

Chapter-II

The Religious Encounter

Between Jesus and Mao :
Christianity and Atheism in
Satan Never Sleeps

Pearl Buck's Satan Never Sleeps (1962) portrays the conflict between Christian faith and atheist communism which regards religion as 'opium of the masses'. The conflict is between Ho-San, the colonel of the Chinese 'Red Army' of Mao-Tse-tung and the two Christian priests father Fitzgibbon (Mansignor) and father 'O'Banion.

Ho-San is lost by his parents during the famine in the province of Kwangtung, China, and is found and brought up by father Fitzgibbon. He tries to prepare the young boy for holy priesthood. The action of the novel takes place during the time of the political struggle between Mao-Tse-tung and Chiang-Kai-Shek in China. The communists find Ho-San to be useful to them; so they praise him. They secretly teach him to condemn all that is religious. Thus Ho-San is caught between the two contradictory forces of Christianity and atheism represented by the two priests and the communist ideology respectively. One day, Ho-San runs away with the communist army. There is something rebellious in Ho-San's character. Father Fitzgibbon, shocked by Ho-San's desertion of Christianity tells his subordinate priest, father O'Banion :
"....and may the devil go after him with all the trouble he

made me, answerin' me back in Bible class and all, talkin' Karl Marx to me, and quotin' Mao-Tse-tung."¹

However, the ties between Ho-San and Mansignor are not broken immediately. Ho-San continues to write to his teacher and guardian for sometime. He writes about his training in Russia and about his communist thought. In one of his letters he condemns all 'religious stuff' thereby shocking Father Fitzgibbon into a recognition of his failure to bring up Ho-San as holy priest.

Thus the conflict between christian faith and communist atheism starts in the novel. Ho-San's character is very significant here. There have been atheist heroes in many novels, Ivan Karmazov in Dostoevsky's Brothers Karamozov for example. The difference, however, is significant. Ho-San's atheism is not a product of any inner intellectual struggle; nor is it a matter of conviction born out of a sense of crisis. It is a case of a psychological problem related to his childhood. Ho-San hates his parents because he thinks that they did not care for him. Ho-San is brought up in an atmosphere in which he is not loved by any body. Even Father Fitzgibbon, though he has done all that is essential for his growth, has not loved Ho-San as a son. Thus, brought up in a lonely, loveless world, Ho-San

embraces communism in order to seek a sense of psychological security. The communists on their part, know this psychological problem of Ho-San and are therefore eager to accept him in their fold. Ho-San's atheism is thus, a dogma borrowed from the political philosophy of communism.

The real conflict starts when Ho-San, with his soldiers, arrests the two priests and prevents Monsignor from escaping to Ireland. The dialogue between Ho-San and Father Fitzgibbon at the time of the arrest is very revealing. The priest asks Ho-San to come down from his horse and to speak to him with respect as he was Ho-San's 'spiritual father'. When he sees that Ho-San does not yield a bit, he makes an appeal to him :

I thought you would become a priest and take up my work after me. Do you remember how I spent hours with you alone in the Chapel ? Did I not teach you the mysteries of the Church myself ?.... Where has your faith gone ? How is it that you have yielded to the devil ?²

Still Ho-San remains unmoved and at last he bursts out :

I have seen a greater light than the light of the Church. This light shines upon the path I have chosen now to follow. It leads

to a better nation, a better world. This is the heaven I seek - a heaven now, here on the earth, while I am alive.³

Ho-San's passionate outburst shows how the religious images of 'light' and 'heaven' which he first learnt from Father Fitzgibbon are now transferred into a secular ideology of communist atheism. The elements of initial estrangement between Ho-San and the priests and the sharp intellectual differences now escalate into a major conflict which is at the centre of the novel. The soldiers and officers of the 'Red Army', one day, march to the Chapel with their bayonets pointed towards the people engaged in the mass. Ho-San orders them to disperse. The solders rush towards the people shouting at them and cursing them for being the 'running dogs of a foreign religion. Ho-San destroys the mass and this leads to a sharp verbal exchange between Ho-San and the Priest.

"You have sinned, God will not forgive you...."

Ho-San answered between set teeth, "There is no God. This is what I know now. You have deceived me, foreign priest ! You caught me in a net of lies when I was only a child and I knew no better than to believe you, because you ^agive me food. You

stole my soul away by your kindness
It is you who have sinned ! You told me
of a God that never was. It is for this
that I cannot forgive you."

"There is a God," Monsignor said firmly.
"I stake my whole life on the fact of
God."⁴

Where upon Ho-San tells the priest that he might deceive himself but he would not be allowed to deceive others. Ho-San further says that the Chapel would be a prison for the two priests and it would no longer be a place to worship false gods, male and female. Ho-San further declares that if the people gathered for the mass recant and join the brotherhood of the communist, they would be forgiven, otherwise he would behead them on the altar. He then turns to his soldiers and shouts a command, "Sweep the altar clean : "⁵ And the soldiers spring over the communion rail and sweep everything from the altar with their swords. Then they tear the golden crucifix and trample on it.

One day Ho-San catches Siu-lan, the young and beautiful girl and tries to drag her away in order to rape her. The priests rush to help her escape and there takes place a physical fighting between Ho-San and Father O'Banion.

The young priest tightens Ho-san's hands behind him and Siu-lan escapes from his grip. Pearl Buck depicts this scene with remarkable religious tinge :

"I am that sorry I had to fight you",
 Father O'Banion said. "It's not my nature
 nor my religion to do so."

"I will see how well you practice your
 religion", Ho-san barked.

He lifted his right hand and slapped
 Father O'Banion's left cheek. The priest
 did not flinch.⁶

This illustrates how the two priests continue to remind Ho-san, in the heat and storm of their conflict, of the common principles of religion and humanity. Every time Ho-san condemns all religious faith and orders his soldiers to torture the priests still more. They are pricked with pointed bayonets, tightened with big ropes and starved. The details of such torture in Ho-san's army camp, are horrible and inhuman. The descriptions reveal Pearl Buck's awareness of reality and her sense of evil. Even in ^{awareness of the} this sort of terrible suffering the two priests continue to declare their unshaken faith in religion and in truth. They refuse to be forced to admit that they were American spies to escape the

torture. Instead they continue to remind Ho-san of his true duty :

"Ho-san" he said. "Look at your old teacher ! Have you forgotten all the good teachings of Confucius as well as those of your blessed Lord ? Does not Confucius bid you consider your teacher as a parent ?"

Ho-san's handsome lips curled downward. " I do not know Confucius and I have no Lord as you call him."⁷

The courage of the priests and their faith in Christianity are seen at the time of their torture. One day the soldiers begin to prick their backs with bayonets and Monsignor finds his back bleeding, and he tells Ho-san :

"You cannot make liars of us. You are stupid even to imagin it."

He (Ho-san) thumped a paper lying on the table. "This cannot lie ! Here are the facts. They have been sent to us from top echelon officers. Mao-Tse-tung has stamped them with his seal. 'All priests are American spies and spies for the Pope.' It is written here - an official paper. Official papers of the Red Army do not lie. And - "

Monsignor interrupted. "You studied with me year after year. Did I ever ask you to be a spy? You know that you are lying, not I. I am acquainted with your mind, Ho-san. I know you. You do not deceive me. You deceive yourself, for what reason I do not know, unless you are afraid. You may be false, but you cannot make me false, for I am not afraid of you or of any one."⁸

Thus the conflict is worked out on two levels. On the historical level, it portrays the clash between religious faith and communist political ideology during the period of Mao and Chiang-Kai-shek. On the human level this ideological clash is unfolded in the context of interpersonal relationship between Ho-san and the two priests - Monsignor and father O'Banion. In the novel, Father O'Banion is portrayed as a very kind and loving man and yet determined to follow his own missionary work inspite of the tortures, suffering or temptations by Siu-lan. Through out the novel we find Siu-lan begging for his love and Father O'Banion always refusing it to her only because of his mission and religious duty. Ho-san's fighting is on one level only, that is, the level of the conflict between his political ideology and the Christian faith. But Father

O'Banion's struggle is of a two-fold nature. On one hand he has to resist the temptation of Siu-lan's love for him and on the other hand he has to resist the cruel tortures by the communist soldiers. When he goes to the Christian hospital to bring Penicillin for Ho-San, he finds Siu-lan sitting on the back-seat of his car. She very earnestly asks : "Perhaps if you let me love you, I can learn after a while to love your God." "No", he said, and after a moment he added three words, "I dare not." Significantly enough, Pearl Buck here remarks : "Now these three words carried a burden which Siu-lan suddenly understood."⁹ Thus we find the inner crisis of Father O'Banion to be very testing and difficult. Yet at the end he comes out to be triumphant and victorious. He retains his priesthood his faith and his character is unshaken by the storms and upheavals of passion and fortune. It is in this sense that we find Father O'Banion "struggling for personal goodness", trying to raise himself to the level of a saint.

