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True Replica of Indian Woman: A Perspective Study of Rukmani's Identity in Kamala
Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve

Abstract: Every writer has its own peculiar and unique vision. Their vision gets suitably modified by a confluence of divergent cultures, of which they are the products. Being an expatriate writer, Kamala Markandaya has very artistically dealt with the harsh economic realities of life, social realism and cultural differences. Kamala Markandaya with a rare kind of sensibility and awareness, has been free with her women characters. This freedom that she grants to her women characters, liberates them from the chains of social bondage. This is the reason why her women characters are so different and are able to rise high above the multitude of the other characters. In my research paper, I have dealt with a character Rukmani from Kamala Markandaya first novel Nectar in a Sieve. In the novel she represents a peasant woman of pre-independence rural India. In this novel, we see the travails of Rukmani who faces the vagaries of nature with courage & extraordinary confidence. Though she seems to be quite passive, she never gives up her spirit of individuality and Strong will power.

Key words: Strong willpower, extraordinary confidence. Travails, vagaries, social realism, Rural India.

“When God created man and woman, he was thinking, ‘Who shall I give the power to give birth to the next human being?’ And God chose woman. And this is the big evidence that women are powerful.”

Malala Yousafzai

(Winner of Nobel Peace Prize, Sakharov Prize, Philadelphia Liberty Medal, and International Children’s Peace Prize She is the youngest Nobel Laureate)

A woman has been awarded the quality of creation by nature. They are the building as well as the binding stone of nature, nation as well as family. A woman with her innate qualities of love, affection, care, softness, forgiveness, adjustable, spiritual and many more, had faced the adverse situations very courageously. It seemed to appear that only theoretically woman was extolled as a ‘devi’. What was seen in actual practice did not accord with this romantic exaltation. Woman was given a secondary status in society in spite of the fact that the constitution provides equal rights to men and women.

“Human right are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights.”

Hillary Clinton

(Former First Lady of the United States)

Although women are soft kind. Forgiving, affectionate, but when situations or conditions goes against them they have shown revolutionary changes in their behavior along with their traditional, moral and spiritual nature. The best examples of it from our history are Rani laxmi bai, Meera bai etc... But after independence the political, social, economic cultural atmosphere changed completely. With the liberty of nation came the liberty of life, consequently it propogated the liberty of thinking. It was also the turning point in the history

of women in India. This was the beginning of struggle for equality for the women. As before independence the highest aim of an Indian woman has been to sacrifice her flesh, her ambitions for her lawful husband. But today there is a shift, as woman are self-conscious for their career and to attain this she manage to keep a balance with her family and career.

With the changing social scenario and with the entry of women in the literary scene, Indian writing in English has undergone a tremendous change. Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Nayantara Sehgal, Kamala Markandaya, Shobha De through their writings exposed the harsh realities of women's life, projecting over fine feminine sensibilities. They expressed their experiences through their writings and occupy a prominent place in Indian Writing in English.

Kamala Markandaya, an expatriate writer, inherited Indian values by birth and acquired western values through residence in London. Though married to a Britisher, she continues to write on themes concerning India and its culture. In her own words, I do not think of myself as an expatriate writer. All my thought processes are Indian, my parentage, religion and schooling are Indian, all my formative factors are Indian (Sastry 151). In all her novels we can see a social and traditional touch which is directly contrasted with women feelings and emotional sufferings. In views of Markandaya, women are the perfect symbol for the word that spells excellence. They sacrifice a lot in their whole life from cradle-hood to last chapter of life. Primarily, a housewife in real life, she herself seems to be conscious of the gender differences when she enters her journalistic career. She has a feminist dread that her domestic duties will stifle her literary career.

Marriage for Kamala Markandaya seems to be a profound symbol of community and marriage in her fiction has been 'women's adventure, the object of her quest, her journeys end' (Heiburn 309). Kamala Markandaya's heroines, does not present her customary role of

the 'Sati- Savitri' archetypal pattern of a wife. She also do not adore or worship their husbands, but they love and respect them. In her first novel 'Nectar in a Sieve, Rukmani represents a peasant women of pre-independence rural India resolutely struggles for survival with undaunted courage, determination fortitude and an indomitable spirit of endurance. She is a prudent and sensible housewife and as a mother she is the guiding force to her children. Her traditionally arranged marriage with Nathan works out satisfactorily in spite of dire poverty and illicit relations of her husband with another woman Apart from this she supports her husband emotionally as well as physically. She accepts every adverse situation silently. What do we think here that she do not have enough strength or courage to protest against her husband and endures everything silently? As she suffers everything silently and I think in her silence lies her strength and it does not mean that she lacks sufficient strength and courage to protest against her husband. She accepts her husband with all his weakness and limitations because she loves him deeply and profoundly. Her genuine love for him enables her to forgive him and accept him whole heartedly. Uma Parameswaran observes, "Without the least break or imbalance of body, mind, or spirit, she lives on now supporting her husband and her young children" (Parameswaran 94)

