding. She has no contentment unlike, for example, Rukmani of *Nectar*, who has come to acquire,

at the end of all her tragic experiences, a fuller and deeper understanding of life and its value. But the sense of philosophic realization that within the bounds of moral government and with one's own faith in life a man must find happiness never deserts Rukmani.

Implicit in the story of the boy's undying inspiration for his artistic work while on the hills is the transparent thought that creative talent is to be used in the service of the divine and not for pandering to the gazing public or for wealth, which cannot buy peace of mind or harmony of the spirit. To the boy, Valmiki, art is an expression of the divine gift to be returned to God in an appropriate manner and not a commercial product designed for the acquisition of wealth or fame. The external, elemental world on the isolated hills for all its appearances is a blissful source of divine inspiration to the boy. But it is inchoate, bewildering and disturbing to a casual observer and a careless intruder. To live there without putting oneself above that part of God's creation is true humility. It is this experience that enables Valmiki to find artistic expression readily and to find peace within himself — to be at peace with himself. What he gets when he is with Caroline — and from Caroline — is no more than the satisfaction of the cravings of the flesh, an answer to the daily needs of life and its physical comforts. When he is with her, he is unable for some time to get inspiration to continue his work. Valmiki comes to realize the vanity of wealth and the inanity of fame. While one may take possession of another, no one can take possession of another's true inner spirit. No one has taken possession of the Swamy, the true embodiment of the inner spirit, who has the peculiar gift of enabling one to find oneself. He owns no one and has no attachments, though even he is somewhat troubled at the end. However, with him come peace and order.

Possession ends on a note of the triumph of the spirit; it shows that the happiness of the spirit is to be found on the solitary hills and inhospitable wilderness — solitary to

those who seek poetry, romance and excitement in life and inhospitable to those who instinctively turn to the crowds, glamour, and the lure of the cities. It is the story of the supremacy of renunciation over possession, of the spirit over the flesh, and of spiritual happiness over material success as much as it is a veiled political allegory. Our residual impression of it all is that with poverty and renunciation come true wisdom and spiritual understanding.

The other religious element that appears in Markandaya's fiction is that of Christianity. There is nothing to suggest that its treatment is anything more than routine, though accurate in its reflection of the actual society. Christianity is not a major religion of India, and most Indian Christians are local inhabitants whose forbears or who themselves were converted, often from the lower caste groups and the untouchables, and who exhibit in their religious practices something of the Hindu influence. Markandaya herself remains strictly neutral except for giving to her characters such words as we ourselves would use, if we were in the position of the characters, in commenting on other religious groups. Sometimes the comments concern the moral habits, daily customs and traits of cleanliness, and at other times the differing religious beliefs.

Although like all other great religions of the world, Christianity was also born in the East (or the Middle East), it has been regarded, more often than not, as a Western religion, and in *Some Inner Fury* it is a symbol of the West. In this novel one character is a Christian missionary named Hickey, and like any other missionary he has the desire to spread his religion. As such, he is not on the best of terms with some other characters in the story, such as Govind, who represents the renascent Hindu movement at a time when the country is fighting for its independence from the West. The missionary therefore excites Govind's hostility:

To him [Govind] missionaries were not merely men who assaulted the religion which was his, though he might not cherish it, impugning its austere dignities in a hundred

ways; they were also white men, who not only set up their alien and unwanted institutions in the land but who, for the preservation of these institutions, invariably sided with those other white men who ruled the country, with whom otherwise they had little in common. (p. 149)

Even Oxford-educated Kit dislikes the missionary, though for different reasons. "But Kit's dislike," says the narrator, "was to some extent superficial: it was more instinctive than reasoned out. To him missionaries were impossibly earnest people who belonged to a class one simply did not mix with, whose peculiar beliefs and habits were beyond comprehending" (p. 149). Hickey is also a social worker and to that extent he is tolerated, and Premala, the gentle character of the novel, demonstrates this acceptance when she volunteers to work at the school run by Hickey. The narrator, a rich brahmin girl, also exhibits a sympathetic and thoughtful attitude toward the missionaries:

What was [Hickey]? A man toiling among people not his own, in a country not his own, for the good as he saw it and for a reward which most men, so far from envying, looked at with pitying if not scornful eyes. (p. 150)

The author obviously goes a step further and depicts the extreme tolerance of Hinduism when she makes the dying Permalla, a brahmin girl, confess Govind's affection for her to the missionary, a totally strange thing for a brahmin, and a step out of the normal Hindu tradition.

