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Tradition and Chance in the Indo-Anglican Novels of the Post-Independence Era

Margaret Lindley Koch

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TRADITION AND CHANGE IN THE INDO-ANGRICAN NOVELS
OF THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

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In Partial Fulfillment
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by
Margaret Lindley Koch
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OF THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

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TRADITION AND CHANGE IN THE INDO-ANGLICAN NOVELS
OF THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Margaret Linley Koch. December 1974 140 pages

Directed by: Donald R. Tuck

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The theme of the conflict of old and new, tradition and modernity, east and west in contemporary India has been a major concern of many Indo-Anglican novelists of the post-independence era. This study focuses on the reactions of various authors to this theme, as expressed by their treatment of it in the novels.

Four particular aspects of the theme which are explored in the novels, the fate of the family, economic upheaval, a questioning of religion, and the impact of the conflict on the individual person, are discussed.

Three reactions to the tension facing contemporary India are expressed by the novelists. First, a significant number of the authors reflect the attitude that all which is good in life is encompassed within the tradition. A second reaction which is developed in several novels is an acknowledgment that there is something to be gained from the interaction of the seemingly opposing forces. The third reaction is a sense of impotence, and is expressed with two different emphases. For certain authors the impotence suggests a helpless individual caught between the destructive force of change. But the seeming helplessness of the individual is also portrayed as a wise relaxation to the forces of life which will themselves resolve the conflicts.

In the first chapter, the challenges to the family expressed in the novels are explored with an emphasis on the potential disintegration. The threat of the idea of romantic love, the role of the joint family and,
finally, Nayantara Sahgal's unique view. The changing economic attitude are explored in Chapter 2. Sudhin Ghose's romantic approach is shown in contrast to the works of realistists such as Kamala Markandaya and Bhabani Bhattacharya, who treat the difficulties of the individuals trapped in the changes and a society looking for a solution. In Chapter 3 the conflict expressed in several novels between the traditional religious view of life and the emerging secular view of life is explored. The reaction of three novelists to the idea of Hinduism as a religion which rejects the concerns of this world, and focuses rather on spiritual concerns, are also discussed. Finally, the last chapter deals with an often repeated theme, the crisis of personal identity created by the meeting of cultures.
INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Indian society finds itself caught between the pull of a four thousand year old heritage and the pressures for change presented through contact with modern, western culture. As one of the largest of the developing nations, as a free society welcoming the exchange of ideas, and as a democracy attempting to negotiate a settlement with the pressures of the technocratic, modern world, India is open to a myriad of stresses which seem paradoxically to offer hope and threaten destruction. These pressures on India's culture have found expression in the works of the Indo-Anglican novelists written since independence. Nine different authors in one or more books have treated as a major thematic concern traditional Indian society in conflict with the new, the modern, or the western. In the various treatments of the theme are reflected the attempts of several respected artists to give order and meaning to the changes they have experienced around and within them.

The Indo-Anglican writers, with the one notable exception of M. K. Narayan, all spent at least their university years abroad, experiencing first hand the interaction of Indian and western cultures. The very fact that they are Indians writing in English suggests the lengthy, historical interaction of cultures in India. The double base of these writers might be expected to give them double authority or appeal. How-

ever, as K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar notes, the fact that an Indian wrote in English has long meant that his writing was held suspect.1 On the one side, the Indian nationalist has tended to think that Indo-Anglican literature is not—and never could be—as good as indigenous Bengali or Tamil literature. On the other hand, the English critic has felt that an Indian could never create in English a literature which would meet the standards of English literature. Only recently, beginning in 1962 with the publication of Professor Iyengar's large and detailed survey, has the acceptance of Indian writing in English been widespread. The Writer's Workshop of Calcutta has done a great deal to place this writing before both the reading public in India and scholars abroad through its Journal, Writer's Workshop Miscellany.2 Since the publication of Dorothy Spencer's annotated bibliography in 1960, called Indian Fiction in English, a number of critical works have been written. M. E. Derrett's master's thesis submitted to the London University, The Modern Indian Novel in English: A Comparative Approach has been published by de L'institut de sociologie of Brussels. Both Indian Writing in English by David McClutchion and Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English by C. F. Verghese explore the difficulties and successes of the Indo-Anglican novelists. Most recently, Meenakshi Mukherjee has produced an excellent study, The Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English. In addition to these book-length studies, two collections of critical essays have been compiled by two of India's most able critics, G. D. Narasimhaiah and M. K. Naik: Fiction and the Reading Public and


Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English. Such studies have begun to establish a place for Indo-Anglican fiction in the Indian national literature beside the works of authors writing in the regional languages.

The term Indo-Anglican, first brought to general usage by Professor Iyengar, was applied to Indians who wrote in English, without respect to the origin of the writer's exposure to the language—America, England, South America or India itself. Dorothy Spencer in her work Indian Fiction in English, used the term more broadly, bringing together without distinction the novels about India in English by Indians, non-Indians, and in translation from the regional Indian languages. This is an indiscriminate use of the term Indo-Anglican and not used in this thesis. In more recent works, the Indo-Anglican novel has been limited to Professor Iyengar's definition and treated as a unique, Indian contribution to fiction. Sujit Mulherjee, author of an "essay on definition" in M. K. Naik's recent collection of critical essays, states that "today the term 'Indo-Anglican' is more or less accepted without further dispute as descriptive of original literary creations in the English language by Indians."¹ This definition of 'Indo-Anglican' will be the meaning of the term as it is applied in this paper.

In the last hundred years, the Indo-Anglican novel has given expression to some of the great concerns of modern India. Professor Iyengar notes three stages of the Indo-Anglican novel in pre-Independence India.² Before the turn of the century, the recurrent theme seemed to be how to restore the national respect, ground down by the British presence

²Iyengar, Indian Writing in English, p. 317.
in India. The poet Rabindranath Tagore dominated the literary scene in the years around the turn of the century. The theme most often treated in this period was how to establish harmony between the east and the west. The third stage, often described as the "Heroic Age," embodied in fiction the ideals of the Gandhian age. These writers were concerned with the need for social reform and refused to accept India uncritically as she was. The tendency in this period was to oversimplify and picture India as a monolithic structure standing against the oppressive foreign invader.

Since independence, Indo-Anglican fiction has taken a different turn. First, the ideology of the Gandhian era which pressed novelists toward a crusading stance, has been exchanged for more individualistic approaches to the problems of the Indian social scene. As in the political arena, the monolithic picture of India collapsed with the withdrawal of Great Britain, the literature has also reflected a more pluralistic and realistic picture of India. The contradictions which exist within India have been opened in this period to analysis in the literature.

A theme which dominates Indo-Anglican fiction of the post-independence era is the tension and conflict between old and new, tradition and modernity, east and west. This paper is not concerned with the defining of dichotomies. Only the perceptions and definitions of threats challenging India and forcing her to change which grew out of the specific novels that reflect the issues will be discussed. There can be no doubt, however, that traditional Indian society is encountering aspects of an alien tradition which challenge a reevaluation of society and an attempt to understand what may be gained by change and what must be retained out of the past. The social matrix of conflicting values and contradictory elements of cultures creates, especially for the individual who has travelled abroad, a struggle to determine personal identity.
The Indo-Anglican novelists of our chosen period have reflected these struggles in the themes of their novels. David McCutcheon calls the conflict of old and new, of east and west "the major theme of this literature."¹ C. P. Verghese notes:

India has undergone profound changes while seeking simultaneously to form and preserve a sense of identity. The dynamics of her contemporary evolution vis-a-vis her traditions, and the realities of her modern life naturally are reflected in the novels written in modern India. Consequently, the Indian novelist faces the problem of giving artistic expression to the effect of economic changes and industrialization on the community, the class structure, the old relations among occupations and professions and above all on the family ties.²

M. E. Derrett suggests in her work that the choice and treatment of this theme in the recent Indo-Anglican fiction is particularly revealing and that the theme of the wanderer returning home, treated in this study under "personal identity," itself merits a special study.³

This work proposes, then, to study the novels of the Indo-Anglican authors, written since independence, which have treated as a major thematic concern, India in conflict or tension with modern, western culture. It is the goal of the novelist to create an imagined world which reflects with truth the realities of existence. Though the novel has no tradition of precise literary rules, it has developed as a form which attempts to extend men's sympathies by freshly revealing the commonplace.⁴ It is an

art which recreates the vividness of shared experience. A novel, if it is successful, is an attempt to make sense of experience, to understand how meaning can be created from the forces of life.¹ At its best, a novel gives a new vision of reality.

Phillip Stevick has noted in his definition of the novel that western novels have "expressed, criticised or ministered to" the particular social and intellectual concerns of the culture out of which they grew.² This is also true of many Indian novels written in English in the post-independence era. Each writer we are concerned with expresses an overriding concern with the forces shaping his own culture. Their novels are attempts to create the feel of these tensions and, in their thematic treatment, to suggest meaning and structure which can develop out of this experience. Bhabani Bhattacharya has expressed his view of fiction in which he says "the problem is to create the semblance of life, the illusion of truth. In fiction, truth alone counts."³ Bhattacharya believes art must grow out of the concerns of society. He is interested in using the material of India's contemporary history in fiction, suggesting that "it would be appropriate for a novelist to raise the spiritual values of the five-year plans the basis of his theme."⁴ The writing of Kamala Markandaya and Sayantara Sahgal especially aspire to social realism. But even Suchin Bose's romances are bound up in the issues

confronting contemporary India. Balachandra Rajan, a noted Milton

critic who has also tried his hand as a novelist, comments in an article

on Indo-Anglican literature that the role of the artist is definition.1

The artist is a "maker of meaning." The Indo-Anglican writers are, he

feels, uniquely suited to capturing the clashes which challenge India:

The question to be answered is whether the Indian tradition,

with its capacity for assimilation and its unique power of

synthesis, can come to terms with the new (and the new is

inevitable) without deep erosion in its fundamental character.

In creating an image of this challenge there is perhaps a part

to be played by the men of mixed sensibilities caught in the

cross fires whose mind is a microcosm of what he seeks to

convey.2

The very choice of the theme of change by so many novelists suggests

their concern with reflecting the truth of the world in which they live

and attempting to bring order to it.

To say that the novelists dealt with in this paper are concerned

with creating illusions of reality which ring with truth in the minds of

their readers is not to say that they all succeed. The artistic failures

do not usually grow out of what might seem to be the obvious difficulty,

an Indian writing in English. Certainly the pedestrian prose of Nayantara

Sahgal often leaves a good bit to be desired. Several other writers have,

however, forged a use of English which effectively conveys a full range

of tone. Narayan's dry, comic prose carries the subtle contradictions

which infest life. The lyrical English of Sudhin Ghose captures the depth

of the richest myth and the blue billowing of the Indian sky. The fact

is, the failures of the Indo-Anglican novelist often grow out of the

very theme he feels compelled to treat—India confronted by an alien

world view. This is a powerful theme, well worth the challenge of treat-


2Ibid., p. 91.
ment. But to sustain an understanding and appreciation of the dialectic in one's mind between the Indian tradition and the challenges facing it is a demanding task. The theme almost defies adequate treatment because of the breadth and depth of understanding demanded. With certain emphases, more success has been achieved than with others. It seems, perhaps because fewer passions are touched, that the conflicts are more easily articulated when dealing with economics than when the emphasis is personal identity. Therefore more satisfying artistic treatments of the economic facet of the theme have been created. When dealing with personal identity, too many authors have committed artistic suicide by succumbing to nostalgic feelings for their tradition. Nostalgia is not a surprising tendency, and is very significant as we analyze the overall reactions to the theme of change, but in an artistic sense an overwhelming nostalgia is fatal.

Both the development of character and plot in these novels have suffered because it is difficult for the author to maintain a steady gaze. Several critics have noted that most characters in Indo-Anglican fiction are often types—flat and undeveloped.¹ This has often been true because the terms of the conflicts have been perceived in the abstract. Rather than a round character experiencing the good and bad of each culture, the characters have tended to act as functions of the plot. A stereotyped westerner, coming up against an idealized Indian who only finds peace when he has rejected the westerner, is not an unfamiliar structure. All too often, the plot does not grow out of the interaction of characters, ideas and incidents. Rather, the plot seems to be on a track, headed toward a predetermined resolution.

Successful or not, each novel which treats the theme presents a particular perspective which we are interested in considering. Yet while we are not directly concerned here with the artistic success of these writers, their success in creating an illusion of reality has implications for our understanding of their treatment of these. If the novel fails artistically, the reader is left with the feeling of having never grappled with the real issues of life; of having been handed only the simplistic resolution of a tired mind. The fact that the novelist has come to this conclusion is significant for our study. The novel which is artistically successful, however, will not only give the reader the feeling of having lived through the author's struggle, but will also give him the taste of having grappled with facets of the real struggles facing India today. It is not our concern here, either, to hold the novels to the standard of "truly reflecting Indian life." The obsession with "Indianness" has in fact contributed greatly to stock answers suggested in some Indo-Anglican literature.\footnote{McCutchion, Indian Writing in English, pp. 9-11.} What the writer can authentically present is his own experience confronting radically different cultures. Those novels which give the sense of reality will more readily take the reader deeper into the real roots of the struggle than those which fail to convince the reader that the conflicts and resolution do indeed grow out of experienced reality. Therefore, while we are not primarily concerned here with the artistic merit of these works, in a secondary sense we must be aware of the validity of a thematic treatment in any given work.

All of the Indian writers considered in this study are Hindu. Though 80% of the population of India is Hindu, the designation "Indian" includes more than the designation "Hindu." However, as the word
"Indian" is used in the novels by these Hindu writers, Indian culture is equatable with Hindu culture. Therefore when the word "Indian" is used in this study, it will be used in the limited sense of Indian Hindu culture, society and thought.

Within the large theme of the interaction between old and new, tradition and modernity, east and west, four different areas of conflict receive the greatest attention. The four chapters of this study will outline the reactions to the challenges in these four areas. Chapter One will be concerned with the challenges to and changes in the structure of family life. We will consider the threats toward disintegration, the impact of the idea of romantic love, the fate of the joint family and, finally, Nayantara Sahgal's unique emphasis on the importance of the individual person. The subject of Chapter Two will be the impact of economic changes and industrialization. Here we will consider first the changes in attitudes toward economics expressed in the novels. This will be followed by an exploration of Sudhin Ghose's romantic, anti-progressive views, and the portrayal of individuals caught in changes which are beyond their control and of the potential and effects of suggested economic "solutions" to India's economic problems. In Chapter Three, the focus will be religion. In the novelists' consideration of this facet of the larger theme, two concerns emerge which will be treated in this study. First, there is a sense of conflict between the traditional religious view of life and an emerging secular view. Secondly, there is a concern with the idea of Hinduism as a religion which encourages a rejection of the concerns of this world. The Fourth Chapter will deal with the crisis in personal identity which is the result of the clash of cultures. This aspect of the theme is usually treated in terms of a wanderer returning home to India. We will con-
consider first two works which are unique in the fact that the main character does not solve his identity crisis by melting back into the Indian tradition, Music for Mohini by Bhabani Bhattacharya and Seasons of Jupiter by Anand Lal. The other four novels which center on this theme, Kamala Markandaya's Possession, Santha Rama Rau's Remember the House, Balachandra Rajan's The Dark Dancer and Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope, all offer a solution which involves a complete return to the demands of the tradition. The first three novels emphasize submission to the society and family, while the fourth sees the tradition in terms of Advaita Vedanta philosophy and calls for a dissolution of the self.

As we work through these four aspects of the chosen theme, three different reactions toward the challenges facing India today will emerge. First, several authors—especially when considering the family, religion and personal identity—react by asserting the validity and completeness of the traditional Indian view. Raja Rao and Sudhin Ghose express this reaction most often and most clearly. Other authors suggest this reaction in specific areas, such as Santha Rama Rau on the family, or Balachandra Rajan on personal identity. The second reaction expressed is a sense of need for interdependence between the new and old, modernity and tradition, and west and east. Bhabani Bhattacharya and Nayantara Sahgal most clearly express attempts to integrate good ideas from all sources. The final reaction may be combined with either of the first two and is very prevalent—a sense of impotence to control the forces of change, either to stop them or to channel them into a creative integration. However, this feeling of impotence may be portrayed as either a positive or negative quality. In Narayan's novels which are dealt with here the individual cannot and, indeed, need not fight the forces which threaten him. Since the cosmos is ordered, it will itself integrate any destructive
elements. In contrast, Kamala Markandaya portrays individuals helplessly caught in conflicts destined to destroy them.

By examining the four areas of challenge—the family, economics, religion and personal identity—this study will reveal those reactions to traditional, Indian society challenged by modern, western culture which are suggested in the post-independence novels of the Indo-Anglican novelists that have chosen the conflict of cultures as a major thematic concern.
CHAPTER ONE

THE FAMILY

Hindu culture has regarded marriage and the establishment of a household as a good and necessary stage in the life of each individual. Since the Vedic period, the belief has held firm that the condition of rebirth is dependent on the balance of good and bad deeds, or karma, accumulated during life. One means of building good karma is to carefully perform one's dharma, "right action," or the fulfillment of one's "appointed place in the nature of things." In the ideal course of life, one would move successively through four stages, or ashramas: the student (brahmanscarin), the householder (grihastha), the hermit (vanapasthya) and the ascetic (sannyasin). Each stage of life presents certain duties, which are opportunities to build good karma. Marriage, then, was the duty of each individual in the second stage of life and was a part of his spiritual progress.

Marriage was also considered normal and compulsory in the society because it was the means of propagation and of perpetuating the family ideal. An Indian family is seen as the link between the living and the dead, which makes the birth of sons to carry on the tradition a necessity. Raja Rao's narrator in The Serpent and the Rope notes, "Marriages are because deaths must be: the end implies a beginning. The fear of extinction is the source of copulation: you make love that the son will

be born—the son who will light your funeral pyre." The family is inviolable, an absolute link with the past and the future, and each of its members must define himself in relation to it. He must consider his personal satisfaction only secondarily, and always within the established family bonds. Joint family living has been the Indian norm, although there have been variations within this standard form. All the sons of a father are responsible to him, as well as for one another; the daughters, given in marriage, are incorporated into the families of their husbands; the filial bonds extend far and hold strong. Around the stages of each member of this body much of the basic Hindu ritual is performed. This has been the traditional Indian concept of marriage and family life.

One of the basic concerns of the writers of Indo-Anglican fiction since independence has been the fate of this traditional family structure. Four approaches to this theme emerge from these novels which will be discussed. First, the introduction of new economic structures and values by foreign contacts are shown by Kamala Markandaya in Nectar in a Sieve and R. K. Narayan in The Vendor of Sweets to cause a disintegration of the family. The second area of concern is the concept of romantic love, which is perceived as particularly threatening new ideas. Santha Rama Rao in Remember the House, Balachandra Rajan in The Dark Dancer and Raja in The Serpent and The Rope have reacted against romantic love which seems to contradict the traditional idea of duty as the basis for marriage. The Joint family, as opposed to the nuclear family, is a third concern explored in the novels of the post-independence period. Kamala Markandaya in A Handful of Rice and Shabani Bhattacharya in Music for Mohini suggest the difficulties of maintaining a joint family in contemporary society.

while showing the desirability of the traditional structure. Nayantara Sahgal in A Time to be Happy and Kamala Markandaya in A Silence of Desire suggest the impact of a breakdown of joint family life on other aspects of Hindu culture. Finally, one writer, in her two most recent novels, presents a unique attitude toward the traditional Indian family challenged by new ideas. Ms. Sahgal is concerned that marriages be built not primarily out of duty, but for the purpose of personal development. In her view, much of the Indian tradition is outworn and must be supplemented by new ideas. We will explore these concerns in order to understand the views of some Indian writers on the changes occurring in the contemporary attitudes toward marriage and family life.

The Threat of Disintegration

Kamala Markandaya in Nectar in a Sieve and R. R. Maran in The Vendor of Sweets both suggest that new pressures in contemporary society will make the preservation of traditional Indian family life difficult. In the first story, new economic forces draw the family apart while in the second, challenging values gained by a youth who has studied and travelled destroy the meaning, if not the form, of family life.

Rukmani, a woman with her life already behind her, relates the story of her marriage to the compassionate, hard-working tenant farmer, Nathan, in Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve. Not long after her marriage, Rukmani gives birth to a daughter, Trinadha, but "the tears came, tears of weakness and disappointment; for what woman wants a girl for her first born?" Nathan for a time ignores the baby, bitter because he needed a

son "to continue his line, and walk beside him on the land."\(^1\) Even more threatening, the years pass and no more children are conceived, in spite of worshipful visits to the temple. Irwaddy is already six years old when Rukmani meets an American doctor who treats her medically and assures her that she is able to bear many children. When the first boy is born, Rukmani's tottering father rides a bullock cart for miles in order to join the whole town, which Nathan has invited to celebrate the good fortune.

Peaceful family life is threatened and soon shaken, however, when a tannery is built in the town. The boys of the village begin to work and earn cash at the tannery. Times become increasingly difficult and Arjun, Rukmani's oldest son, whose real love is books, decides that he must work in the factory if his brothers and sisters are not to go hungry. His mother is shocked. "You are young. Besides you are not of the caste of tanners. What will our relations say?" she asks.\(^2\) But seeing other families which live better because the sons work at the tannery, Arjun disregards family opinion and begins to work. He is soon followed by his younger brother, Thambi.

Within a few years the family has gained economic stability. The workers at the tannery, however, feel they are not receiving enough money for their labors and, as a result of a strike, both Arjun and Thambi lose their jobs. Having experienced the potential of money, they cannot go back to simply working the land with their father. When a call for workers on a tea plantation in Ceylon comes, the two boys leave; they never return. Family solidarity is threatened further when the third

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 20.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 55
son, Muragan, takes a job as a servant in the city. Raja, the fourth son, meets a tragic death when he is caught stealing money and struck with a fatal blow. Anxiety for their welfare and prayers for their protection have not guaranteed them sons to carry on the traditions of the family, nor has hard work on the land forestalled the fragmentation of the family by challenging economic forces. The introduction of a money economy into the village society has placed a pressure on the family with which it could not cope. Too easily, a self-assertive individualism has preempted the older values of family loyalty and continuity.

The book is not unaware of the injustices perpetuated by the old system. Irwaddi, married at fourteen to a promising man from a neighboring village, is brought back five years later because she is barren. The husband, pressured by traditional norms, can wait no longer for an heir. Although this practice is not always followed in Indian society, as, for instance, a Hindu with a barren wife is allowed to take a second wife if he can afford it, the potential for divorce and its consequent abuses is still there. In the context of a changing society, though, Irwaddi's situation is more difficult. Her mother takes her to the doctor who assures her of her potential fertility, renewing Irwaddi's hopes. Her husband by this time, however, has married another wife.

Irwaddi makes the best of her desperate situation by alleviating the poverty of the family in the only way she can, watching her mother's newly born baby starving and knowing that the men from the tannery have money which could be used to feed him, she sells herself. As a result of her prostitution, she gives birth to an albino child for whom there will be no place in society—a child without a family.

1 Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, p. 62.
The injustices of the traditional system are magnified by a situation in which traditional family values are upheld, while new pressures cause the basic structure to crack. The tone of the story is one of resignation. Once the tamary is introduced, who can control its effect? The increasing desire for money, coupled with a new craving for higher social status in the young, can only undermine the family structure which stresses stability, cooperative sharing, and an orientation to the past.