The subtitle of the novel 'A Novel of Rural India' depicts with obvious clarity and vivid observation the socio-economic condition of rural India, particularly, the human degradation that hunger brings. As Kai Nicholson rightly points out, "in India the Country side too has been polluted, but not by the encroachment of industry ... in the village the pollution comes from within through starvation" (Nicholson 120). Rukmani and her daughter Ira, both are the two suffering characters in this novel adjusting their life for the sake of relations and to fulfill the existence of their life. "Ira had ruined herself at the hands of the throngs that the tannery attracted. None but these would have laid hands on her, even at her bidding" (NS 136). The pangs of hunger faced by Rukmani's family is responsible for the

moral degradation of Ira, the only daughter of Nathan and Rukmani, as she sells herself to the townsmen in order to save her brother kuti from hunger. Here we feel the love and sacrifice made by a sister for her hungry brother. Do you think that Ira is happy by doing so? No, here we feel the 'Mother' in Ira is unable to bear to see her younger brother dying for want of food and treatment. In spite her brother dies of all her care and affection.

Rukmani, as a mother tries her level best to cope up her children from the adverse situations they are facing in their lives. In spite of strong opposition her two sons, Arjun and Thambi, join the tannery and refuse to plough and till the fields, the traditional family occupation, Murugan, the son of Rukmani, also leaves the village in order to get job in the city. When she appeals to her sons to give up the idea of going away from them Arjun tells her, "It is not fitting that men should corrupt themselves in hunger and idleness" (NS 67). Although the separation of her sons make her depressed and disconsolate yet she endures the ordeal without giving up hope in life. After that she was terribly shocked and horrified when the dead body of her fourth son Raja was brought home by the tannery officials. Mother Rukmani's mental agony and pain find no limitations. Afflicted with great sorrow and heartache Rukmani sadly narrates, "For this I have given you birth my son, that you should lie in the end at my feet with ashes in your face and coldness in your limbs and yourself departed without trace, leaving this huddle of bones and flesh without meaning" (NS 89). In her life, the harrowing experience has not ended. It became pathetic and unbearable for her to see her own son kuti becoming quite frail and dying gradually. Though a doting mother, she does not stifle the aspirations of her offspring, but bids her son's good bye with a heavy heart knowing full well that she will probably never see them again. Now here a question arises whether she grieves on her son's death or not? Here we notice that she absorbs all miseries and misfortunes that came her way with an uncommon spiritual and mental strength. Though

she grieves like an ordinary human being whenever she is subject to the cruel vagaries of cosmic forces

Still the misfortunes in her life have not come to an end, the untimely death of her husband happens to be an appalling and a horrible blow to Rukmani. But she surfaces again with stoic calm to find fresh hope in this adversity. She volunteers to adopt Puli, a leper boy, who is rejected by relatives and society and leads a life of petty crime in order to survive

Conclusion

At the last we see that the brutality of life has not been able to defeat her, for she is the earth mother, continually regenerated and sustained the exuberance and abundance of life is recreated in the cycle of time and we find that Rukmani retains the same fascination for life which she had as a young bride. I think Rukmani represents a true replica of Indian woman of the folk with all her weakness and strength, doubts and beliefs, hopes and fear, who faces crises in life with exceptional courage and extraordinary confidence and strong will power. My paper reflects the women character who everyday learns a new lesson regenerates and once again helps herself to prepare for the next one. Women who runs the home, society as well as a nation, are the perfect picture in creating new heights as well as opportunities to transform her world to attain her dream destination. Now she had come to know how to deal with the problems, circumstances and also the surroundings which she faces daily. She is always ready to face with never ending zeal. We may have a long ways left to go, but we've certainly come pretty far from where we once were.

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