
Dynamics in the novels of Kamala Markandaya

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Indian-English Literature is both an Indian Literature and variation of English Literature. Although English is an adopted language for Indians, Indian-English writers have created a great treasure in English literature. Though it is considered that one cannot write perfectly in a foreign language, the Indian writers have got a remarkable place in English Literature. English has become one of the Indian languages and Indian-English Literature has become an established entity, expressing Indian's cultural glory in epics, lyrics dramas, short stories and fables.

Rabinder Nath Tagore, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Sarojini Naidu, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya are the writers of great caliber who have established Indian - English Literature on the top. Like Jane Austen, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and the Bronte sisters, the Indian women novelists have also established a great tradition. The women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Jhabvala and Anita Desai etc. have played a remarkable role in development of Indian English literature.

Kamala Parnaiba Taylor was so private that she had written under the pseudonym of Kamala Markandaya. She belonged to a middle class south Indian Brahmin family. She was born in 1924 and educated in various intervals at various schools and at the Madras University. Her father worked for the railways and was an inveterate traveler. She herself worked for a weekly paper and later she tried her hand in some clerical and liaison work for the army. She also worked in a solicitor's office for awhile in London. In 1948, she married, Bertrand Taylor, an Englishman and made England her adopted home but she visited her homeland regularly. Her husband died in 1986 and Markandaya died on May 16, 2004 at her home in the outskirts of London.

She has not written many novels but the quality of her work takes her in the midst of great writers. She has knowledge of both the cultures so her novels have both Indian and British Characters. Markandaya's first novel Nectar in a Sieve was published in 1954. It got world-wide fame and became so popular that it has been translated in seventeen languages, including Russian in 1958. Her novels are remarkable for their range of experience. Her other novels are Some Inner Fury (1955), A Silence of Desire (1961), Possession (1963), A Handful of Rice (1966), The Cofferdams (1969), The Nowhere Man (1972), Two Virgins (1974), The Golden Honeycomb (1977), Pleasure City (1982) and her posthumous novel Bombay Tiger (2008).

Nectar in a Sieve is the story of a simple village woman, who represents the traditional Indian womanhood. She suffers all the hardships and financial difficulties mutely. This novel is set in a village and examines the hard agricultural life of Indian peasants. The novel's title Nectar in a Sieve has been drawn from a tragic poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge called "Work without Hope". "Work without hope draws Nectar in a Sieve and hope without an object cannot live." This novel shows that hope or the sweetness in life (Nectar) can be difficult to hold on to almost like trying to carry it in a Sieve (Strainer).

If Nectar in a Sieve is a tale of rural Indian woman, Some Inner Fury is the story of Mirabai, a highly educated young woman who belongs to a partly westernized Hindu family in pre-independent India. This novel is considered as a semi - autobiography of the novelist. There are so many similarities between Mira, the narrator of Some Inner Fury and Kamala Markandaya but the difference of Markandaya and Mira's decision of

marriage separates this novel to call an autobiography. Her novel A Silence of Desire is the story of a husband and wife.

Dandekar is a petty government clerk and his wife Sarojini is a good householder but she is superstitious and believes in a faith healer to get cured for her disease. The husband is by no means a westernized person but he is to some degree secular and modern and the situation enables the author to reflect on the tensions, the strength and the inadequacies and aspirations of middle class Indian life.

Another novel Possession is a story of South Indian poor shepherd boy Valmiki who has a god - gifted talent of painting. He is purchased by a high born rich lady Caroline Bell. The novel flings defiance at the arrogant culture of the West. Valmiki's return to his native land giving up all the luxuries of Caroline shows the spiritual strength of the East.

A Handful of Rice is a pathetic story of a young man Ravi, who suffers due to extreme poverty. Being educated he is unable to find a good job. He leaves the village to city but the different and harsh streets of the city lead him to the criminal world of petty criminals. He faces the ups and downs of his married life. He gets a respectable life with his in-laws family but his father - in-law's death again creates problem to him and he leads again to the life of a petty criminal.

The Coffers Dams is a highly contemporary examination of the activities of a British engineering firm which is invited to build dam in India. The British firm appoints Indian tribesmen as laborer. The Britishers exploit Indians by giving low wages for hard tasks. The novellas as a whole is a voice against the injustice and inhumanity of Britishers to poor Indians. The Nowhere Man is a woeful tale of an Indian immigrant.

Srinivas, who dies in London like a nowhere man while he spends there along time of his life and sacrifices his son for that country. This novel is compared to Farukh Dhondy's Keep Britain White Another novel Two Virgins is a story of two sisters who are opposite in nature. Saroja is the central character but the story revolves around Alitha who suffers because of her negative freedom and a fanatical attraction of city life. She comes into contact of Mr. Gupta a lusty film director and spoils her life. Saroja is a tradition loving girl and survives being unhurt. The novel shows a conflict like rural versus urban or Eastern values versus Western values.

