



22

**PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S
NECTAR IN A SIEVE: A STUDY**

Dr. Madhav D. Shrimangale

Assistant Professor & Head

Department of English

Vasantrao Kale Mahavidyalaya, Dhoki

Tq. Dist. Dharashiv, MS, India

=====***=====

Abstract:

The Indo-Anglian women novelists of the post-Independence era laid great stress on the issues of city, but very few have contributed anything towards the rural society and its issues entirely. They portray women as an individual in search of freedom, self-assertion, and longing for fulfillment of her desires. Kamala Markandaya is a prominent Indian English female novelist. She has focused on the life of Indian women who fights for freedom, identity, and fulfillment of their desires. She has made a solid contribution towards the rural society of India in her novel 'Nectar in a Sieve'. Her attention is focused on the problems faced by Indian woman. She explores woman in her social relationship, emotional responses, and psychological motivations. She creates an authentic world of woman where they grow and live, suffer and endure and then emerge more dignified and more humane as individual. She presents Rukmanias an epitome of Indian woman. Markandaya achieves a perfect curb between the rural reality and the disciplined urbanity of art.

Keywords: Freedom, Culture, Tradition, Philosophy, Reality, Identity, Psychology, etc.

Kamala Markandaya is a well-known Indian English female novelist. She was born in 1924, Mysore, India to an upper middle-class Brahmin family. She has portrayed most of the female characters in her novels. Her first novel 'Nectar in A Sieve' received Critical Acclaim and became a best seller. It deals with the theme of hunger and starvation. Markandaya depicted a realistic canvas of contemporary woman through her character Rukmani with presenting the life of a peasant woman who faces many odds of life.

Nectar in A Sieve is a 1954 novel about a family of Hindu farmers living in a remote Indian village over several decades in the first half of the twentieth century. During a period of urbanization, the family navigates hardship and challenges brought on by poverty, social expectations, and rapid societal change. The research paper attempts to study the portrayal of women in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in A Sieve*.

Nectar in A Sieve is compared to Pearl S Buck's *The Good Earth*. Marksndaya takes up to the heart of a South Indian village where life has not transformed for a thousand years. Rukmani the narrator heroine tempered in love and faith. She is a mother of Sorrows who



receives shock after shock. Rukmani is a sensible and prudent housewife. A. V. Krishna Rao observed, “The real truth of Nectar in the Sieve is the spiritual stamina of Rukmini” (Rao, 47).

Markandaya’s has delineated the character of her heroine to the most miserable rural Portrayal of Womanhood. In Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani, the youngest of the four daughters of a village Headman, is married at the age of twelve years to a tenant peasant, Nathan, who is far below her status. She enjoys her marital life with whatever her husband earns whether plenty or scanty due to draught. Rukmini concedes, “This, mud hut, nothing but mud and thatch was my home. My knees gave...and I sank down” (Markandaya, *NIS*, 6).

She learns to be proud of her domestic space and enjoys her married life at all planes whether sexual, physical, or psychological. She belongs to a generation of self-sacrificing women. Soon Rukmani becomes the mother of five sons and a daughter Ira. When the daughter was born, not only her husband even, she too regretted over the birth of a female child. She is literate but her bias for a girl child is that of a conventional grandmother or great grandmother. She reacts unpleasantly at the birth of Ira and shed “tears of weakness and disappointment; for what woman wants a girl for her first born (Markandaya, 15). Rukmani wants to give birth to a male child because a son can “continue his line and walk beside him on the land” (Markandaya, *NIS*, 16).

Rukmani’s daughter, Ira is married to a peasant boy at the age of fourteen. But, after five years of marriage, her son-in-law abandoned her for being barren. Rukmani and her husband, Nathan tolerates it with equanimity. Nathan blames his own daughter and supports the action of his son-in-law. Rukmani too did not protest the behaviour of both her husband and her son-in-law but she behaved in a sensible way by taking her daughter to Dr. Kenney to be treated for barrenness.

Today, Indian women writing in English is more concerned with man-woman relationship than with any other issue. They portray women as an individual in search of freedom, self-assertion, and longing for fulfillment of her desire. “In the development of Indian English novel, the feminine sensibility has achieved one imaginative self-sufficiency which merits recognition in spite of its late manifestation” (Markandaya, *NIS*, 16).

Kamala Markandaya realistically portrayed all the shades of the Indian womanhood in her novels. Women have to face so many problems in the society. These problems can be observed at moral level, emotional level as well as spiritual level. As R. S. Singh rightly remarks, “Kamala Markandaya’s sense of involvement in the social life of India, her keen observation combined with critical acumen and feminine sensibility brought her international with the very first novel ‘Nectar in Sieve’” (Singh, 1954).

At the age of twelve, Rukmani understood limitations of her parents. It shows us that she has possessed born understanding qualities of Indian womanhood. Rukmani’s three sisters married with big dowry and celebration. After the loss of headman ship of the village, it becomes difficult for him to manage money for dowry for the marriage of Rukmani. Her mother was worried about it. In this situation, Rukmani used to cheer her mother, “I shall have a grand wedding...such that everyday will remember when all else is a dream forgotten...for is not my father head of the village. I know this pleased my mother, for she would at once laugh and lose her look of worry” (Markandaya, *NIS*, 30).



It shows us Rukmini's satisfied nature and positive attitude as a real new woman. Though Nathan was an illiterate person, she doesn't mind it and serve him as God because Nathan's love for her is as spiritual one.

References

- Rao, Krishna A. V. *The Indian Novel and the Changing Tradition*, Mysore, 1972. Print.
- Markandaya, Kamala, *Nectar in a Sieve*, New York, signet Books, 1954. Print.
- Singh, R. S., *Indian Novel in English*, New Delhi, Arnold Heinemann, 1977. Print.
- <https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/NCSCRCL/Volume-1/4.pdf>/Web.



This is an Open Access e-Journal Published Under A Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

To Cite the Article: *Shrimangale, Madhav.* "Portrayal of Women in Kamala Markanday's *Necter in a Sieve: A Study*" *Literary Cognizance*, IV - 3 (December, 2023): 133-135. Web.