



TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S "NECTAR IN A SIEVE"

M.Kasulamma^{1*}, Dr.Ch.Naresh²

(Ph.D Research Scholar, K.L.University, Vaddeswaram, Guntur A.P .India.)

Email: kasurah@gmail.com

(Assoc.Prof., Dept. of English, KL University, Vaddeswaram, Guntur A.P .India.)

ABSTRACT



The most striking feature of Indian English novel is the appearance of women novelists who gave new dimension to Indian English novel. In the beginning of the 1980's, Indian English Literature received an international status. After independence, women writings have acquired an importance more than even before. They have started questioning the age old oppression and colonization. Indian women writers in English fiction have been presenting women as the centre of concern in their fictional world. Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004) is unquestionably one of the most popular Indian women novelists in English of post-independence period. She won fame and success with the publication of her very first novel '*Nectar in a Sieve*' in 1954. Rukmani of *Nectar in a Sieve* belongs to this variety, where her existence is thwarted by the irrational forces of nature and of commercialism. Her life's questions are thus reduced to the eternal quest for freedom in the face of tyranny of many kinds. Denied individual, social and economic rights because she is a woman and a poor one, her mental agony becomes truly reminiscent of the feminist call.

Keywords: *Self-Identity, Modernity, Liberation, Tradition, Feminism, Image of Woman.*

Citation:

APA Kasulamma,K. & Naresh,Ch.(2017) Tradition and Modernity in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*.*Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL*, 4(3), 58-62.

MLA Kasulamma.M and Ch. Naresh "Tradition and Modernity in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*."*Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature-JOELL* 4.3(2017):58-62.



In her novel, Markandaya is all out to enhance the traditional picture of the Indian woman as a docile, weak before her life partner. She reshapes her women characters like Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve* as forceful blasters of male self image hierarchy. From this overview one can get two sorts of parts played by women characters in Indian Women Fiction: the traditional and the modern. The female novelists attempt genuine endeavours to extend the suffering of women with a specific goal to educate men and their cognizant. The unconventional are seen to suffer for their violation of accepted norms of society or for questioning them; death is the way out for them, unless their experiences teach them to subdue their individuality and rebelliousness and realize the wisdom of the traditional way (*Nectar in a Sieve* 67) The hardships of traditional women are scarified by the standards of Indian culture, and patriarchal culture. A traditional woman is normally introduced as convention bound. She may give up her bliss for the prosperity of the family as a unit. She doesn't make a fuss over her own bliss and solaces yet maintains to make others cheerful. There is a direct opposite between traditional and modernity, which finds a noticeable place in the depiction of women by the Indian women writers. By remembering every one of these sufferings the women writers have portrayed dispositions and connections of their protagonists towards Indian traditions, culture and convention and especially both the homes: fatherly home and the mother-in-law home. From the sociological perspective woman in India endures because of her passionate attachment with home.

Kamala Markandaya shows a conscious worry with the identity and status of the Indian woman in the background of the bigger setting. She investigates subjects of technological, political, cultural and inter-cultural, socio-economic. Ramesh Shrivastava comments "The tannery represents a world of immortality, greed and corruption invading another which is moral, happy and pure" (Shrivastava 115). As rightly remarked by Parameswaran, "One get an idea of how life flows in an Indian village standing at the periphery of urban civilization" (Parameswaran 92). The simple villagers gaze at the immense sprawling development of the tannery. As

K.R.S Iyengar says, "The village landlord's selling of land to the tannery is "very hard to bear for villagers with their ineradicable adhesion to property," (Iyengar 438).