It is this saintly quality of Father O'Banion that proves effective in turning Ho-San to the right path. When Ho-san suffers from Pneumonia, he needs penicillin which is available only in a Christian hospital far away from the military camp. It is Father O'Banion who rushes to the

hospital and brings the medicine within the shortest possible time. Moreover, he then baths Ho-san's hands and his face with a small towel and cool water.

"Why do you do this for me when you hate me?" Ho-san muttered....

"I don't hate you", Father O'Banion said in his mild way. "On the contrary - I love you with a brotherly love."

Ho-san made a bitter smile.

"Love - love - you Christians are always talking about love ! "

"If you still believed in God," Father O'Banion said while he bathed Ho-san's hot forehead, "You would know what I mean by brotherly love. It keeps hatred out of the heart, because it is occupied by love."¹⁰

Yet, Ho-san does not yield. He says that he does not need love and he has a 'duty to the state'. Father O'Banion, however, does not give up hope. He tries to remind Ho-san of his sin. Though in his first attempt Ho-san has failed he makes second successful attempt to rape Siu-lan. So Father O'Banion tells him :

"You had the soul of a priest and I cannot believe it's all washed out of you, so that you no longer even feel sin ! "

"Sin ! " Ho-san sneered.

"There is no such thing as sin, except in a priest's imagination ! ... Sin is your livelihood."¹¹

Father O'Banion then tells Ho-san that Siu-lan has delivered a child - a boy and he must 'acknowledge his son and marry his mother'. At last the priest is successful in taking Ho-san to Siu-lan and her son. Ho-san and Siu-lan look at each other over the child's head. It is a 'doubting, troubled, questioning look'. Ho-san realizes his sin and says : "If I - if it has not happened as it did, things might be better at this moment than - they can be."¹¹

"You were a beast."

"Don't say it," Ho-san begged hurriedly.

"Forgive me."¹²

At the same time Ho-san's parents are brought there and then he learns that he was not left behind by them but he was really lost; and that his parents did search for him. At last he realizes the love of his parents, of his son and

of Siu-lan. He then arranges to escape from the communist tyranny. All of them the priests and his parents, Siu-lan and the child try to cross the border of the region but they are caught by the communist soldiers. One of his officers, a lieutenant, has been plotting against Ho-san and he tries to catch them at this crucial moment of escape. At this time Ho-san plans for the safety of the others, asks them to hide in the jungle and decides to face the enemy alone. He tells the priest, Father O'Banion :

"Spiritual Father, ... save my son, for me there is no escape, I cannot be saved.... But you can save my son.... Take him baptise him in your faith but give him my name." ¹³

The encounter between Christianity and atheism, thus ends with the defeat of atheism and with a positive note on the need for religious faith and humanism in life. The novel, thus, charts Ho-san's growth from an 'other-directed' persona to an 'inner-directed' being in terms of a crisis. The crisis purifies Ho-san of his atheism. The resolution of the crisis is however, rather contrived and somewhat mechanical. The novel, thus, illustrates Pearl Buck's conviction of the 'struggle towards personal goodness' in the form of Father O'Banion and Ho-san.

- II -

From Religious Fanaticism to Religious
Tolerance : Judaism, Buddhism and
Confucianism in Peony

The conflict in Pearl Buck's Satan Never Sleeps was between communist atheism and Christianity, that in her Peony (1948) is between the conservative, orthodox Judaism and liberal Confucianism and Buddhism in China. Pearl Buck's seriousness and her keen interest in the encounter between the two religious ideologies is clearly evident in her own remark :

As it happens, I did profound research for this novel, having worked for the subject for a period of some ten years. I did visit the Jewish Theological seminary and the people there were most kind to me. I talked at length with men and women from Palestine. 14

The centre of the religious encounter in the novel is the city of K'aifeng in China - especially the big house of the wealthy Jew merchant, Ezra ben Israel. His wife Madame Ezra named 'Naomi' and the Jew priest Old Rabby are the two orthodox Jews who strongly believe in the Jewish

doctrines of 'pure blood' and 'chosen race'. According to Judaism 'the only true God', Jehovah, had 'chosen' the Jews to be his priests so that they can remind mankind of Him. Judaism believes that the Jews are the only 'chosen people' and all others are 'heathen'. Arthur Hertzberg's remark is very significant in this regard. He says :

The truest key to understanding Judaism in its own terms is to be found in its concept of the 'chosen people'. This doctrine of 'chosenness' is a mystery - and a scandal. It was already a mystery to the Bible itself, which ascribed the Divine choice not to any inborn merits of the Jews, but to the unknowable will of God.¹⁵

Hertzberg further says that this 'self chosenness' has invariably degenerated into some form of the notion of a master race. Moreover, he feels that this 'conscious apartness of the Jews' has been "a bar on the road to complete social integration."¹⁶

In Peony, Madame Ezra and the Old Rabby provide the illustration of this statement. They always try to separate the Jews from all other Chinese. It is in this spirit of the separateness of the Jews that Naomi has promised the old Rabby's wife (now dead) to accept her daughter, Leach, as her

daughter-in-law. The promise was given in order to maintain the 'purity of the Jewish blood'. However, her only son, David, loves a Chinese girl named Kueilan, the daughter of Kung Chen. Significantly enough, Ezra supports his son, David, in this conflict. The religious significance of this conflict between Naomi on one hand and David and Ezra on the other, is expressed in the following dialogue :

"A sacred promise", Madame Ezra declared,
"made before Jehovah, to preserve our
people pure ! "

" But Naomi - "

"I insist ! "

"It's little late to talk about purity.
My own mother was Chinese," Ezra said.

"Don't remind me of her ! " Madame
Ezra screamed.¹⁷

Naomi, thus, remains unyielding in her orthodox or conservative views. We find her observing all the rituals of the orthodox Judaism strictly in accordance with the Torah. For example, the passover, the sabbath, the prayer in the synagogue, the psalm and the messiah. But Ezra, her husband, is indifferent to all these rituals. Kung Chen, his business partner, also shows the liberal spirit of the Chinese by offering his daughter to David.

Thus, in Peony, we find two types of religious encounter - the first is within the Jew family and the second is out side the family. In other words, the first is between the old orthodox belief of the 'chosen people' and the 'spirit of separation' represented by Naomi and the broad spirit of humanism represented by Ezra. The second type of religious encounter is between the old orthodox convictions of Judaism represented by the old Jewish Priest Rabby and the liberal humanist spirit of Buddhism and Confucianism represented by Kung Chen. Both these types, in their own ways, tacitly influence the social setting of the city K'aifeng in the province of Honan in China.

Naomi's orthodox views are clearly expressed in her reply to Leah's innocent remark, "Chinese are very kind to us". Madame Ezra retorts :

Kindness, I grew tired of it ! Because the Chinese have not murdered us, does that mean they are not destroying us ?... Now, Leah, you know there is unchangeable difference between them and us. We are the children of the true God, and they are heathen. They worship images of clay. Have you ever looked into a Chinese temple ?¹⁸

It is because of this spirit of separation of the orthodox Jews that the Old Yang Anwei in Kung Chen's house remarks, "In my long life in this city I have seen that the worship of a special god makes a special people."¹⁹

Madame Ezra's Jewish belief in the 'chosen race' and spirit of separation stand in striking contrast to the liberal spirit of Kung Chen. According to him, when foreigners come into a nation, the best way is to make them no longer foreign. "Let us", he says, "marry our young together and let there be children. War is costly, love is cheap."²⁰ This view of Kung Chen represents the Chinese attitude towards the Jews.

The tention and the religious conflict within Ezra's house is heightened when Naomi brings the old Rabby and his daughter in the house after driving away the old Confucian tutor Ezra had appointed for his son - David. It is significant to note that Ezra allows his son to visit the old Confucian tutor and he also encourages David to love his Chinese beloved, Kueilan, the third daughter of Kung Chen. Moreover, Ezra refuses to go back to their 'promised Land' when Madame Ezra longs to go there. In this way, Ezra is nearer to Kung Chen, in his liberal views on religion, than to his wife Madame Ezra and the priest Old Rabby. Thus we

find a striking picture of the religious conflict in Ezra's house itself.

There are two significant illustrations of the second type of religious encounter in the novel - the encounter outside Ezra's family. There is first the striking difference between the teachings of the Jewish Priest - the Old Rabby and that of the old Confucian tutor of David. And second, the visit of Kung Chen to the synagogue with David.

