



Impact of East-West Cultural Clash on Women Characters of Kamala Markandaya

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Many Indian English writers have been concerned with the East-West theme in their creative endeavours. An accident of history resulted in a long period of British rule in India. As a result, the Indians were exposed to Western culture very closely which would not been possible otherwise. A natural outcome of this situation was a constant comparison between the two cultures. Sarath Kumar Ghose wrote a novel, 'The Prince of Destiny' in 1909. The novel is about an Indian princess. This was perhaps the beginning of the East-West theme and since then a number of writers have written novels and stories on the theme.

E.M. Forster's A Passage to India is also based on the cultural differences that exist between the two cultures. In the novel, Dr. Aziz, an Indian is a good friend of Cyril Fielding, an Englishman who is the Principal of Chandraporecollege. Aziz is accused of raping Miss Adela Quested in the Marabar Caves. Fielding knows very well that his friend is innocent and stands strongly by Dr. Aziz. In the existing political situation. Fielding realizes that they cannot be socially equal. He regrets,

“...socially they had no meeting place. He had thrown in his lot with Anglo-India by marrying a country woman, and he was acquiring some of its limitations, and already felt surprise at his own past heroism. Would he today defy all his own people for the sake of a stray Indian? Aziz was a momento, a trophy, they were proud of each other, yet they must inevitably part”¹.

Thus they can be friends as two individuals but socially, culturally, they are poles apart and hence a lasting personal relationship is not possible.

Kamala Markandaya, an accomplished writer of Indian origin won international fame and recognition with the publication of her very first novel, Nectar in a Sieve. Apart from dealing with themes of Alienation, Rootlessness, Hunger, Poverty, she also wrote on East-West encounter, with an insider's knowledge. The East-West conflict, clash of culture and social and moral values are presented by her from a first hand experience. Her knowledge of the West is as much as that of the East. She well understands the strengths and the weaknesses of both the cultures. She knows that the East and the West can never meet because of cultural differences. C.D. Narasimhaiah, too believed that her novels reflect her 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. Uma Parameswaram wrote,

“For the un-Anglicized Indian she has the affinity of sympathy; for the British in India she has affinity of association; for the Anglicized Indian she has the affinity of personal knowledge and identification.”²