The Vendor of Sweets treats this theme quite differently, though a bleak picture of the future of family life also emerges. Jagan, the widower sweet-vendor, has thoroughly enjoyed spoiling his only son Mali. When Mali drops out of school, suggesting that he wants to be a writer, Jagan reluctantly agrees to allow the adventure. Mali's next craving is for a trip to America, for which Jagan supplies the resources by raiding his savings stored in the attic. Several years pass with only the most meager contact, but Mali finally comes home with what appears to be his Korean-American wife. They take up residence in the house of Mali's father. Jagan is, of course, thrilled to have his first born under his roof again.

The life styles of father and son are, by this time, wholly divergent. Indoor plumbing is installed in Mali's quarters and provisions are made for cooking American food. The differences, however, run much deeper. The son cares nothing for the desires or advice of the father, and rather than forcing his control over the household, the father installs a partition between them. He even begins to tiptoe around his own house, to say his prayers after they have left the house and to speak to his son only when his wife serves as a liaison to beckon Jagan to listen to his son's latest schemes. But his family life deteri-
orates further. His son has never formally married the girl! What has happened to Jagan's life, his home and his son? Under his own roof, his only son is living with a mistress! This is more than Jagan can accommodate. Although he discovers that the girl is to be sent back to America, Jagan decides that his days as a householder are over. It is time for him to retire from the active life of involvement and to devote himself to the spiritual quest.

Narayan catches the tensions of old and young, of parent and child, of American and Indian values. Mali has discarded his father's values concerning home and the family and lives with his father only because it is the cheapest place to live. Marriage, rather than being experienced as a disciplined stage of life, is a convenience into which Mali will step only when he can financially afford it. A basic conflict results because Mali backs away from responsibility. Like Markandaya, Narayan does not want to over-simplify these issues. Jagan is clearly responsible at least in part for spoiling his son. The temptation of escaping to a different setting in order to avoid responsibility and the acquisition of a new set of values from watching American business men at work are the real forces at work in the disintegration of Jagan's family life. Tensions in Indian society on the one hand cause it to make room for Mali although he has rejected some of society's basic tenets. On the other hand, individual Indians who are in contact with Mali are left without a basis for communication with him, since Mali has rejected his family status. Both Narayan and Markandaya present a character from the older generation watching the breakdown of family structure in the younger generation. The concern expressed is that the family cannot hold on to the next generation drawn by the temptations of contemporary society.
Romantic Love

Rukmani's sons, as well as Mali, are drawn away from the traditional family structure by values which have come from contact with conflicting forms of society. The outside idea which several Indo-Anglican authors perceive as the greatest threat to the stability of the family is romantic love, when it becomes the primary basis for marriage. Three books, Remember the House by Santha Rama Rau, The Dark Dancer by Balachandra Rajan and The Serpent and The Rope by Raja Rao, deal specifically with this theme. All three strongly favor the preservation of the traditional reason for marriage, namely, duty. One marries for both social reasons and to enhance personal growth; love is an outgrowth of a long, deepening relationship between the marriage partners.

The young protagonist, Baba, in Remember the House, wrestles with the question of romantic love. At a New Year's party she watches two young Americans gaze seriously into each other's eyes and catches only a few of the tinctillating words exchanged:

"...loving you."
"Oh my darling...."
"A happy New Year to us." ¹

Baba makes friends with Alix and Nicky in the next weeks and catches glimpses of their fast-paced relationship—the mid-afternoon, crooning phone calls to the office, the spats, the making up. Alix discusses her ideas of love with Baba—her old romances, how much in love she and Nicky are, how dearly her parents still love each other. When Baba confesses that she has never been in love, Alix is aghast: "Oh, how sad for you!

I can hardly remember a time when I wasn't in love...”¹ How dull in comparison is Baba's proper and arranged marriage to Hari Joshi!

However, her first contradictory clue that "being in love" may not offer a more satisfying alternative comes at a party on the beach to which Baba has been invited. When Nicky steals a chance to give Baba a salty kiss, she smells his "sweetish, slightly sickening foreign sweat" and wonders what romantic love really means. Later, when Baba tries to solicit a reason from Nicky for his act, all he can do is casually apologize if it "annoyed" her. The much-flaunted "romantic love" seems to involve neither commitment nor loyalty. Whereas it seemed from a distance that individual persons were important in the western ideal of love, Baba begins to wonder if "romance" is not an excuse for a selfish pursuit of fleeting whims.

Baba, full of mixed feelings about "love", leaves the city to visit her mother who is studying with a guru in the south. While there, a young teacher comes to visit regularly and she is able to read out of every sentence suggestions of romantic love, carefully veiled, however, because of her grandmother's presence. Baba falls in love. He discusses his teaching with her--its psychological rewards, and meagre financial returns. Baba muses, "It might be fun. "Trying to Make ends Meet, (sic) as It's usually described." Krishnan's roots, however, are more firmly placed in the reality of economics, "Fun?...Poverty isn't fun, you know."² As the time nears when Baba is to leave, she anticipates that he will ask her to marry him. Instead, he informs her that he has to go to Madras soon because his marriage has finally been arranged.

¹Ibid., p. 48.
²Ibid., p. 165.
Baba's grandmother presents an opposing alternative to this harrowing search "to be in love" which Baba has been conducting.

It [love] came to me gradually through many days and nights when at last I knew him as I knew myself, when there were no more discoveries, when there was no longer need for forgiveness or understanding or expression, then I loved him as I have loved nothing else on this earth—more, even, than my children. When he died, I, too, wished to die, for I could not find in myself even a love for God except with him... You can see that when we talk of love, you and I, we talk of different things.¹

Looking at her conversation with her grandmother in the light of her brief thrill with Krishna, Baba has to agree with her grandmother's diagnosis of love:

What is it, this 'love' of yours? A little excitement, a little impatience, much imagination—is that enough to found your life on? Can you base the structure of your feelings, your fulfillment, your children, your whole being on so little?²

The search initiated by Alix's ideas of love has left Baba with a renewed appreciation for her own traditions. "Love," as defined by her western friend, was a fleeting thing, a flimsy reason for marriage. It is to the traditional pattern, symbolized by Hari, that Baba turns to find the good in life. She now tells Hari that though she is not in love with him, she would like to marry him. Being "in love" doesn't matter, "because it's only a reason, after all, isn't it? One reason among others."³ Marriage, they both conclude, is not intended to be a gamble. It is a commitment within which there is plenty of room for personal growth. The traditional Indian system has again brought together two people from fairly similar backgrounds, and for whom happiness is predicted by those closest to them.

¹Ibid., p. 183.
²Ibid., p. 184.
³Ibid., p. 240.
Baba has become convinced of the wisdom of this method of selecting a mate. She joins with Hari to return to his ancestral country home. Santha Rama Rau's treatment of the theme of romantic love makes her position clear—that India has nothing to gain by adapting her marriage patterns to western concepts of love.

In The Dark Dancer by Balachandra Rajan, the hero Krishnan, who has recently returned from England, resists but finally accepts his mother's choice of a wife, Kamala. On their wedding night he shudders, "What did they know of each other?"1 As they begin life together, Krishnan, still under the influence of his life in England, cannot feel open with Kamala who prides herself on being a Hindu wife. She carefully, quietly goes on fulfilling her duties, never critical of him. At a party one night Krishnan meets an old Cambridge friend, Carolyn, whom he begins to see occasionally. He refuses to admit how much she affects him, and his abruptness gives her occasion to taunt him.

"You can be as rude as you like. It just shows how badly your subconscious wants me."
"He couldn't help smiling but he had to remind her, "Aren't you forgetting that Kamala is my wife?"
"She got to the crux of it with her usual directness. "Why did you marry her?"
""In order to get married."
""If I weren't so perceptive, I'd call that an unintelligent answer."
""If you were perceptive, you'd realize that it wasn't meant to be intelligent. It was supposed to be adequate."2

Krishnan is trying to fit back into his Indian tradition, though he is insecure in his attempts. Therefore, he is vulnerable when she calls into question his "acquiscent" spirit and challenges him to exert his own freedom, predictably, by rejecting Kamala for herself. When Kamala

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2Ibid., p. 79.
is called away for a few weeks to her mother's sick-bed, the relationship between Carolyn and Krishnan blossoms. A distance, a lack of complete understanding persists, however, and Krishnan cannot help thinking of her as a "glossy photograph." When Kamala returns, she has already heard of her husband's unfaithfulness, but fulfilling her role as a good Hindu wife, does not reject Krishnan because of it. She greets him warmly and begins to arrange the Gods she has brought back with her. Finally, and bluntly, Krishnan confronts her with the facts. Without fighting him, Kamala acknowledges his decision and leaves the house for Shantipar, where she nurses the victims of the riots which occurred over the partitioning.

Krishnan's relationship with Carolyn is stagnant; it cannot deepen not only because they lack common roots, but because neither is committed to any social responsibilities which lead beyond their own physical relationship. Carolyn has demanded that Krishnan assert his individual freedom and choose a partner on the basis of romantic love. The demand has amounted to a rejection of his own past where duty and responsibility, not individual romantic love, determined a man's action. Once Krishnan realizes this, the break with Carolyn is inevitable, and Krishnan sets off to find Kamala. Within the planned marriage, the marriage that included responsibility, Krishnan finds security and purpose. Together, husband and wife, they nurse the sick, fall heavily into bed at the end of the full days to sleep close to each other. There had been no peace or fulfillment with Carolyn who had tried to offer the joys of romance. Kamala, with her dignified fulfillment of duty, her headlong meeting of all life offered, was an ideal which suggested the good in life. When Krishnan comes to understand the Hindu wife, he begins to understand the good in his tradition.
She was a Hindu wife, her father said. Krishna would have thought the ideal tyrannical once, a condemnation to a life of drudgery, toiling consumptively in the smoke-filled kitchen, waiting upon the men, eating apart, walking behind them in appropriate deference, bearing their children and accepting their sins. Now... he recognized a nobility, not one that he would wish to inflict on others, but which he could understand as a principle and pride in Kamala's life. She was a Hindu wife, he echoed, and watching her father's eyes glow he knew that in his strict world of dignity and duty it was not possible to pay a higher compliment.

Not the "glossy photograph" Carolyn, with her emphasis on romantic love, but Kamala with her strong acceptance of the Indian tradition and her role in it offers Krishna the key to personal understanding and fulfillment. Balachandra Rajan's treatment of this theme joins in affirming the dignity and superiority of a marriage built of adherence to time honored tradition and fulfillment of one's dharma rather than romantic love.

Much of Raja Rao's discussion of marriage in The Serpent and The Rope has more to do with ontological reality than hearth and children and will be appropriately dealt with in the discussion of religion. In the thin plot line, however, Raja Rao makes the point in three different ways that marriage is the rewarding union based on a concept of fulfilling one's duty. First, the main character, Ramasamy (or Rama), leaves France to see his sister Saroja before her wedding. They talk often and she exclaims that she wishes that she had been born a European woman, with "freedom" and "brightness" in her life.

"What freedom," Rama exclaimed. "The freedom of foolishness. In what, Saroja, do you think Catherine or Madeleine [his European wife's cousin and his wife] is better off than you?"

"They know how to love."

"And you?"

1Tbid., p. 284.
"And we know how to bear children. We are just like a motor car or a bank account."  

Frightened, Saroja still feels she must comply. Several weeks later, when her husband is called out of the country, Saroja comes home to visit. The change is instantly visible. Saroja leaves home this time to rejoin her husband, "looking bright and fulfilled, as though she liked marriage."  

The key to her happiness has been a fulfillment of her duty.

The second affirmation of marriage as the fulfillment of dharma is more expensive personally to Rama. He has loved Savithri before her marriage, yet encourages her to marry the man chosen for her. While he is in a London hospital recovering from a lung ailment, Savithri visits him regularly and reveals to him how restless she is. That the only happiness in life is created through fulfilling one's duty, Rama again affirms with an image incongruously mundane in this work of struggling poetry and profundity:

"The plane must accept the direction of the radar, that there be no accident. Either you are a plane and you follow national and international conventions—or you do not fly."

"And no garland put on your wings and no coconut broken as you make your first flight."

"Yes, that is what I mean."

"So, when the plane refuses the radar, and only loves the beauty of the broad sky, the sea below and the sands of Santa Cruz shining in the sun..."

"Then it must crash."

"So the plane must obey the radar."

"Yes, that is dharma. The law is dharma. To disobey dharma is to give pain."

As could Saroja, Savithri, when she submits to the duties life has com-

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2. Ibid., p. 274.

3. Ibid., p. 361.
pelled upon her, can write, "The radar, Rama, has landed where it
should. Paradise, I thought, does, does exist."¹

Finally, one sees in Rama's own marriage the calamity a marriage
between people who are untrue to their traditions and their *dharma* can
be. Rama, as a young man of twenty-one, has married a twenty-six year
old French professor of history. Their marriage is a series of upheavals
which finally ends with Madeleine's asking for a divorce. Apparently,
Rama's statement, "Happiness is a question of determination," applies
only when one does not stray too far from the well-defined, correct path.
Between Rama and Madeleine there can be no reconciliation because in
their marriage Rama has stepped outside his *dharma*. Raja Rao sees the
pull of the idea of romantic love, but finds no advantages in considering
romance as the basis for marriage. Individuals must submit to their duty,
and then, within it, fulfillment will follow naturally.

All three of these writers, then, reject romantic love as a basis
for marriage. The pull of its suggestion of freedom and thrill captivates
both women (Baba, Savithri and Saroja), and men (Krishnan and Rama). The
idea of romantic love is presented as a real threat to the tradition.
Each character in these novels who, however, tastes a bit of the western
idea of "romantic love," spurns it for the permanent values of Hindu
marriage.

The Rule of the Joint Family

New economic and social pressures as well as insidious ideas such
as romantic love threaten the family structure. In other novels of the
post-independence era, the emphasis has been on joint family life. Two

¹Ibid., p. 383.
novels raise the question, "Is the joint family worth preserving?" Kamala Markandaya's _A Handful of Rice_ shows the breakdown of a joint family and the social consequences of this disintegration. _Music for Mohini_ by Bhabani Bhattacharya maintains the value of family life built on a continuing heritage, while realistically treating the problems of integration into the large family. Two other books, _A Time to be Happy_ by Nayantara Sahgal and _A Silence of Desire_ by Kamala Markandaya, use portrayals of individual family units to suggest the difficulties of continuing other aspects of Indian tradition after the dissolution of the joint family.

The plot of _A Handful of Rice_ centers around a joint family under the headship of Apu the tailor. The picture is something less than blissful. Beds are shuffled to give newly weds privacy for a time, but how long can this last in a four-room house giving shelter to eight adults and two children? For the son-in-law, Puttanna, who has never had a particularly strong compunction to work, it is only natural to rely on his family and take his time finding a job after his store is claimed by creditors. How can one kick the nephew Varna onto the street, even if he is obese and lazy? As Apu ages, more and more of the family responsibility falls on Ravi, the young son-in-law who is the only worker in the younger generation of the household. Ravi begins to wonder why he should shoulder all this responsibility—why should his labor not be used to buy a bed for his own wife, instead of food for the loafers in the household?

The first break in the solidarity of the joint family comes when Puttanna steals his father-in-law's life savings. Though it has been Apu's policy never to deny care to any member of the family, he now turns Puttanna out of his house in moral outrage. The senior craftsman, Apu,
has a heart attack not long after this incident. As business falls off, Ravi's frustration rises. He has left his own village family to start a better life in the city. Why should he be dragged down by commitments to this new family? In an outrage one day he turns the cripple Kumaran out on the street; Varna, Apu's nephew, follows Kumaran. The strong members of the family have traditionally been responsible for carrying the weak or infirmed members. When rejected by the family, where are they to go?

Since Puttanna, an able-bodied but lazy man has already been forced out to fend for himself, Kumaran and Varna go to him and are accepted into their one room flat—already the home for a family with three children. Ravi has gained nothing in the dissolution of the joint family. He has lost his only, if incompetent, help; the house is "unnaturally silent and empty;" his son is at a loss for playmates, his wife, for companionship.

In coming to the city, Ravi broke his family ties. The family is no longer a "given" for Ravi, as it had been for Apu. Ravi can think of family members as individuals who must contribute to the overall welfare, or fend for themselves. In Ms. Markandaya's story, nothing is gained by the reversal of values. Much is lost, most importantly the fabric which has held up the weak element of society has now been torn. The joint family serves functions no other social institution can fulfill. With its threatened breakdown, it is suggested, new difficulties are certain to arise.

In Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Music for Mohini*, the heroine has been exposed to new ideas and is faced with difficulty of adjusting to a family rooted in tradition. The daughter of a progressive city lawyer, Mohini leaves her home to marry the largest land owner of a country district. She has been with her new family only a few days when her mother-in-law draws from the safe a thick parchment roll with the record
of seventeen generations, one-thousand years of her son's family tree. To Mohini, who cannot name her own great grandfather, such interest in family is overwhelming. How can she adapt to the heavy traditions built over a thousand years? What kind of responsibilities fall on the carrier of the keys of the Big House? The pressure is especially great because she, the wife of the only son, has not yet borne a son. Mohini's own feeling about the family are paradoxical, ranging from rebellion to a deepening pride in her membership in this vast, honored past. Because her husband Jayadev is also not ready to accept all of India's past without examination, the young couple can rethink together what should be preserved and what should be abandoned. The mother clings to all that is old. Since the children cannot always agree, they seem to stand opposed to her. Actually, both appreciate the cultural wealth built up over centuries and feel much of it can be brought into modern life. The tradition of the Big House, the ancestral home, the joint family is, to Mohini and Jayadev, worth saving. Bhattarcharya does not, however, idealize the difficulties of a modern girl trying to fit into a thousand year old household ruled by a die-hard mother-in-law. Clearly, though, he suggests that Mohini has gained a great deal by being able to step into a position with such deep roots and that the emphasis on family tradition is a treasure to be kept and guarded.

Music for Mohini and A Handful of Rice show the joint family under attack. Two other books deal with the question of the joint family from a different angle. A Silence of Desire by Ramala Manikandaya and A Time to be Happy by Nayantara Sahgal discuss the difficult situations which result when the joint family is dissolved while people cling at the same time to other elements of the tradition.
In *A Silence of Desire*, Sarojini is drawn away from her family to a Swami who promises her healing and spiritual satisfaction. As she begins to spend more and more time with him, Sarojini's fulfillment of her family responsibilities degenerates. The floors are no longer swept. The meals are late. The oldest daughter begins to go to the milk bar unchaperoned. Within the joint family system there would have been room for Sarojini to take time to fulfill her spiritual needs while other women contributed to the care of her family. In their isolated flat in the city, however, the nuclear family must operate as a self-contained unit. It can no longer rely on the support the traditional system offered. If the joint family is to be replaced by nuclear family units, some of the freedom to pursue spiritual desires considered normal by the Hindu tradition must be sacrificed.

Again, in *A Time to be Happy* we see a woman unable to fulfill herself in a nuclear family situation. Maya is the wife of Harish Shivpal, a man who has become too Anglicized to adapt to the life in his Mother's home. Unfortunately, Maya has no children. Because Harish is sufficiently Anglicized, he does not hate his wife simply because she is barren. Yet Maya loves children and longs to have her own. Her need, which could have been filled with the children of her brothers in a joint living situation, remains unfulfilled. As a result, she becomes a withdrawn, somber person who is unattractive to her husband and most other people. The nuclear family also has cut her off from the Hindu rituals which would have comforted her. "I cannot pray in an empty house," she says, and goes on to explain that "Divali [a Hindu ceremony] had to be celebrated in a house where there were children, where there were elders, a house balanced by youth and age, where riotous spirits were tempered
by wisdom and prayer.\(^1\) Because so much of Hinduism is bound up in the commonplace of life and in the celebration of the movement of each member of the household through the stages of life, it is not surprising that often in the Indo-Anglican novel of the post-independence period a changed family life also suggests an altered religious life.

Although these writers are not particularly optimistic about the fate of the joint family, they suggest that for social well being, cultural continuity and personal fulfillment, the joint family serves Hindu society well. If this form of social organization is done away with, other aspects of society as well will have to be changed in its wake.

\textit{Nayantara Sahgal: The Importance of the Person}

In her three later novels, \textit{This Time of Morning, Streets in Chandigarh}, and \textit{The Day in Shadow}, Nayantara Sahgal suggests a view of marriage which is unique in the post-independence fiction reviewed here. Ms. Sahgal deals with a strata of society in which the joint family is already a thing of the past. Her nuclear units, most often two people alienated from each other, drift from elite party to party where they discuss politics or economics and return home to empty personal lives. The situation of a man or woman trapped in an unbreakable Hindu marriage recur often. In Ms. Sahgal’s view a marriage without mutual honesty, acceptance, and room for the personal growth of its members is not a marriage.

As we consider the view of marriage in the themes of this author’s later novels, three recurrent thought patterns emerge. First, whereas

\(^1\)Nayantara Sahgal, \textit{A Time to be Happy} (Bombay, India: Jaico Publishing House, 1963), p. 41.
many authors affirm dharma as a sufficient basis for marriage, Nayantara Sahgal is convinced that this can no longer be enough reason. Secondly, marriage—according to Ms. Sahgal—must be a union of equals based on trust, respect and openness. If these qualities are lacking, there is no true marriage. Therefore, she maintains that despite the circling of the sacred fire, no one is bound to a marriage which threatens to stifle the growth of the person.

First, Ms. Sahgal suggests that adherence to duty can no longer be a sufficient basis for marriage. It is apparent early in *This Time of Morning* that Maya, Rashmi's mother, is in turmoil over the fact that problems in her daughter's marriage have reached the point of irreconciliation and she has come home to stay indefinitely. But when Rashmi finally tells her mother that her marriage is ended, her mother's reaction is scorching.

> It was a mortal blow to all she held sacred. What had brought Rashmi to this pass? What reason under heaven could sever the marriage bond? Women stayed married, had since time in memoriam, under every conceivable circumstance, to brutal insensitive husbands, to lunatics and lepers. And Dalip, God forbid, was none of those things. Fulfillment had lain in service and sacrifice. If there was suffering, it too, was part of life.¹

It is this attitude which Ms. Sahgal cannot allow to remain unchallenged.

Entering dutifully into a marriage must not bind one to irrevocable misery. Her characters demand more of marriage, and even Rashmi's mother must reconcile herself to the fact that her stern morality need not be accepted in toto.

> She now realized that the moral order did not degenerate nor was it enshrined forever in unchangeable patterns of

behavior. It has to be refashioned and protected in every age and every generation found its own way to do this.¹

Too often, clinging to the forms of the traditional definition of marriage can actually work against the building of satisfying relationships. Both Leela and Inder in Storm in Chandigarh suggest this attitude. Vishal, Leela's husband, realizes that there is something wrong with their marriage. When he finds his wife is having an affair with a friend of his, Vishal wants desperately to know where he has failed her, what he can do differently and how their relationship can be mended. Each time Vishal tries to probe his wife's feelings, she sweetly reassures him that he is a wonderful husband. "To the last she had released only the emotions appropriate to a wife."² The facade of fidelity was so important that "even his pleas could not penetrate" her shield, and consequently no real marriage could begin to develop. Inder also twists the tradition to suit his needs. He uses his definition of marriage to justify fulfilling his own personal wants which include subjugating his wife.³ His anger at Saroj's third pregnancy shows that he has taken from the traditional view of marriage only that which will serve to justify his selfish desires.