In the first illustration we find the old Rabby demanding David to learn by heart the curses that Jehovah has against the heathen :

Thou shalt surely kill him, thine hand shall be the first upon him to put him to death and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones that he die, because he sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God.²¹

David has learnt such words but he hates them even-though he knows them to be the words of Jehovah; and for comfort, he goes to the little house of his old Confucian teacher. There he listens to the other words the old

Chinese teacher reads. They stand in sharp contrast to the Jewish teaching of the old Priest Rabby. The Chinese teacher reads from his book of Confucius :

To repay evil with kindness is the proof of a good man; a superior man blames himself, a common man blames others. We do not yet serve man as we should; how then can we know how to serve God ?

There is one word that can be the guide for our life - it is the word reciprocity. Do not unto others what you would not enjoy having them do to you.²²

Yet another very significant and direct encounter between conservative Judaism and the liberal Chinese Confucianism is seen in the dialogue between the old Rabby and Kung Chen in the Jewish synagogue of the city, K'aifeng. As Abraham Kaplan points out, the Confucian philosophy is, above all, "a humanistic one. Morality, which is the major preoccupation of Confucian thought, is based squarely on the conception of a common human nature."²³ According to Kaplan the basic virtue which a man is to cultivate is called by the Chinese "jen", meaning human heartedness. 'Jen' includes mercy, justice and love. This basic and humanistic attitude of the Confucianism is revealed in Kung Chen's speech that stands in sharp contrast with the religious

fanatism of the Old Rabby. Even Kung Chen's presence in the Jewish synagogue is not liked by the old priest, Rabby, as Kung Chen was a 'heathen' for him. After the exchange of some uncomfortable remarks on religious beliefs, the old Rabby says :

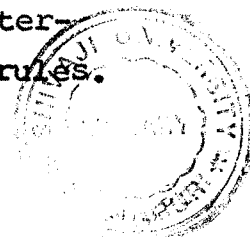
"There is only one true God, and Johovah is his name," the Rabby declared, trembling all over as he spoke.

"So the followers of Mohammed in our city declare," Kung Chen said gravely, "but they call his name Allah. Is he the same as your Johovah ?"

"There is no God beside our God," the Rabby said in a loud high voice. "He is the One True God ! "

Kung Chen stared at him. Then he turned to David. "This old teacher is mad," he observed. "We must pity him. So it often happens when men think too much about gods and fairies and ghosts and all such imaginary beings. Beyond this earth we can not know."

But the Rabby would not have his pity. "Beyond this earth we can know ! " he cried in a loud firm voice. "It is for this that God has chosen my people, that we may eternally remind mankind of Him, who alone rules.



We are gadfly to man's soul. We may not rest until mankind believes in the true God."

All the anger faded from Kung Chen's heart and he said in the kindest voice, "God - if there is a God - would not choose one man above another or one people above another. Under Heaven we are all one family."

When the Rabby heard this he could not bear it. He lifted up his head and he prayed thus to his God :
 "O God, hear the blasphemy of this heathen man ! "24

This illustrates the religious encounter between the orthodox Jewish doctrine of the 'chosen people' and the Confucian and Buddhist spirit of religious tolerance and humanism. Pearl Buck's endeavor here is to emphasize this Chinese spirit of tolerance. She wants all religious exclusiveness and separatism to be reduced to humanism. Therefore, Kung Chen advices David while leaving the synagogue, "None on earth can love those who declare that they alone are the sons of God."25

While writing about Confucianism Abraham Kaplan says :

"What is virtue?" Confucius was once asked. "To love your fellow man". "And what is knowledge?" "To know your fellow man". Man is every thing....²⁶

We find a striking illustration of this remark in the novel at the time of the funeral of Ezra ben Israel. Ezra is a Jew by birth, but through out his life he remains a true friend of the Chinese People in the city. He does not believe in the orthodox Jewish doctrines of separatism. He is a Jew by birth, but a liberal or Confucian by spirit. The Chinese respect him with all sincerity. Therefore, when he dies the Buddhist priests rush to the place of his burrial. Their chanting startles David for a moment. He wishes to refuse when the abbot of the temple of the Golden Buddha comes to pay his respects to the dead. Somehow David manages to inform the abbot that Buddhism is not the religion of his father and it would not be fitting to allow Buddhist music at the grave. At this time the abbot of the Buddhist Temple replies with great dignity :

Your father, although a foreigner, had a large heart, and he never separated himself from any man. We wish to honour him with what we have, and we have nothing except our religion. 27

It is this humanistic attitude in practice showed by the Chinese that has been stressed by Pearl Buck in the novel. Therefore, while speaking about the purpose of the novel, she says :

Peony I write to show that the Jews could be assimilated by another people as they were in China, and that in a sense, persecution taught them to respect people.²⁸

Thus Peony takes us from religious fanaticism or separatism to the doctrine of religious tolerance and humanism, in the light of her belief in 'personal goodness'. Satan Never Sleeps has a strong Christian basis in the characters of the two priests. This Christian dimension plays a major role in the resolution of the crisis. But in Peony Pearl Buck steps out of Christianity and moves towards a larger vision which accommodates the non-Christian religions such as Confucianism and Buddhism. Peony is therefore a major indication of the Oriental basis of Pearl Buck's novelistic vision.

- III -

From Seclusion to Brotherhood :
Christianity and Buddhism; and
Christianity and Judaism in
The Hidden Flower

While Pearl Buck's Satan Never Sleeps portrays the conflict between atheism and Christianity and her Peony the encounter between Judaism and Confucianism and Buddhism, The Hidden Flower (1952) deals with a kind of religious confrontation on two levels; first the encounter between Christianity and Buddhism in the first part of the novel and second, the conflict between Christianity and Judaism in the second part of the novel. The religious encounter in the first part of the novel is somewhat direct but that in the second is rather indirect and a reported one. Moreover, what differentiates The Hidden Flower from the novels considered so far is that it has at its centre a love story between Allen who is an American and Josui, a Japanese girl.

The religious conflict between Christianity and Buddhism in the novel is in the form of Mrs. Kennedy and Dr. Sakai. Allen Kennedy, the young American army officer, presently in Japan, loves Josui, the young and beautiful daughter of Dr. Sakai. The conflict starts when Dr. Sakai

forbids his daughter to see the American any more. Dr. Sakai has a personal ailment hidden in his heart. Like Pearl Buck herself Dr. Sakai belongs to the two worlds; by birth he is a Japanese and by religion he is a Buddhist, but he spent many years in America, & is American by temperament. Yet because of the war he has to leave America reluctantly and has to come to his own country, Japan, with his only daughter and his wife. As a young man in America he was in love with an American Christian girl whose parents rejected him because he was a Buddhist by religion. Moreover, he is even threatened with a pistol by the brother of his American beloved. To add to this bitter experience he finds his son, Kensan, being rejected by the missionary parents of his beloved. About the parents of Kensan's beloved Pearl Buck says :

Her father was a minister at the Christian Church. The Sakai family had always been Buddhist and this had troubled the christian family. Was Buddhism not heathen ? It had been a matter for dissension between her brother and her parents.²⁹

As Dr. Sakai himself had the experience of being rejected by the parents of his christian beloved, he becomes conscious of his Buddhism. So he also does not wish to see his son married in a church. Thus Kensan's wish to marry

his American beloved is not fulfilled and eventually he is killed in the war before Dr. Sakai comes to Japan. These experiences propel Dr. Sakai to fall back on his Japanese culture and his Buddhism with a special zeal. Thus his religion is not natural or spontaneous like that of Father Fitzgibbon or of Father O'Banion in Satan Never Sleeps but a kind of reaction against American christianity. It is against this background that we find him refusing Allen even to enter his house. The novel includes a scene where Dr. Sakai and Allen Kennedy actually fight at the gate of his garden.

In spite of all this, Josui declares her wish to marry Allen, and very reluctantly Dr. Sakai arranges their marriage at a Buddhist temple in Kyoto. However, when Allen takes Josui to America they are forced to live in a hotel as Mrs. Kennedy, Allen's mother, refuses to accept Josui as her daughter-in-law and their Buddhist marriage. Thus the pattern of conflict in Peony is repeated here in The Hidden Flower also. As in Peony, we find the religious conflict within the family itself. In both the novels, the mother is orthodox and the father is liberal in their religious views. Therefore, Mrs. Kennedy resembles Madame Ezra or Naomi and Mr. Kennedy reminds us of Ezra ben Israel in Peony. Again Allen's position is like that of David in Peony, though the two characters are

different in other dimensions and personal features. In both the novels the religious conflict arises out of the marriage problem of the two sons. The significant illustration of this religious conflict within the Kennedy family in the novel is clearly seen in a dialogue between Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy. About the Buddhist marriage between Allen and Josui Mrs. Kennedy says : "What is Buddhism, any way ? That's no real religion. And certainly a temple is not a church. Its full of idols."³⁰ Mr. Kennedy, like Ezra Ben Israel in Peony, is a liberal and considerate gentleman. So one day he tells his wife :

"Suger, why do you say that again ? You know I told you that a temple is just the same thing as a church - "

"I don't care about the temple", she said.³¹

Thus we see Dr. Sakai and his son Kensen, both being rejected by the parents of their respective American beloveds, and now Mrs. Kennedy refusing to accept Josui as her daughter-in-law. It is significant to note that this orthodox christian spirit of exclusion has something of the orthodox Jewish spirit of separatism in Peony.