The Golden Honeycomb is a historical novel. It has the background of princely states in India. This novel is related to the story of kings, queens and their royal siblings developing a kinship with the working class. Rabi, a prince, comes together freely with the servants children. His mother and grandmother encourage the spirit of nationalism in him.

Kamala Markandaya is not so much successful in giving the actual particulars in the form of historical events even though the novel has been compared with Manohar Malgonkar's Princes and Mulk Raj Anand's Private Life of an Indian Prince. Her second last novel Pleasure City also published under the title Shalimar shows the writer's desire to bring the British and Indians together. The friendly relationship between Rikki, a young boy who sails boat and Tully the director at Shalimar call for admiration. Markandaya seems to prove false Rudyard Kipling's statement, "East is east and West is west, and never the twain shall meet." She tries to explain her wish that East and West can be together if they recognize the values of each other. Bombay Tiger her posthumous novel is a story of two friends Rao and Ganguli who leave the village for the city and settle there. Both of them are intelligent, ambitious and boyhood rivals. Rao plots too much and never gains the heights that his school rival achieves. Ganguli becomes Bombay's most powerful tycoon This novel is an image of 1980's India, which shows the fast changing India.

Markandaya's novels have a variety of themes. We find discord in relationships, class, cultural attitude and ideology. The themes are repeated in her novels. Discord in relationship is the main theme of Nectar in a Sieve, Some Inner Fury, A Silence of Desire and A Handful of Rice. Discord in class is the theme of Nectar in a Sieve, Possession, Silence of Desire, A Handful of Rice and The Coffers Dams. A discord in cultural attitude is the pervading theme of all her novels except Pleasure City and Bombay Tiger. Discord in ideology is also an effective theme most of her novels Nectar in a Sieve, Some Inner Fury, A Silence of Desire, A Handful of Rice, The Coffers Dams, Two Virgins and Bombay Tiger. The above themes of Markandaya's novels make her novel

outstanding proves her a rare kind of magician who knows how to control the tension in every scene and in every incident. In second chapter of this research work discord in relationships has-been highlighted in the novels of Kamala Markandaya She shows some reasons of discord in relationships and presents a solution to lead a happy family life. There is a hidden message in her novels that harmony of life lays in the loving family bond. She shows the requirement of friendly atmosphere in the family so that everybody can share his or her feelings and worries to others. Children and parents should try not to conceal the truth from one - another as in Nectar in a Sieve, Ira conceals her emotions and takes to prostitution to feed her hungry brother. In Silence of Desire, Sarojini does not tell the truth about her disease which makes her husband suspicious and her daughter rebellious. In Some Inner Fury, Premala does not get a friend in her husband and feels loneliness.

Markandaya depicts Eastern and Western outlooks in relationship. Kit-Premala and Dandekar-Sarojini are the victims who lose the harmony of their married life due to this. Kamala Markandaya is a keen observer of relationships. She tells that need and poverty is the true judge of relationship. Rukmani's sons in Nectar in a Sieve and Ravi in A Handful of Rice leave their parents due to poverty. On the other hand Ira takes to prostitution to help her parents in economic hardship. Markandaya wants to show the sincerity of female child and ungratefulness of male-child.

Arjun and Thambi in Nectar in a Sieve leaves their parents ignoring their love and sacrifices for them. In A Handful of Rice, Ravi uses his parents for his marriage settlement but parents are parents they forgive the cunningness of their children and stand with them when their children need them. They only wish to progress of their children. In husband - wife relationship Markandaya presents many reason of discord and one of them is betrayal. She presents husbands as fallible mortal who cross the limit and does not hesitate to make clandestine relationship with other woman. Nathan in Nectar in a Sieve exposes his relationship with Kunthi. Ravi, in A Handful of Rice makes relation with his mother-in-law. He ignores his duty for his family also. It results in discord in their relationship. Wives in Markandaya's novels are traditional Indian woman who forgive follies and betrayal of their husbands and adjust with their limitations. They show considerable understanding and accept the hardships of life as their fate. Nalini forgives Ravi and Rukmani forgives Nathan. Markandaya also presents the strength of a good wife whose virtuous beauty can change a bad man in a good one and a criminal also change into a gentle man as Ravi changes at last in A Handful of Rice. Markandaya shows the requirement of love care and mutual understanding for happy married life. In lack of these things no relationship can survive and discord takes place. In A Silence of Desire, Sarojini and Dandekar do not have mutual understanding and they have to face bitterness in their married life. In Some Inner Fury, Kit-Premala has to suffer due to their different upbringing and lift the weight of an imposed marriage. They lose the love and become indifferent to each-other.