However Rukmani states herself and her uniqueness when she goes toward the western doctor Kenny for medicinal aid. This must be kept up as a firmly watched mystery because Rukmani can't bear to deface her "reputation" and convey discourtesy to her community and her sex. The feminist of the book are in this way not be mistaken. Rukmani frequently poses the unending question "Why? Why?" to address and oppose the supposed fate. Unless she bears sons, she has no place in a male overwhelmed society. She has no privilege to approach a doctor to check her physical condition. Though it is the right of any individual it is not the privilege of a woman in the Indian culture to which Rukmani has a place. When a town is confronted with a proposal of progress, there exists an adjust of forces, Jackson states, "on one side of the scales are those powers which are against change conservatism, indifference, fear and the life; on the opposite side are the powers for change disappointment with existing conditions, town pride et cetera? The primary feminist good example is that the charted and suppressed woman still sets out to scrutinize business as usual and in calm unpretentious ways, declares her independence This segregation is the augmentation of the very preference which marks just female children as undesirable or that a woman picks up personality just when she has borne a male kid, preferably a first male kid. Rukmani needs to counsel Dr. Kenny with the purpose of restoring her imagination without even her husband's knowledge for he, as a male individual from a male-dominated society, would discredit her endeavours to utilize medical aid for such a reason. Rukmani's visits to Kenny are subsequently to be dealt with as a statement of her freedom even with patriarchal standards her claim to her individual right and therefore perhaps a maturing reaction to the possibility of women's liberation. Rukmani knows about the unfriendly and cruel treatment allotted towards woman in her society. The system anticipates that women will live in household containment denied any vision and any



expectation of a superior. Regardless of all chances, her expectations don't perish or diminish. Her freedom adoring spirit dissents the subordination of her fellow Muslim women. She communicates her perspectives seeing they secured with voluminous Rukmani. She says: I felt desperately sorry for them, deprived of the ordinary pleasures of knowing warm sun and cool breeze upon their flesh, of walking out light and free or of mixing with men and working beside them (*Nectar in a Sieve* 48). Ira, similar to her freedom cherishing mother, loves to live an autonomous life. Denied a home in her husband's home, accused of being desolate she lives with parents. She wouldn't like to live a life depending on upon her poor father, Nathan and her brothers who scarcely have enough food to sustain themselves. Representing the present day modern woman she believes her own particular judgment and long to remain all alone feet autonomously, settling on her own choices and judging her own behaviour. Being denied social and economical right, she turns to prostitution as a means for financial freedom and as a ways to get out from dependence. Even when Nathan keeps her from following this wrong way, she challenges and adheres to her impulses. She is basically being herself in choosing her own particular life. We can here refer to what Virginia Woolf says on the subject of woman's virtuousness: For chastity may be a fetish invented by certain societies for unknown reasons but were none the less inevitable. Chastity had then, it has even now a religious importance in a woman's life, and has so wrapped itself round with nerves and instincts that to cut it free and bring it to the light of day demands courage of the rarest (*Nectar in a Sieve* 46). Markandaya shows that the indulgence of passion, desire and frivolity is just negative freedom an escape from obligation and is entirely unexpected from positive freedom. Subsequently Markandaya separates the gap between a genuine women's liberation and the numerous sorts of false feminism. Dickens calls Markandaya's books as "Poetry of facts" (*Nectar in a Sieve* 54).

The full acknowledgment of one's potential and beliefs in building one's very own eventual fate require not be completely contradicted to capable conjunction with society. Joy, in Markandaya's

reality, comprises in coming back to the crease, to time-worn circles of customary society and not in fleeing. Escape from institutions is viewed as negative. The conservation of female identity inside the circle is allowed. Rukmani understand this. Whether an Indian woman can accomplish full acknowledgment of herself inside the substantial patriarchal folds of this society is begging to be proven wrong. Feminism has not yet turned into a movement, despite the expansion in the quantity of urban working women. Therefore, individual fights for female freedom don't win strong ground in the restricting of patriarchal society. However, there is more acknowledgements and recognition of the power of woman to go up against man's world notwithstanding her own domestic sphere and in this, the Indian woman is just going further and further. If women's liberation is a battle to accomplish responsible status in the society at that point it is succeeding gradually. But, if women's liberation is a fight to measure up with men then it is a long way from triumph at least in India