Since religion is always manifested in the marriage ceremony of a people, the marriage between Allen and Josui

becomes significant in the consideration of the religious encounter in the novel. The American (Allen), is not in black garment as he should be; but the woman (Josui) at least is in white Kimono. Pearl Buck has described the marriage ceremony in every detail. Some of her remarks are significant in this regard.

The Hosshu joined their hands together and placed upon their united hands his sacred rosary.....Allen, guided by gestures placed sticks of incense in the ashes of the urn before the gods bending above them, and Josui touched the burning spill of the sweet smelling incense.³²

And further Pearl Buck compares Christian Church and Buddhist temple in a remarkable way. Her comments are significant and interesting as they throw light on her views on religion. She writes :

The Buddha, gilded until the image looked like solid gold, stood immobile as always, the hands in a gesture of eternal and universal blessing, the eyes unmoving and unmoved.

Strange unreality, Allen thought, his head not bowed....The solid presence made the Buddha no more actual than the unseen deity in a Christian Church, and

yet no less actual. For the temple air was somehow sacred, not with gods but with the prayers and sorrows of those who came to plead, to beg, to search for what was not to be found. The atmosphere of humanity was here, reaching into unreachable beyond, asking for the answer never given.³³

This comment by Pearl Buck suggests both the strength and the weakness of religion as such. Her unbiased comparison between Christianity and Buddhism defines her own religious view point. 'The deity in a church' and 'the Buddha' are 'unseen' and therefore, 'not actual' and yet they are 'not less actual' as the devotees feel their presence. This is the mysterious and crucial point of religious experience of human mind every where in the world. This method of comparing one religion with another with reference to their rituals and rites to get a proper perspective on the religious experience is a typical feature of Pearl Buck's portrayal of religious encounter in her novels. We find it in Peony, in the forms of the synagogue, the Sabath and the Passover in Ezra's family and in the mass conducted in her Satan Never Sleeps.

Another illustration of the religious encounter between Christianity and Buddhism in the novel can be seen in the letter sent to Allen by his father about the Christmas^{day}.

Allen and Josui live in a hotel in New York as Mrs. Kennedy refuses to accept Josui in her house. However, she wants her son alone to come to her house for the Christmas festival. Mr. Kennedy does not like this, yet being governed by his powerful wife, he is forced to write to Allen : "I suppose that being a Buddhist, your wife will not have association with this day (Christmas) as we have";³⁴ and leaving Josui in the hotel, Allen goes to his house for the Christmas.

The habit of meditation is a common feature of Buddhism which is new to the Americans. This has been illustrated by Pearl Buck with a very simple incident. Dr. Sakai, after seeing a fallen leaf in his garden starts thinking. He closes his eyes and meditates for a moment, murmuring the fragment of a sutra. When he opens his eyes again he sees his garden with, fresh perception, 'glowing in the sunlight' exactly as he wishes to see it. "Meditation was not easy for him In America there had been no time for meditation. He had been compelled to learn it when he came to Japan....which he enjoyed in the evenings."³⁵

Pearl Buck uses such small events, brief moments or a minor religious rite to convey the differences in religious attitudes. However, her purpose always remains the same - to take the readers from such closed religious rites or rituals to the real spirit of religion that is found only

in humanism and spiritual communion.

In The Hidden Flower, this spirit of universal brotherhood is seen in the form of Dr. Steiner, the old lady who was just one eighth Jew. In the novel, the religious encounter between Christianity and Buddhism is skillfully linked with the conflict between Christianity and Judaism in the form of Dr. Steiner.

The son of Allen and Josui is not accepted by the American state. So he is declared to be an 'orphan' in the charitable hospital. Dr. Steiner accepts the child as she really loves it. This Dr. Steiner was in Germany where she was tortured by the German soldiers only because she was a Jew. She tells Josui : "I myself am one eighth Jewish but for Hitler I was a whole Jew."³⁶ And further she describes how she was tortured in Germany because of their religious fanaticism. She has lost all her teeth in the concentration camp. "Some of them had been knowcked out, some had follen out."³⁷ The German religious and racial fanaticism is portrayed by Pearl Buck in the following way :

Dr. Steiner looked down into his
(Lennie's - the newly born son of Josui)
laughing face. She thought suddenly of
little dead babies, starved, killed,
bayonated, tossed into heaps, babies who

died because of what their parents were :
Jews, Catholics, rebels, the hated, the
feared, the despised. She could not bear
to know that Lennie saw these memories
even in her eyes.³⁸

This terrible experience of the German fanaticism
turned Dr. Steiner to the concept of world humanism. She
believes that the doctrine of 'pure blood' (like that of
the 'chosen people' of Judaism in Peony), is inhuman and
unscientific. She believes in the mixing of blood. Because
of the vitality of his mixed blood, Lennie, the child of
Josui and Allen, attracts her and she begins to love the
boy as her own. She tells Josui :

....But it was my blood, mixed with the
Germans. They said we must have only pure
blood - as though human blood is not pure
wherever it is found ! Your blood, my
dear, is not different from mine. We bleed
the same red stuff, though I am ugly old
Jewess and you are such delicate young
Oriental girl.³⁹

Pearl Buck has made a very significant remark in this regard.

She says :

The German people treated the Jews in one
way and kept separation alive by persecution.
The Chinese treated Jews in another way with

different and far happier results. Had the Germans been like the Chinese, the history of the world would be different indeed.⁴⁰

Thus the gospel of religious tolerance and humanism is conveyed in the novel through Dr. Steiner. Her remark about mixing of blood reminds us Kung Chen's remark in Peony - 'war is costly love is cheap'. Pearl Buck's humanism does not admit war even in terms of Patriotism that drives people into war-fever. We find this in the views of Mr. Tanaka in The Hidden Flower. He has lost all his sons in the recent war and his old father had been killed in the first war with China, many decades ago. So "He himself abhorred all war and in his revulsion he had become a Buddhist, refusing to follow shinto, because it insisted upon a patriotism which he denied. He declared himself a humanist, scrupulous even toward the Americans."⁴¹

As we find Father O'Banion and Kung Chen at the centres of her novels, Satan Never Sleeps and Peony respectively, we find the character of Dr. Steiner at the centre of her novel, The Hidden Flower, resolving the religious conflicts in the form of the affirmative vision of human life.

- IV -

Towards Religious Brotherhood ?
Christianity and Hinduism in
Come My Beloved

Pearl Buck's Satan Never Sleeps, Peony and The Hidden Flower are characterized by the portrayal of strong religious disparities. In Come My Beloved, Mandala and Pavilion of Women, however this confrontation gradually gives way to a sense of religious brotherhood.

Come My Beloved (1953) portrays the religious encounter between Christianity and Hinduism. The religious encounter in the novel, which is spread over four generations of MacArd family, starts with Mr. MacArd's visit to India and ends with the confession by his grandson, Ted, of not being able to face the ultimate demands of Christian love. In between, we find gradual but always developing understanding between the two peoples of the two religions, though it is less than perfect. The characters in the novel, though try to achieve religious perfection, never attain it. The social, political, racial considerations, though we see them tending to be desolved, still prevail.

Mr. MacArd, a wealthy and successful American businessman visits India with his only son, David, and one

day sees a Hindu peasant kneeling before a big cobra, his hands palm to palm, in a field. This 'superstitious' behaviour of the Hindu peasant makes Mr. MacArd underestimate the Hindu religion. He thinks that the Hindus need a new and practical religion that can build irrigation systems and rail-roads as well as churches. For him, the Indian Hindus are 'supine animals'. His beloved wife, Leila, is now dead and as he believes that she was religious, he wants to start 'Leila MacArd School of Theology' in which young men will be trained and sent to India to spread the gospel of his 'practical christianity'. They will "destroy their (Indians') idols, clean out their vile temples and give them energy."⁴² Mr. MacArd believes that the Americans have over thrown their tyrants as they have been inspired by their faith. His comparison between the 'practical christianity in America and the passive and superstitious Hinduism in India is very significant as it represents the typical American attitude towards religion.

Pearl Buck has very significantly portrayed the difference between the American and the Indian attitudes towards religion in a dialogue between David and his friend, Darya Sapru from Poona. David, having been asked by Darya to explain his view of religion, says :

With us.....religion is or should be expressed in practical works. It would be impossible for us, I think, to endure or allow such poverty as you have here in your country, Darya. We would try to do something about it and that would be part of our religion.⁴³

Thus for the Americans religion is to be seen in a pragmatic context and not in terms of spiritual gains, which, for the Indians, are more significant than all other material things in general. Therefore Darya immediately asks :

"What of the soul ?....What of the mind, the heart, the communion with God ?"

