

A Study of Racism and Cultural Conflict Through the Novel of Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man*

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Abstract

This paper focuses the suffering of a migrated man of India in England. As the man migrates, he has to face the struggles like cultural conflict, river, loneliness etc... The protagonist is an old man who is living there alone after the death of his wife, lost his one son in the war and the another son never care him. There is no self identity for him and he undergoes several problems, The psyche of the protagonist is unstable and he has nowhere to go to get solace.

Keywords: migrating - cultural conflict - self identity -alienation -rootlessness

When Kamala Markandaya wrote *The Nowhere Man* in the early 1970s, she may well have imagined that the fault lines of British society she portrayed would, half a century on, be a bygone aspect of less enlightened times. Set in 1968, the year of Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' verbalization, this intricate, perceptive tragedy of alienation centres around the belligerent racism sparked by post-war immigration to Britain.

A vivid reminder that progress is not a straight line, the novel is plenary of conspicuous parallels to our messy present, not least the Trump/Brexit attribution of economic woes to the presence of a maligned outgroup. Inditing ahead of one's time risks cultural neglect, and *The Nowhere Man* was all but ignored on its publication. Arthur Miller inscribed that 'the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is yare to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing – his sense of personal dignity.' In *The Nowhere Man* this character is Srinivas, an elderly spice importer, native of India, and decenniums-long denizen of a leafy South London suburb. Along with many more incipient advents from South Asia and the Caribbean, Srinivas realizes with horror that, at proximately seventy years old, he has been marked as a pariah, 'a convict on parole'. At first, the peril signs don't quite perforate his consciousness.

He is by nature dreamy and peaceable, not given to surmising the worst of people. And he has always regarded England as a haven of tolerance and lucidity. 'My country,' he calls it. 'I feel at home in it, more so than I would in my own.' But ineluctably, the ambient

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threat turns palpable, and he commences to auricularly discern of ‘a incipient gospel, Her seventh novel, *The Nowhere Man* (1972), was the only story with an English setting, though there are flashbacks to India. It was additionally her favourite — of all her works — no doubt because the story was something she had optically canvassed frequently in her adopted country: racism.

By addressing that issue frontally, she paved the way for novelists from the Indian subcontinent (especially Salman Rushdie and Nadeem Aslam) who would subsequently take the issue to more upsetting levels of confrontation. My postulation is that Markandaya must have been apprehensive of the replication the novel would have with British readers, pushing them out of their comfort zones. Srinivas rattles around in the attic of the house he has lived in for years, since he’s rented out the first two floors.

Not many years ago when his wife died, he was about to be apprehended for throwing her ashes into the Thames. “The river’s not the place for rubbish,” a policeman tells him. But Srinivas’ replication “It was not rubbish... It was my wife.” brings a moment of commiseration from the man, the last time that anyone will treat him decently. Britain is transmuting colour because of all the immigrants who have arrived from its colonies. Whole neigh borhoods suddenly look different and as has transpired so many times in other Western countries those at the bottom are threatened, fearing that their jobs will vanish (to the much harder-working immigrants) and that these incipient foreigners will anon get opulent. Optically canvassing the incipient belligerence, Srinivas briefly considers returning to India but conclusively concludes, “He had no notion of where to go to in India, or what to do when he got there.” He kens that the country has transmuted.

He additionally cerebrates to himself, “This is my country now.” In some ways he has become more English than the English around him. Much later he will realize, “If he left he had nowhere to go.” He’s a nowhere man. If Kamala Markandaya were alive today she would no doubt be horrified by the millions of refugees throughout the world who, for one reason or another, have nowhere to go. They’re often stateless, caught in political limbo, the result of overthrown regimes, wars, famine, and most recently climate change. How ironic, then, that Srinivas is not the product of any of these cleavages but simple homegrown racism

As incidents of British racism impact upon his life, Srinivas recollects earlier racial incidents from his past, when he was still a student, and experienced kindred slights under British colonialism. Thus, there’s a kind of continuum of discrimination from the same people first in his own country and later in theirs. How surprising (or perhaps not) that the worst acts of violence inflicted on him emanate from the loutish puerile man who lives in the house next door. He’s unemployed, remotely more than a punk, though espoused with several children and living under the roof with his mother, who considers Srinivas one of her friends. Yet Srinivas, a geriatric man and pellucidly no threat to anyone becomes the focal

point of his racism because Fred Fletcher can't take his ocular perceiver off his neighbour, turning his life into hell. But the hellish cessation of Markandaya's novel you will require to discover for yourself along with its many rewards as a compelling narrative.

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