



# Kamala Markandaya's "The Nowhere Man" is a reflection of East-West Counter in Indian Diaspora Literature

## Abstract:

The Nowhere Man is a seventh novel of Kamala markandaya written in 1972. This is the very novel mirrors alienation of an Indian Brahmin who had spent one third of his life in England faced bitter experiences though he embraced England life. He was dissuaded, deceived and ill-treated by whites whom he knew in foreign land. Markandaya's diasporic writings explore then condition of relations between East and West. Her novels elevates issues of Identity crisis, alienation in home land, cultural conflicts etc. the present study shows disparages faced by an Indian who migrated to England and lived there for thirty years but his identity is at stake being a man from other land. The character portrayal of this Indian Diaspora writer is conscious and racism which highly explored through this novel is also discussed. This study also throws light on collisions between East and West.

**Key words;** *Alienation, Identity Crisis, Indian Diaspora, racism, migration, cultural conflict and foreign land.*

## Introduction

Literature is a bridge that connects any nation to exhibit its culture, tradition, customs and values globally. It is a common phenomenon in the world to migrate from ones native land to foreign land in search of employment, survival or on any purposeful reason. This migration is another aspect in literature to intertwine two cultures into another new culture or it provides scope to amalgamate traditions, values, ethics, habits generally obtained from native land will absorb with foreign land simultaneously people who have migrated consider foreign land as their second home and develop love and affection. When such scenario is dissuaded, commented and heckled by natives of foreign land would turn into a question of marginalization, identity crisis and isolation. These complexities are vividly explained through diasporic literature.

Kamala Markandaya is one of the famous diasporic writers who boldly express difficulties of Indians on foreign land. Kamala Markandaya was born on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1924 in a small town in Mysore. She had graduated from Madras University in History and turned to be a journalist and writer. She raised her voice for Indian

identity during Quit India Movement in 1942. Her novels *Nowhere*, *Nectar in a Sieve*, *Possession* and *Nowhere Man* mirror financial, social and helpless conditions of India. She is an icon for dealing with post colonial themes and undertones of the depressed people's conditions in a confused world.

### **The author projects east –West as love- hate relationship through Srinivas, an immigrant from India to United Kingdom**

Srinivas is an Indian Brahmin scholar who has spent his youth in a small town located in Southern India during Pre –Independence days. His meritorious vision, academic excellence and winning a gold medal made him travel towards England as soon as he got married to young, modest and beautiful Brahmin girl Vasantha. Soon after his settling in England as a business man, he brought Vasantha also to England. They also carried Indian Habits, dress, beliefs and traditions with them. they became affluent in London. Laxman and Seshu are their two sons whom they loved very much.

The elder son was an engineer in the British Army and the younger son Seshu, a navigator in the Royal Air Force was unfortunately killed in an ambulance accident. This sudden dismissal of her son left Vasantha in a terrible shock besides Laxman married to Pat an English girl in Plymouth and lived with his in-laws. He didn't bring his son or wife to his parents. It also an unexpected blow for Vasantha and she was sooner attacked by tuberculosis. Srinivas remained isolated when his wife passed way due to such deadly disease. Simultaneously his business went into a huge loss and made him hopeless, helpless and confused in an alien land. The situation became worsened for him to pull himself together. After series of incidents, Srinivas had met Mrs. Pickering who was an elderly kind woman near –destitute.