"It is individual", David said.

"You," Darya said relentlessly, "What is it to you ?"

"Not very much, I am afraid," David acknowledged. "I have gone to church with my parents, I take communion, the bread and wine, you know. I used as a child to pray, I do not do so now. Since my mother died, I have thought about such things more than before, but I do not know how to begin to pray again. I cannot pray as a child and I do not know how to pray as a man. Indeed, I am not convinced of the reality of prayer, though certainly I believe in

God, or I cannot say I do not. I have no explanation, otherwise, for the universe."

"All this is not religion," Darya had said thoughtfully.⁴⁴

This dialogue is a significant illustration of the religious encounter between Christianity and Hinduism in the novel; however, David and Darya are not experts in their religions and hence they represent, at this stage, only the general or common man's views on their respective religions. David belongs to a generation of Americans for whom religion has only a remote importance; and Darya is no better than him. Hence he says that he would be able to explain his Hinduism to David some day, but not now.

In the novel, all who speak for Christianity seem to believe only in Christ and they refuse to admit any other faith to be true. This exclusive nature of the Christian mind is pitted against the Hindu spirit of tolerance and inclusiveness. One of the illustrations of this is in the dialogue between Mr. MacArd and Darya Sapru. When Mr. MacArd speaks of the Christian faith in the true God, Darya asks him :

"Is there more truth in your God than in ours ?"....

"Your temples are full of superstitious litter," he (Mr. MacArd) said bluntly. "Your people are confused by the legends of ancient history. A clean mind, a sweeping change, will give you fresh strength. I believe that our own prosperity proves the validity of our religion. God has been with us."

"I grant you the right to believe in your own religion," Darya said in the same intense quiet. "I have sometimes even thought that I, too, would like to be a Christian if I could become one without giving up my own religion."

"That," MacArd said decisively, "would be impossible. When a man becomes a christian, he must forsake all other Gods, and believe only in the One."

"Thus you exclude most of the world," Darya said.⁴⁵

Another illustration of this christian exclusiveness and Hindu spirit of inclusiveness and tolerance can be seen in David's encounter with his Marathi teacher. Pearl Buck comments on the teacher's remarks, "All religions are good." She says :

At what point, David inquired of himself, should he challenge this frequent declaration, to which he had thus far replied

only with silence ? Silence implied acceptance, and he could not and must not accept the easy Indian attitude toward all religions. Any religion was better than none, so far he could agree with the Marathi teacher, but he longed to explain to this kind and proud man that the fruits of Western Christianity were surely better than others.⁴⁶

This solid and exclusive conviction leads David to decide his goal in India. His task and his challenge is "to make his own religion the most vital of all."⁴⁷ This aggressive attitude leads David to consider the Marathi saint, Tukaram, to be his enemy, though the saint died centuries ago. Therefore he tells Ramsay, the Anglo-Indian architect :

There are yogis who are so kind, so winning, so good, that I fear them because they resemble christ. They are our real enemies. The Marathi poet saint said - you remember Tukaram ? I was reading his poems the other day;

'On all alike he mercy shows,
on all an equal love bestows.'

That's the man I fear, a saint who does not acknowledge christ. The cruel, harsh self sufficient yogis - ah, I don't fear them ! But I want to show them the true light.⁴⁸

Thus David has that American ego of superiority and the strength to persue his task; however, his real purpose is to educate the Indian people in the modern ways of life and in this his sincerity cannot be challenged. What he does not understand is the ancient Hindu faith in 'Sannyasa ideas'. This has been illustrated in his reaction to the Ramkrishna rivival of Hinduism. He thinks :

The Ramkrishna people are perfectly aware of the dangers of the old Sannyasa ideas, which taught that men should be indifferent to the sorrows of the world, because all was illusion anyway....'Be Gods and make gods' - I have heard them say that myself. They revive Hinduism with such slogans, and that is what I must oppose, for India would be taken out of the modern world for centuries.⁴⁹

The religious encounter in the novel gets another dimation with the introduction of Jehar's character. Jehar, the only son of the wealthy Sikh, Sirdar Singh is sent to David's MacArd University to have modern education and not to learn Christianity. However, he is attracted towards Christ in the atmosphere of the missionaries. So he now wants to be a 'Christian Sadhu'. This idea of becoming a 'Christian Sadhu' is a complicated one. When asked to explain Jehar says :

I shall travel on foot over India,
 teaching and preaching as Jesus did, but
 I shall remain an Indian. As an Indian
 I will portray an Indian Christ, such as
 He might have been had He been born
 among us.⁵⁰

David's orthodox mind does not accept it. He wants
 Jehar to be a Christian, but not to be a 'Sadhu'. So he
 says : "Certainly he cannot be a Sadhu. The Christian Church
 would not recognise him."⁵¹

It is here we find Ted, David's young son, differing
 from his own father. His reaction to Jehar's idea of being
 'Christian Sadhu' is really a crucial one. It is revealed
 in his dialogue with his father. He says :

"Jehar has an immense idea - one that
 might revive the whole spirit of
 Christ in India ! "

"I don't see what you are driving at - "

"Father, an Indian Christ ! "

"That's blasphemous - or would be if it
 were not absurd." He gazed at his
 father with clear eyes, his heart
 beginning to flame. "I wish I could
 have thought of it, only I am not
 Indian. I wish I were ! To see the
 spirit of Christ incarnate again in an
 Indian - "

"Ted, I will not listen."⁵²

This dialogue clearly illustrates how Ted is ahead of his father towards religious understanding and the idea of religious brotherhood. However, Ted seeks further explanation of Jehar's idea of 'being a Christian Sadhu' and Jehar explains :

I simply do what many have done, except I am of Christ. Shiv and Ram I do not condemn, Kali I will not worship, nor Ganesh, for I cannot see them good or beautiful. But Christ I see is beautiful because he committed no crime and he harmed no one, and he spoke of God.⁵³

We understand Jehar's liking of Christ, but it is difficult to find sound reasoning for his views about Kali and Ganesh. We do not know why he thinks Ganesh not 'good' and 'beautiful' and how Christ is more beautiful than Ganesh. In fact, in Hinduism, Ganesh is the God of wisdom, welfare and success. So he is worshiped at the beginning of every new work. Perhaps, the appearance of Kali and Ganesh might have disturbed Pearl Buck. Any way, Jehar has sound reasons for his being drawn to Jesus Christ as he has seen Christ in a vision. He explains it to Ted :

Once I even tore to pieces the Bible, Mr. Fordham said we must use in the class-room. I was so unhappy to read it. I did not wish to be compelled by him. And then suddenly I saw Christ, there in my lonely room.⁵⁴

It is very significant to note that Jehar's idea of becoming a 'Christian Sadhu' and Ted's belief in an 'Indian Christ' shake the boundaries of the orthodox Christianity and Hinduism alike. These concepts are novel and raise serious questions about the true meaning of religion. Because of such free play of ideas and spirit of inquiry the characters (Jehar and Ted) start thinking scientifically about the old religious dogmas or orthodoxy. The confrontation between Ted and David about the true meaning of Christianity is in example. Ted tells his father that they have tried their way of preaching Christianity for some hundreds of years churches and hospitals and universities etc. But "It does not make christians".

"It does make Christians", his father said harshly. "There is a statistical gain every year in Indian Church membership."

"No real gain", Ted said doggedly. "The villagers are as they have been for all these hundreds of years. I saw

no sign of Christianity there, father. The same old poverty, the same old misery, the same greed of the zamindars and the landowners, the same ruthlessness of the rich over the poor, the evil over the good - "

"These things have always been and always will be," his father said.

"Then of what good is Christianity ?" Ted cried passionately...."Jehar is right....I wish I had the guts to be like him....⁵⁵

Thus, we find Ted going far ahead of his father in seeking the true meaning of religion. He not only speaks but he also acts according to his own speaking. He gives up all comforts in the mission house in Poona and goes to the village Vhai and lives there like a Sadhu devoting his life to the service of the people. Pearl Buck significantly remarks that he read to the villagers, gathering around his door in the twilight, "from the Bhagavad Gita or Koran, the Christian or Hebrew sacred books or he told them stories of other countries."⁵⁶ This explains Ted's humanism and his belief in religious brotherhood and religious tolerance.

