

CRITICISM ON KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S NOVELS: A REVIEW

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Abstract: Kamala Markandaya is a post-independent Indian novelist and journalist, a native of Mysore, India. Markandaya was a graduate from the University of Madras, and published several short stories in Indian newspapers. After India declared its independence, Markandaya moved to Britain, but labeled herself an Indian expatriate. The paper is an attempt to make a review of articles on Markandaya's works. The paper entitled "Criticism on Kamala Markandaya's novels: A Review" explores the central idea of Markandaya's novels to explore the themes like struggle between tradition and modernism, poverty and hunger, race conflicts, east-west encounters, fatalism, politics and human relationships, feminism, industrialization, poverty, east-west conflicts, identity crisis, cultural estrangement, cultural rootlessness and exile. A review of articles on Markandaya's select novels paves way to understand researcher's findings and their effort to derive further scope of research in her novels.

Kamala Markandaya was a pseudonym used by Kamala Purnaiya Taylor, who was born in 1924, and lived till May 16, 2004. She was an Indian novelist and journalist, a graduate from Madras University who published several short stories in Indian newspapers. After India got its independence, Markandaya moved to Britain, though she still labeled herself an Indian expatriate. Markandaya is known for writing about cultural clashes between Indian urban and rural societies. Markandaya's first published novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*, was a bestseller and was cited as an American Library Association Notable Book in 1955. Other novels include *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), *Pleasure City* (1982/1983) and *The Bombay Tiger* which is posthumous.

The article entitled "Significance of the title *Nectar in a Sieve*" written by K. Ramesh Srivastava conveys the fact that the title of the novel is derived from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous lines quoted in his sonnet *Work without Hope*. The sonnet is written in the year 1825 relating nature to human emotions. Ramesh analyses the life of Nathan and Rukmani with regard to the inner meaning of the title of the novel, in various aspects. The author connects the significance of the title with some of the happiest and saddest moments of the character's life as mentioned below with regard to the novel. K. Ramesh Srivastava analyses the life of Rukmani and finds that the happiness is short lived in the life of Rukmani and Nathan due to the birth of sons and the wedding of Irrawaddy. The reaping of good harvests brings happiness in their lives but later things change. Their sons no longer provide their helping hand to their family. The daughter's marriage gets

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collapsed, the hut and the harvest get destroyed and finally the land is taken away from them. Every tragic incident turns her towards hope in the path of Rukmani's life. When Nathan dies, she comes back to the village with Puli and Selvam with her disappointment leading to hope. Srivastava highlights the happiest and saddest occasions of Rukmani's life which helps the readers understand the significance of the title of the novel.

Nectar in A Sieve is viewed as a portrayal of rural India in the article "Portrayal of Rural India in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*" written by L.M Joshi. His article highlights the upcoming of industrialization and its impact on rural human living conditions. The elements like poverty, lack of family planning, unemployment, prostitution, zamindari system, superstitious beliefs, lower status of women, marriage system explore the rural India. The author cites an example of traditional families pointing out the tragedy of patriarchy society where sons are considered as assets and the daughters are considered as burden on the family which could be seen in the life of Rukmani. The author points out a situation in Rukmani's life when she gives birth to a daughter. Her husband does not cherish but when she gives birth to sons, Nathan feels happy.

Gurpreet Kaur in her article "Postcolonial Ecofeminism, Women and Land in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*" suggests that the novel consists of the theme of postcolonial ecofeminism. According to Kaur, there is a relationship between the land and woman. She further ensures that the woman protagonist Rukmani's identity crisis is resolved through her ambivalence towards nature and spaces. It is indicative of the postcolonial environmental condition that she engages in to survive materially and to triumph. Rukmani's identity crisis is mediated through the land in which the family lived metaphorically in the novel. Kaur highlights Rukmani's involvement in gardening which provides her peace and security. Gardening enhances her spiritually and economically. She earns out of her cultivation and feeds her family and gets refreshment through the green environment. At the same time Rukmani undergoes trouble due to the upcoming of tannery which causes pollution affecting the natural environment. Farkhanda Nazir in the article "Women and Nature: Eco feminist Study of Kamala Markandaya's Novel *Nectar in a Sieve*" suggests that Rukmani is a keen Spectator, radiant raconteur and admirer of nature. Her gardening is a symbol of spirituality and depicts her deep love for nature. Farkhanda Nazir's study highlights Rukmani's deep concern and affection for the land and environment.