The traditional structure of the arranged marriage is shown to be no longer applicable in a world where girls are exposed to men toward whom they naturally develop attachments and aversions. The wife's relationship with her husband is no longer her one and only personal relat-

¹Ibid., p. 169.


relationship with a man. She can compare personal qualities. Nita in *This Time of Morning* is being pressured by her parents to marry, though in the interim they have allowed her to take a writing job. She meets a man whom she finds fascinating; and, knowing this is the last time in her life that she will be free to decide for herself in a relationship, she rushes toward him. In spite of this infatuation Nita loves her parents and in order not to disappoint them agrees to marry their chosen mate. But in accepting their choice, she is forced to "close her eyes and give herself up to the game of pretense."  

Sahgal suggests that rigidly following the forms of the tradition in today's changing society will not foster the deep relationships or even succeed in preserving the stability of a society attuned to the modern demands of marriage. If the tradition is too rigidly held to, it can produce men like Inder, who are like wooden shipping crates with their swollen planks fallen neatly apart, while the iron bands stand, still in place, "rigid and intact, incongruously protecting nothing."

Sahgal's novels suggest, secondly, that marriage in the contemporary world must be a union of equals, where two whole persons offer themselves to build a deep personal relationship. Marriages lacking these ingredients are bound to flounder. Inder, the husband of Sumrit in *Store in Chandigarh*, sees himself as the strong man ruling his marriage.

"Put it in whatever smart new language you like, it's a lot of bilge. A thousand years from now a woman will still want and need a master, the man who will own and command her—that's the man she'll respect."  

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3. Ibid., p. 108.
The relationship between Inder and his wife is of secondary importance because she "belongs" to him; the marriage is a matter of social and historic fact. Living under this attitude, his wife, a sensitive woman who feels a need to know the man with whom she lives, smothers. In the course of the book, Inder does develop a relationship with another woman in which he learns to give something of himself as a person. He sees no need, however, to introduce this depth into his marriage or to give up his marriage for a better relationship.

"You don't understand," he said stiffly. "She belongs to me."
"Belongs to you. So do your shoes."
"Even my shoes are special to me because they are mine."
"They're special because they fit you. If they didn't you'd throw them away. And you can't own a woman, even if she's your wife."
"You're a foreigner," he said harshly. "You wouldn't understand."
"Does she understand?"

Obviously, Sumrit does not understand because her need for some human response finally drives her to leave Inder.

Una and Arjun Nitra in This Time of Morning also suggest what a marriage should not be. Arjun is older than Una. He had already adjusted to a quiet life as a district officer when they married. His strikingly beautiful wife, bored with their bland life, begins to make Arjun's life miserable with temper tantrums, and finally, with an open and humiliating affair. Though Arjun acknowledges many years later that he might have "given her more of his time, himself, tried harder to understand her needs at the time," he finds the easiest escape from his difficulties simply isolating Una from himself. ¹ "As far as he was concerned Una was dead. As far as the world was concerned he continued to

¹Ibid., p. 144.
²Sahgal, This Time of Morning, p. 25.
give food, shelter and the protection of his name to the woman he had had the misfortune to marry.\footnote{Ibid., p. 29.} The situation is entombed for years because within Hindu law there is no provision for divorce. Only the form of a marriage has been maintained. Beneath the surface, society has allowed opportunities for exploits outside marriage and never forced them to establish the harmony and understanding which would have given substance to the form of marriage.

Ms. Sahgal's ideals of equality in marriage and personal fulfillment, rather than social obligation, as the basis for marriage set her over against others who represent the mainstream of Hindu tradition. But the third idea suggested in her novels is even more radical: there are situations where divorce is acceptable. On the basis of her view of marriage as a relationship between two people, Ms. Sahgal moves easily to the position that no one is bound to a marriage in which personal growth is impossible. In three of her novels, divorce itself is specifically treated. The first case of divorce is only suggested at the end of Store in Chandigarh, when Saroj finally walks out on her insensitive husband Inder. When she says, "Is this running away, Vishal," Vishal, who is a close surrogate for the author, returns, "No my darling. It's good sense."\footnote{Sahgal, Store in Chandigarh, p. 204} Sumit in The Day in Shadow also finds herself completely alienated from her husband. Son has become so thoroughly engrossed in his money, his western-style entertaining, and his rise to status and power that he no longer cares about quiet discussion, time with the children or the appreciation of the beautiful. In order to have a lively hostess and a glistening recipient for his lavish gifts, Son demands...
Sumrit's compliance with his values. Sumrit cannot adopt them and as a result Som finally delivers the ultimatum and Sumrit leaves with her children. The young Rashid in This Time of Morning is the third woman trapped in a stifling marriage. Few of the details of the arranged marriage are given by the author, but one senses the torture a divorce within the Indian society can create. The breakup of the marriage is itself "like a prolonged starvation... robbing lustre, defeating courage and will." But because Rashid had been conditioned to endure and preserve at any cost, she is burdened with guilt that she could not submit as her tradition demanded.

Ms. Sahgal suggests these three situations in which divorce seems inevitable and is, in her judgement, good, in that it releases people from bonds which threaten to destroy them as individuals. She sees something the other writers who deal with the family do not stress—that there may be an irreconcilable conflict between the demands of the tradition and the needs of the individual. When a choice between the two must be made, Ms. Sahgal's sympathies are clearly with the individual.

The context in which each of these divorces take place is significant. In each marriage, one partner is influenced more quickly by the changes taking place in the society than the other and consequently their lives diverge. Whether the idea influencing the character is good or bad is irrelevant; it is the change itself which destroys the permanence of the marriage bond. In the case of Som and Sumrit, Som adopts a value system from his German partner which the author clearly finds inferior. His wife cannot, nor does the author suggest she should, adopt it. The case of Inder and Saroj shows a man clinging to the form of tradition,

1Sahgal, This Time of Morning, p. 13.
while his wife demands that their marriage be expanded with deep personal understanding. Neither can fully adjust to the other's demands. Rashid is an example of a young woman who has experienced too much of life before marriage to be locked into a drab marriage which cuts her off from ever widening experiences. Ms. Sangal is not prescribing divorce for all situations, but suggesting circumstances in which it is inevitable in the context of present upheavals. Therefore the tradition must be adapted to accommodate inevitable changes, some of which are improvements, because they give new significance to individual persons.

Conclusion

The fate of the traditional family structure as it meets the challenges of new economic forces and new ideas is, then, a thematic concern of several Indo-Anglican writers in the post-independence era. Four different aspects of the problem have been explored in the novels discussed. First, Ramala Markandaya in Nectar in a Sieve and A. K. Narayan in The Vendor of Sweets show the conflict between the ideas of the older generation and new ideas and economic forces which relegate the family to a much lower importance. Rusman and Jagan, representatives of the older generation, have built their lives around their families and therefore find their worlds collapsing when Rusman's son and Mall, representatives of the younger generation, are caught up in new ideas of individualism and economic success which make them disregard family considerations. Both novels suggest that something very good is being lost, but neither Jagan nor Rusman is in a position to fight the economic realities or western ideas which draw their children away from the traditional web.
The second aspect of the theme of the family structure in conflict which has been explored in novels of the chosen period is the idea of romantic love, which tantalizes the young with a basis for marriage other than dharma. In all three of the novels which explore this idea, Remember the House by Santha Rama Rau, The Dark Dancer by Balachandra Rajan, and The Serpent and The Hope by Raja Rao, romantic love is shown as a weak and inadequate basis for marriage. It is repeatedly suggested that the individual can and will find personal happiness as he submits to the duties within the tradition.

Thirdly, the fate of the joint family has been explored. The writers who deal with this aspect of the theme all project an attitude that if the joint family does not survive a great deal will have been lost. Kamala Markandaya in A Handful of Rice shows the joint family pressed beyond the breaking point. The breakdown means the loss of a sense of shared work, of playmates and companionship, and, most importantly, the means to support to infirm fringes of society. Bhabani Bhattacharya shows the difficulties of bringing the joint family into the modern age in his novel Music for Mohini. He suggests, however, that if the young are allowed to work for an interdependency of tradition and modernity, they will carry on the best of the rich heritage of Indian family life. Incidents in Kamala Markandaya's novel, A Silence of Desire and Nayantara Sahgal's novel, A Time to be Happy, show that if joint family life is exchanged for the life of the nuclear family, other aspects of Indian tradition must inevitably change.

Finally, Nayantara Sahgal, in her latest three novels, This Time of Morning, Store in Chandigarh and The Day in Shadow, approaches the question of family life from a very different standpoint. While all the other novelists see the problem as one of the tradition blasted by
threats of change, Ms. Sahgal sees the problem in terms of the individual caught in a tradition which may not allow the development that is necessary for a person. The other authors begin with dharma and suggest individual fulfillment can and will be found when an individual submits to duty. Ms. Sahgal suggest this is not always the case. Marriage must be based on trust, understanding and affection, as well as loyalty. Merely living together under the forms of the tradition is not necessarily a marriage since, for a true marriage, there must be a union of persons. This kind of thinking also allows Ms. Sahgal to suggest in her novels that there are times when divorce is inevitable and good, since it frees people from situations in which personal development is impossible.

The predominante reaction to the challenges to the family is one which reasserts the validity of the traditional forms. Several writers suggest that some destruction and change may be inevitable while the family is influenced by changes in economics and thought patterns. Nayantara Sahgal finds a need for the Indian tradition to integrate certain new ideas into its concept of marriage and the family. However, most writers reaffirm the validity of the Hindu tradition. Dharma, as opposed to romantic love, and the joint family, as opposed to the nuclear family, are found to be superior and worth preserving.
CHAPTER TWO

ECONOMICS

No difficulty facing India today is more pressing or overwhelming than the poverty of her people. The Indo-Anglican writers have not been insensitive to this. In fact, some of the better works of art, the more convincing, bitter-sweet tastes of life have emerged from the writers' struggle with this seemingly irresolvable problem. Except for the romantic, there is no easy resolution and few of these writers are romantics. To understand certain authors' perceptions of the economic situation, we will first discuss two new attitudes suggested in a number of works, one toward money, the other toward social mobility. These new attitudes make the fact of poverty, so long accepted as the inevitable result of past lives, a pressing social problem. Three different viewpoints on this problem emerge from the authors of this period. First, Badrinath carries through his romantic lyrical style and treatment of the theme as he looks at this problem in Cradle of the Clouds. The second approach, attempted by Kamala Markandaya in A Handful of Rice and Nectar in a Sieve, views the problem from the standpoint of the individual trapped in changing circumstances of which he cannot make sense. The third looks at society as a whole and its leadership which struggles for economic answers, although all proffered solutions are insufficient and often proliferate new evils. Bhabani Bhattacharya in Shadow From Ladsigh and Kamala Markandaya in The Coffee Dawn look at the problem from this viewpoint.

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The Old and New Economic Attitudes

Artha, or wealth, is recognized in Hindu thought along with dharma, righteousness, kama, or artistic and cultural life, and moksha or spiritual freedom, as one of the supreme ends of life. The desire for property is, however, linked with the other three desires. The Hindu view of life does not accept the ultimate feud between the human world of natural desire and social aims, and the spiritual life with its discipline and aspiration. The two must interact. The Hindu view does, though, condemn the natural existence which is unrelated to the spiritual realm of life. Therefore, while the pursuit of wealth is legitimate within the Hindu way of life it is always disciplined and subservient to fulfilling one's duties in life. The disciplined religious teacher who had no need of wealth was a more respected person than the possessor of wealth.

Beyond these concepts, the attitude toward wealth was influenced by the idea of karma. As Baird notes,

> While such a belief could logically offer the reassurance that one's situation is never hopeless and that being based on one's previous deeds, one's predicament is surely just, in fact the opposite was not infrequently the case. Disease, suffering and bondage to the continual course of migration was man's lot.⁴

On the one hand, a man saw himself in his situation because his fate was decided by past lives. How much could be hope to alter that fate? On the other hand, the important thing in life was not to increase one's own wealth in this life, but to faithfully perform one's present duties.

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¹Rashtrakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 57.

so there could be hope for a better lot in the next life. These aspects of Hindu thought helped put financial gain rather low on the scale of human values.

The recent writers of Indo-Anglican fiction examine these attitudes toward finance and suggest that they are changing. In fact, an emphasis on money is one of the basic differences brought to light when an author wishes to hold a "modernized" man up against a traditional man. R. K. Narayan presents this type of contrast in two novels, The Man-Eater of Malgudi and The Vendor of Sweets. In the first book, the main character, Nataraj, is a respected member of the slow moving Malgudi village society. He runs his printing press with an eye to quality, not efficiency. Certainly no business concern should keep him from afternoon chats with his friend the poet and the aspiring, unpublished journalist. Customers who enter his establishment are often interrupted half way in their requests and given a plug by Nataraj for his competitor:

"I welcome friends rather than customers. I'm not a fellow who cares for money. If anyone comes for pure business, I send them over to my neighbour and they are welcome to get their work done cheaper on a better machine—original Heidelberg."

Vasu, a taxidermist who "seemed to have picked up his American style from crime books and films," intrudes on the Malgudi scene. Money, for him, is the standard by which one measures everything. "Time is money," says Vasu. What does not increase one's wealth is valueless. When a religious celebration is planned Vasu protests, "All you are joining to do is waste everyone's time and money! If I

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2 Ibid., p. 30.
3 Ibid., p. 132.
had any authority I'd prohibit celebrations of this kind as a waste of national energy."¹ One day, Nataraj discusses the eagle which Vasu has recently stuffed. To Nataraj, it is a sacrilege to kill— but to stuff the sacred garuda! Men stop in the roads to gaze in the sky and salute this sacred bird. Vasu quickly sees a good business proposition. "I can supply them stuffed eagles at about fifty rupees each. Everyone can keep a sacred garuda in the pula and I'll guarantee that it won't fly off. Thus they can save their eyes from glare."² To a man who respects his traditions like Nataraj, such a mercenary scheme can only send shivers up his spine.

In The Vendor of Sweets, two different ideas toward money are epitomized by the father, Jagan, and his son, Mali. Jagan runs a profitable sweet shop in the heart of Malgudi, using only the finest ingredients and charging a fair price. Over the years he has developed a frugal life style based on his admiration of M. K. Gandhi's life and thought. His pile of cash mounts because he demands only the necessities of life. However, Jagan is no fool. Why should he give away money to the government in taxes? In order to circumvent this, Jagan regards some of the money taken over the counter as "free cash" received in a kind of "immaculate conception" and therefore not subject to taxes. When he finally renounces life as a householder, Jagan finds it only prudent to take along his checkbook. Here is a man who understands the value of money, yet makes it subservient to what he finds valuable in life.

¹Ibid., p. 133.
²Ibid., p. 52.
To Mali his father is an eccentric fool—hoarding his money when he could be living well or at least investing it. Giving up his thoughts of becoming a writer, Mali has been hooked by an American businessman on a scheme for manufacturing a "fiction-writing machine," which he is convinced his father should help finance. Jagan, watching his son's easy way with money and listening to him describe the questionable merit of this venture, resists helping him. Money in Mali's view is for making more money by whatever means seem feasible and for insuring the good life. His frugal-living father with Mali's savings stored in the attic is totally outside Mali's comprehension.

A correlate with an enhanced view of money is the idea of upward mobility which is a radical shift in Indian thought. Suchin Ghose's Cradle of the Clouds is set in a traditional village society where "no villager was ashamed of his hereditary calling. Even the lowest of the lowly would have been greatly humiliated had his son abandoned the parental occupation to take some other calling."1 There was no question of stepping out of one's hereditary calling because one's dignity in life grew out of his properly fulfilling his given place in society. Nandas, the chowkidar, or watchman of the village, is the classic example. Actually, a villager explains, it "might have been difficult to discover the precise practical value of the services rendered by Nandas...he was a part of our rituals and traditional institutions."2 The office had been established hundreds of years previously in order to guard the temples from the bands who had robbed them searching for the sapphire which legend had taught was buried under the cornerstone.

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2Ibid., p. 110.
the years, the post had to be filled by descendants of successive chowkidars who received the same wage in kind as their ancestors. The two perpetual great worries of Raman's life are his nephew's rebellion against assuming the hereditary post and his wife's complaints over living on the age-sanctioned wage.

Few of the young men present in these novels are content to follow their fathers' lives, and several factors seem responsible. First, certain positions in society have been outdated by the change. Govind Narayan, a wealthy landowner in A Time to be Happy, realizes that with the coming democratic government he may lose his land and his lovely, gentle life style. Therefore he raises his sons Girish and Sanad to fit into the coming business world. The second contributing factor is the inability of the land to support all of the sons of a family, pressuring some to work at any job offered merely to survive. The families in Nectar in a Sieve are forced to meet this pressure. Arjun confronts his mother, "There is nothing for us here, for we have neither the means to buy land or to rent it." This factor would not be for India a unique problem were it not for the third factor, the growth of manufacturing, business and civil service which offer options other than enforced poverty of the village. New opportunities draw people away to new hopes, however illusionary. For this reason, Ravi in A Handful of Rice has left the country.

A leaven must have been at work, a restlessness, a discontent in the towns whose spores had spread even as far as the villages so that suddenly it was not good enough and first one home and then another begin to lose its son. young men like him who felt, obscurely, that

1V. S. Satyendra, Nectar in a Sieve, p. 95.
it was not right for them and—this with conviction—that it would be utterly wrong for their children.¹

Once these young men are in the cities, they have lost family ties and centered their existence on one goal, improving their lot in life. Only the most fortunate of those reach the stage of Dande in A Silence of Desire whose life has seemed to steadily improve as he moved his family every few years down a flight of stairs in the tall apartment building until his family finally had use of the ground level courtyard. Economic changes as presented in several novels have brought new desires which encourage the exchange of the stability of the hereditary society for a society of individuals hungering for something better.

Sudhin Ghose's Romantic Perspective

The changes brought by these shifts in attitude have been viewed from several standpoints. Sudhin Ghose's view is unique, minimizing both the need for and the ability of attempted economic solutions to bring good to village life. Cradle of the Clouds, threaded with rich legend and myth, curiously blending reality and fantasy, the serious and the comic, is one of the most artistically satisfying works written in the post-independence period. Within the major theme of faith versus a rational approach to life runs a subtheme which is concerned with economic progress, in which the author expresses underlying feeling of "Ban-Hurabug" toward change. Two mythical stories of the history of the region of Pernari Parganas suggest that people too concerned with money have already revisited the civilization. On the present scene, Nopaldas the communist—with cohorts like Comrade Dynamite—also threatens destruction. The Panditji reasserts what he, as well as the author, believes is a

¹Marwandaya, A Handful of Rice, p. 12.
proper understanding of civilization and a true picture of what the western ideal of progress means.

In the far reaches of history, the brave princes of Penhari Fargana were taken with an overwhelming love of the sport of wrestling. So lavish was their enthusiasm for the sport that they came to bestow the finest blue-diamond ornaments crafted on those who were victorious against the princes. But the glitter of these expensive jewels lit the eyes of the greedy wife of the Delhi ruler, Assad-Ullah Khan. Craftsmen of jewels such as these could only belong to her. Though her husband had tried to lure them to his palace, the jewelers had been unimpressed with his promises and remained immovable.

But we have just as much gold as we need. What should we do with more? And we are having a good time. Right here in Penhari. We love our work. We love our bamboo huts, the music of our bamboo flutes, the beauty of our cerulean hills, the grandeur of our scarlet plains, the grace of our women. What more do we want?¹

A new tactic had to be tried, so seven hired assassins were rigged with gauntletts over ingenious tiger claws and sent to challenge the princes of Penhari to a wrestling match at night. Both the gauntletts and the night setting seemed strange, but the assassins assured the princes there was only a gap in cultural understanding. In their attempt to be accommodating, the princes were heartlessly ripped to shreds. The lesson is clear. Those who care too much for riches can only bring destruction. Those tempting one with economic progress, offering assurances of cultural sensitivity, are on the other hand preparing to destroy the civilization if necessary to achieve their own goals.

The Yangi rulers who followed years later generally left the Penhari people to their gentle life. Yet each year, troops would visit

¹Shore, Cradle of the Clouds, p. 146.
the valley to collect taxes. An advance guard led the way with rash promises:

'This year the Vargis won't harm you,' was their usual greeting. 'The Vargis are pious Hindus. They don't touch beef. All that they want is to make the country free and everyone happy. That, of course, takes money. They don't want much. Just one fourth of your produce. One fourth of all that you have made during the last twelve months. That's very little. The price of freedom.'

This kind of rhetoric does not blind the people to the realities of their demands. Who needs this freedom at such a price? They are happy. How will taking one quarter of their produce make them happier?

In the contemporary story line of Cradle of the Clouds which these myths are told to enhance, a dam is being built for which the villagers will be taxed. It is to be built ostensibly for their good, yet it seems that things have backfired. Just as the advance guard of the Vargis promised to respect their traditions and to give return for their financial sacrifice, and in fact brought terrible destruction, the builders of the dam with their fine phrases are also irrevocably moving toward destruction of the village. The contemporary heralds of the better life in Ghose's story are the communists. Led by Gopaldas, the nephew of the Village chaudkar, Randas, these reformers engage in revolutionary activities such as setting off time bombs in the mines to stir a general upheaval and a concern for safety regulations. Only the young, who are disgruntled by an education which raised their hopes yet brought them no jobs, find their way into this crowd. While these young nobsters seek to destroy the lives of their families, their relatives hide their heads in shame.

\[1\]Ibid., p. 150.
The Punditji expresses the best wisdom of the community against this unruly lot who want to bring their own breed of "civilization and progress." Their major problem, as the Punditji sees the situation, is that somehow they have adopted a polluted view of civilization. He argues about the meaning of civilization with the Second Master, under whose tutelage these youngsters have grown their homes.

"Civilization?" Did the Second Master know the origin and meaning of the term civilization? Perhaps he didn't. Therefore, for his benefit, the Punditji told him that in the language of the Jondras, the Yavanas, it implied that which went with the cities whereas in Sanskrit, the language of the gods, it meant the culture associated with the village councils, the sages...

'That's neither here nor there,' the Second Master tried to retrieve his position. 'Civilization as it is universally understood today means general culture.' And you are going to measure this general culture by the consumption of gas and electricity? What amount of gas was consumed by the Buddha? How much electricity was turned on to produce the Song of Songs? Or the Cloud Messenger? Tell me, was Buddha as civilized as your smart young friends who read detective novels in gas-light and dance such steps as Black-bottom or Camel-walk?