The religious encounter that takes place in Ted's mind is of great importance. He experiences a kind of inner satisfaction that reminds us of spiritual delight when he

arrives at the decision of leaving Poona for Vhai. Pearl Buck says :

Hindu saints, like ancient Christians, were acquainted with the state of ecstasy, and this he supposed was what they meant. When a decision was right, because it was the will of God, or perhaps only because it fulfilled the soul's deepest unknown desire, then such ecstasy was the confirmation, a powerful happiness, an accord which was complete.⁵⁷

Thus he understands the common feeling of inner satisfaction, experienced by 'Hindu saints' and 'ancient Christians'. Moreover, when he marries Ruthie, he finds that both the religions have granted the 'natural life of man'. He finds Soloman's song - 'come my beloved, let us go forth into the field' as well as Shankaracharya saying :

For only where the one is twain
And where the two are one again
Will truth no more be sought in vain.⁵⁸

This parallel belief between Soloman and Shankaracharya is the significant illustration of the religious encounter taking place in Ted's mind. Yet this is not all. Ted finds a common ground between the Hebrew, Christian saints and the Marathi poet - saint - Tukaram very striking. Jehar has explained to

him the "spiritual ties between all the greatest leaders of men and to the same God, whatever His name. Thus Moses and the Hebrew prophets, thus David and Paul, were brothers to Tukaram."⁵⁹ Ted finds the story of Tukaram so strangely like the life of St. Francis of Assisi. As Pharisees and Sadducees had persecuted Jesus so too the Brahmans had persecuted Tukaram. Yet Ted's Christian mind is not prepared to accept Tukaram with all his heart. Therefore, whenever he is moved by the Hindu poet saints, he turns to his New Christian Testament, sometimes frightened, "lest the seat of his heart be shaken by those who had never known Christ..."⁶⁰

Thus Ted, though capable enough to attain the expected height, falls short of it. He finds it very difficult to step outside his christianity and to experience religious brotherhood with all his heart. We find Ted at least allowing his mind to be shaken by Tukaram but David, his father, does not do so. Instead he considers Tukaram to be his enemy.⁶¹ This exclusiveness of David's Christianity is still dormant in Ted. Perhaps Ted might have inherited it. It is this Christian exclusiveness of his mind that leads Ted to deny his daughter, Livy, to marry Jatin, the Indian, whom she loves with all her heart. Thus as we find in Peony and The Hidden Flower, the issue of marriage becomes very significant in this novel also. Jehar indirectly

suggests Ted "to complete the meaning of Christ" by allowing Livy to marry Jatin. Jehar tells Ted :

The ladder to Heaven is made of steps. With each step we think we have reached the goal. But there is another step, and the final one before the gates of God is the one when all of self is given.⁶²

Jehar's appeal, however, does not succeed. Instead, Ted, takes her daughter, with all the members of his family, to America. Yet, his frank and sincere confession is very significant and striking. He says :

I should perhaps be willing to carry the meaning of love to its ultimate. I feel a failure in myself. I am not ready to face the ultimate nor to accept it.⁶³

Thus, Ted fails to attain the height of Kung Chen in Peony and Dr. Steiner in The Hidden Flower. Yet his struggle towards such height is too great to be ignored. At least he has realized his limitations and has shown courage in admitting them frankly, which David or Mr. MacArd would not have. Hence, Jatin while evaluating Ted's dilemma remarks :

I know his soul reaches beyond the rest of him. His faith is far up yonder.... But his flesh is more prudent than his soul and it remains upon earth. And his

mind is uncertain between the two. He believes in his ideals and he considers them necessary.... What he does not know is that if one does not immediately practice ideals, they are lost.⁶⁴

The ultimate end of the religious encounter in the novel is to uphold or cherish the idea of religious brotherhood and spiritual love - Christian and Hindu alike. And if it is beyond the capacity of the common individuals, they should at least show the sense of mutual respect and the spirit of religious tolerance, which is exhibited by Darya and David. It is in this spirit that David has found amazing parallels to Christian thought in the prayer from the ancient scriptures of Hinduism :

From the unreal lead me to the real
From the darkness lead me to light
From death lead me to immortality.⁶⁵

This prayer, which Pearl Buck has so thoughtfully referred to, is very significant as it clearly expresses Pearl Buck's belief in the "struggle towards personal goodness".

- V -

From Religion to Mysticism :
Reincarnation in Mandala

While Pearl Buck's Come My Beloved portrays the meaningful interaction between Christianity and Hinduism, her Mandala (1970) brings into focus Christianity and the mysticism of India. Mandala, mainly deals with the theme of reincarnation or rebirth through mystic experience; and hence it is far from the world of religious fanaticism or intolerance. The effort, here, is towards the unity rather than fraction. So this is a step further towards Pearl Buck's ideal of religious humanism and her spiritualism which she has portrayed in her Pavilion of Women.

In Mandala, Christianity is represented by the English Priest Father Francis Paul, Buddhist mysticism by the Lama in Ladakh and Hinduism by Jagat and Moti.

One of the significant illustrations of the religious encounter between Christianity and Hinduism at its plain and somewhat orthodox level is the exchange of remarks between Jagat, the Prince of Amarpur, and the Christian Priest, Father Francis Paul. Father Paul works as a missionary among the Bhills near Amarpur (Rajasthan). Jagat asks the Priest to let the

Bhills enjoy their heathen ways as they accept the Hindu Gods and believe in Hindu Trinity, whereupon Father Paul says :

I hope, they will not accept Hinduism your highness....Left to themselves my hill folk are free and independent and honest. But when they come under Hindu influence they doubt their own souls. Your people despise them and the Bhills feel it.⁶⁶

However, nothing else happens except this exchange of remarks because "In spite of a secret prejudice against Catholicism, Jagat enjoyed conversation with Father Francis Paul."⁶⁷ They enjoy each others company because both of them are interested unknowingly in a sort of religious mysticism.

The crucial point of religious encounter in the novel arises when Moti, the beautiful wife of Jagat, expresses her love for this young foreign priest, Father Francis Paul. Thus, he finds himself in a situation most challenging in his life. He is caught between his religious mission and personal passion. Confronted with sudden passionate attack by Moti, he considers his mission to be more significant than his personal passion and tells her, "you are a wife of a great and good man (Jagat), I am a priest of God. This is our destiny. If we are to meet again - and if we are not to meet again it would break my

heart - it must be only because we do God's work together."⁶⁸
 This reminds us of Father O'Banion in Satan Never Sleeps. It is significant to note that Pearl Buck portrays missionaries or men of religion in her novel with high esteem and respect. They are never tempted by beautiful women. Father Paul in Mandala, Father O'Banion in Satan Never Sleeps and Brother Andre in Pavilion of Women illustrate this point.

Inspite of his differences with Jagat over the religion of the Bhills, Father Francis Paul shows a remarkable understanding of religious brotherhood. This is clearly evident in his reply to Moti's passionate appeal. He says, "What does it matter if your God is Krishna and mine Christ? There are those who say that the two are one....who knows? Let us work together for the good of our people...."⁶⁹ Thus the passionate event is turned into a religious understanding and spirit of co-operation by Father Paul. This bringing of Krishna and Christ together by this English Priest reminds us Ted's combination of Tukaram and St. Francis of Assisi, Soloman and Shankaracharya in Come My Beloved and it sets the background for the mysticism of the novel.

Mandala deals with the theme of reincarnation or rebirth in a double context. Jai, the young son of Jagat who is killed in the war against the Chinese in Ladakh, is supposed

to be taking second birth in a peasant's house near Amarpur; and second, Miss Brooke Westley, the young American girl herself is shown to have strong connections in her previous life, with the palace of Jagat in Amarpur. The portrayal of the first is more direct in the novel than that of the second.

We find Jagat and Miss Brooke visiting the Lama in a big Buddhist Temple in Ladakh. They are in search of Jai, the son of Jagat and Moti. This Lama episode is a crucial one in the novel. We see the Lama establishing a direct link - a sort of conversation or communion with the spirit of Jai. After describing the conditions in which Jai is killed in the war, the Lama goes on explaining to the strangers the stages in the process of rebirth. According to his theory, the soul of the dead does not leave the body immediately after death; it wanders around the dead body for some time. Then a kind of choice is given to the soul, it can directly go to the heaven or it can wait to take a second birth. If the soul wants to be born again it can enter in a pregnant women's child and when it is born, generally it remembers something of his previous life, however, faint the memory might be. This reminds us of Gerald's spirit visiting his wife, Eve, in Pearl Buck's Letter from Peking, though the nature of its mysticism is somewhat different from that in Mandala. We find Gerald shot dead in Peking and at the same time Eve, seeing

him clearly at the door of her room in Vermont. The vision was, though momentary, very clear and relevant to the reality. A step further than this momentary vision of the spirit of the dead is its reincarnation and Mandala deals with it in the double form of Jai and Miss Brooke. It seems, from the descriptions in the novel, that Pearl Buck must have studied a lot about the Tibetan mysticism. Her account of the whole Lama episode is confirmed by that of Emil Schlagintwait, who says :

A particular class of Lamas are astrologers, the Lamas called Choichong, who are said to be all educated at the Garmakhya monastery at Lhasa enjoy the greatest reputation, because the God, Choichong....is supposed to become incorporated in one of the Lamas.⁷⁰

Thus it is because of such incorporation of the spirit of the God Choichong, the Lama can tell Jagat and Brooke how Jai is killed in the war and all that. The theme of rebirth, with all its mysticism, is introduced in the novel with this episode. Jai had the hobby of tiger-hunting with his father. Moti, his mother used to complain against it as it was dangerous to the life of her son. As a child Jai used to play with his 'talismans' (toys) namely a tiger's paw and an ape. Jagat now gives them to Brooke. One day, while moving in the countryside near Amarpur, she sees a peasant young

woman holding a child, a boy, in her laps. Surprisingly enough, the child turns from his mother's breast and gazes at the stranger "as though he recognized her." The mysteriousness of this significant event is portrayed by Pearl Buck in the following way :

"He knows you," the mother exclaimed...
"Perhaps I also know him," she replied,
and opening her bag she took from it the
toys that had once belonged to Jai. The
child leaned from his mother's arm....
he examined them and then with care he
took in his tiny fingers the tiger's paw
and clasping it in both hands he held it
to its breast.