Nectar in a Sieve (1954) was Markandaya's first published work depicts the life of the protagonist of the novel Rukmini and her Family. In the novel, Rukmini drives the life of mental and physical torments, financial scarcity and hardship, however she shows amazing abstinence. Markandaya presents Rukmini as the positive and dynamic picture of valor amidst unpracticed hardships and depression. "Rukmini's hard laborer life represents reality of Coleridge's line, "work without hope draws Nectar in a Sieve" (Naik 236). Rukmini reviews her past life when she married at 12 years old with Nathan a landless agriculturist and how her expectations of excellent wedding are broken. When the wedding service is finished; she abandons her father's home with her husband Nathan in a bullock-truck. On contacting her new home, she sinks down as much with despondency as with profound anguish and dissatisfaction. "I wanted to cry. This mud, nothing but mud and thatch was my home. My knees gave first the cramped one, then the other, and I sank down" (*Nectar in a Sieve* 4). Nathan's affirmation and his consideration touch to Rukamini's heart when he says that soon they will have a better and greater house. She also communicates her



substance him that the house is all right and she is content with him. She doesn't complaint at all and is somewhat thankful to her husband for being so kind to her. She begins showering her affection when she comes - to realize that Nathan has built the hut with his own hands for her. The mud house is the making of adoration thus she appreciates her husband for his respectability of heart. She feels exceptionally euphoric and glad understanding the power of her husband's affection. She says: "A woman they say always remembers her wedding night. Well, maybe they do; but for me there are other nights I prefer to remember, sweeter, fuller, when I went to my husband matured in mind as well as body not as a pained and awkward child as I did on that first night" (*Nectar in a Sieve* 2). The wedding night for Rukamini has no sweet recollections however later that she comes to love him as a true and dutiful. She is reliably dedicated to her husband and as per Indian customs, does not call his name but rather addresses him just as husband. Understanding the circumstances, she goes about as a prudent housewife and deals with her home well. She is obliging and delicate and soon she has various companions among the womenfolk of the town. She is especially near Janki and Kali; however she doesn't care for Kunthi to such an extent. However, when Kunthi gives birth to her first kid, she serves her to the best of her capacity; however it puts such an extensive amount strain on her. To increase the family income, she sows wine vegetables in the little fix of ground at the back of the hut. She pitches first to Old Granny and afterward to Biswas, the Banya, as he pays a substantially higher cost. She gathers cow dung at early hours in the morning from the fields around, and in this way spares the cost of obtaining fuel. She is farsighted and prudent and even in days of flourishing saves something for the rainy day. Rukmini brings forth her first female child and names her Iravadi. Yet, after that she doesn't conceive for full seven years. Her husband needs a child to bear on his name. He waits patiently however she feels his disappointment and pain. At her mother's home, she meets Dr. Kenny and trusts her inconveniences to him. It is by excellence of his treatment that she considers again and soon turns into the glad mother of six children—Arjun, Murugan, Thambi, Selvam,

Raja and Kuti. She never discloses to her husband about the treatment that she has taken from Dr. Kenny. Her idea of life is exceptionally straightforward and basic; it doesn't require being much cheerful. She contemplates on minimum essentials comprising to a great extent of shelter, clothes and food. While the sun sparkles on you and the fields are green and excellent to the eyes and your husband sees beauty in you, who nobody has been earlier and you have a decent store of grain laid away for harsh circumstances, a rooftop over you and a sweet blending in your body, what more can a woman request? My heart sang and my feet were light as I approached my work getting up at dawn and going to rest content. Peace and calm was our own (*Nectar in a Sieve* 7). She acknowledges that her better half had no land as her dad had however she trusts one day there will be, " True, my husband did not own the land he tilled, as my father had done; yet the possibility was there that he might one day do so" (*Nectar in a Sieve* 7). She is a sharp eyewitness of nature. She trusts that Nature speaks to some grandiose power—destructive and constructive. She communicates her perspective: Nature is like a wild animal that you have trained to work for you. So long as you are vigilant and walk warily with thought and care, so long will it give you its aid, but look away for an instant, be heedless or forgetful, and it has you by the throat (*Nectar in a Sieve* 39). The joy of Rukmani and her family is reliant on great gather and that in turn is subject to timely and adequate rains. Nature plays the session of „hide and seek“ and at last grabs all delights from her life—destroying the crop— - now and again as overwhelming heavy rains—some of the time in the form drought. She doesn't get over the shock given by Nature. Meanwhile, industrialization as tannery flattens her. She is very mindful of this chance. "But the change that now came into my life into our entire village, blasting its way into our village, seemed wrought in the twinkling of an eye" (*Nectar in a Sieve* 29). She is dead against the change because of its noise, stinking smells and crowds. In place of quiet, the village has "all noise and crowds everywhere.