A wrong definition of civilization of course leads to a wrong idea of progress. The whole idea of material progress is so much foolishness to the Punditji. When the young man in the story tells the Punditji he wants to be a social worker, he is warned not to be misled by "shitboleths." "Welfare work can't cure the ills of society. Build men of character," is the Punditji's advice. Social reform will follow character development naturally. Material comfort can be a threat to the life of a community's mind. The Punditji is determined to hold to the superior idea of progress and, just asThose upholds the Punditji's

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1Ibid., pp. 68-69.
2Ibid., p. 133.
vision of religious truth in the plot line, we hear the author echo with him,

Progress? What's progress? In the so-called progressive countries, print is getting bigger as ideas are getting smaller. And to judge by the more popular periodicals the majority of the progressive Westerners have reverted to the picture books of their infancy. Can you call that progress? The state of a man's mind is the true measure of his progress. The degree of serenity is the measuring rod. Is the state of mind of a man in an Industrialized country necessarily better than that of a man in the Penhuri Parganas? Progress is the same as holiness.... Progress lies in the appreciation of Beauty.... Is it to be measured by the speed of planes? Can you measure the speed of thought?1

For Sudhin Ghose the very idea of attempting economic progress is a threat to the basic and superior values held by the villagers of Penhuri Parganas. Rather than encouraging dissatisfaction and upheaval, society must concentrate on developing the deeper values of the spirit. There is a sanity in the old pattern where people accept their lot realizing that there will always be people in poverty.

Individuals Trapped

As the modifications of various attempted solutions to India's economic plight are explored in the following books, one sees some sense in Ghose's view which suggests relaxing and living with the old problems of disease and death, rather than facing the new evils which are often side effects of economic progress.

In two of Marvanaya's novels, A Handful of Rice and Nectar in a Sieve, individuals are trapped by changing patterns which cannot, however, change fast enough to lift the mass of people immediately to material comfort. Individual initiative and Industrialization have been seen as factors which could contribute to solving India's economic problems. In

1Ibid., pp. 226-227.
these two post-independence novels, individual initiative and industrialization are shown to be Janus-faced solutions, which in fact contribute to social disintegration while providing no economic relief for many people. Mr. Markandaya suggests that there is nothing the individual can do to alleviate this problem; he is in fact trapped in a situation which offers no release. Proposed solutions seem to further the destruction of individuals and society.

The tension built in the plot line of A Handful of Rice is designed to make the case that present economic reality can make survival and decency mutually exclusive. Ravi, a boy determined to escape the hopeless living conditions of his village, journeys to the city and begins his job hunt. Despite his elementary education, which was touted by his father as the key to "the power of earning," Ravi discovers he cannot compete with the "gaunt, shabby-genteel" young graduates streaming from the colleges. Education has solved none of his problems. Into his despair comes Damodar, a boy raised on the street, toughened to do anything to survive and able to introduce Ravi to a whole gang of boys teeming with ideas to be used to gain their share of the city's wealth. Already it is becoming evident to Ravi that the dilemma of existence is between "those who kept their standards and sacrificed their families," and "those who went out to grab what they could." Damodar's values are tougher and can be stretched further than those of a village boy from a decent family. Each day in the struggle for existence brings Ravi's thought closer to Damodar's. In a world where the weak wither and die, a man was a fool not to do all he could to keep on top.

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1Markandaya, A Handful of Rice, p. 27.

2Ibid., p. 177.
One night, drunk and hungry, Ravi forces his way into a house and demands a meal and a bed. He wakes in the morning tied hand and foot, and is released only after a beating. Later, Ravi begins to worry because he has broken the protective bars on the window. The idea that the family is now open to the attack of a more brutal marauder haunts him until Ravi returns and repairs the damage. While he works, he meets the jewel of the family, Malini, with whom he falls in love. By stealing expensive brocades for her father the tailor, Ravi schemes to become Apu's apprentice and finally his son-in-law. Here the possibility for a fine, respectable life presents itself to Ravi. For this, he works with all his energy.

Ravi's father-in-law is a respected craftsman, but the huge joint family can barely make ends meet. Ravi begins to learn a new lesson. One may work hard, but that does not necessarily guarantee a living wage. One day, Ravi delivers an order of a dozen silk jackets to an expensive shop. For their labor on all twelve jackets, the family receives eighty rupees; the shopowner sells them for one hundred twenty-five rupees each. Angrily the boy confronts his father-in-law, but Apu is not shocked. That is life. They are of a lower class. This bland reaction leaves Ravi incensed—they must demand more. But to what end? There are laborers enough who would be glad to fill their shoes.

Throughout the years Ravi has periodically kept contact with Damodar, who has by his shaddy activities made a huge fortune. He cannot help thinking now that Damodar's value system is far more useful than his father-in-law's. He reflects that though marriage has given him a few streaks of respectability, he can never go back to the "old, patently
useless values bequeathed him by his father’s generation."\(^1\) One must survive and offer one’s children something better.

As the years pass, the old man dies, the drought comes, children are born. There is not enough work on which to live, even though Ravi has accepted extra menial tasks such as hemming sheets for a hospital. He looks at his chubby children and wonders how long their displeas will last, thinking, "children folded so quickly, one drought had been enough to produce a whole pack of skeletons, and the burning-ground fires were hardly ever out."\(^2\) Finally, Ravi goes to Damodar:

'I shouldn’t have pulled out,'
'No.'
'I didn’t think it would come to this... I mean if one works one ought to be able to live, it isn’t too much to expect, is it?''\(^3\)

Damodar has a soft spot for his old companion and says that he can find room for him in his next deal, which Damodar outlines,

'...corner the grain market... not all that difficult... people have to eat. laihne to be made.'
'What did you say?'
'I said I need men to handle the distribution. I’ve bought to the hilt, the lorries are ready to move in... we can start pushing up the prices the moment they’ve unloaded. Job’s mine for you, there isn’t a dump in the city you don’t know.'\(^4\)

Ravi is ready to retch. How can he join hands with these dirty men who live by squeezing other men’s throats? But in this jungle... what if this method was the only way to survive? He could contribute to the starvation of the vague masses, who were probably destined to be destroyed anyway, or bring the rottenness on his own house. Ravi

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 177.
\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 210, 212-216.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 212.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 216.
resists Damodar's offer until his breaking point is finally reached in the death of his son. Though his son was ill, he put off calling the doctor until it was too late, realizing that he could never pay the bill. He does not blame himself but rather society, which is "guilty of casual murder." Feeling no loyalty to any of the ramshackle codes of society but only to his oath to gain for his children their rights to a decent life, Ravi is ready to do anything Damodar suggests. This time, Damodar will not include him in his schemes. In the closing scenes of the book, Ravi joins an irrational mob as they raid the storehouses of rice.

Ravi has given all his energy to building a decent life for his children and has found his goal impossible to reach. Feeling betrayed by society, he is ready to join with those who feel no restraint in their struggle to survive in the economic jungle. Ms. Marvanaya's city is a jungle; a portrayal which is in the tradition of literary naturalism. Her characters seem chained in a forest where each trip around the tree faces them with the same tiger. Morality not only does not assure one's rise, it can be damming to one's mere survival. Individual initiative is shown in this novel as an unworkable solution to economic problems. It is very probably a threat to society because of the frustration to which it gives rise.

Nectar in a Sieve also portrays people who are trapped by an economic situation in which a "solution," in this case industrialization, further destroys them. Whereas Ravi in A Handful of Rice goes to the city, in Nectar In a Sieve, the city comes to Rakmani's family. One day bullock carts carrying bricks appear on the village square. A tannery is being constructed. The reactions of the villagers are varied.

1Ibid., p. 231.
Janaki is thrilled that there is something to do with her sons, since the land cannot take them all; Kunthi is pleased that there will be town shops and tea stalls. But the extent of the changes which will come to the village can hardly be foreseen. Prices sky rocket as local merchants determine to take as much of the outsider’s money as possible. The sons are taken, leaving the fathers to work the land, and finally are lured away from the village itself when they learn the power of money. People who adjust and survive drought, the death of their infants, the destruction of their crops by monsoon rains, should also be able to adjust to this. But there is no way to adjust when the tannery takes away the very root of their lives by buying up the land they had rented for centuries.

Rakumuni thinks back on what the coming of the tannery has meant to the village:

> Somehow I had always felt the tannery would eventually be our undoing... It had spread like weeds in an untended garden, strangling whatever life grew in its way. It had changed the face of our village beyond recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants in a myriad of ways. Some—a few—had been raised up; many others cast down, lost in its clutches. And because it grew and flourished it got the power that money brings, so that to attempt to withstand it was like trying to stop the onward rush of the great juggernaut.¹

This powerful story, starkly narrated by a simple village woman, distills the mute terror which is the other side of the brazen cries of the need for industrialization. What kind of a solution is an answer which must so twist the lives of the individual villagers who make up India?

A Society Looking for a Solution

A Handful of Rice and Nectar in a Sieve look most closely at the individuals affected by economic change. Another of Markandaya’s novels,¹

¹Markandaya, Nectar in a Sieve, p. 180.
The Coffer Dams, and a novel by Bhabani Bhattacharya, Shadow from Ladakh, begin with the larger perspective of whole societies and the leadership which hopes to bring economic progress. In The Coffer Dams a commitment to rapid industrialization is shown to result in inevitable destruction. Bhattacharya in Shadow from Ladakh brings two ideals for economic progress into play, one of village self-sufficiency, the other of industrialization. His treatment of the theme suggests the need for interdependence between these two ideals.

The coffer dams are the two smaller dams which flank the site of the main dam, protecting it during its construction. This middle stage of a dam's construction is the time setting of The Coffer Dams, which is also the story of the "middle period" of India's economic growth. Within India, the author suggests the big dam of economic, industrial growth is being built and altering the land. Not enough time, however, has been allowed for the protective coffer dams, the needed adjustment to change, to slowly develop. When The Coffer Dams opens the first step, commitment to the project aimed at economic development, has been taken. In this middle period India has her own skilled workers to contribute to the project but has not yet had enough experience to handle the project without outside help, in this case the established London firm of Howard Clinton. India also is in its middle years, in the sense that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the goals of certain segments of society and the understanding of others. One group which is ready for change has already decided firmly for economic growth. Yet there exist other groups with no desire for change, no understanding of the forces crashing over them. India is portrayed in the midst of this confusing "middle period" when the old answers, which still satisfy certain seg-
ments of society, have been preempted by new answers offered by a powerful element of society.

Indian leaders in Delhi have agreed with the British company to an accelerated schedule for building the dam. On the site, Indian workers balk. Their leader Krishnan maintains that there are weather factors and labor problems not taken into account in the planning schedule. Delays and setbacks would hurt the image of the operation, which is more than merely the building of a dam—it is a test of the efficiency of the Indian Government. At a closed meeting, the heads of the project consider the issues. All are willing to hold to the original schedule except Bashiam, a high level worker whose original home was with tribes who were disrupted by the dam. The feeling prevails that "no modern project could advance if one had first to allay every tribal anxiety."1 Bashiam feels the "towering and voracious terms of modern commitment" diminish him to insignificance.2

Once the timetable has been set, nothing can delay the work. Damaged equipment is improvised into working order, even though it may not meet minimum safety standards. When the project seems to be slowing, an additional work shift is added. The men for this shift are drawn from the village which has already been displaced by the dam. Throughout the novel as commitment to the completion of the dam overtakes all other considerations, we watch the village disintegrate, its men "sucked in, to whirl like cogs around the restless core."3 Those of the village who are not working on the dam spend their days watching the monstrosity rise.

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2Ibid., p. 22.
3T. D. Brunton, Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English, p. 144.
Often, groups edge precariously close to the site where the men are
digging and dynamiting. It is hardly a safe vantage, yet who has the
time to chase them off? Then the inevitable accident occurs, forty-
tribesman are killed. Only thirty-eight bodies can be recovered
because two have been trapped by a huge, fallen boulder. The time table
for completion before the monsoons is pressing and it might take a week
to move the boulder. A decision is made to leave the boulder, work it
into the structure, and entomb the bodies within the dam. Krishnan leads
the workers in their demand for the bodies and the threat to strike if
their demands are unheeded.

It is Bashiam, the marginal man going from wilderness to civilization,
who must be sacrificed. This man has left the village and learned
to skillfully operate the most complicated machinery. He freely admits
a fascination with the machine which he operates. Yet something draws
him back to the village where he has built himself a hut and can feel
free and at rest. Bashiam's loyalties waver as he faces the quandry.
He is aware that the dam will not survive the rains unless the coffers
are completed. He is aware also of the spiritual torture which will stay
with the families unable to free the spirits of their dead loved ones by
cremating them. Bashiam realizes he might hold a solution if he would
be willing to attempt lifting the boulder with the huge crane. He thinks:

I must do it, since they are my people, whom I cannot
shed though I have tried. My people who are the
impediment as they have long been said and are now
proving themselves to be, which it is for me to remove. 1

As Bashiam begins to lift the boulder the emergency light flashes on the
dash board. Nevertheless, he pushes the machine beyond its normal
capacity. The rock rises; but as it does, the machine which has been

1Markandaya, The Coffier Dam, p. 183.
hastily repaired gives way and the crane follows its bent arm down the slope, crushing Bashiam within it. The rush to bring economic progress has cost not only the lives of the backwards villagers, but the life of a man in a position to harmonize the divergent elements of society. Bashiam understood the values offered by the village and industrialization. Working under a relentless pressure for spreading economic growth, there was no time for the reconciliation which was so badly needed in India during the "middle years."

Karala Murkandaya's treatment of the theme of economic progress in The Coffer Dam does not suggest that the attempt to raise the living standard can be halted. Bashiam does not desist from promptly declaring that machines have given him a better way of life. For him, however, modernization had been a slow process in which he chose certain new values while clinging to other old ones. In the story of the coffer dam, the men in positions of leadership had made the commitment toward economic progress. The commitment itself involved pride — compelled them toward completion of the dam, which became an end in itself. The valuable intent of bringing a better standard of life seems to be lost and no time can be allotted for the societies or lives affected to adjust. In this book, the leaders of India share with British company executives the responsibility for the "juggernaut." To the question, "Is there to be no line drawn at which one stops?" it is a Britisher who answers, "No lines are possible."¹ The Indian government which desires economic progress as top priority and is concerned with national pride has also had its share in the creation of a mentality for progress which potentially results in destruction.

¹Ibid., p. 197.
Bhabani Bhattacharya in *Shadow from Ladaik* presents a story which embodies two different ideals for solving India's economic problems. One ideal is embodied in the village, Chandigram, and its leading citizen, SatyaJit, who has been influenced by Ghandi and the ashram he established at Sevagram. On the model of Ghandi's Sevagram, the people of Chandigram have been building a model community in which all people are regarded as equal. Land is cooperatively held, food is distributed according to need and all other simple needs are met by small, locally based cottage industries. The goal is economic self-sufficiency within a larger Hindu society.

The fight was with the system that welded human beings to the machine. But that was not all. Mechanization, Ghandi had said, was inevitable when there was a dearth of labor. It became needless and evil when there was a surplus of hands. The problem in India was not how to find leisure for the teeming millions in its villages, but against the kind of machine that helped an individual to add to his efficiency without turning him into its helpless slave.¹

The other ideal is found in Bhashkar, the chief engineer of Steel-town who has learned his skills in Pittsburgh. The author makes clear, however, that he is not an American product, but rather an Indian with a different perspective. Papa, the westernized Indian who has fallen in love with Bhashkar, shouts at him near the end of the novel, "The truth is that America as a whole has meant nothing to you. You brought back industrial know-how, not the know-how of life."² As Bhashkar works late into the night, he thinks, "each five ticks—or it could be four—signalled the birth of an Indian child. A child to be fed, clothed, reared, educated; given cultural fare, given employment, given his due

²Ibid., p. 252.
share of the human heritage." He wonders if the production rate has caught up with the birth rate. With these thoughts, Bhashkar devotes himself to building a steel plant which will provide jobs and goods to lift India from her poverty. He is anxious for growth because of what it will mean for India as a whole and has no patience with those who are willing to leave India out of the Twentieth century industrial world.

These two ideals for solving India's economic difficulties come into conflict while the shadow of the Chinese invasion creeps into Ladakh. For Satyajit, this is the occasion for a peace march. Bhashkar, on the contrary, sees non-violent thinking as the disease of India. It is essential in Bhashkar's mind that Steeltown swallow Ghandigram; the Chinese forces pouring over the border are the unanswerable argument for steel. Although Bhashkar could expand his plant in any direction, he is determined to buy the piece of land on which Ghandigram is situated. An argument between Bhashkar and Sumita, Satyajit's daughter, presents the issues:

"You think we in the village are outside that civilization?"
"Voluntary poverty is no answer to our country's problems. . . With industrial progress we'll attain higher standards within a short span of time. We have big resources in men, materials. What we need is applications, energy. We've been sitting tight over the ages. Let's start moving along. . ."
"We also believe in social action," she said. "We are trying to build a new social order."
"It's as if a country place in New York tried to return to the age of Plato. You are out of context in history."
"Maybe we live ahead of the times. Maybe we live in an age yet unborn."²

For Satyajit and his daughter, economic progress is only worthwhile when at the same time the other good things in life can be preserved.

¹Ibid., p. 31.
²Ibid., pp. 87-88.
They are willing to build slowly. Bhashkar, on the other hand, sees the backwardness and poverty of India as the one overwhelming issue which must be given priority. When pressure fails to gain his objective, Bhashkar decides to use Satyajit’s own weapon of non-violence. He builds a “Meadow house” on the state property which lies between the two settlements. The house is to be a social center which will offer audio-visual publicity of the goals of Steeltown in both the national and personal contests. The new non-violent campaign also includes bus trips for young boys to see the wonders of Steeltown. Bhashkar is convinced that when villagers see modern amenities, they will be unable to resist. Yet he does not have the time to wait for this slow approach to work. More direct action is needed—an appeal to the government that Chandigram be acquired by special power, in the national interest, of course, is registered.

While on the surface both sides seem uncompromising, underneath the activity each side begins to see some of its own weaknesses. Embodied in the ideal of Chandigram, Bhattacharya suggests, is a world negating philosophy which the author rejects. While still a young husband, Satyajit has taken the vow of celibacy, robbing his wife Saruchi of sensual love and children. After her original fury and bewilderment, Saruchi submits and resigns herself. Yet her anger at her world renunciation arises each time she sees her beautiful daughter draped in the stark white, which should belong only to a widow. What a sin to deprive such beauty of adornment? A village crisis develops while Satyajit is away. Shanak, a young girl who has once before been sternly admonished by the council for her free behavior with boys, openly revolts and crosses the meadow accompanied only by a Steeltown youth. The council, at a loss as to how to further deal with her, decides to leave the decision
to Suruchi. As she struggles with the problem of handling Jhanak, she is also grappling with her own struggle as a woman shut off from the pleasures of the world. She finally decides that she cannot hold back the girl who has had the courage to grasp life and fight for what she wants. "An ascetic woman," she concludes, "is a contradiction in terms." Suruchi is not rejecting Ghandigram, but asserting that it must open itself to the world, if only for its own survival.

Nor, for that matter, could Ghandigram afford to turn itself into a secluded hothouse, where behind the thick sheets of glass exotic values bloomed. It was not to be wondered that within the walls of the hothouse there was the alien burgeoning of Jhanak! There was only one way left for Ghandigram. It must make readjustments. That would mean acceptance of life in its totality.

Satyajit, fortunately, has also had a change of heart through his discussions with his friend Bireswar. For both husband and wife the time for reclaiming all the good in life has begun.

At the same time Bhashkar has been recognizing some of the weaknesses of Steeltown, his own ideal. Sunita, Satyajit's daughter, fascinates him with her idealistic strength and idealistic commitment. Bhashkar begins to see certain aspects of life which his approach has ignored and denied. Returning to India and meeting Sunita had reawakened a desire for values that could outlive moments. Values that would assuage some hidden hunger in him... He could now see the contradictions in his feelings. He, apostle of modernism, was himself disillusioned, seeking something beyond. Yet he who wanted a release from a built-in habit of the new civilization would have it thrust on others, on India.

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1 Ibid., p. 284.
3 Ibid.
Bhashkar begins to take a look at the characters surrounding him and to compare them with the characters which had grown out of the soil of Chandigram. He thinks of "Section Twelve longing to be Eleven and Ten. Insatiety, frustration, intrigue, graft." As Bhashkar sees the emptiness in his ideal and falls in love with Sumita, Sumita also is awakening to life, to the vitality and beauty around her and is being drawn to Bhashkar. It is on this personal level that the tensions begin to resolve themselves.

Satyajit knows that there is only one way to fight Bhashkar's request to the government to move Chandigram—the Gandhian way, with an unlimited fast. As Satyajit begins to fast, factory workers sympathize with his view and begin to carry placards declaring "Hands off Chandigram," "We have no quarrel with the spinning wheel," "Men of Chandigram, we are your brothers." The village and the city are unified with the actions of Satyajit. When a general strike threatens, Bhashkar finally relents on his request and even addresses the crowd.

The workers in Steeltown have expressed their united will. That will prevail... Don't move away from Chandigram after the passion of the moment is spent. You will have to be with these people always. Try to see what they stand for. Give them a chance to understand what we are striving to attain.

Bhashkar has moved toward Chandigram by realizing the need to concentrate on aspects of life other than economics. Having shed its scorn of the world, Chandigram is capable of taking effective spiritual leadership. Bhattacharya does not give a complete resolution of the conflict but

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1Ibid., p. 157.
2Ibid., p. 324.
3Ibid., p. 369.
lets each side see its own limitations and offers the hope that at least on the personal level resolutions are possible. Industrialization must go on, but one senses that the authors' own sentiments lean with Satyajit in favor of spiritual values.

Steeltown belongs to the present, Gandhigram to the future. Steeltown must do its work. But when that work is done, when the material benefits of production have been fully attained, Steeltown, decrepit and soulless, will have to seek new moorings. Then it will be Gandhigram's turn to come forward. ¹

Economic progress is a worthwhile goal. The spiritual needs of man, represented by Gandhigram, can never be neglected, however, in an attempt to bring quick material prosperity.

Conclusion

The economic difficulties facing contemporary India find a multitude of expressions in the Indo-Anglian novels written in the last twenty-five years. First, we have seen the portrayal in a number of novels of new attitudes toward economics, especially among the younger generation. Two ideas which involve radical shifts in Indian thought crop up often in the novels—an emphasis on money as a goal in itself in life, and a drive for a higher social status. M. K. Narayan's novels, The Man-Eater of Malgudi and The Vendor of Sweets, suggest the contrasting views of money held by the man with traditional values and modern values. In Sudhin Bose's Cradle of the Clouds a traditional stable society is drawn. The chowdiker's young nephew in Bose's story is unwilling to assume his hereditary past, just as young characters in Nayantara Sahgal's A Time to be Happy and Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve and A Handful of Rice are unwilling or unable to continue in the footsteps of their fathers.

¹Ibid., p. 158.
Three ways of treating the theme of economic progress are attempted in the novels of this period. Sudhin Ghose in *Cradle of the Clouds* suggests a unique approach. In style and content his book is romantic, using myth and an epic sweep to convey his love of tradition. His attitude is that the western definition of progress is absurd; true civilization does not depend on a commitment to material comfort. The novel suggests a determination to live with India's economic difficulties while concentrating on her spiritual and cultural growth.

In *A Handful of Rice* and *Nectar in a Sieve*, Kamala Markandaya portrays India's economic plight with a view close to literary naturalism. The changes going on in India today are shown as totally outside the control of the individual. Though they give their whole energies to it, neither Ravi or Radhni can forestall their destruction by economic forces. Industrialization and individual initiative which might seem to contribute to economic progress only bring destruction and frustration. The individual is trapped. The changes are inevitable, the prospects for survival in the jungle, especially with any semblance of decency, are improbable.