The mother laughed, "He will be a
hunter of tigers", she exclaimed.⁷¹

This experience must have been very striking to
Miss Brooke.

A month later, Jagat sees the same child while
passing by the road. Then the boy sees him and laughs
loudly. Being surprized, the mother of the child stops
there and asks Jagat :

"Does my son know you high one ?"

"What has he in his hand?" Jagat asked.

"It's a tiger's paw, a foreign lady gave him....Have you seen my son before, high one?" she asked.

Believing and non-believing he gave a great sigh.

"I don't know," he said, Believing and non-believing he went his way.⁷²

Thus the theory of reincarnation or rebirth is first explained by the Lama and then it is reinforced in the form of the child that takes the tiger's paw from Miss Brooke. Both these events make Miss Brooke get deeply involved in the mystery of rebirth. This is necessary as it prepares her for the significant experience of her own identity at the end of the novel.

It is essential to note that Miss Brooke has come to India in search of reality. Pearl Buck explains it in a very symbolic and significant way :

She had come to believe at last that reality was to be found only in a very old country, the oldest of countries, and so she had approached India, the mother country of ancient Asia....here perhaps she would find her own being, who had all her life been lost, for she had no home.⁷³

This statement clearly illustrates Miss Brooke's quest for identity. The guiding force of her life is a mystic statement she has read in the house of her grandmother. This statement is central to the entire design of the novel. Pearl Buck makes it as follows :

The antipathies and sympathies of today, the sudden affinities like falling in love at first sight, and the sudden hostilities that apparently had no sense - all were due to relationships in some buried yesterday, while those of tomorrow could be anticipated and so regulated by the actions of today.⁷⁴

She has followed her 'sympathies' and they have brought her to India, and here at Amarpur she does not know for what purpose.

A strong hint of mysticism about her relations with Jagat and Amarpur is given in a dialogue between the two :

"What is this between us ?" He had demanded. "It's as though I had known you forever."

"A friendship," she had said, "And friends are always sure they have met before - reincarnation and all that."

"Do you already believe in
reincarnation ?"

"Perhaps I have always believed,"
she said...⁷⁵

Now the question that requires to be answered is in what form they have met before. A significant hint for the answer of this question is given by Pearl Buck at the beginning of the novel: Jagat's grand father brought a Greek girl to the palace. He had been infatuated with her.... she had died soon..."dysentries - or had she hanged herself ? palace gossip":⁷⁶

With reference to this information Pearl Buck shows Brooke's association with the palace in an oblique way. Therefore, her description of Brooke's mental state becomes significantly symbolic and highly suggestive.

She was beginning to feel the marble palace was her home. It's uncounted rooms a dwelling familiar to her. Never before had she known this feeling of being at home in a place.⁷⁷

Here the suggestion of her being 'the Greek girl' is most powerful and it is further reinforced by Pearl Buck's following remarks :

In India life never ends. It goes on into some other realm. And this, is modern truth, for if science teaches any precept, it is that there is no destruction but only change.... And she found the report of a speech made by the Prime Minister of India....in which he quoted a saying from the wandering saint of India, that spirit of the past made flesh today and they were the words of Vinoba Bhave; the time has come for science and spirituality.⁷⁸

This is a convincing illustration of the encounter between the Western Christian mind trained by the modern science and the Indian mystic mind believing in the ancient gospel of the spirit.

At the end of the novel, the 'glass-room' scene of the marble palace settles all our doubts and completes Miss Brooke's search for identity. Miss Brooke's experience in the glass-room of the marble palace reminds us of Adela Quested's mystic experience in the Maraber caves of E.M. Forster's A Passage to India. Of Miss Brooke Pearl Buck writes :

She found that they (the walls of the glass-room) were built of mirrors and even the ceiling was a mirror. What Prince long dead had devised this means

of manifolding his infatuation ?
 She (Miss Brooke) imagined a lovely girl, nacked in the room of glass, repeated a hundred times among these walls. And as she imagined she seemed to see the girl alive again, her face half turned away....suddenly she saw, or imagined she saw, that the girl was herself. Had she once been born in India ?

Alone in the room of glass she was suddenly afraid and ran as if pursued, and that day, at that moment saw Jagat at the head of the marble stair....

"Who pursues you ?"

"No one, and yet I feel I am pursued."⁷⁹

Thus Brooke's self identification is complete - the identification with the girl in the glass-room of the palace and thus she realizes her sympathies that take her to her previous self - the self of the Greek girl. Thus the title of the novel, Mandala, becomes very significant and symbolically meaningful as it means "a symbol representing the effort to reunify the self."⁸⁰

Miss Brooke's experience in the Marble Palace and Miss Adela Quested's in the Maraber caves in A Passage to

India are essentially mystic in nature. Both Adela and Brooke come to India with quest motive. Jagat reminds us of Dr. Aziz and Brooke's grand mother, indirectly portrayed by Pearl Buck, has something of Forster's Mrs. Moore in the novel. However, in Mandala mysticism provides a resolution to all conflicts and doubts whereas in Forster, it provides an identical plane of consciousness for Godbole and Mrs. Moore, but can not resolve the political, social and racial tensions between Aziz and Fielding.

Pearl Buck's Mandala, thus, depicts the encounter between Western Christianity and Eastern mysticism and tries to foster human understanding between the two peoples. The novel takes us away from orthodox religion to universal spiritualism and humanism.

It is the loving affections, "these sympathies" and not "antipathies", to use Pearl Buck's own distinction, which constitute the affirmative vision of Pearl Buck as a novelist.

- VI -

Freedom and Communion :
Spiritual Pursuits in
Pavilion of Women

Pearl Buck's Satan Never Sleeps, Peony, The Hidden Flower and Come My Beloved deal with orthodox institutional religions and her Mandala is a kind of departure from such orthodox institutional religions to mysticism. Though the Lama in the Buddhist Temple in Ladakh and Father Francis Paul working as a missionary among the Bhills near Amarpur, represent their orthodox institutional religions, the emphasis in the novel is on the music intimations of the reincarnation theme. Seen from this point of view, Pearl Buck's Pavilion of Women (1946) seems to be a unique novel. It's uniqueness is of threefold nature. First the religious encounter in the novel does not have the usual background of orthodox and institutional religion; second, it is totally devoted to mysticism and spiritualism and third, it defines Pearl Buck's humanism and her vision as a novelist very clearly.

The religious encounter in the novel is between Madame Wu, a Chinese lady and Brother Andre, the Italian Priest. Madame Wu is sceptical about any orthodox religion

and does not believe in any one; and Brother Andre, though always referred to as a 'priest', is not a 'Christian' in the orthodox or traditional sense of the term. When the 'Old Lady', Madame Wu's mother-in-law, dies, the Buddhist Priests are called, but "Wu did not believe in those priests nor in their gods".⁸¹ We find her disbelief in any orthodox or institutional religion or religious rituals throughout the novel. "She who all her life had been sceptic to the bone, who had smiled at priests and temple mummery, who had looked up to the sky and seen no gods...."⁸² has been the tone with which she has been portrayed. And yet she has a remarkable religious tolerance. She allows all Buddhists rituals in the family and arranges Brother Andre's funeral in the traditional Christian way as she does not want to harm the religious feelings of those around her.

Brother Andre, on the other hand, is also out of tune with orthodox Christianity. His conversation with Madame Wu is highly significant in this regard. When asked to explain his religion, he tells her :

"I will not explain it, for I can not... Little Sister Hsia can read you out of a book and speak to you a way of praying, but these are not my ways. I read many books, I have no set ways of prayer."

"Then where is your way of religion?" she demanded.

