



## East West Encounter in Kamalamarkandaya's Selected Novels

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### ABSTRACT

*East-West Relationship is the major theme in all the novels of Kamala Markandaya. The Cultural and Religious differences can be overcome if the persons involved were prepared to give up their angularities for the sake of mutual love and happiness. She points out clearly how the east and west would always remain poles apart but the paper explains that is possible with compromise.*

### Keywords :

The dictum of the author Kamala Markandaya in the Possession is a failure of a harmonious meeting of the east and west is inevitable. This incompatibility arises due to the egoistic and self-centered personality like Caroline. Likelihood of East-West meeting is achieved, through the tolerance and temperance of the characters, even though society poses the greatest threat to their union. However, in possession society plays an insignificant part and there is adequate room for the meeting and merging of the east and the west, but yet remains an illusion due to characters like Caroline.

As in Possession, in Some Inner Fury and in Nowhereman the East and West do not meet, but the author does not indicate that they cannot come together at all. Even in these three novels, there are instances of cordial relationship between the East and the West. In Some Inner Fury for example, the lovers Mira and Richard are united by their transcending love for each other. Though they belong to different cultures and different classes- the ruler and the ruled, their love stands unaffected. This is possible due to mutual sacrifice and tolerance. The forces responsible for their final separation were not within themselves but created by the society. The political fanatics forcibly separate the lovers, but the lovers continue to remain united in their mind and soul. This is evident from Mira's recollection of her past, holding in her hand, as a relic, the torn shirt sleeve of Richard. Similarly in Nowhereman the West is extremely harsh towards the East. The racial fanatics led by Fred fletches make the life of Srinivas miserable. The extreme tolerance shown by Srinivas even when he is insulted and injured shocks us. Here again society is solely or partly responsible for preventing the meeting of the East and the West. Indian authors attempting this theme have emphasized the antagonism existing between them, the gulf which separates individuals belonging of different societies. As Kamala Markandaya shows us, it is not only the cultural differences which bring about alienation but also society itself, its economic and concomitant social structure to which culture values are related dialectically and not independently, are equally responsible.

But in possession it is not society that is responsible for the strained relationship. Polarity is in-built in the character of both Caroline and Valmiki, one arises for the life of the spirit; whereas the other completely ignores it. Nonetheless Valmiki is patient and ready to make sacrifice in the beginning. He leaves behind his home, his family members and the Swamiji. He is very patient adjustable and takes every step to adapt him and make him acceptable to the Western society. He even begins to learn English and imitate English manners. He is happy with other Westerners like Mrs. Peaboy, Ellie and Annabel. But Caroline's impolite behavior and fraudulent tactics test Val. The series of quarrels between

Valmiki and Caroline are due to the self-righteousness of the pompous Caroline; nonetheless they serve as eye-openers of Val's spiritual rejuvenation.

So only some individuals like Caroline with eccentric qualities spoil the harmonious existence of East-West completely. On the other hand, Kamala Markandaya does not rule out the possibility of the east and the West existing together. She proves beyond doubt that such a relationship is possible if the Easterners and the Westerners understand each other and show a spirit of tolerance. As Joad observes while talking of modern civilization, co-existence of nations is possible only when tolerance is practiced. Possession ends with Valmiki's return to the village. But Caroline is optimistic and hopeful of winning Val back. Caroline's optimistic echoes,

"One day he will want to be mine again  
I shall take care to make him want me  
Again and that day I shall come  
Back to claim him... of course it will come"

reveal the author's hope that the East and the West can come together though they do not directly do so in this novel.

Besides this, in almost all the novels of Kamala Markandaya, there is always a character, either British or Indian who strikes a common note and proves to be a successful combination of East and West like Kenny in Nectar in a Sieve, Roshan in Some Inner Fury, Mrs. Pickering in Nowhereman and Anasuya in Possession. They show the spirit of tolerance. Dr. Kenny, a missionary is all love for peasants in the village. The villagers go to him seeking help. Roshan is loved and respected both by the English and the Indians. Mrs. Pickering loves Srinivas and lives under his roof. And Anasuya serves as a bridge between the East and the West. These amiable Indian and English characters prove that a cordial relationship is always possible between the East and the West. Through Possession, Kamala Markandaya proves that the eccentric qualities of an individual add to the already existing differences in Culture and religion and thus mark the relationship beyond redemption.

Kipling's proverbial statement declares:  
"Oh East is East, and West is West, and never  
The twin shall meet.  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's  
Great judgment seat;  
But there is neither East nor West, Border,  
Nor Breed, nor Birth,  
When two men stand face to face, though  
They come from the ends of the earth"

But Kamala Markandaya has proved with the help of these characters who stroke a common note that a blend of the twin cultures and co-existence of the east and the West is always possible, when the individuals concerned are prepared to sacrifice their idiosyncrasies for mutual benefit, unlike Caroline and Valmiki with fundamentally different qualities and vastly differing aims.

#### REFERENCES

1. Kipling Rudyard. 1946. Verse. Definitive edn. New York: Garden City. P233. 2. Iyer V.R.Krishna.1979. Law and Life.New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House.