They became good friends and it lead to live together just like wife and husband. It was completely rejected by Laxman. He couldn't digest the fact that his father was living with an English woman. When he met his father he learnt that Srinivas was suffering from leprosy and Mrs. Pickering was carefully nursing him out of her generous mind and sympathy. To Srinivas dismay, his vicious neighbor Fred Fletcher harassed him as he was an affluent business man once and also leading peaceful life economically with the support of Mrs. Pickering. His racial minded called Srinivas as a black who entered into England and enjoying their wealth. He went to an extreme end and threw tar on Srinivas once and also left dead mice at his door step. His racial discrimination had no bounds as it hurt his Indian neighbor to face slanders abuses even by Fletcher's companions. They began to threaten him to leave that area. Here the writer illustrates how West had shown such discrimination for a man from East who loved his Western life and felt it was his home land. He became one among the millions whereas he was ill treated, tortured by his racist neighbor for no reason. The pathetic situation was turned to death of Srinivas who was set fire by Fletcher. He also burnt alive. The generous doctor Radcliffe tried his best

to save Srinivas but his efforts went into vain and a debilitated old left his breath in an alien land where he is restricted to leave yet his life was ended there pathetically.

According to P.P. Mehta “ Perhaps The Nowhere Man is the first novel of the racial problem in England. It is the most compassionate of Indo – Anglican novels: it is a plea for human dignity and sanity. A sort of Eastern wisdom encompasses the entire atmosphere of this novel, which one might call the most touching of Kamala Markandaya’s novels.”

Kamala portrays character of Srinivas as a typical Indian who is generally India called as brain-brain. He could have got an opportunity in India for his academic excellence and intellectuality. But he also ran after like other of pre independent period to migrate to England and earn pounds. He wished to see himself a successful trader in an alien land. His dreams came true and he migrated to England and became a successful trader.

An East brain worked in the West whereas his color, creed, race and religion were completely at stake. He was called as ‘ Black’ by native of England. Vasantha is synonymous of a perfect Indian who could think of associating the pomp and circumstance of the few with the agony of the many. She used to remind her husband about the business laws that they buy things at cheap and sell them at dear price, it is the foundation of their prosperity and human beings and their color is not material whereas it had hand in both transactions. The entire plot made readers to know owes and difficulties of the East who migrated to the West. The plot had developed as the vacuum found in Srinivas ‘s life.

According to Uma Parameswaran “After 50 years in England he felt no doubts at all about the country being his home. Somewhere along the way he had been usually silent and naturally to his adopted land even as to his house guest of 20 years, Mrs. Pickering “.

Mrs. Pickering appeared as a generous woman though she was belonged to West in view of Srinivas. He constantly thought of committing suicide when he was isolated after his wife’s death and Laxman’s distance with him. H. M. Williams asserts :

“Srinivas who dies just as he is being rescued ironically by the “nice’ policeman belongs to the list of hapless victims, usually sensitive and life-loving driven to near madness by cruel fate or man’s inhumanity to man, who parade through Markadaya’s novels. She portrays an inverted kind of heroism- often adroitly.

It is generally observed by the readers that though Mrs. Pickering is of English she loved Srinivas so she had considered everything belonged to him like his house, and his son Laxman are also hers. She treated Laxman as if he were her son and Pat as her daughter – in – law. She also showered her love for Roy, son of Laxman. An Indian is totally stranger to her but she accepted and served him. It appears that their friendship is synonymous for the relationship between India and England. Besides, Srinivas could see love of a Westerner at his old age through Mrs. Pickering whereas he faced racial discrimination, identity crisis and alienation more than his second wife’s love. He had tasted bitter experiences and lost his life as he was treated as ‘black’ from the East.

**Conclusion:**

The Nowhere Man confronts with the problem of East – West encounter, racial violence which was a growing phenomenon in England during her stay and even after independence. As an Indian- born woman she had intellectually portrayed the genesis of the East- West difference and violence. Racial aversion, militant nationalism, arrogance all together brought into a vortex of evil and good, the white and black. Above all, solely the human values, Christian values, compassion, tolerance are priceless and precious qualities every human supposed to habituate on the earth. There are Fred Fletcher, and his racial gang- Mike, Bill, Joe and Mrs. Gass MRs. Marjorie were in the same white society where Mrs. Pickering, Mrs. Fletcher, Dr. Radcliffe and Constable Kent lived. They had chosen to kill Srinivas through their racial attitude and the latter team supported him till he left his life.

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