"In bread and in water", he replied, "in sleeping and in walking, in cleaning my house and making my garden, in feeding the lost children I find and take under my roof, in coming to teach your son, in sitting by those who are ill and in helping those who must die, that they may die in peace."⁸³

When Madame Wu tells him that she wanted to call him, instead of the Temple Priests, at the time of the Old Lady's death, Brother Andre tells her that he would not have kept the priests away as he believes in the religious brotherhood, and as he does not want to harm the religious feelings of any one. It is because of such views on religion that Brother Andre is called a 'heretic' by his own people in Italy. At the end of the novel, we find Andre's nephew informing Madame Wu, "He was a heretic.... the church cast him out as a renegade - homeless, without support."⁸⁴

Thus both of them - Madame Wu and Brother Andre - are beyond the limits of any orthodox institutional religion. Therefore, they are free to seek spiritual happiness without any restrains of religious orthodoxy.

One of the major obstacles in the way of any spiritual development is considered to be the human passion or the demands of the flesh - the physical side of man - woman relationship. It is very significant to note that both Madame Wu and Brother Andre are totally away from such demands of the flesh; and this is the second very important feature of their characters. We find Madame Wu stepping out of her wife-hood or womanhood after her fortieth birthday. Willingly, on her own, she renounces all physical contact with her husband and finds a young concubine for him. She believes that for any woman, to cling to a man beyond the time of her fertility is 'to defy heaven's decree'. Her purpose behind stepping out of her woman-hood is clear. She says, "I will spend the rest of my life assembling my own mind and my own soul."⁸⁵ Thus we find Madame Wu fully prepared - both physically and mentally - for her spiritual pursuits.

On the other hand, we find Brother Andre, the Italian Priest, already beyond the physical and material wants. He is to marry a woman he loves; but he sees 'a light' that turns him away from love and marriage. Like Jehar in Come My Beloved, Brother Andre also experiences an epiphany and he explains it to Madame Wu as follows :

I thought myself loved by a woman.
But God gave me a sight into human
beings too quick for my own happiness.
I saw her like Eve, planning for other
human beings whom she was to create -
with some small help from me.... And
I saw my small part, so brief a
satisfaction of the flesh and all my
life then spent in digging and delving,
like Adam, in order that our garden
might be bigger and the fruits more
rich. So I asked myself if it was I
she loved, and the answer was, perhaps -
but only for the moment, because she
needed to be served. So I said to
myself, 'shall I not rather serve God,
who asks nothing of me except that I
do justly and walk humbly before him ?'
On that day I became a priest.⁸⁶

This explains Brother Andre's views on physical love and
marriage and wordly things. Thus like Madame Wu, he has
already stepped out of his manhood. This has been
significantly illustrated in his reply to Madame Wu's
hesitation in visiting his house to see the radio. He says,
"Do not be disturbed. There is nothing to disturb you.
The man in me is dead. God killed him."⁸⁷

This shows that both of them are out of the demands of their flesh. This is necessary to qualify them for their endeavor towards spiritual happiness.

Though Madame Wu and Brother Andre have stepped out of all orthodox ritualistic religion and set religious institutions of religious dogmas, they believe in certain humanist convictions which are called 'religious'. Their humanist convictions can be seen in the following dialogues :

"You believe in God and I believe in justice", she had declared. "You struggle towards one and I toward the other."

"They are the same," he had declared...."⁸⁸

"Is there no God there ?" she inquired.

"There is", he said. "But I have not seen His face."

"Then how can you believe in him ?" she asked.

"He is also in that which is around me", Brother Andre replied...."He is in the air and the water, in life and death in mankind ! "⁸⁹

This illustrates Pearl Buck's idea of religion which is all inclusive and human. It is this attitude

toward religion that makes Madame Wu remark, "The seas no longer divide the peoples and heaven is no more our canopy."⁹⁰

Thus Madame Wu and Brother Andre enjoy a kind of freedom which is denied to those who are trapped in religious dogmas, demands of the flesh and other petty considerations of race and nationality. Against this background we find Brother Andre answering questions of Madame Wu about the universe, soul, love, duty, freedom and all such things. Brother Andre, thus, steps towards saintliness reminding us of Father O'Banion in Satan Never Sleeps, though we find Andre far ahead of Father O'Banion in his spiritual pursuits.

One day, we find Madame Wu experiencing supreme happiness in a trance. She sits gazing into the handful of stars above her court. Her servants, sons and even Mr. Wu come to see her. They all call her out loudly but she hears no voice. She continues to look at the stars for a very long time. Pearl Buck describes this trance in the following words :

Nothing in her life had been as sweet as those moments of whole freedom when her soul had left her body behind. She knew that this freedom could become drink to

the soul, for while her soul
 had been wandering among the stars
 she had neglected all else, and the
 burdens of this great house had
 dropped from her.⁹¹

It is this spiritual freedom which is central and crucial in the religious encounter in the novel; and the greatness of Brother Andre lies in his taking Madame Wu to the realm of such freedom. This freedom of Madame Wu which she experiences in her trance is something mystic, transcendental or spiritual in nature; and it leads her to establish a sort of spiritual communion with the spirit of Brother Andre.

Brother Andre is killed by robbers and Madame Wu having heard the news rushes to his place. He dies immediately after asking her to feed the orphan children he has collected under his roof. However, her experience of Andre's death is very significant as it gives her added spiritual strength. Being alone with his dead body in the room, she feels Brother Andre's spirit to be alive in her own heart and she experiences a kind of spiritual peace. She then tells to his dead body, "Andre....you live in me I will do my utmost to preserve your life"⁹² Pearl Buck comments :

The moment she had said these words peace welled up in her being. It was so profound, so quieting, so contenting, that for the first time in her life she knew that never before had she known what peace was. Standing motionless in the bare room before his shell, she felt happy.⁹³

This experience proves to be of great significance for it changes her whole personality. The change is expressed in her remark, "The springs of my being are different. I shall no longer live out of duty but out of love."⁹⁴ This was her discovery of herself through love and she felt a kind of strange enrichment flowing through her whole being, followed by a 'serene content'. It is at this moment that she declares her love for Brother Andre. For her he is not dead, he is living and he is with her "because she loved him. The reticence of the body was gone. It was unnecessary. She who all her life had been skeptic to the bone....now was sure that Andre was alive and with her."⁹⁵

After this mystic experience we find that whenever she has a question to ask, she asks it to Brother Andre now alive in her own soul. Thus the dialogue is between her own voice and a voice answering from within her own body. The dialogue becomes a monologue. One of the significant illustrations of it is as follows :

"Andre", she said to herself, "it is strange, is it not, that you had to die before I know you?"

"Not strange", the answering thought came into her mind.

"There was my big body between us.... I was held in their (his parents') flesh. Now I am wholly myself."

"Andre,....should I still call you brother, perhaps?"

"It is no longer necessary to qualify our friendship." So he answered in her heart.⁹⁶

This mystic communion between living Madame Wu and dead Brother Andre reminds us of the communion between the Lama and Jai in Mandala. However, the Lama mysticism is something external to the main characters in the novel. But the mysticism in Pavilion of Women is something internal to Madame Wu and Brother Andre. In A Letter from Peking, we find, the spirit of dead Gerald visiting his wife in a visible form for a moment only. There is no dialogue between the two as it is portrayed only within the context of love. But here in Pavilion of Women the context is clearly spiritual.

A significant feature of this level of religious encounter - spiritual one - in Pavilion of Women is that it is not simply for individual's private happiness; it is extended to human understanding based on universal love. Pearl Buck is not only interested in individual salvation but in the gospel of universal love that alone can make life happy. We find several significant remarks in this regard throughout the novel. Madame Wu's own realization of living out of love and not out of duty is one example.

Moreover, the whole episode of the flower girl, the young prostitute, Jasmine, is of great significance in this regard. What Andre does for Madame Wu with spiritual strength, Jasmine does with her true love for Mr. Wu. Pearl Buck's remark in this regard is very important :

But that this Jasmine, this common, rosy little street girl, this creature of ignorance and earthly innocence, should have roused in Mr. Wu something of the same energy was a miracle.... She understood the miracle in him that was love.... Priest or prostitute the miracle was the same.⁹⁷

The novel ends with this same triumph of love. About Madame Wu Pearl Buck says at the end :

Gods she did not worship, and faith she had none, but love she had and forever. Love alone had awakened her sleeping soul and had made it deathless. She knew she was immortal.⁹⁸

Thus Pavilion of Women explores two ends of the spectrum of Pearl Buck's humanism. The interpersonal relationship between Andre and Madam Wu exemplifies the mystical end of her humanism while that between Jasmine and Mr. Wu represents its secular level. Thus the polarities of the mystical and the secular are telescoped into a single humanist vision in Pavilion of Women.