Mrs. Rachana Mishra and Dr. Anita Juneja in their article "Markandaya's Women characters in her Novels: A Critical Analysis" state that "While Premala is an epitome of Indian tradition, Roshan Merchant, another women character symbolizes frank, liberated enlightened ultra-modern woman concerned not only about personal freedom but also about national as well as global freedom" (Rachana 98) According to these two authors *Some Inner Fury* narrates the story of young

generation caught amidst the cultural conflicts. The three women characters Mirabai, Premala and Roshan are portrayed as mature women who very well adjust with their problematic life. Premala learns to adjust with her husband Kitsamy who is totally different from her. Premala is stirred by Indianness whereas Kitsamy is a person praising Western culture. Mirabai for the sake of her nation decides to sacrifice her love for an English man Richard. Roshan even after her divorce lives according to her wish and is concerned about her personal freedom by involving in national activities.

Ramesh Chadha in the article "The Interplay: *Nectar in a Sieve*, *Some Inner Fury* and *Esmond in India*" explores that *Some Inner Fury* is concerned as a novel investigating women having individual awakening and identity with feminist poetics. The cross-cultural interaction in Indian fiction could be traced by Markandaya's novels as seen in this article. The article presents the idea that each and every character of the novel is the victim of his or her destiny. In an Indian traditional family every individual seems to be different from each other due to the influence of Western culture. Most of the researchers have traced out the element of cross culture in the novel. Ramesh traces out a few lines from the text in order to show the character of Kitsamy, the eldest son of the family who is deep rooted in English customs, as he hates his own people who follow Indian way of living. Kitsamy's attitude could be witnessed through these lines. "It was a hot dazzling day beyond the shade, though it was still early the air rose shimmering from the earth, the mid-summer sunlight was nearly white. My brother, in collar and tie and suit in brown leather shoes and pork pie had shifted impatiently from foot to foot." (SIF 11) by highlighting these lines from the text Ramesh Chadha depicts the anglicised nature of Kitsamy.

Mr. C. Sengupta analyses the theme of alienation in the characters Govind, Kitsamy, Richard, Premala, Marlowe and Mirabai in his article "Alienation in Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury*: A Study of Characters". The author comments on various characters as Kitsamy is alienated from his own nation and his attitude is completely anglicised, Govind is alienated from other characters since he is involved in violence and destruction activities. Premala changes her identity completely in order to match Kitsamy, and accepts false image of being westernized. Richard is caught between his nation England and India, but is alienated in both the places. Mirabai's alienation is a deliberate one that is from her own love affair. Thus alienation has assured the proportions of great problem in modern fiction, whether British, American or Indo-Anglican.

The article "Stability and changing Social Scene in Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire*" written by Mr. Ramesh K. Srivastava portrays two kinds of people one group which remain stable and the other group which keeps on changing due to the influence of British culture. The two couples Dandekar and Sarojini lead a happy life

but their happiness gets collapsed due to the difference in opinion. G. Nageshwara Rao in his research article “Betwixt negation and affirmation: An Approach to *A Silence of Desire*” says that the title *ASilence of Desire* is a very suitable title conveying the ancient Indian thought. In Indian philosophy silencing the desire is an important step. In the novel *Markandaya* employs the concept of silencing the desire in order to search the philosophical values in a man’s life. Most of the researchers have analysed the character of Sarojini in different ways. She is portrayed as a devoted responsible wife fulfilling her responsibility with excellence and is proven to be a trust worthy soul mate. Sarojini’s character is analysed with regard to Biblical perspective in the article “Images of Women in Kamala Markandaya’s *A Silence of Desire: A Biblical Perspective*” written by Edith Deen. The author praises the genre of Indian English fiction written by many novelists, who have portrayed women possessing spiritual and modern values.

The novel *A Handful of Rice* is advocated with respect to the theme such as crisis of human values by Mr. Subash Chandra in his article “Crisis of values in *A Handful of Rice*”. According to him human nature is credited only if an individual possesses good values and morality, if morality does not exist humanness is absent. The analysis is strongly made in order to find the cause of crisis of values in the character of Ravi Shankar. In the research article *Crisis of Values in A Handful of Rice* Subash portrays the evil in the post-independence urban Indian society with all its corruption and dehumanization like smuggling, blackmarketeers, economic exploitations and many other evil traits. He further makes a comparison of Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* since there is a connecting theme of alienation and disharmony in both the novels which highlight the living conditions of poor in urban as well as rural atmosphere.