Again in *A Handful of Rice* there are brief references to Indian Christians and Christianity. In this novel, as in real life, Christianity, a symbol of the West, coexists with the East without evoking hostility. Ravi, the central character of the novel, recalls what his father had told him about the Christians, and the father and son represent the views of the lower class and lower caste of the Hindu society, of which they are a part:

On the other hand, his father had held that Christians were good people, and good people were God's neighbours; but then he — Ravi's father — was going by the only one he knew, the missionary doctor who had tried so hard to help their family. Perhaps they were good people,

thought Ravi judiciously, and he told himself there were good and bad in all kinds. (pp. 99-100)

There is another view also, as held by Damodar:

[Ravi] had, of course [noticed the crosses], but he had not attached much religious significance to them. Christianity meant little to him, impinging hardly at all on his life. Damodar said it was a spent religion, not only in India where people thought it a bit peculiar, but all over the world because it shied away from a contemplation of the immensities of the universe to preoccupy itself with the trivialities of behaviour in this world. It had, besides, according to Damodar, tied itself up in knots what with its leaders contradicting each other about what things really meant and having to tinker with truths which they had once treated as gospel. (p. 99)

An interesting thing is the pervasive influence of Hinduism on all in India, and we see evidence of it on Christian rites and rituals, which become modified by Hindu customs. Thus, a procession of the images of Christ and St. Mary is taken out by the Indian Christians just as the Hindus take out the procession of the images of the Hindu gods on certain religious days. Thangam and Ravi, among others, are impressed and moved by the religious procession (p. 99). The author goes on to give a detailed description of the procession:

The waving palms had passed, the bearers of the crosses, the musicians, the torch-bearers. Now came a group of women, dressed all in white, each carrying a candle. . . . Ravi took them for nuns at first; then he saw they were young girls dressed in white saris, with veils over their heads held by circlets of flowers. . . . The crowd fell silent. No movement, no sound except the soft foot-falls . . . and a sense of exaltation that was suddenly among them all. . . .

At first Ravi was aware only of a radiance, a shimmering radiance that seemed to pour from a central point. . . . Out of it the vision grew, set on a shining orb, drawing every star-point of light, the magically evoked statue of the Virgin Mary. He did not know, but the murmurs floated up. The Holy Virgin. Blessed Mary, Mother of God. Our Lady of Compassion. Serenely borne above the heads of the crowd in a glass palanquin, moving in an aureole of light, a shining halo about her and about the Child she bore in her arms.

Ravi leaned closer. . . . Beautiful mother, lovely child. . . .

"How well they are made! So life-like, who would believe they were not real!" . . .

They listened respectfully, awed, exalted by the majesty of the symbolism. The fall, the ascension: it was the divine cycle, familiar to Ravi from his own religion. . . . For there was in the religious lexicon of his village a variation of this ceremony.

God, Heaven . . . it was all so vast it created in him a longing for what he did not know. He sighed, and felt his soul empty as he watched the procession pass. . . . The glittering palanquin, the beautiful Madonna and Child, were already beyond his line of vision. (pp. 100-101)

Two Virgins makes a clear departure from the other novels of Miss Markandaya in the matter of the treatment of religion. In this story, she neither carefully omits all reference to religion nor does she introduce special symbols of ancient Indian tradition representing its spiritual strength. It is also interesting to note the increased attention paid to Christianity in this story. Religion appears in the novel merely as a part of everyday life, and certain religious customs and habits are brought to our knowledge as a result of the interaction of the Hindu and Christian characters. The novel also shows that each group has its own notion about the other. In a rigidly non-interfering multi-religious society misconceptions about each other are not uncommon. In all these, there is a truthful representation of contemporary Indian society. Nevertheless, Markandaya takes care not to throw in any clue about the caste of the Hindu family around whom the story is largely built. In today's professedly socialistic and secular India, it is almost impolite to ask about anyone's caste.