Nectar in a Sieve views the problem of human relationships in the context of economic forces, social evils and vagaries of cruel nature. It also



dramatizes the tragedy of a traditional Indian village and a peasant family assaulted by industrialization. "Admiration or regard for each other's qualities make for a positive reciprocal relationship," (Nathan 374) says Scott. Nathan, lifting Rukmani he says, "I am happy because life is good and children are good and you are best of all" (Nectar in a Sieve - 59). Thus Markandaya's novels depict balanced and harmonious and man- woman relationships. The basis of exchange between parents and children changes throughout the life cycle, depending on each side's circumstances but its importance remains. External factors such as economic hardship and changing values and attitude, very often, adversely affect these fundamental ties. These bonds are sacred, powerful and enduring. Markandaya favours greater freedom, trust and understanding between the parents and children. The filial ties, therefore, are no insufferable bondage for her characters. Their march towards autonomy is consistent, smooth and inevitable As S.C. Harrex notes, Markandaya established the peasants as heroic figures of the mythic mode by showing how their sense of identity, linked to a traditional intimacy with the earth, helps them coexist with nature's cycles of creation and preservation. The calamities of the land belong to it alone, born of wind and rain and weather immensities not to be tempered by man or his creations. To those who lived by the land there must always come, times of hardship, of fear and hunger, even as there are years of plenty. This is one of the truths of our existence as those who live by the land know: that sometimes we eat and sometimes we starve. Still while there was land, there was hope (Harrex 73).

Markandaya's presentation of women belonging to upper class society is that of a rebel who doesn't conform to any tradition. They don't want to follow any social or moral code of conduct. It may however be noted that while presenting the colourful and glamorous image of the modern and her outstanding achievements, Markandaya seems to be pointing also to the negative aspects of their achievements and aspirations. Her portrayals are very much true to life. Whatever she has created reflects the true image of the modern women and the society. With her realistic writing Markandaya

has carved out a distinctive place for herself among the well-read women novelists of Indian. Markandaya's women show the behavioural traits of new or modern woman. They are all daring women and have lots of stamina to face the strain of the high society live in. Power, money and fame are the three biggest aspirations of the modern women. They refuse to look on men as their superiors. Women in Markandaya's novels challenge traditional concept of morality. Morality no longer implies demarcation of accepted sexual boundaries but emphasizes values which are derived from the actions of people in the changing social atmosphere. Morality thus becomes a term with changeable meaning which can be redefined from time to time. Markandaya has created the new women who are daring and fearless. She has consciously created characters and themes to draw attention towards women's exploitation in India. She has thus joined the host of feminist in exposing the women's situation and underling the need for recognition of modern woman's power which had been suppressed in the past.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Markandaya, Kamala. *Nectar in a Sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2009.
- [2]. Naik, M.K.A. *History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi, SahityaAkademi, 2006.
- [3]. Kothandaraman, Bala. *The Feminist Dilemma in Indian Fiction in English*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1987.
- [4]. Ramesh, K. Srivastava. *Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya*, ed. Madhu sudan Prasad. New Delhi: Vimal Prakashan, 1984.
- [5]. Parameswaran, Uma. *A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelists*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976.
- [6]. Iyengar, A. General Survey: *The Novel in Modern India*. Bombay: The P.E.N, 1964.
- [7]. Woolf, Virginia. *The Years*. London: Granada, 1982.