The third approach to the theme is attempted in Kamala Markandaya's *The Coffer Dams* and Bhawarl Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh*. Though the insignificant individual is caught in the changes, the leaders of society are in a position to make decisions for solving the problems. However, each solution suggested in these novels has certain drawbacks. There seems to be no complete answer which will provide a balanced interaction between economic progress and traditional society. In *The Coffer Dams*, men become chained to their own vision of progress. In the long range effort to bring a better life, a number of lives are crushed. Bhattacharya in *Shadow from Ladakh* offers the most positive picture,
suggesting that the ideals of Gandhi and of industrialization can with some effort co-exist through interdependence.

Three different reactions to the threatened forces for change can be perceived in these novels. Sudhin Ghose expresses in his novels the feeling that traditional society can gain nothing through material progress or industrialization. In two of her novels, Kamala Markandaya treats the economic upheavals as inevitable. Her characters are helpless in the face of the changes, unable even to adapt successfully to them. In *The Coffin Dams* and *Shadow from Ladakh*, both Markandaya and Bhattacharya express the need for interdependence between the traditional culture and industrialization. Neither novel, however, suggests that there is any simple solution to these complex problems.
CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION

In many of its forms, Hinduism depends not so much on theology, but on a permeation of the whole life of society. It is not surprising, then, that an exploration of the changes in the family and economics suggested by the Indo-Anglican novelists of the recent period reveals something of their views of changes in religion. Challenges to religion have, however, been dealt with directly by some of the novelists. The first challenge is the secular view of life now beginning to permeate a society once dominated by the religious view. A Silence of Desire by Kamala Markandaya, The Man-Eater of Malgudi by R. R. Narayan, and Cradle of the Clouds and Plane of the Forest by Sudhin Ghose explore this conflict, which is hardly a surprising theme to grow out of this period. What is more significant is that several novelists have sensed a challenge to a tenet which they perceive as basic to Hinduism itself. The idea they explore is Hinduism as a religion which tends to reject concerns of this world, accept life as it comes, and concentrate instead on the spiritual realm. As the novelists grapple with this idea in the light of challenges from outside the culture, several different reactions emerge. Nayantara Sangeet finds in an exploration which develops through several novels that Hinduism does indeed lack a concern with the affairs of this world and therefore cannot motivate efforts for needed reforms. In her view, Hinduism would benefit by interaction with other religious thought. In The Dark Dancer, Balachandra Rajan
makes a contrary assertion: the acceptance of life is itself the very strength of Hinduism. Raja Rao refuses in his novel, The Serpent and the Rope, to consider the challenge in its western form. When considering the world or the need for reform, one deals only on the low level of the phenomenally real. Hinduism appears unconcerned about this illusory, changing reality because it offers the understanding of ultimate Reality (henceforth capitalized), which is beyond contradictions or change.

The Religious and the Secular View of Life

Four novels written in the post-independence era deal with the theme of religion in contemporary India in terms of a clash between the traditional religious view and a new practical, scientific, secular view. Kamala Markandaya demonstrates the complexity of issues raised when the two views meet in her novel A Silence of Desire. Through the use of a mythical structure in The Man-Eater of Malgudi, R. K. Narayan draws a story in black and white in which the destructive secular man meets his own inevitable destruction. Suchin Ghose, likewise, sees no need for interdependence between a religious and practical scientific approach to life. In Cradle of the Clouds and Flame of the Forest, a young man is brought twice to the conclusion that life only has meaning and sense when approached from the viewpoint of the traditional religion.

Kamala Markandaya is at her best, building the irresolvable tensions of life, in A Silence of Desire. The life of Dandeskar, an Indian Civil Service clerk, flows smoothly from success to success until his wife begins a strange series of unaccountable absences. Dandeskar is haunted, wondering, "who is the man whose picture he has discovered in the bedroom trunk? Why doesn't his wife Sarojini allow him to touch her?" Finally, Dandeskar stays away from work to follow his wife but
loses her in a crowd. Frustrated, he confronts her with an accusation that she has a lover. But Sarojini will not explain where she has been and goes to lie down in her children's room. The next day, Dandekar's chase succeeds; he catches his wife, cross-legged in front of a Swastik in a crowd of people. "What were you doing... Am I not your husband, entitled to know?" he asks her when the children are in bed. Sarojini finally confesses, "I go to be healed...I have a growth in my womb."

Dandekar is stunned. Why had his wife not told him? They could have gone to the hospital, where she would have been treated. Yet this, it seems, is the crux of the whole misunderstanding. Sarojini protests:

You would have sent me to a hospital instead. Called me superstitious, a fool, because I have beliefs that you cannot share. You wouldn't have let me be—but You would have reasoned with me until I lost my faith, because faith and reason don't go together, and without faith I shall not be healed. Do you understand that?

Dandekar is not an irreligious man. He has argued with an Englishman who scorned astrology that since the universe is a whole—parts naturally influence the others. "Oceans rise and fall by the moon... Are human lives so worthless the stars will not touch them?" Though he cannot accept the tulasi as a sacred plant, he does recognise it as a symbol of God. Yet Dandekar finds such that is ignorant and superstitious in Hindu practices. He impresses his cousin Raja as a man who does not "believe anything much." It is his skepticism that has alienated Dandekar's wife. Sarojini says,

I do not expect you to understand—you with your Western notions, your superior talk of ignorance and superstition

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2. Ibid., p. 99.
3. Ibid., p. 212.
when all it means is that you don't know what lies beyond reason and you prefer not to find out.  

The misunderstanding is not to be easily resolved. Dandekar is convinced Sarojini will only be healed by modern medicine, yet retains enough Hindu thought to be convinced that she cannot be healed if her mind is working against her body. His first resolve is to find out if the Swami is a truly religious man or a fake. When he finally finds the Swami, Dandekar sees the serene face of a "saint" or a "starving pauper." The Swami seems to handle Dandekar so cleverly, though, twisting his thought to persuade him of the Swami's own case that Dandekar is put on his guard. When he turns to leave, Dandekar sees a money pouch swinging at the door and hears the Swami tranquilly suggest, "If you wish you can help." Dandekar is suspicious of the reality of the Swami's powers but he cannot act upon other options.

The life of Dandekar's family begins to crumble as Sarojini spends more and more time with the Swami. Yet there are no signs that she is being healed. When Sarojini gives the silver intended for her daughter's dowries to the Swami, Dandekar has had all he can take. He returns to the Swami and demands that he quit taking the gifts his wife offers. The Swami confronts Dandekar with the fact that possessions mean a great deal to Dandekar. He could be free if he would be willing to give away everything. To this, Dandekar can only protest that while he knows the Swami's view is right while sitting with him the demand is too great for ordinary people. He echoes these thoughts in a discussion with his boss, Chari, whom he has begged to drive the Swami from town.

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1 Ibid., p. 100.
2 Ibid., p. 141.
In the world I'm in it's important, all the small things are important and I know it's small and petty, but I'm a small and petty man—I know it but I'm not fit for anything else, I cannot change myself.\(^1\)

The Swami has already stolen Dandekar's wife, while offering her no real hope of healing. He should at least leave Dandekar his possessions.

Sarojini is convinced of the rightness of her worship. No reconciliation seems possible.

Chari launches a dual investigation at the request of Dandekar. Ghose, his north Indian subordinate, carries out one prong of the investigation. He is anxious for his country "to be the equal of anything in the West; and being equal excluded even a hint of Medievalism."\(^2\) In Ghose's view, the Swami is a quack who takes advantage of the poor and the foolish. Chari sees the other side when he investigates the situation.

With Ghose and Dandekar, Chari is convinced that the Swami cannot heal the body except when the causes of suffering are purely in the spirit. But there are other considerations. First, Chari thinks of Sarojini and how much better it would be for her to die at peace than to have her concern shifted purely to the life of the body, where defeat would one day be inevitable. Secondly, Chari is aware of the Swami's social function. The Swami sustains a group of people—misfits, the hopelessly deformed, the abject poor—people for whom there is no place in society other than huddling around the teacher.

The novel's easy resolution is totally inadequate for the tensions which Ms. Narkandaya develops. Rather than following the tensions to their conclusions, the author has the Swami leave the town voluntarily.

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 221.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 235.
and instruct Sarojini to go to the hospital. Yet the simplistic conclusion does not destroy the sense of truth in the religious dilemma put forth in the body of the story.

In the novel, the need for modern medicine is not minimized. Ms. Markandaya makes no case for the Swami's healing powers, yet she does suggest that Sarojini's pattern of life and death has advantages over Dandekar's fretting, assertive life style. The scientific medical view of man does not take all aspects of the human condition into consideration—the role of the mind, the need of hope for the hopeless. The bureaucrat Ghose's neat solution for the problem of the Swami leaves out a consideration of the social function which the Swami fills. Clearly the heart of the conflict is in the relations between persons affected by change at a different rate, yet bound together in marriage. It is on this level that the questions need solution most crucially and on this level that they defy resolution because Sarojini and Dandekar start from opposite presuppositions. Ms. Markandaya's art does not carry the reader to a new level of ordering these dilemmas, but only reflects the pressing tensions.

R. K. Narayan builds the story of The Man-Eater of Malgudi around a mythical structure. The story has the sense of truth which can be found in a fable, making the terms of absolute good and evil acceptable. The Man-Eater of Malgudi is the tale of a rakshasa, "a demoniac creature who possessed enormous strength, strange powers and genius, but recognized no sort of restraints of man or god." The plot structure is based on the myth of Bhimaasura, the demon who scorched everything he touched. Enraged by a lovely dancing maiden, to mimic her every move,

1Narayan, The Man-Eater of Malgudi, p. 100.
the demon placed his destructive fingertips on his own head and turned himself to ashes.

The demon who invades Malgudi is Vasu, an aggressive taxidermist who has no respect for the fabric of traditional culture. Society means nothing to this individualist. He has no patience with family life or even friendship, since all such sentimentality must be overcome by the scientific view. Nature is his rival. Art is epitomized in stuffing dead animals.

The counterpart to this destructive creature is the self-demeaning printer, Nataraj. From their first encounter, Vasu overpowers the meek printer. He tears back the curtain which separates the public from the operations of the press, "an act which violated the sacred traditions of my press." In a matter of days, Vasu has taken residence in Nataraj's attic and the stench of the taxidermist's carcasses spreads throughout the neighborhood. Nataraj is impotent to confront him and bring an end to Vasu's destruction. "The situation seemed so dark that I surrendered myself to it in a mood of complete resignation. I even began to look relaxed."2

That Nataraj had adopted the proper attitude is shown in the resolution of the plot. The poet whom Nataraj has supported for years is about to publish his first book. To celebrate the occasion, Nataraj plans a town-wide celebration grand enough to even include an elephant. This seems the perfect opportunity for the destroyer to add the valuable carcass of the elephant to his collection. When Nataraj discovers Vasu's intent and tries to thwart it, all his efforts are abortive and super-

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1 Ibid., p. 14.
2 Ibid., pp. 77-8.
The stable cosmos is quite capable of returning to its own order. Vasu is in fact the cause of his own destruction. The violent taxidermist kills himself when he strikes a mosquito on his own temple. Santri, Narasimha's wise partner, comments on the illusionary nature of the threat of change.

Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the rakshasas that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity?\(^1\)

As Edwin Gerrow notes, the story is not really the development of a plot to a conclusion, but rather what one might call an "anti-plot:" "the reintegration of an original state—dynamic to be sure, but stable—which has for a time been threatened with destruction."\(^2\) Vasu's eruption into the world of Malgudi brings the traditional religious view into conflict with a secular, scientific view. Vasu, unaware of the spiritual level of reality, acts on a level of unreality. Therefore his massive efforts toward destruction can never really be a threat. The religious view is in tune with the reality of the universe, and therefore there is no need to fear the blustering threats of a secular view which operates only in illusory phenomena. Narayan builds the tensions, but in the end treats them as illusion. His treatment of the theme of the religious versus the secular view of life suggests there is no need for interaction between the two, because reality is embodied in the religious view which will inevitably prevail.

Through two of Sukhın Chose's novels runs a theme of the faith of the religious man versus the rational view of life of the secular man.

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 185.

Cradle of the Clouds and Flame of the Forest present the unfolding of the central character, Balaram, as he matures and confronts the question of his own view of life. Suchin Ghose has his predictable ax to grind, yet his lyric style and mythic treatment salvage his thematic treatment from the didactic and make it art which rings true. In the first book, Balaram confronts the problem of faith versus reason on a somewhat theoretical level, while in the second book it is the practical, economic affairs of life in a city which pull him away from the religious core of his being.

The tale of Cradle of the Clouds is developed around a ritual religious ploughing ceremony based on a Hindu myth of Kansa, the tyrant king who attempted to burn down Brindiben and subdue its inhabitants. While the men of the village were away, the king set fire to the city taking the undefended women and children by surprise. In the face of this, the boy Balaram bravely decided to pull his toy plow through the fields to make Kansa believe the men were already back at work and getting ready to wreak vengeance. Not only was Kansa deceived and the attack halted, but Balaram's act so pleased Indra that he sent rain to quench the fire.\footnote{Neerakshi Mukherjee, "The Tractor and The Plough: The Contrasted Visions of Suchin Ghose and Nalk Raj Anand," Indian Literature 13 (March 1970): 96.} The Panhari Fargamas in Ghose's story is not under siege, but under drought. To bring down the rains, the village plans to reenact the ploughing ceremony.

The central question of the book revolves around the efficacy of this ritual, the symbol of the religious view of life. The man who calls into question this view is Ramu Hem Chadar, a proclaimed rationalist who is against all superstition and for all modernization. He
had a profound contempt for all country fools. . . . He did nothing to hide his horror of their illiteracy and superstitious practices.¹ Bahu Nem Chadar is the Second Master at the government school, where he greatly influences the young. He encourages them to start at home, getting people to abandon the country's "tenacious admiration of the past."² Even as a boy, Balaram finds serious contradictions in this rationalist's view of life. First, the Second Master himself often attends the rites and ceremonies of the village. He explains unconvincingly that his only motive is to please the villagers who believe him a lucky man, since he was born the eighth child of his mother on Krishna's own birthday. Secondly, the Second Master has an irrational hatred toward industrialists. The teacher's brother, an industrialist, was to have built Bahu Nem Chadar a school where he would have been the principal, rather than the Second Master. The school, one learns, never materialized. The fact that none of the nasty, industrialist publishers will take his definitive work on "Kron-bell" may also have contributed to his hatred. Thirdly, Balaram notes the Second Master's malicious pleasure as he tells about the sickness of his enemy, the Panditji. Where is there room for these irrational feelings in the Second Master's approach to life?

The alternative to the Second Master's approach suggested in the novel is the traditional faith of the villagers. To them, each duty, each ritual, demands perfection. So committed are the villagers to the authenticity of the traditional rituals that they set fire to a neighboring town to reenact Kansa's firing in the original story. The women who participate in the ceremony honor the representative of Balaram as

¹ Ghose, Cradle of the Clouds, p. 36.
² Ibid., p. 41.
if he were the God personified. They stake their lives on the efficacy of the rite, for if it fails none of the women will be allowed to return to their homes.

The Punditji, the religious leader of the community, is a well educated man. He knows a number of foreign languages and handles them with sufficient fluency to have produced a Sanskrit translation of Gray's *Elegy*, a Bengali version of *Les Misérables*, and a Hindu commentary on Plato. His faith is not primarily in the ritual itself, but in the faith of the villagers who participate. The Punditji defends the learning of the villagers against the teachings of the Second Master.

Literate is not education. I would rather that my people remain unlettered than taught to read the rubbish that floods the book-reading industrialized world of today. From the cultural point of view they will remain better off with their own classical and popular literature of which all have oral knowledge. That much is perfectly clear, a semi-literate population can be more easily misled... than the unlettered peasants of the Panhari Parganas... Better untaught than ill-taught.¹

A use of reason, in the Punditji's view, is no insurance for obtaining truth. Truth is already presented fully and is available to all in the time-honored traditional religion. The myths, after all, relate true history which is "not mere chronology," but the story of "man's endeavor to find the Absolute, his God."² Young Balaram puts the question to the Punditji, "Will it do any good for the matrons to plough the fields?" The Punditji answers impatiently, "Don't they want a cloudburst?"³ The villagers must only manifest their faith in the traditional enactment, and their needs will be met.

¹Ibid., p. 300.
²Ibid., p. 90.
³Ibid.
When the ploughing ceremony finally takes place, the Second Master, the man allegedly blessed with luck, has been asked to act the part of Krishna playing the flute. Balaras is anointed and fondled by the village matrons. As he is carried to the field, tension stiffens. The weary matrons are beginning their third turns at the plow when the Second Master appears, mocking and gesturing at the naked women. When he begins to threaten one, Balaras—now invested with the historic Mahendra Chandal, the Black Staff of the religious leaders—beats Bahu Hem Chadar and then strikes the rock at his feet. As the rock shatters, the torrents begin. Faith has prevailed.

The story had been related as Balaras stood at the train station years later, ready to go to Calcutta. The neighbors around him had discussed the city. "A slight twist in pronunciation readily changed Calcutta to Black Dog," the symbol of Yama, the destroyer, the God of Death. In Flames of the Forest, Balaras finds himself in the sinister city looking for a job. The threat to his Faith in the first story had been the teaching of a rationalist; here, the threat is an absorption in the mundane, practical affairs of life which blind Balaras to his need for deeper religious truth. Balaras comes to the city skeptical of the old myths and far more concerned with simply finding a job which will keep food in his stomach. While still getting acquainted with the city, Balaras meets Myra, a kirtani, a companion of Radha the divine Sheppardess and a singer of devotional songs. Balaras is fascinated with Myra as a woman, and a love affair begins although Balaras cannot identify at all with her life of devotion and worship. He is terrified of her "mystic moods." It seems to him that at times fire, not blood, flows in her veins. At these mo-

1Ibid., p. 18.
ments, Myna calls Balaram to "leave Calcutta and seek the world. She used words, phrases and expressions as well as images and parables of rare significance. Where did she get them." With this facet of Myna, he wants nothing to do.

The more practical and important aspects of Balaram's life begin to take shape. A man from the magazine Life in Technicolor (sic) has interviewed Balaram and made the most of his biting comments on fellow members of the academic community. This is the start of a budding career. Not all his friends, however, approve of his connection with the glossy magazine.

"Money talks—you have been bribed to become pro-American." 'Isn't that wonderful?' I replied, and swelled my chest. It was plain common sense, as far as I was concerned, to make hay while the sun shone; in other words to make as much as I could of the temporary popularity of my low brow contributions.

As the story develops, though, Balaram discovers his roots are far deeper in his tradition than he has suspected. Reading at the temple when Myna leaves the city, he listens to the wise, simple commentator on the scriptures. The numerous astrological bulletins begin to make sense, since "forewarned is forearmed." The sculptures of Ananti and Ananda outside his friend Dwan's house look more and more lovely and everlasting. Yet Balaram avoids invitations to visit Myna who to his symbolizes the religious quest.

Balaram's thinking comes to a crisis when two figures, Ek Nambur, a westernized politician, and Charlie Andrews, a sympathetic Christian missionary, begin to attack parts of the tradition which have become in-

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2Ibid., p. 136.
portant to him. Balaram finds Charlie an eccentric but practical man of
God. He has spent some months living with Balaram, totally upsetting his
host's life style with demands such as saccharine to substitute for sugar,
because the poor could not afford sugar. It seemed to make no difference
if his host had to pay more for saccharine than sugar. When his friend
Diwan is put under house arrest by the politically powerful Ek Nambur,
Balaram contacts Charlie, thinking he will get some Western publicity on
behalf of Diwan's plight. Instead, Charlie talks to Ek Nambur and finds
Diwan has "obscene images" on his porch, the very statues Balaram has
come to love. Charlie's advice is to "get the filthy things removed
and to try to understand Ek Nambur, who is working to rid India of her
superstitious habits. In reaction to this comment, Balaram's own thinking
focuses. He remembers Charlie's scornful attitude toward Myna. "Why
does she gad about? Can she not sit down somewhere and do some nursing
or some such job?" Of course Charlie cannot understand Myna's worship-
ful, impractical approach to life. Myna has been quoted in Life in Techni-
kolor [sic] as saying,

> The life of the mind is of greater consequence than
> the mechanical aids for greater production. If we lose
> our sense of oneness with the other worlds in which lie
> the roots of our thoughts and feelings we should be un-
> happy even in an earthly paradise—may we might even
grow to hate it.\(^2\)

Charlie's reaction is that the Bengalis love the "concatenation" of
words. A practical approach to life has kept this ostensibly religious
man from the flights of beauty and devotion which real religious know-
ledge offers. In contrast, Myna has experienced new levels of mystical
union with Krishna and is even more full of devotion and life.

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 279.

\(^2\)Ibid.
When Balaram sees his choice between these approaches to life, he rejects Charlie's "practical" style and becomes Kyna's flutist. Again in Gose's novels, the religious basis of life is asserted. Temptations confront India, asking her to change this traditional orientation. Any rejection of her religious foundations, however, can only serve India badly. The practical affairs of life are not man's primary concern. The stories Gose tells of the Perbati villagers and the boy Balaram lead to a conclusion that the secular view of life, with its rationalism and concern for the practicalities of life, has nothing to offer the man who can know religious truth. The myths of India's religious heritage embody a truth to which a man must respond with devotion and faith.

Hinduism as a World Rejecting Religion

Certain writers of recent Indo-English fiction which we have considered are, then, concerned with a secular view which challenges the traditional religious view of life. But there is a deeper, more intricate concern expressed by several novelists. The challenge they perceive is to the idea of Hinduism as a religion which tends to reject the concerns of the world, encouraging men to accept life unselfcritically and concentrate primarily instead on spiritual concerns. Three authors explore this idea. Nagantara Nagai expresses in several novels the feeling that Hinduism does indeed encourage a passive acceptance of life and that this element of Hindu thought is a threat to the good in society. A western character in Balachandra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* challenges the acquiescent spirit of Hinduism, but is firmly refuted in Rajan's treatment of the theme. Rajan asserts that the acceptance of life is itself the great power of Hinduism which can in turn affect life in this world. Raja Rao in *The Serpent and The Rope* takes the challenge and turns the
question into what he sees as its Indian form. Hinduism does, he suggests, reject the concerns of this world, accept life as offered, and concern itself with spiritual concerns. In his novel, Raja Rao brings to this statement the perspective of the religions systematic thought of Advaita Vedanta. The Hindu recognizes that the world is only phenomenally real. Therefore, he need not be overly concerned with the change or illusion on the phenomenal level of existence. Rather, the Hindu accepts the world in its partial reality and looks for the unity on the highest level of absolute reality where there are no distinctions.