The Hindu element of the novel is seen in the picture of the daily life of a Hindu family. A reader becomes aware of some superstitions, belief in rebirth (pp. 18, 20), temple worship and prayers (pp. 29, 32, 34, 233 and 239), making vows (pp. 111, 133), and food restrictions, such as not eating meat. There are references to Hindu gods or pictures of their images (pp. 111, 175 and 202) and, for the first time in Miss Markandaya's fiction, a reference to the famous Hindu belief in *karma* (p. 39). We have also instances of Amma taking pride in Hinduism (p. 139) and Appa criticizing the joint family (p. 122).

In this novel Hinduism comes in contact with Christianity on such occasions as when Appa and Amma meet their daughter Lalitha's teacher, Miss Mendoza, an Indian Christian. We also get some idea of how an average Hindu looks at Christianity. To Amma it is a "curious" religion (p. 14), and Lalitha realizes that the Church collects "gifts" even as the temple does from the devotees. Hinduism has obviously had its influence on the Christians of India; for example, Miss Mendoza has pictures of the image of Christ in her house (p. 207) copying the Hindu custom. There are references, too, to some of the customs and practices of the Christians, such as Miss Mendoza's making a symbol of the cross with her hands when the storm threatens (pp. 96-97), and to transubstantiation (p. 206). Western habits of using forks and knives and of cleanliness are identified with the Christian Mendoza (p. 189). There are also occasions when some of the differences between Hinduism and Christianity are brought to light. At times a Hindu character is irritated when another refers to a saying in the Bible (p. 94). Conflicting beliefs are mentioned, such as Miss Mendoza saying that "souls did not enter other bodies. They went straight up to heaven, or down into hell, or were cooped up in purgatory which was an in-between place for doing penance in, but none of this happened until resurrection on the day of the last judgment. At this time a bugle call sounded which woke the dead, who heaved off their tombstones and rose up from their graves" (p. 38). Again, we are told that "in Miss Mendoza's school, which was Christian, they taught that animals were created for men, that God gave man dominion over beasts" (p. 192). Occasionally, a corrective to a hasty Hindu view of Christianity is offered, such as when Appa tells Amma that it is not correct to say that all Europeans lack religion. On the whole, *Two Virgins* presents Hinduism and Christianity as they exist in everyday life in contemporary India. In conclusion, it may be said that while Kamala Markandaya is not a "religious" or "philosophic" writer

she does not totally ignore these aspects of India and that her picture of society as it is makes her a significant documentary Indo-Anglian novelist.

NOTES

¹See, for example, Manmohan Ghose's poem "London," *Songs of Love and Death*, ed. Laurence Binyon (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1926), p. 32, where he pines for the life of England. George Sampson remarked that a reader of Ghose's poems "would readily take them as the work of an English poet trained in the classical tradition": *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, England: The Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 914.

²Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London: Meridian Books, Limited, 1951), Chapter 4. It is especially interesting to note that he approached India "as an alien critic. . . . To some extent I came to her via the West, and looked at her as a friendly westerner might have done," *Ibid.*, p. 34. Considering this and also the fact that he was an agnostic, if not a confirmed atheist, his waxing eloquent about the vedas, upanishads and the epics is noteworthy.

³Anita Desai, *Bye-bye, Blackbird* (Delhi: Hind Pockets, 1970).

⁴See her essay "The Book I Enjoyed Writing Most," *Contemporary Indian Literature*, 13, No. 4 (October-December, 1973), 24.

⁵Kamala Markandaya is the author of the following novels: *Nectar in a Sieve*, 2nd edn. (1954, New York: The John Day Company, 1955); *Some Inner Fury* (1955, New York: The John Day Company, 1956); *A Silence of Desire* (London: Putnam, 1960); *Possession* (London: Putnam, 1963); *A Handful of Rice* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966); *The Coffer Dams* (New York: The John Day Company, 1969); *The Nowhere Man* (New York: The John Day Company, 1972); *Two Virgins* (New York: The John Day Company, 1973).

These texts of the novels are used for the analysis of the selected novels in this paper, and all quotations from them or references to them are identified by page numbers in parentheses following the quotations or the references.

⁶See my essay "Some Notes on the Plots of Kamala Markandaya's Novels," *Indian Literature*, 13 (March, 1970), 102-112, where I have discussed this question at length.

⁷*Nectar in a Sieve*, pp. 68-69.

⁸See, for example, pp. 23, 78 and 79.

⁹Edward J. Thompson, *Youngest Disciple* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1938).

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