Markandaya considers that only love can make a relationship last long. It is love of Rukmani, Nalini and Sarojini to their husbands, which makes them forgive their husbands; and love of Ravi, Nathan and Dandekar to their wives which compels them to save their married lives. The lack of communication is a major reason of increase in the complications of married life. Husband and wife should not have communication gap with each other and with their children also Usually husband-wife disputes throw a bad effect on their children as Raju, in A Handful of Rice feels lonely due to disputes between his parents.

Suspicion also engulfs the harmony of married life. As Ravi in A Handful of Rice suspects his wife Nalini and fetches her out from his house, Dandekar in A Silence of Desire suspects his wife Sarojini and uses abusive words for her. Both of them have to suffer the disharmony of life. Markandaya believes in equality between husband and wife. Dandekar and Kit do not care their wives' thoughts which are the main reason of the discord in their married life. Actually no one is superior between husband and wife as both have equal value in married life.

Markandaya conveys the message that mistrust, dominating nature and extra marital affairs are fatal to a married life. Discord in relationship can destroy any relationship. The Third chapter expresses the dynamics of discord in class. Welcome through the pathetic economic condition of the poor class. Markandaya has portrayed the plight of poor peasants in her first novel Nectar in a Sieve. She depicts very beautifully the mute tolerance

of the poor people. Rukmani being a daughter of village headman gets married to a poor tenant peasant in lack of dowry. Her daughter Ira takes to prostitution to save her dying brother because of hunger Ravi, the central character of *A Handful of Rice* also suffers the economic hardships and poverty makes him immoral. He does not mind to do crime and hateful work to fulfill his needs. Markandaya wants to express that it is poverty that creates criminal and compels the person to do immoral and illegal work like Ira in *Nectar in a Sieve* and Ravi in *A Handful of Rice*.

The short pocket and rising prices make the poor starve. The poor have no value for the rich. Even the death of a poor person doesn't matter as old Granny's death in *Nectar in a Sieve*, poor tribesmen's death in *The Coffers Dams* and Apu's death in *A Handful of Rice* do not create any sympathy in the hearts of the rich people. The rich exploit the poor mentally and physically. Kamala Markandaya expresses this exploitation in her novels very carefully and strongly through Ravi in *A Handful of Rice*. She wants to show that a poor can only dream and his dreams never get materialized. Through the character of Nalini and his father-in-law Apu, Markandaya wants to make home the fact that the poor do not have any right to dream also. A poor person cares only for earning bread for his family as he has no time for other things. The exploitation rampant in society as everywhere the poor are exploited by the rich. In *A Handful of Rice*, Ravi is exploited by shopkeepers. In *Coffers Dams*, the poor tribesmen get exploited by their employers. Markandaya raises her voice against exploitation in the society. She draws a realistic picture of a low wage clerk in *A Silence of Desire*. The poor clerks take advance upon advance against their salaries to run their household expenses. Markandaya also depicts a realistic picture of a middle class family where gold is considered as the most stabilizing object.

In *A Silence of Desire*, Dandekar gets worried when he comes to know that his wife is giving both money (gold) and time to one Swami. It is unbearable to a clerk who saves money by walking on foot to office instead of boarding a bus another social reality is the problem a poor family finds in consulting a doctor. In *A Handful of Rice*, Ravi's son Rajudies due to the lack of proper treatment as Ravi is unable to pay five rupees to a doctor. In *Possession*, Markandaya presents another pathetic picture of the poor people. Poverty makes them selfish and they do not hesitate in selling their children. On the other hand, she portrays the cunning nature of the rich who consider the poor only a thing which can be purchased and possessed. Caroline in *Possession*, purchases Valmiki being impressed by his talent of painting, she exploits him both mentally and physically. Markandaya portrays the inconsiderate British in *The Coffers Dams*. There is no scope for humanistic concerns in professional work. Even the death of a laborer is not considered worth calling off the work. Poor Indian laborers have no value to them. Exploitation and inhumanity are the main themes of this novel. Markandaya's message to the world is that the East should develop itself and the West should not overpower the East. She also conveys the message that two worlds of machines and men are not exclusive but complementary. In the fourth Chapter Markandaya's views can be explained clearly through Ruyard Kipling's famous lines "Oh, East is east and west is west but never the twain shall meet". Markandaya's has the firsthand knowledge of both the cultures because she belongs to the both; one by birth and the other by adoption. The local names of the places and persons give a realistic touch to her novels. She uses deep insight to describe both the cultures and portrays Eastern and Western characters like Kenny, Caroline, Clinton, and Mrs. Pickering etc. to express her own views.

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