Promod Kumar Singh in his article “*A Handful of Rice: A Classical tale of lower Middle Class People.*” has viewed the novel *A Handful of Rice* as a classical tale of lower middle-class people. The author mentions that Ravi could not give a proper medical treatment to his son due to his poverty, like many urban poor middle-class families and he brings back his wife Nalini and new born babies back to his home within thirty days in order to avoid medical bills. The source of economic exploitation is identified in the lines: “The increasing price-rise of essential commodities gives pain to Ravi and Nalini like crores of poor Indian masses. Ravi reacts sharply when he comes to know that the price of rice has risen from eighteen rupees to twenty.” (Promod Kumar 129) According to the review Kamala Markandaya has skillfully represented the vision of day-today problems of poor masses in India. Apart from this the author has focused on gender discrimination in particular saying about the birth of girl child.

Arthur Pollard in his article “Kamala Markandaya’s *The Golden Honey Comb*” praised the artistic beauty of Kamala Markandaya for creating such an excellent

story of Indo-British encounters and further develops his idea commenting on the novel that *The Golden Honey Comb* paves way to recognize the role of women at frontline which is evident in these lines: "Though this novel is a tale of father and son, it may be said to be dominated by women- the Dowager, Mohini, Janaki and then Usha and Sophie." (Arthur Pollard 31) Pollard represents the idea that the women characters play a vital role in the lives of two majestic men, Bawajiraj II and his son Rabindranath. The author shows how Mohini stirs patriotic consciousness in these two men who later realize their responsibility and render their duties for Indian independence. A detailed study of characters is also made in the article with reference to the plot. Rabindranath is the most fascinating character in the novel as he is exposed to a new way of life unlike his father. Rabindranath is introduced to Indian culture and tradition and he is educated and becomes a dedicated citizen of India ready to fight against the British rule. Ravi involves in all sorts of mass struggle and decides to build a dam for the sake of people even though his father was against it. The father and Son stand apart by thoughts but they are united by souls having the relationship of a father and son. According to Arthur Pollard Markandaya posturises many events of mass struggle present in the history of Indian nation and in the epilogue the information of India's freedom is given.

In the article "*The Golden Honey Comb: A Critical Appraisal*", A.N Dwivedi says that Kamala Markandaya traces out the adolescent aspects of Ravi and describes his encounters with the women characters in the novel. Dwivedi points out Rabindranath's plight with different women. He loves for Janaki, a working girl in palace garden but also gets attracted towards Jaya and has physical relationship with her. Later we find Vimala the Dewan's daughter falling in love for him but the Dewan arranges her marriage with another guy, but the Dewan does not mind his younger daughter Usha having interest on him. Another girl, the daughter of Sir Arthur, named Sophie gets attracted towards him. "And yet another glimpse of closeness of the two distinct races is to be had in the hunting spree of Rabi and Miss Sophie. The two people also come very close to each other during the wild yet harmless Holi celebrations in Devapur state." (A.N Dwivedi)

Mr. S.P Appasamy in his article "*The Golden Honey Comb: A Saga of Princely life in India by Kamala Markandaya*" views the novel as depiction of colourful life of Indian Princes which she narrates the facts of historical vision. The author makes an analysis of women characters in the novel and says that they are strong enough to make choices and take decisions. Bawajiraj's mother, Manjula and his mistresses Mohini try to revive him but they do not succeed but they are successful with Rabindranath whom they educate in Indian ways. The power of women is voiced out in the article in the following lines: "It has often been remarked though women do not have a place in public life, they have a very overpowering influence on the affairs of both private and public life" (S.P Appasamy 62) The women

characters Manjula and Mohini realize the importance of refining Rabindranath and they play a vital role in transforming his character by stirring nationalism in him. Through the review of Kamala Markandaya's research articles in the select novels, it is evident that themes like nationalism, cultural rootlessness, identity, exile, isolation, multiculturalism, feminism are mostly dealt. Markandaya's novels inherit the new trends of Indian English writings which are evident from the study of the research articles. Further Markandaya's novels can be analysed with reference to the men characters and the study of philosophies can be interlinked with the novels of Markandaya.

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