Shubhacharya suggests in Shadow from Ladakh that the world negating element of Hinduism can undermine the best social action. Mayantara Sahgal expresses concern in three of her novels that Hinduism encourages only an uncritical acceptance of life, rather than inspiring effort for its betterment. In A Time to be Happy, published in 1957 and set at the time of independence, Ms. Sahgal seems convinced that Hindus have been able to find a balance between the spiritual and material worlds. McIvor, an officer in a British company, suggests to the narrator that Hindus seem very preoccupied with giving up things. The narrator cannot fully agree:

We are and we aren't. That is one of the paradoxes you will find in India, probably the basic paradox. And when you examine it, it isn't really a paradox at all. I have always believed there are two opposite tendencies that create the pattern of Indian life: a forthright sensuality existing side by side with a stark and stoic renunciation. They seem poles apart, but they are really two sides of the same coin. At heart the sensualist is an Indian as the ascetic.

This novel is written about a "time to be happy," a time when Indians had recently won their independence by means of the purity of non-violence and were about to build a better alternative than the decadent West.

1Sahgal, A Time to be Happy, p. 160.
India at the time of independence seemed ready to achieve great things, and Ms. Sahgal emphasizes the creativity of Indian civilization in the novel. However, she also suggests in *A Time to be Happy* the problem which will obsess her more and more in her later works. "We have created beauty in all its forms . . . to rank with the world's greatest, yet we tolerate the most appalling squalor about us." Writing in the years just after independence about the exciting period that gained independence, Ms. Sahgal does not concentrate on this apparent flaw in Hindu thought.

Increasingly in her later works the quality of renunciation in the Hindu view is portrayed as a defective characteristic. *This Time of Morning*, written in 1965, reveals a cast of characters more aware of their shortcomings than the idealists of the independence years. Sir Arjun Mitra finds that the Ideals embodied in the Bible make it a valuable addition to his library. Sir Mitra is a convinced Hindu, yet he cannot help being impressed with the Bible's singleness of purpose and the dynamic society it had brought into being. . . he and others of his generation examined their own society afresh and found it wanting. Vitality had ebbed from the social order. Religion was a snarl of taboos and abuses. The country was ripe for decay—or reform.

Even the hero of the story, Kailas, a follower of Sahndi who considers Hinduism a part of himself, worries that one cannot accept Hinduism without reconciling himself to ignorance and superstitions. Ms. Sahgal evidences a reformer's zeal, especially as she works with the question of women in society. Therefore, it is not surprising that she writes

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1. Ibid., p. 231.
with a concern that Hinduism cannot allow, much less encourage, reforms which she feels are necessary for the survival of society.

The Day in Shadow, written in 1971, expresses a disillusionment with Hindu religion and culture. A major theme of the book treats Hinduism as a religion which encourages a passive acceptance of life. The major character, Sumrit, has recently gone through a divorce. Trusting to the last, she has allowed herself to be tricked into a settlement in which she must hold in her name several lakhs worth of stock which are in a trust fund for her son. Until he comes of age, Sumrit must pay huge annual taxes but can draw no income from the stocks. When Sumrit discovers this she is muck, but has no interest in fighting her ex-husband. She thinks that she simply will write more and survive somehow. Raj, a Hindu friend with a Christian father, is infuriated with her passive reaction. How could she do nothing while a vindictive husband ruined her life and the lives of her children? Sumrit's reaction seems to offer additional proof for a dilemma Raj has already sensed. To him it seems that Hinduism is most often represented by inaction, and even toleration of inhuman action. Christianity, on the other hand, seems to bring action, reforming zeal. Raj cannot reject Hinduism, though; it is a part of his roots.

Ram Krishnan, a friend of Raj's father, has carried on a discussion with him for years on the likenesses and differences, merits and defects of Hinduism and Christianity. Raj's father is now dead; but as the editor Ram Krishnan works out his New Year's issue, Ram is still grappling with the earlier discussions.

In the chapter where Sahgal works through Ram Krishnan's thoughts, the author seems to have worked out a sort of reconciliation.\(^3\) The

Christian, Ram suggests, begins with value before existence—God exists and must be good. The Hindu, on the other hand, begins with existence and stresses acceptance. Ram suggests that while Christianity is concerned with introducing more good into the world, the Hindu is concerned with adapting to good and evil which are both expressions of existence. The editor then turns to approach the question with a presupposition that the problem of religion is the problem of evil. The Christian separates good and evil, while the Hindu, in Ram's view, accepts God as the universe and therefore accepts the things that exist as ultimately good. The Hindu attitude cannot be viewed as cowardly resignation. It is rather an attempt to align with the facts of existence which suggest that the individual is an insignificant part of the entire universe. Ram Krishnan goes a step further to suggest that he is considering the meaning of religion for people in their daily lives, viewed from their finite viewpoints. From the viewpoint of the individual man the evil that comes into his life is unquestionably evil. Therefore, while Hinduism might hold the final truth concerning the unity of all things, the Hindu could work with the Christian for good in the phenomenal world. This realm of lesser reality is nonetheless real in the perception of the individuals who live in it.

For Dayanara Sahgal this question looms very importantly. In The Day in Shadow the author is concerned with the selfish, grasping breed of men who are gaining political and economic control in India. If Hinduism continues to encourage a passive acceptance of life, she foresees the rise of unprincipled and egocentric men to places of leadership. There must, in her view, be a new element of striving introduced into Hinduism and the element may come from some kind of interdependence with Christian thought.
The acceptance of life as it presents itself, which Sahgal finds such a threatening idea, is given by Balachandra Rajan the status of the very strength of Hinduism itself. In The Dark Dancer an English friend taunts the main character Krishna repeatedly with the charge that Krishna is a resigned man who is content to "live in a cage," because he has submitted to the demands of family tradition. Though he is driven by her questioning to criticize his traditions, Krishna ultimately realizes the power that comes from acceptance of life. This idea is expressed in the novel first in Kamala, who is the conquering idea of the book, and secondly in the symbol of the Natraja, the dark dancer.

As Krishna gazes at his bride Kamala on his wedding day, he thinks, "with Kamala there would be no tranquility." It is not rebellion which he sees, but a "strange strength of acceptance."1 This strength is first seen at work in a non-violent rally for independence. Calmly, Kamala marches toward the oncoming police. Krishna, just home from England, watches a friend being beaten and turns on the policeman. His violence shatters the tenor of the mass gathering. Kamala may nurse her husband's wounds, but she cannot understand his. For her, non-violence is not simply a technique, but "an invoking of qualities instinctive in her nature."2 Rajan suggests that Kamala, the Hindu woman, understands that acceptance paradoxically can conquer. Kamala explains to Krishna why this is true. "It isn't a tactic, Krishna. It's a way to the truth, and the truth is the same on both sides of the conflict."3 Kamala will not fight what she sees as evil because she believes in "accepting," in

1 Balachandra Rajan, The Dark Dancer, p. 18.
2 Ibid., p. 35.
3 Ibid., p. 37.
standing firmly on what she sees as right, while demanding others do the same; the two sides will eventually be absorbed in each other.

Kamala uses this "acceptance" on her husband when he takes an English lover. This has been his decision and she has no intention of fighting him. For Kamala, this is not a tactic to make her husband feel guilty, but a way of life which throws the weight of proof on the other individual. Her final assertion leads Kamala to her own death. Two Muslim men threaten a young girl and Kamala stands firmly in their path. Though she dies, she has become the conqueror, first in being true to her own sense of duty, but also in the fact that the riots are quelled. In Kamala's non-violent way, she has taken what could have been construed as resignation and turned it into a resistance against evils in many forms. Rajan's thematic treatment affirms the validity of this attitude toward life.

The attitude is correct because it grows out of a correct perception of reality, the unity of all things. The symbol of the Nataraja reflects this truth again and again throughout the book. Nataraja, the Lord of the Dance, is one of the manifestations of Shiva. The unending dance embodies and manifests Eternal Energy in five forms: Creation, Maintenance, Destruction, Concealment and Favor, which seem intellectually to be mutually exclusive ideas. The incessant motion of swaying limbs is, however, one with the balanced head and the mask-like countenance. Rajan uses the symbol repeatedly to emphasize the unity which is ultimately real. At Krishnan's wedding, the Nataraja seems to capture something of what he sees in Kamala. She, like the Nataraja, has the sense of "union of power with tranquility, not captured but liberated in

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the eternal dancing.\(^1\) Later, Kamala returns from her mother's sickbed at the same time as her husband's relationship with the English woman is destroying their marriage. She brings with her an image of the Nataraja. New creation does indeed result from destruction when Krishnan finally comes to terms with the meaning of Hindu marriage. Near the end of the book, when Krishnan has joined Kamala to nurse the victims of the war over the partition, he watches a Moslem whom they have been trying to save from cholera slip away. The Nataraja image dances in the light of the swinging hurricane lamp and Krishnan meditates:

> It was as if one were raised into the mystery's center, into the transformation of the God's eye, as if the destruction shimmering on the leaping muscles, swishing down the thin wall of the dying man, was not a barbarian to be subdued, a violence to be disciplined, but a jubilation that absorbed the flesh, the rivers and peaks of comprehension being one hair of the unanswered stillness... Perhaps, like Kamala, he could watch the man go down and feel the seduction of a different whirlpool, the merciless, impartial vortex of truth.\(^2\)

Acceptance of life as it presents itself becomes for Krishnan not a passive acquiescence to good and evil, but a powerful means to understand diversity and to transcend it to experience the ultimate unity—even to bring unity into the temporal world. What is shown as a threat to Hinduism by Sahgal, in her novels, is defended as the very truth and power of Hinduism in The Dark Dancer by Balachandra Rajan.

Raja Rao in The Serpent and The Rope is sensitive to challenges to the Hindu view of the world. He responds to these challenges by affirming the absolute truth of what he defines as Hinduism, Advaita Vedanta philosophy. His novel expresses this truth in three ways. First, in contrasting the westerner Madeleine and the Indian Rama, Raja Rao suggests

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\(^1\) Balachandra Rajan, *The Dark Dancer*, p. 28.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 225.
that in fact the westerner denies the world because he does not accept it in its unity. If the Hindu is accused of rejecting the concerns of the world, the accusation results because the Hindu realizes that the distinctions and changes of the world are only phenomenally real. Ultimately, Reality is a unity. Therefore, Rama finds no need to draw the distinctions which Madeleine does and fight against the body or death or disruptive changes. Raja Rao pursues the idea, secondly, on a more abstract level—using the idea of the feminine, world-affirming principle and the masculine, world-denying principle. One moves toward truth, Raja Rao suggests, never by denying the world, but by seeking unity in it, as in the unity of male and female. This realization leads the main character Ramanaray thirdly, toward an understanding of the true nature of Reality, which is unity. When Rama gains a knowledge and experience of the Real, he discovers that there is no world to either reject or affirm, for it is only an appearance which is based on ignorance and only secondarily, phenomenally real. Atman is one with Brahman, intellectually. There are no distinctions in the experience of ultimate Reality.

When Raja Rao counterpoises his two major characters, he contrasts two ontological views. Both Madeleine and Rama are on a search for truth; each begins from an opposing standpoint. Madeleine can only view the world in terms of duality and thereby blocks all avenues for discovering truth. Rama, on the other hand, is aware of the unity of reality and therefore his search leads him progressively toward an apprehension of Reality.

Madeleine, Rama’s French wife, is convinced that truth is to be found only outside oneself, on the other side of some distant, strange and difficult wall. Her mind operates on the level of logical contradictions.
As Rama explains, bridges both fascinate and terrify Madeleine, but she always feels truth lies on the other side. Madeleine's own Roman Catholic heritage means nothing to her. It is too easily accessible, too familiar. Truth must always lie for her across a barrier. Madeleine not only divides the world by assuming that truth can be found only in one specific way, she also sees everything in terms of either good or evil. When Rama meets Madeleine, he notices that she is often indignant at some particular evil, always outraged against some just cause. Because she will not recognize the coincidence of all things, Madeleine is never able to reconcile herself to the death of her son. She judges the body as evil and wishes her husband would practice the ascetic brahmacarya of his ancestors. This dualistic, world-rejecting attitude finally drives Madeleine to Buddhism and the cure for suffering. She begins to sleep on a thin pallet, eat weeds, and limit her words to 400 a day in an effort to get outside herself to the truth; but all this is to no avail. Madeleine has made the original error of seeing the world in terms of contradictions and duality; she has shut herself off from ever finding the truth. It is Madeleine, ostensibly concerned about the affairs of the world, who has in the end rejected the world.

The Hindu Rama is launched on a much more hopeful search because he rejects viewing the world in terms of contradiction or dualism. Rama is prepared to look for unity in the depths of all that is around him. While Madeleine is trying to escape the self, Rama is searching for the Self, Atman, which is Reality, or Brahman. Already, Rama is fascinated by the unity of man and woman and tries to develop a oneness in his marriage.

1 Raja Rao, The Serpent and The Rope, p. 10.
His ideal is the relationship of Yajnyavalkya with Maitreyi. Often he quotes Yajnyavalkya’s words, "For whose sake, verily, does a husband love his wife? Not for the sake of his wife, but verily for the sake of the Self [atman] in the wife." Rama is kept from experiencing any of the oneness he desires in his marriage, because of Madeleine’s dualistic view. Rama glimpses something of the unity behind the phenomenally real world and therefore is not tortured by the events which worry Madeleine. Rama’s audacious reaction to the death of his second son contrasts vividly with Madeleine’s irresolvable sorrow: "... I laughed. I was neither in pain, nor was I relieved; I felt above both, like a child looking at a kite in the sky." Because Rama is looking for truth not in negation, but by grasping for unity, he has hope of finding truth.

Rama sees that the level of contradictions on which Madeleine lives is only phenomenally real. He is searching for the highest level of being. Though he cannot find an expression of oneness in his marriage, Rama continues to explore the unity to be found in the joining of masculine and the feminine. To Rama, the feminine represents world-affirmation.

The woman presents herself to man in order that man may see himself in unity with her. This unity on the phenomenal level of reality foreshadows the unity which is ultimately Real. Because Madeleine rejected

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1. Raja Rao, The Serpent and The Hope, p. 32.
2. Ibid., p. 283.
3. Ibid., pp. 350-51.
the world, she could not embody the Feminine Principle and, in turn, could not be the mirror which Rama needed to see the ultimate Self.\(^1\)

The embodiment of the Feminine Principle comes in the person of Savithri. This Indian woman he can worship, and onto her feet he slips the family heirloom wedding rings. His worship of Savithri is really only one expression of the bhakti Rama begins to render the Feminine Principle which he sees as his hope.

Rama is still searching for a unity on the level of the phenomenally real, but his acceptance of the world is moving him toward an understanding of the Ultimately Real. He sees that the world "is spread for woman to be," and in making man know the world, "woman shows that the world is oneself as seen as the other."\(^2\) In the acceptance of woman, in the spiritual union with the world affirming principle, Rama moves toward a realization of the Ultimate Reality. The realization comes not by rejecting the world, but by realizing it exists only on a secondary level of reality. It is "annihilated" by "absorption," by union as experience beyond knowledge.

The woman needs our worship for her fulfillment, for in worshipping her we know the world, annihilate it, absorbing it into ourself. We should be Shiva that woman be dissolved—and with her the world. For the world is not meant for denial but dissolution.\(^3\)

It is, then, through trying to discover unity on the secondary, phenomenal level of reality that Rama glimpses the primary, absolute truth of ultimate Reality—Atman, the self is Brahman. Rama has sensed throughout his


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 169.
search that truth is to be found in unity. Yet one distinction is left to be dissolved if he is to experience the Truth—the intellectual distinction of the knower and the known.

Let us review the movement to this point through which Raja Rao has taken his character. The third and lowest level of being, the level of logical contradictions, Rama has recognized as unreality from the beginning. Madeleine's distinctions between good and evil, just and unjust, have never captivated him. To describe Rama's movement through the next level of being, Raja Rao uses Sankara's own symbol of the rope coiled in the twilight. This is the level of appearance, characterized by illusion and change.\(^1\) Two types of reality exist on this level, the illusory and the phenomenally real. In the twilight a coiled rope may appear to be a snake. When one comes close to it, one realizes that the snake existed only in illusion. The rope itself, however, has a phenomenal reality which can be substantiated through the senses. Yet the phenomenal existence of the rope, an existence subject to change, is also not ultimately Real.

When Rama recognizes this he is ready to comprehend the primary level of reality. He tries to express the unity of existence to Madeleine. "The rope is no rope to itself," he says. "Then what is it?" Madeleine demands. "The rope. Not as opposed to the serpent, but the rope just is—and therefore there is no world."\(^2\) Rama is attempting to express to his French wife the classical Advaita Vedanta philosophy—that the world is an objectivication of the mind which imposes itself on the Self, the

\(^1\) Robert D. Baird, "Indian Religious Traditions," p. 189.

\(^2\) Raja Rao, The Serpent and The Rope, pp. 333-34
Atman, Ultimate Reality, Brahman, is pure consciousness, devoid of all attributes and all categories of the intellect. Atman, the Self, is the same as Brahman. Since Brahman is non-dual, there are ultimately no distinctions between knower and known. Therefore reality "has no name. The rope is no rope to itself." Raja Rao affirms in The Serpent and The Rope this ontological view of reality as the basis of truth.

The understanding of reality Raja Rao presents answers critics who charge that Hinduism rejects concerns of the world, accepting life as it presents itself and concentrating only on the spiritual realms. The Hindu, who in Raja Rao's view has the true understanding of reality, knows that contradictions and the phenomenal world have no final reality. There is therefore no need to be imbalanced in one's concern over the ethical issues which trouble Sahgal or lead Rajan to assert that the power of the acceptance of life can in itself work for good in the world. Rama clearly answers to his wife's suggestion that "We Europeans believe in being good," "We Indians in being wise." Madeleine, Rama suggests, is attracted to Buddhism by the compassion it evidences. Here again, she reveals her incorrect understanding of Reality.

To have compassion, remember, presupposes the existence of the world. You must have compassion toward some suffering thing, so suffering exists and compassion as well.

The saint wants to transform the world into his image, yet his actions

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3 Raja Rao, The Serpent and The Rope, p. 333.
5 Ibid., p. 331.
are deluded and futile because he deals with the phenomenally real but does not experience Ultimate Reality. Rama states that Hinduism had to defeat the moralism of Buddhism.

The Bhagavad Gita... is an affirmation not of good but of Truth. Truth can take no sides. Krishna is the hero of the battle, but seemingly a hero greater than he is Shriya, the great warrior. Yet Shriya's courage was Krishna's gift. Krishna fought himself against himself, through himself and in himself, and what remained is ever and ever himself—the Truth.¹

Raja Rao clearly senses challenges from outside the Hindu view which charge Hinduism with being a religion which accepts life as given and encourages the individual to search for spiritual Reality, without concern for reforming the temporal world. The charges, in Raja Rao's view, are true from a particular point of view. Yet critics have not discovered a flaw in the Hindu view, but have only pointed to the truth in the Hindu understanding which finds ultimate unity in Reality. To fight evil would be to reject part of the world which the Hindu recognizes as only phenomenally real. Man's responsibility is rather to experience the truth of Ultimate Reality.

Conclusion

Hinduism, and its role in the contemporary world, has been chosen often for thematic consideration by the recent Indo-Anglican authors. As a whole, the writers evidence a deep concern for the preservation of the religion which serves as a basis for their culture. Two major concerns are expressed. First, a new secular view of life, embodying rationalism, individualism and a disrespect for tradition, is described as it challenges the religious view based primarily on tradition and faith and expressed in the life of the community. In A Silence of Desire, Kamala

¹Ibid., p. 94.
Markandaya suggests the irresolvable conflicts between persons holding these opposing views. Both Sudhin Those, in Cradle of the Clouds and Flame of the Forest, and R. K. Narayan, in The Man-Eater of Malgudi, use a mythical structure to suggest that the religious view embodies basic truth which cannot be replaced by the secular attitude.

Other authors deal with a second challenge which demands that Hindus reevaluate their religion. The charge they sense suggests that Hinduism is a religion which rejects concerns of the world, accepting life as it presents itself and concentrating primarily on the spiritual realms. Nayantara Sahgal in two novels, This Time of Morning and The Day in Shadow accepts the charge as true. She finds Hinduism in need of a new assertive tendency if society is to be preserved and led by its nobler elements. In The Dark Dancer, Balachandra Rajan attempts to make the case that the acceptance of life as it offers itself is the very strength of Hinduism and that it can work for the good of society. For Raja Rao, however, the state of the social order is not of primary concern. He agrees with Mr. Sahgal that the charges made are true if one accepts certain presuppositions. Rather than sensing a lack, however, Raja Rao affirms that Advaita Vedanta's attitude toward the world grows out of true assertion about the knowledge of reality. The world is only phenomenally real. Man's primary concern must be with Ultimate Reality in which there is no distinction or change.

What then can be said of the reactions to the challenges to Hinduism from outside the tradition. Only Kamala Markandaya in A Silence of Desire and Nayantara Sahgal in This Time of Morning and The Day in Shadow suggest that some interdependence between the traditional views and new ideas from outside the tradition is needed. Two of the books hint at another reaction we have seen expressed in the novels studied,
the reaction of impotence to cope with the challenges. Kamala Markandaya does not suggest that there is any way in which a reconciliation between Sarojini and Dandekar can be effected, though there is a need for their attitudes to intersect. Narayan's character Nataraj in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* is helpless to cope with the destroyer, Vasu. However, this impotence is presented as a positive reaction. Nataraj cannot, and in addition need not, deal with Vasu, because the order of the cosmos will inevitably return to itself. The most prevalent reaction to the challenges to Hinduism is a reaffirmation of the truth of the traditional religion. Sudhin Ghose, R. K. Narayan, Balachandra Rajan and Raja Rao all concur that within the Hindu religion is the truth which, when experienced, can help a man to order his life. The secular view of life is shown by Ghose and Narayan to be a threat which must be totally rejected. Balachandra Rajan and Raja Rao, with varying success, argue the completeness of the Hindu view of life. In *The Serpent* and *The Rope*, Raja Rao equates truth with Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Raja Rao asserts that nothing can be added to this understanding of truth.
CHAPTER FOUR

PERSONAL IDENTITY

The Indo-Anglican novelists all have roots in more than one culture, with the notable exception of R. K. Narayan.¹ Most of them, raised in pre-independence India, spent university days in Britain, America or France. The clash with the values of western culture has meant for them more than changes in the family, the economic structure or even religion; it has presented a problem of pressing personal importance. In traditional Indian society, the role, the duties, and the identity of each member are clearly defined. In a sense, then, the question of personal identity is not raised, since identity is seen in terms of one's role in society. Western society, however, has placed an emphasis on each individual determining his own personal identity. The novels show that the clash between the two views has had two particularly unsettling effects on the Indian in close contact with western values. On the one hand, the Indian abroad develops a feeling of rootlessness and alienation which makes it difficult for him to identify with his traditional role. On the other hand, Western demands for personal freedom and development have an exciting lure. The Indian caught in the clash may find it difficult to define himself or his place in the world.

The recurrence of the theme of the search for personal identity in the Indo-Anglican novels of the post-independence era suggests how deeply this tension has been felt. The search for personal identity is often presented as a confrontation with Western values in which the individual must discover his own country and himself. The most frequent approach to the theme is a plot structure of a wanderer returning home. Sometimes, however, the lure of new ideas is represented by a western character who is visiting India by an Indian who has had a freer upbringing. It would seem that the interaction of two cultures in the mind of an individual should prove very fertile ground for artistic creativity. Too often, however, a sentimental longing for the security of traditional roots overwhelms the plot and character development and no interdependence of ideas is achieved. Several of the books treating the theme present a plot which leads toward a predetermined resolution, rather than faithfully capturing the implications of the tensions.

