

## Chapter VII

### Conclusion

Katherine Mansfield was all for experiment both in life and art. Erratic and maverick, she is often deemed fallen by conservatives. Readers have been mostly given a highly slanted portrait of the congenital nonconformist. Highlighted as the enfant terrible, Mansfield has remained a debatable personality over the years. Her legacy constitutes the entire gamut of experience from the vulnerable youth of the Bavarian Sketches to the transcendental artist of her last stories. The essentially sensuous experience of the beginner slowly matures to a remarkable clarity of vision.

An avid admirer of Chekov, Mansfield does not see life in a monotone like him. Her characters are sharply individuated. Though personally acquainted with the Bloomsbury group, she does not echo them. Aware of her temperamental inclinations, she is a lone wolf and strikes out on her own. With a distinctive Colonial flavour, Mansfield creates an ambience fraught with her personal brand of magic. She never reduces to flashy gimmicks inasmuch as personal preoccupations inspire her creation. A writer first and a woman next, she portrays life as a tortuous path of which she has recondite knowledge. The irony is that the unconventional, irreverent woman in her threatens to obscure the original, sensitive artist. Hence it is all the more imperative that she is studied in the right perspective.

Mansfield's concern is with the subjective, the fugitive, the elusive and the enigmatic. She wants to capture the vision and not the circumstance. The theme or thought is of prime importance in a Mansfield story and it shapes the technique. A self-exile's deracination has its safety-valve in counterbalancing nostalgia. Hence the recurrence of nostalgia as a motif in the Karori tales. And if that expatriate is emotionally as high-strung, if not somewhat unbalanced, the chances are there that she should plunge into bouts of recklessness, inevitably followed by soul-searching. Mansfield's intense soul-search as she penetrates through her inverted image often misleads critics.

Katherine Mansfield's coming of age as a writer coincides with the . . . world war]and the outset of her tuberculosis. These traumatic changes in the public, and private worlds are well reflected in her new images of devouring animals and disturbing insects. Dr. Sohrapure's confirmation of her gonorrhoea adds remorse and shame to the unbearable suffering. The outrage she feels at the loss of her much prized privacy is compounded by the conditioned life of a patient. The wheel comes full circle as the initial rebellion is replaced by a final resignation to the inevitable : "Who am I as I sit here at this table, but my own past? . . . One thing I have learnt, one thing, I do believe is, Nothing Happens Suddenly. Yes, that is my religion, I suppose . . ."

(A Married Man's Story)