Two novels avoid this tendency, Bhabani Bhattacharya's novel, Music for Mohini, and Anand Lal's novel, Seasons of Jupiter. In Music for Mohini, Bhattacharya grapples realistically with the struggles of a modern, young girl trying to find herself in a marriage that takes her to an ancestral home. The resolution comes only in interdependence between tradition and modernity. Anand Lal's hero in Seasons of Jupiter is never able to "return" to the home of his ancestors, although he tries to determine his identity through following each of the goals of life Hinduism sets forth. Four other novels concerned with the Indian wanderer suggest that western ideas of personal identity offer nothing to the Indian. In Kamala Markandaya's Possession, Santha Rama Rau's Remember the House, and Balasubra Rajani's The Dark Dancer, a personal identity crisis only develops because the Indian character succumbs to the ideas
of an opposing western character. None of these novels recognize a need for forming a personal definition such as the western characters in the novels advocate, since the Indian can find complete satisfaction when he is reintegrated within the traditional pattern of society. The fourth novel which suggests there is nothing to be gained from the western ideas of personal identity, Raja Rao's novel The Serpent and The Rope, comes to its conclusion through a different approach. Rama, the main character, does not achieve an understanding of his identity through integration into the social order, but rather through understanding that the self is only phenomenally real. Ultimately, only the self, Atman, is Real; and it is one with Brahman.

Music for Mohini

Bhabani Bhattacharya presents one of the more satisfying realistic pictures of the search for personal identity in Music for Mohini. The conflict of Mohini, like that of the heroes who return to India from abroad, is the dilemma of evaluating the old and the new. She is not, however, the protege of a cynical westerner, but of an enlightened widower father who wished for his daughter a broad view of the world. Though Mohini has a good education, she has no intellectual aspirations. Her days are filled discussing with Old Mother or her brother Heeralal, reading an Indian novel, bantering with the tangle vendor or watching a cinema show; but music is her first love. Her voice captivated one listener enough that he had Mohini record several songs which were then heard on the radio. At this point in a young girl's life, though, there are even more important things than music—there is a marriage to be arranged. Though suitable men are difficult to find, a scholarly country landowner is finally discovered. The suitor's mother has demanded a girl
with all eight luck signs and Mohini jubilantly holds the marks in her hand. However, Mohini's father hesitates at sending his lively, city-bred daughter to this country existence.

You don't understand, girl. Space and emptiness could be more suffocating than din, dust and hustle unless you have mental preparation. Even at my age, I would go mad in the country! And then, consider, no more cinemas or theatres or concerts. No singing for A. L. R. [All India Radio].

To Mohini it does not matter where she lives with this wonderful man who is to be her husband.

The shocks begin immediately after the marriage. Village women have no qualms about examining a new bride's finery. Her mother-in-law quickly hustles her to the women prayer room where she is to take the dust from the sandals of her dead father-in-law. Mohini's husband has led a scholarly bachelor's existence too long to relish the whirlpool of feelings caused by his marriage. But Soop-lekha, Mohini's sister-in-law, attempts to put things into perspective. She had moved in the opposite direction from Mohini, as a country girl marrying a city man. Both face comparable difficulties:

"A city has no little mercy for an alien as the country; no more, no less. Years it was before I could fit in, Mohini, hard years."

"A city, even? A city like Calcutta? It is so knowing, so reasonable."

To eat meat and fish, to mix bare faced with men of her own age, and to give up ingrained ideas were hard orders for Soop-lekha. For Mohini, moving in the other direction, it would be equally difficult. Yet Soop-lekha encourages her:

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1Shattacharya, 'Basic for Mohini', p. 22.
2Ibid., p. 110.
We who're wed serve some real purpose. It's as though we make a bridge between two banks of a river. We connect culture, Mohini, our old Eastern view of life with the new semi-Western outlook. The city absorbs a little of the 'barbaric' village, the village absorbs a little of the 'West-polluted' city. Both change, unaware. They are less angry with each other. This is more urgent today than ever before. Our new India must restore this foundation.1

Mohini's husband, Jayadev, does not hold to his mother's intensely orthodox attitudes; but, since he is immersed in scholarly pursuits, he contributes little toward Mohini's adjustment during her early days in the "Big House." As in Remember the House and Seasons of Jupiter, an ancestral home represents the joint family tradition, the pull of the Indian past. In this novel, however, both good and bad are embodied in the ancestral home, the Big House. In the early days of marriage, her mother-in-law undertakes to make Mohini fit her position, trading her favorite "cheap" glass bangles for golden ones, dressing her in the plain cotton muslin woven in the village, subduing her girlish sprightliness. Mohini is charmed at being the mistress of the Big House, yet feels weighed down by its solemn tradition. Her own symbolic act of rebellion is climbing merrily onto a tree limb in undignified bliss. Though her mother scolds Mohini for her lack of propriety, Mohini's husband senses her need to feel free from the traditions and assert herself. One day he himself sits in the tree waiting to meet his wife. Together they discover an outlet for her, teaching the village women of India of ideas of freedom and equality and even of basic science. Some of the women, however, have no time for a girl who does not even know the basic myths which explain the basis for caste. Others are impressed, are anxious to learn and even to read. Mohini in turn learns to treasure the festivals, to

1Ibid., p. 113.
fill in the details of the rich legends which her Old Mother had only outlined and to thrive on the tales spun by the village story tellers. Bhattacharya suggests that the 'barbaric village' and the 'West polluted city' both have worthwhile values which must be fused together.

This is no easy task, however, because the two views of life stand at points in utter contradiction. Mohni's struggle to define her own identity reaches a crisis when her mother-in-law demands that she cut her breast and offer her blood to the Goddess as a plea for the birth of a son. She thinks of what her father would say.

Don't bow down to such insult. You are the New India. The old orthodox ways have been our yoke, have enslaved us. Let us be free.¹

But her Old Mother's answer would be,

How can we live without our past? Time is our earth, the earth which feeds our roots. Faith will not be denied. Give yourself to the Goddess with grace, if not with faith.²

Her Old Mother had faith in the traditional rituals. Would it hurt to go through the motions? Though Mohni cannot believe a trip to the temple will cure her barrenness, she does not want to incur her mother-in-law's disapproval or to alienate the Big House which has given her so much and appears even to be learning from her. She decides to follow her mother-in-law. The Goddess is about to be appeased by Mohni's sacrifice when Jayadev hears that his wife has gone and rushes to stop her. "Mohni mustn't insult herself... we are not slaves," he demands.

The implication in Bhattacharya's thematic treatment is that the individual must not submit himself wholesale to an unchangeable tradition.

¹Ibid., p. 204.
²Ibid.
which still can benefit by development and growth. The tradition embodies a great deal of good from India's past, but it is not to be accepted blindly or uncritically. Bhattacharya reiterates that adherence to the form of the tradition can lead to a subversion of its intent in a final development of plot. Jayadev's mother is convinced that the horoscope does not lie when it declares that her son's life will be threatened and can only be saved by her grandson. Jayadev must have a son.

When Mohini and the mother return from the temple, Mohini makes plans to visit her home for a few weeks. The mother plots. There is in town a much scorned girl who has loved Jayadev and also bears the eight lucky signs. Humiliated and desperate, the mother goes to this girl and pleads with her to entice her son and bear her a grandson who can save her son's life. Before the plan is effected, Mohini is discovered pregnant. The mother is aghast at the drastic measures she has already taken against her daughter-in-law.

What madness had grown out of her anguish... The mother of the Big House had transgressed the basic moral laws as though they were meaningless. Was her son's life or, for that matter, even the life of the Big House worth saving at such a price? ... For the first time she could see her son clearly... Right or wrong, he had honest faith in his set of values.1

The form of the tradition, Bhattacharya suggests, must be upheld by those alive to the best in its spirit, rather than those bound only to its laws. A resolution to Mohini's personal identity could not be found by adapting to everything the tradition offered. Instead, the resolution was possible through her willingness to evaluate the old and the new and to attempt to bring the best of them together.

1Ibid., p. 230.
Seasons of Jupiter

If any book of the recent period of Indo-Anglican fiction reflects the pessimism of the western novel of the alienated wanderer, Anand Lal's *Seasons of Jupiter* comes closest. Qyan Chand begins his 'endless drifting' when he leaves India ostensibly to study in England, but in reality to avoid marriage. Once he is acculturated to foreign life the irresponsibility of his existence has a giddy attraction for him. He begins to systematically procrastinate taking his bar exam to avoid returning home and continues in England even after his older brother dies. Finally, news that his father is dying draws Qyan home. Guilt and an empty sense of no longer belonging to his own background immediately depresses him. As he watches his father's body shrivel to ashes he feels the ashes filling his lungs and his head, and responds with a feeling that "my faith was pushed out of me."

To escape his desolation, Qyan plunges into his duties, trying to live up to the Hindu goals of dharma and artha. The ancestral home in this book also, serves as the symbol of "duties, responsibilities and a living sense of continuity." Qyan attempts to bring order to the house at Amritsar, to raise the workings of his father's estates to productive levels, and to expand his financial security by investing in a lumber mill. The picture is completed when Qyan marries and has two sons. For his friend and co-worker, Narajan Das, this kind of life is ideal. "Staid and orthodox" Narajan orders his life around the seasons of Jupiter, cares for his family and lumber yard, and, by operating on the level of business and society, conceives his life as a complete success. For

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2 Ibid., p. 43.
Gyan. It is not enough to simply do his duty. He has tried to find identity in the role assigned him by his tradition and has felt unfulfilled. Such a life offers rhythm for life, but lacks the activity or love which Gyan as a person needs.

His friend Ranjit offers another approach to life which fascinates Gyan. Ranjit is a man who loves good music, food, and dance. His rootless existence has taken him the world over in an unquenchable thirst for the good things in life. The life of this highly individualistic hedonist reminds Gyan of the joys of his student days. Yet he knows he is not prepared to give up his attempt to find his roots within his past. "I had to besiege the house, for still it remained unconquered," he says. ¹ Gyan is determined to somehow draw strength for growth in the tradition which is at his roots.

There is one part of the house which seems to hold the key. Upstairs, through a door beyond his mother's bedroom, is a secret room which Gyan discovers only after his father's death. Brocade furnishings and thick, patterned carpets give the room part of its beauty. But the series of erotic wall paintings, rich artistic expressions of all the fullness of love, the "life of activity and love in unbroken rhythm and beauty," is what captivates him.² This is not a room to be enjoyed alone. Finding a person with whom he could share it proves to be one of the great difficulties of Gyan's life. Once, before his marriage, Gyan takes a lovely English girl to the room. "Two irreconcilable aspects of the situation, her beauty... and the saddening fact that I could not possibly

¹Ibid., p. 127.
²Ibid., p. 148.
think of a life with her,"\(^1\) rob the moment of the deep significance Gyan had sought. Gyan's marriage is one of duty, and his wife has no interest in his secret haven. After his wife dies Gyan develops a fatherly relationship with Pushpa, the daughter of Narajin Das. Pushpa seems to have struck her own balance between individualism and tradition in "her sense of adventure and her absorption in the life of the town."\(^2\) She comes to love Gyan and when he takes her to the room, not to make love but only to see it, she says to him, "Gyan, this is the center."\(^3\) Pushpa suggests that the room symbolizes that within the tradition is a recognition of the needs of individual persons for beauty, love and adventure.

Though Gyan lacks the will to ask this lovely young girl to marry him before she goes to college, he thinks constantly of her over the next months while she is away. At last she is to return. His life will be full. Pushpa, however, has lost her faith that an individual can be truly fulfilled within the tradition, and cables home that she has married the individualistic Ranjit. One last time, Gyan reaches out for a partner, the Maid of Amrita Sar. This woman has been trapped in a difficult relationship and tied to her house. When Gyan frees her, she leaves him to herself and life, leaving him to study and grow as an individual.

There is one way within the Hindu tradition left in which Gyan can search for his own identity—the life of a sadhu, the search for saksha. A few miles from his home he finds a sadhu, sitting outside his cave. After Gyan has stayed with him a week, the sadhu agrees to teach him the sacred books. First, Gyan must simplify his life by reducing the number of his needs. This step is not too difficult, but achieving the life of

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 59.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 116.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 138.
meditation takes years of disciplined study and observation. After three years Gyan begins to learn two things about the life of the religious pilgrim. First, it is not a withdrawal from the world of men. When a group of men want to hold a political discussion in front of the caves of the religious men, the sadhu assents and comments:

People so often make the mistake of thinking that we are recluses who want to avoid the coming and going of people. That is not so. We live in these quiet places so as not to be in the way of other people.1

Anand Lal's sadhu had actually left a Delhi room because he worried that he took up a room which could have been used by one of the homeless workmen in the city!

The second misunderstanding concerning the life of the hermit is that it is a state of "idyllic retirement and a cessation of the adventure of life."2 After three years Gyan begins to experience "the meaning of many verses of the Upanishads, a feeling of oneness with the very atmosphere of the earth."3 Five years into the life of a sadhu Gyan comments, "Meditation, apparently so calm a pursuit, had led me into an adventure in space which had taxed me almost to the point of physical disintegration."4

This wandering hero, however, is not to find release from life. His journey toward the Himalayas is interrupted when he discovers a young boy, Ramsu, who has fallen from a cliff and been left for dead by his villagers who are on a pilgrimage north. A relationship between Ramsu and Gyan develops quickly. Gyan's meditative flights begin to take on new muscle and color. When the boy is taken back by his family on their

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1Ibid., p. 197.
2Ibid., p. 205.
3Ibid., p. 197.
4Ibid., p. 206.
return trip south. Jyan is left in despair. He cannot meditate. He cannot even sit still.

To discipline his body and achieve his former state of consciousness, Jyan forces himself to take a barefoot march into the snow-covered mountains. Within weeks of his return to the foothills, an odd relationship with a thrush begins to develop. Jyan shifts his hours of meditation to leave time for the bird. They eat together, sing together, and even swim together. The thrush stays behind when its flock leaves for the south, however, and cannot survive a winter’s freeze. Jyan is again in despair. He realizes it is time to return to the world of men. The meditative life has offered rhythm and a new depth of experience, but without an object to love, it is incomplete.

It has been seven years since Jyan left the house. When he returns he begins to evaluate his attitude toward it over the years. The house at Ajrtaar, the embodiment of the tradition which he neglected and from which he felt alienated, has haunted him all his life. Looking back, he concludes that he has been searching for a mirage. His quest has in the deepest sense been for the “unreality of Ajrtaar.” An individual must not try to press himself into the mold of the tradition. He must instead open his full sensitivity to life. Since Jyan never returns to the house, he donates it for post-graduate work, and moves to Delhi where he again tries to find love in marriage. Still, he has not discovered his place in the world, and he begins to love within himself. Just after the birth of a son, Jyan dies.

Any hopes of Anand Lal’s hero returning to the traditional way of life have been destroyed by his youthful wanderings which opened him to other aspects of life. The tradition, as Lal presents it, is adequate for men content with quiet stability, but can never meet the demands of
a man grasping for personal fulfillment, adventure and deep human relationships. Oyan has been awakened to the lives of individual persons and cannot be content in the world of purely formal relationships in which Narajin Das and his wife operate. The dedication of his life to an attempt to find himself within the traditional Indian form has been a waste, a search for an illusion. Filling his duty, building wealth, and searching for spiritual release have all left him unsatisfied. Only in the search for kama—beauty, as Oyan defines it in the arts and in love with a woman, has he glimpsed what is good in life. As Oyan looks at "the room" after his years as a sadhu he says, "I realized afresh the meaning of art. Here was what a man could do. It almost justifies the pretentious mansions in which he hid his genuine creation of beauty." Oyan suggests at the end of his search that all a man can do is to open himself to all of life. Lal suggests that his hero has both gained and lost by his exposure to western ideals which led to his search for personal identity. He has lost the placid content with life seen in Narajin Das and his neighbor; yet he has gained a thirst for life which has led him to taste life in a depth which the settled Indians in the novel do not plumb. The tragedy is that Oyan has caught the unquenchable thirst of the characters of the western novel of alienation and, like them, cut off from roots, he is never able to establish his personal identity.

The Return to the Tradition

Four other books we will consider examine the personal identity crises precipitated by exposure to western ideas. Three of the novels suggest that a solution to the crisis is to be found in submission to the

1Ibid., p. 251.
traditional demands of society and family. Kamala Markandaya suggests in *Possession* that the crisis only develops because alien ideas overwhelm a youth. Santu Rama Rao and Balachandra Raja, only somewhat more satisfactorily, suggest that the personal identity crisis is totally the result of succumbing to inferior western ideas. The main characters of their novels, *Remember the Rose* and *The Dark Dancer*, find happiness in returning to the definitions given them by Indian society. Raja Rao also presents a clear choice for a traditional Indian definition of the person. But his definition is not the social identity of the person, but rather the philosophical definition given in Advaita Vedanta philosophy. His hero's personal identity search is resolved when he understands that India is a phenomenal expression of Ultimate Reality. He realizes that to be Indian is to know that the self is only phenomenally real. The solution of a personal identity crisis comes with the subjugation of the individual self to the absolute Self.

Kamala Markandaya's novel, *Possession*, fails to come to grips in any way with the real tensions of an individual caught between two cultures. The story is well characterized by N. Neena Belliappa as the story of "an Indian goat herder who is a genius and a western Jezebel who discovers his talent and transplants him into another soil."¹ The goat herder, Valmiki, is an artist who is taken as a boy to the home of Carolyn, an English divorcee with "mytho-erotic needs." The boy gradually comes under Carolyn's spell and rejects his roots for her glittering society. Years later, realizing that his mentor is a selfish, grasping woman, Valmiki executes a complete turn about, takes the boat home and lives in the

hills of his boyhood with the Swami with whom he had grown up. Ms. Markandaya presents the story in terms of East versus West, white versus black. The novel gives no significant exploration of the impact of two cultures on the individual. The character of Valmiki never emerges; his every act is only a direct or indirect reaction to the manipulation of the English woman Carolyn.

In Santha Rama Rau's novel Remember the House a fairly straightforward dichotomy between the western ideals of Alix Nichols and the eastern ideals symbolized in the house at Jalnapur and Baba's mother's is presented. Baba, recently returned from school in England, is attracted to Alix and her ideas of "success," "adventure," "romance," and "happiness." Alix's effervescent approach to life is something Baba lacks. "I think," she recalls, "it was a kind of joy in Alix, a determination to have a good time out of life, that made her such an exotic and welcome addition to my world." Baba realizes how different Alix's approach to life is from her mother's, who is now living with a guru in south India to "set her life in order." When Baba asks her mother, "Now are you happy," her mother can only sigh, "Is happiness what you want? . . . Oh my poor child." Her mother's peaceful approach to life may have a solemn beauty, but it seems to exclude personal, objective love, happiness and excitement from life. Though the western ideal of Alix offers a more scintillating attraction than her Indian mother's ideal, Baba cannot so easily dismiss the rich memories of her childhood life in the joint family home in Jalnapur. Her memories of its full days haunt her.

1 Rama Rau, Remember the House, p. 43.
2 Ibid., p. 60.
3 Ibid., p. 200.
and she thinks:

In Jalalabad . . . no one made much of a point about happiness. We were given, and we accepted, almost without thinking, certain precepts. The importance of the family—the one we were born to or the one we married into. Our place in a certain structure, a pattern of life, of birth, marriage, children, peace and death. Our debt to a world could be defined, but the promises were all unstated. Within our framework we could make our own happiness. It was never suggested that we pursue happiness. We were not encouraged to waste our time. *

As in several of these novels it is a rather nostalgic feeling for a family home, a good in one's past which seems to be slipping away, that serves as a symbol that draws the character back to the security of tradition. The idyllic quality of Alix Nichol's dream evaporates for Baba and she turns to Hari, the undeveloped, stable man chosen by her family to be her husband. Hari offers her a country home, reminiscent of the Jalalabad house. Happiness lies within the tradition.

In a subplot Ma. Rosa Rau tells the story of Pria, a girl who avoided Baba's senseless flirtation with the west. While both Pria and Baba were under the same pressure to conform to the standards of English classmates, only Baba imitated them in an effort to gain schoolgirl popularity. Pria could not understand why she should try to be "enthusiastic" about a thing like hockey, when in India such a thing would be senseless. While in a sense Baba envy's her friend's "almost priggish knowledge of where she stood in the world," Baba cannot help feeling that Pria is missing life with her placid equanimity. 2 Pria has married and is leading a happy family life while Baba is still searching for herself. Baba's search takes her full circle back to "Jalalabad House," the

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1 Ibid., p. 90.
2 Ibid., p. 43.
life with which Pria has always been pleased. Apparently, Pria's total
distance from the foreign culture cost her nothing. Santha Rama Rao
paints the story in terms of western ephemeral values, against eastern,
solidly traditional values and has seen to it that the good triumphs.

The personal identity crisis of Balamandira Rajan's hero in The
Dark Dancer also turns out to be a purely western fabrication. Krishnan
only feels a desire for individual growth and a freedom from the re-
straints of tradition because he is drawn by false western values. His
full happiness lies, in fact, in subjection to the definition society
gives to a man in terms of family relationships and social position. The
western ideal of individual freedom is explored and found to be totally
unnecessary for an Indian, who needs only the definition of society for
personal fulfillment. Rajan's treatment of the theme and the denouement
of the plot leave the reader dissatisfied. The truth is rarely
one side of an issue.

Krishnan's alienation is apparent from the opening of the book.
After ten years in England, he walks to his family home, realizing that
he "could summon the images" of his childhood, "but he could not make
them move him." 1 An indifference to his family, a cynicism about the
ceremonial society around him, a detachment from his surroundings, all
mark Krishnan as an outsider. The analysis of his feeling of alienation
constantly intrudes on the story, yet Krishnan does not act in accordance
with these feelings. He in fact submits to his family's choice of mar-
riage partner and career. Krishnan reveals early in the story that while
his mind is shocked to find that he does not rebel, "under the skin" he
feels differently. "Did his muscles not move to surrender, did his blood

1Rajan, The Dark Dancer, p. 5.
not sing in that deep, fascinated curiosity of acceptance that his reason resisted while his emotions curved to the pull?

Krishnan would, perhaps, have recovered quickly from the taint of western society which raised the worry of his own personal identity had he not run into an old Cambridge friend, Carolyn. When he tells her he has married his parents choice of a wife, she exclaims, "Oh Krish, after ten years of living in England, don't tell me the ancestral customs got to you." Carolyn is an orphan, individualistic and nonconformist, a type of the westerner with no roots. She has nothing but scorn for what she sees in Krishnan as a "streak of resignation a mile wide." Temporarily, Krishnan is drawn to Carolyn's insistence on the importance of the individual self and of separate freedom. But as she drags him to herself he feels no liberation, no "welcoming soil," no new beginning. Krishnan begins to rethink Carolyn's definition of freedom. What was it? What did she mean to him really?

She was the obstinate thirst in him for freedom, the blue ray of loneliness—endless, cruel, futile—against tradition with its consolations, the ordained path with its solacing confines.

As Krishnan begins to question what he has gained, two events make him realize how much he has lost. First, he stands with Carolyn in an Independence day rally. He senses that he is an "island" and will never be able to touch the continent that lies before him if he continues to share his roots with Carolyn. The second event is a trip to a temple which Krishnan has not visited for years. As he walks toward the temple there is "a leap of feeling in him, a feeling not simply of remembrance

1 Ibid., pp. 13, 19.
2 Ibid., p. 81.
3 Ibid., p. 124.
but of something approaching restoration.\(^1\) When they approach the priest for a blessing, however, Krishnan sees in his grave eyes that there is no blessing for him while he is with his western companion.

This priestly rejection hurts Krishnan more deeply than the rejection that he had expected from his family and his society. He recognizes that he has been enticed away from the good in his heritage by a definition of freedom designed only for a particular culture and not necessarily inclusive of all humanity. Krishnan analyzes the differences between his and Carolyn's tradition.

She came from a tradition which included nonconformity and dissent. \(\ldots\) she could do as her heart dictated, create her own life style in sturdy independence and yet not feel the deep interior sense of alienation. \(\ldots\) His background on the contrary, was one of complete conformity, where the ego of one's life was drawn even before one's first cry.\(^2\)

\(\text{Karma, not Fate, was seen as the basis for one's place in society.}\)

Because a man's position in society depended on his previous lives, it was true that his identity could be found only in the resultant place, which was proper for him. To rebel against one's position in life was, in an Indian understanding, to rebel against oneself.

The relationship between Carolyn and Krishnan explodes within a few days. The resolution of Krishnan's personal identity problem, which has been framed in terms of east and west, has hinged on his choice between Carolyn and Kamala. After his catharsis he returns to Kamala.

She is the author's idealization of the Indian woman, with her belief in sacrifice and right action rather than individual happiness, her patience and non-violence. An Indian individual, it is suggested, can-\(^\ldots\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 166.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 162.
not find himself apart from his traditions. "A man creates when he is unable to escape," Kamala has said early in the book.\(^1\) Krishnan accepts this definition and, to solve his identity crisis, tries to internalize the tradition embodied in his wife Kamala.

Remember the House and The Dark Dancer do succeed somewhat more than Possession in portraying the plight of a character caught between two cultures. However, the absolute dichotomizing between Kamala and Carolyn, Baba's mother and Alix Nichols, Indian and Western, good and bad, in both Santha Rama Rau and Balachandra Rajan's stories keep them from grappling with the whole issue. The resolution in both novels comes with a movement back to the "house," back to the ideal Hindu man or woman, back to a life where answers are preferred on the basis of long standing application. As Meenakshi Mukherjee has noted,

one strongly suspects that this is so because the novelists themselves, like their protagonists, feel alienated from these values and therefore tend to sentimentalize and idealize them.\(^2\)

The two novels by Bhattacharya and Lal which deal with the same question internalize the problem within their main characters, recognizing the validity of the question of personal identity. Both Oyan and Nonini change and develop as they search for their identity. Krishnan and Baba simply discover the right and therefore the treatment of these seems over simplified and the denouement predetermined.

Raja Rao's The Serpent and The Rope takes the reader on the identity search of a young Indian doctoral candidate, Rama, who has studied in France for some years. Although Raja Rao, like Balachandra Rajan and

\(^1\)Tbid., p. 15.

Santha Rama Rau, gives the reader a western woman and an eastern man, an absolute dichotomy between India and the west, and an ancestral home, his treatment of the theme of the struggle of the Indian wanderer to establish personal identity is far more significant than that of the novels so far discussed. Perhaps this is because the book sits on the fence between two genres—the novel and the philosophic discourse. Though this vacillation does not contribute to the artistic success of the work, it does mean that the book gives rise to a number of ideas with which it is worth working. In the novels discussed so far the question of establishing personal identity has been bound up with coming to terms with Indian society and the place of the individual in it. Raja Rao approaches the question from a different perspective. Rama comes to terms with his roots as an Indian and himself as he discovers the truth of Advaita Vedanta philosophy. First, he discovers that India, the birthplace of Advaita Vedanta, is a symbol of Reality. Knowing this, he can define himself as an individual in terms of Sankara's philosophy. Rama recognizes that the individual self, the [jiva], has only a phenomenal existence. Any search for "personal identity" ignores the primary Truth of existence which is unity. Atman, the Self, is not different than Brahma.

The Serpent and The Rope begins as Do Remember the House, Seasons of Jupiter and The Dark Dancer, with the return of one of India's wandering sons. Rama's father has died; and on his religious pilgrimage to scatter his father's ashes, Rama tastes for the first time in years the sweetness of his homeland. "It was like a juice that one is supposed to drink to conquer a kingdom or to reach the deathless," he says of India.²

The trip plants within him a new desire to know his homeland and a feeling of loss that he is not a part of India. He senses that "something had just missed me in life, some deep absence grew in me, like a coconut on a young tree, that no love or learning could fulfill." Although Rama returns to his French wife, he lays plans for the day when he will return to India to teach. India in this very early stage of Rama's search means to him the temporal, geographic state.

Subsequent trips to India and further thought, however, lead Rama to crystallize quite a different definition. He rejects the obvious definitions of India. It is not a political state:

- India would never be made by our politicians.
- Anybody can have the geographic—even the political—India; it matters little.  

An Indian woman he meets suggests a sort of Indian moral puritanism which Rama also rejects:

- I hated this moral India. . .Lakshmi was not India. . .
- Lakshmi would not read the Mahabharata the whole night, cut her finger, and anointing her lord with her young blood burn herself alive.

Nor do the modern, technological cities of India have any meaning for him:

- Bombay. . .simply had no meaning to a Brahmin like me. . .
- It had no right to exist.
- The hideousness of Bombay hurt me as only an impersonal falsehood can hurt.

Rama determines that India is not temporal at all. India is instead an

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1 Ibid., p. 24.
2 Ibid., p. 357.
3 Ibid., p. 354.
4 Ibid., p. 46.
5 Ibid., p. 245.
expression of Reality, as defined in Advaita Vedanta. It exists not only in the phenomenal world of the material, but on the ultimate level of the Real. Rama says, "India is not a country. . .India is an idea, a metaphysic." It is not bound by geography or time. "India has no history because Truth cannot have history." The myths and even the history of the temporal state of India express the unity which is true of Reality. While other countries fight for themselves, India fights for the Truth, fights on both sides, as Krishna fought Shisuma by giving him courage, as Gandhi fought the Muslims by fighting for them. India is not a land, but "something other," "the space of the Brahmins," Reality.

India was a continuity I felt, not in time but in space; as a cloud that stands over a plain might say "Here I am and I pour" and goes on pouring. . .It is perhaps in this sense that India is outside history. A patch of triangular earth, surrounded by the three seas, somehow caught the spirit without the time. . .It is something history has reserved for herself, just as humans reserve an area of their own being, known but hardly used; it exists, as it were, for one's rarer moments where you see yourself face to face. Since India is a symbol of Reality, not only a physical place, Rama's search for his own personal identity in relationship to India takes a different turn than the quests explored in the other novels. For Rama there is no need to find his place in the traditional social or family setting. These considerations have to do only with the phenomenally real. Rama is concerned, instead, with finding himself in relationship to the ultimately Real, that which he has defined as "India."

1Ibid., p. 373.
2Ibid., p. 100.
3Ibid., pp. 244-45.
Rama's first step toward recognizing his individual self (jiva) and his ultimate oneness in Atman comes in his relationship with Savithri, an Indian woman. He loves Savithri as the embodiment of the Feminine Principle, and she begins to teach him about the unity of Reality.¹ The more he learns of her, the more she herself embodies the truths of Advaita Vedanta. When he gives the answer "Vedanta" to a friend's query, he murmurs to himself "Savithri."² She gives him the sense that one can only "be."³ They love each other, but their relationship is purely symbolic, consummated in a ring ceremony, symbol of wholeness and unity. In his relationship with this Indian woman, he has experienced the unity which lies beyond individuated selves.

Savithri was there, not in me but as me, as light which seemed never to fade, never to know where to go—like that constant sound the texts say which is the silence of things, the first vibration, the primary sound, the pranavam OM propounds itself and from which all that is world is created. Savithri, as it were, was the meaning of meaning, Sabdharta; and everything read from her, because she was—she is—she will be.⁴

Savithri is no longer an individual woman, a jiva, to Rama. Savithri is Reality, Atman. Rama recognizes his need to achieve this level of being, though Savithri cannot lead him there. He realizes that he needs a guru to guide him to a deeper experience. In the last pages of the book, Rama has a dream in which he sees this friend, this light to guide his, his guru. Thus, Rama's personal identity crisis has led toward a desire for the oneness of his individual personality, the phenomenal self, jiva, with the Absolute Self, the Real, Atman.

³ Ibid., p. 126.
⁴ Ibid., p. 243.
This resolution contrasts with the resolutions to the identity crises suggested in the other novels. The other authors present a situation in which a person’s identity is brought into question by contact with alien ideas. The authors other than Raja Rao search for a solution which is some sort of a return to traditional values and social control. Those who are able to solve their identity crisis do so by returning to Indian soil and assuming a proper place in its society.

Raja Rao suggests a solution which equally idealizes Indian culture, but in a quite different way. His hero sees no need to return to the phenomenal India, for this is not really India. "India is Truth."1 Truth is "wherever one is—for there is no anywhere or anywhere, but all is, for one is not."2 Therefore Rams believes he can carry India wherever he is.

The question of personal identity is rejected by Raja Rao because it is the question of ignorance (avidya). The person, the jiva, is only phenomenally real. The solution to identity, then, is not individuated identity, but the absorption of the individual into the highest truth, nithsha, and the union of the individual personality with the oneness of Brahma.

Conclusion

In several of the post-Independence Indo-English novels, the challenges to the Indian traditional culture are shown giving rise to crises of personal identity. Rabani Bhattacharya in Music for Mohini treats the theme by suggesting that the individual confronting the old and the new is in a position to draw the two together. Mohini finds her place in society, yet contributes to the growth of the society by assert-

1Ibid., p. 13.
2Ibid.
Anand Lal shows a man awakened to the question of his own personal identity through contacts with the west, who is unable ever to find himself by pursuing the goals of life which Indian tradition establishes. His thematic treatment suggests that the Hindu view of life does not adequately meet the needs of an individual who wants to develop himself as a person on a level deeper than fulfilling the role society has defined for him. Both of these novels convey the idea that the western ideal of establishing individual identity is a legitimate goal which must be taken into account in Hindu society.

The other four novelists who treat this theme reject the thought that there is any need in Indian society comparable to the need in western society which gives rise to the quest for personal identity. Three of the novels suggest that this is true because society defines a person, and this social definition results in social and individual fulfillment. Valaskid, the hero of Kamala Markandaya's novel, Possession, is manipulated by a westerner who wants allegedly to give him an opportunity for individual fulfillment. Baba's search for personal happiness in Remember the House by Santha Rama Rau proves to be a misguided quest brought on through contact with a westerner. Her true happiness lies in submitting herself to the demands of family and society. Balachandra Raja's novel, The Dark Dancer, suggests a similar view of the search for personal identity. A man's identity is defined from the day he is born because his position in society is the result of his thoughts, words and actions in past lives. There is no need to search for personal identity, then, because one's identity is established by his birth and position in life.

Raja Rao finds the search for personal identity equally unnecessary, but for different reasons. Personal identity can only be found on the
level of the phenomenally real, where the jiva is divided from the Atrman. Man's primary concern is to find the ultimately Real. On this highest level of reality there is no distinction; all is the Self, Atrman; and Atrman is Brahman. The need of a man, then, is not to distinguish himself as an individual, but to find himself in the unity of the true Self.

The primary reaction of the novelists, discussed here, to western ideas of personal identity is one of rejection. Kamala Markandaya, Santha Rama Rau, and Balachandra Rajan all reject the idea of searching for personal fulfillment because the needs of a man are fully met when he submits to the demands of family and society. Raja Rao finds the very idea of individual self one of illusion. Men need not be concerned with being distinct individuals for these divisions exist only on the phenomenal level of existence. The Real Self exists on a level of experience beyond phenomenal distinctions. Bhabani Bhattacharya finds more merit in the western idea of the need to establish personal identity. The ideas of social obligation and individual fulfillment clash at certain points. However, the best society, it is suggested, can be built where the two factors are interdependent. Anand Lal's hero is overwhelmed in his search for his personal identity and can never find fulfillment within the traditional Indian framework. Most of the writers, however, suggest that the Indian in contact with modern, western ideas can only discover himself as he reintegrates himself into the traditional Indian patterns of society and thought.
CONCLUSION

The theme of the conflict of old and new, tradition and modernity, east and west in contemporary India has been a major concern of many Indo-Anglican novelists of the post-independence era. Various aspects of this theme have been explored in the novels. Four of these aspects—the fate of the family, economic upheaval, a questioning of religion, and the impact of the conflict on the individual person—have been discussed. In conclusion, we will review, first, the three major reactions to the question of change expressed in the novels and, secondly, the patterns which these reactions form in relationship to various particular areas of change.

Three basic reactions to the conflicts facing contemporary India emerge from the novels. First, a significant number of the authors reflect the attitude that all which is good in life is encompassed within the Indian tradition. A second reaction which is developed in some of the novels is that there is something to be gained through interdependence between the seemingly opposing forces. The third reaction is more of a lack of reaction, a feeling of impotence. This attitude reasserts itself repeatedly with two distinct emphases. For certain authors, the impotence suggests a helpless individual caught between destructive forces of change. But as often, the seeming helplessness of the individual is portrayed as a wise relaxation to the forces of life which will of themselves resolve the conflicts.
The reaction of affirmation of the traditional values is most typically found in the works of Suchin Ghose and Raja Rao, although Balachandra Rajan and Santha Ram also evidence it. In Cradle of the Clouds, Flame of the Forest, The Serpent and The Rope, The Dark Dancer and Remember the House, an Indian character flirts with ideas from the west, but only finds happiness when he becomes reintegrated into traditional Indian patterns. Balaram confronts rationalism in the person of the Second Master while living in the village and, once he is in Calcutta, he faces the temptation of living life only on the physical level. He finds the path to happiness when he begins the life of religious devotion as the 

Krishnan is drawn toward Carolyn's idea of freedom, only to find that it is illusory. He returns to his Indian wife, Kamala, who is the symbol of the Hindu tradition. For Babu the lure is the dream of romance. This western dream is equally illusory. Happiness for Babu lies in submission to the social and family demands of the tradition.

Common threads of emphasis run through these novels. First, each novel maintains that society must be based on dharma. The individual can never find the highest good through self-assertion. Duty to society must come first, with individual fulfillment and happiness a secondary outgrowth. The novelists' perceive a threat to this traditional societal structure in the modern, western emphasis on the individual. R. K. Narayan in The Man-Eater of Malgudi also expresses a concern with the destructive tendencies of the individualist. Romantic love and the
pursuit of personal wealth are modern emphases which are threatening to the wholeness of society because they encourage individualism.

Several of the novelists also assert that religious truth can be found only as a man lives within the Hindu tradition. Balaram’s flirtation with the magazine Life in Technicolor keeps him from the one act which could open to him the world of religious truth—following Kyna as her flute player. Rama’s search to understand himself and India leads him away from his French wife, toward the truth of Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Here is the Truth of Truths to which nothing can be added from any other culture. The first reaction to the forces of change is the assertion that all that is good, is contained within the Indian tradition.

The second reaction seen in the post-independence Indo-Anglican novels is an acceptance of the fact that certain emphases of other cultures have something to offer the Indian tradition—an acknowledgment of the need for interdependence. Both Nayantara Sahgal and Shabani Bhattacharya express this basic reaction in their novels. Bhattacharya's novels reveal a deep respect for Indian tradition—the artistic wealth, religious ideals, and stable family structure. Yet his characters are driven to know the need for an interdependence between old and new, tradition and modernity, east and west. In Music for Neelini, Neelini’s life is enriched by the close ties, the feeling of continuity, the deep religious tradition offered by the “Big House.” Yet the tradition of the “Big House” also needs to learn to trust science, to allow room for personal development, and to be flexible. The two ideals expressed in Shadow from Ladakh develop positively through exposure to each other. Bhattacharya generally reacts to the conflicts with an attempt to integrate the best of all of the better ideas.
Nayantara Sahgal is also oriented toward bringing together the best of ideas from whatever source. For her, the old standard of longevity is no longer enough to judge the worth of an idea or practice. Reason must be the judge of what is to be preserved and what is to be added. Many of her characters recognize that the Hindu tradition has given incorrect or incomplete answers. In *Store in Chandigarh, This Time of Morning*, and *The Day in Shadow* characters are all driven to understand that marriage must mean more than the fulfillment of dharma. Ram Krishnan in *The Day in Shadow* struggles with the fact that Hinduism has not provided a basis for social action. There are ways, Ms. Sahgal suggests, in which the Hindu tradition is weak and can be strengthened through interdependence with ideas coming from outside the tradition.

A third reaction is one of personal impotence to either stop the forces of change or to weld them into any kind of positive integration. The inability to act effectively is shown in some novels as a negative quality, yet in others, as a positive contribution. Kamala Markandaya's novels so often express the first attitude. *A Handful of Rice*, *Nectar in a Sieve*, and *The Coffee-Dam* present characters caught in changes with which they are incapable of coping. Savi struggles to feed his family, but only finds them slipping into deeper poverty. Bhumani watches her family disintegrate and her land torn from her, incapable of stopping the destructive force of the tannery. The hill tribe can do nothing to halt the unraveling of its life in the wake of the construction of the dam. Ms. Markandaya shows an India in the midst of turmoil which destroys the individuals helplessly caught in its swirl.

There is, however, a second variation on the idea of the inability of the Indian to act effectively in the terrors. R. K. Narayan expresses it most clearly, although Balasandra Rajan also suggests it. In *The
Nataraj, a demonic symbol, allows Vasu to move into his unoccupied attic and to bring rotting carcasses onto his own premises, because he lacks the courage to confront the destroyer. When Nataraj hears that Vasu plans to shoot the sacred elephant, however, he is finally driven to stop him. All his attempts are frustrated. There is in fact no need for Nataraj to try to fight the destroyer. The seeds to destroy disruptive forces are contained in the structure of the cosmos, and Vasu in fact destroys himself. The role of the individual man is to accept life and allow the forces of the universe to resolve conflicts and tensions. Balachandra Raja suggests also in The Dark Dancer that accepting life as it is contributes indirectly to good in the world.

These three basic reactions, then, are expressed in the Indo-Anglican novels of the post-independence period which treat as a major theme the conflicts of old and new, tradition and modernity, east and west: reaffirmation of the tradition, a desire to work toward interdependence of the past and the modern, and a sense of impotence to cope with the challenges. It is revealing to see which of these reactions prevail when the authors deal with each of the four aspects of the theme discussed in this study, family life, economics, religion and personal identity.

The family in conflict with new ideas is treated often and arouses strong reactions. R. K. Narayan in The Sweet Vendor and Kamala Markandaya in Nectar in a Sieve show with a sense of helplessness the forces on the family which threaten it with disintegration. There is a strong reaction expressed by writers when they deal with both the idea of romantic love (Santha Rama Rau—Remember the House, Balachandra Raja—The Dark Dancer, and Raja Rao—The Serpent and The Rope), and the joint family
structure (Kamala Markandaya—A Handful of Rice, A Silence of Desire, Bhabani Bhattacharya—Music for Mohini, Nayantara Sahgal—A Time to be Happy), that the traditional patterns of marriage based on dharma and the joint family are superior to western conceptions of marriage based on love and the nuclear family. Only Nayantara Sahgal in her later novels, This Time of Morning, Storm in Chandigarh, and The Day In Shadow, takes the view that the Indian tradition has a great deal to learn about marriage and the family. Marriage, she feels, must be based on more than duty. It must be the union of two persons in love, understanding and trust. If a marriage does not achieve this, it is not a marriage and will end in divorce. On the whole, however, the Indo-Anglian writers treated here suggest the first reaction, the reaffirmation of the traditional Indian understanding, when they deal with the challenges to the family.

The second aspect of the theme we considered was economics. The writers considering this aspect of the challenge accept much more readily the need for interdependence between the old and the new. Combined with this sense of need is a feeling of the overwhelming difficulty of finding ways of creative integration. In a number of novels, the rise of new economic attitudes is suggested. The two most important changes are a rise of the desire for money and a drive toward upward social mobility. Only Sudhin Chose in Cradle of the Clouds rejects totally these new attitudes, affirming that the stable, religious society is better off without material progress. In two novels, Nectar in a Sieve and A Handful of Rice, Kamala Markandaya suggests the reaction of helplessness as she shows the destruction of individuals in the economic changes. She does not suggest that changes are not needed, but that transition is painful. In The Coffer Case by Kamala Markandaya and Shadow from Ladakh
by Shabani Bhattacharya, the attempts of leaders to effect change in a positive way are explored. Both authors sense that something of the new must be brought to the old, but also that this is a difficult task. In all but Satin Bose’s novel, there is a sense of inevitability when dealing with economic changes. The search is for the least painful way for economic progress to be quickly effected.

Nearly all of the writers who consider religion, as it is challenged by new ideas, return to assert that Hinduism offers in itself the answers to all the vital questions. Only Kamala Marwadiya in A Silence of Desire presents the secular versus the religious view of life with an emphasis on the inability of the individual to reconcile the differences. Satin Bose in Cradle of the Clouds and Flame of the Forest rejects the secular view of life in favor of the traditional Hindu view. Three writers deal with the issue of Hinduism as a religion which accepts life, while being unconcerned with changing the temporal world. Nayantara Sahgal reacts to this challenge by accepting the fact that Hinduism needs to reevaluate itself and draw on ideas from outside the narrow confines of its tradition. The other two writers who deal with the question, Balasundara Rajan in The Dark Dancer and Raja Rao in The Serpent and the Rope, both react by affirming that Hinduism projects the true understanding of the world. The predominant reaction, expressed by Bose, Rajan, and Raja Rao, is that Hinduism embodies the Truth, and has nothing to gain in building an interdependence with ideas from other traditions.

The final aspect of the theme of traditional, Indian society in contact with new, modern, western thought treated in this study was the impact on the person, in terms of an individual identity crisis. Most authors treating this theme have led the hero or heroine back to the
roots of their being in a reaffirmation of traditional values. Alienated from the tradition, finding it again only after a painful search, the heroine and heroes of Possession by Kamala Markandaya, Remember the House by Santha Rama Rao, The Dark Dancer by Balachandra Rajan, and The Serpent and The Rope by Raja Rao, all cling tightly to it when the tradition is rediscovered. Gyan Chand, the hero of Anand Lal's novel, Seasons of Jupiter, has a unique reaction in that he is unable to return to the tradition and remains rootless. Only Mohini, the heroine in Music for Mohini by Shabard Bhattacharya, finds she can maintain a need for personal identity, while also making a contribution to the Indian tradition through her role in society. Generally, the writers dealing with the question of personal identity show a sense of nostalgia which leads them to embrace in full the tradition which can give them roots.

The theme of the conflict of old and new, tradition and modernity, east and west has challenged the Indo-Anglican novelists in the post-independence years. A number of authors, in an array of novels, have explored facets of the theme. The various treatments given the theme suggest several responses and several attempts to create order out of the tensions facing contemporary India.
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