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**A BEAUTIFUL SKETCH OF LOVE, FAITH AND RESPECT AMONG THE COUPLES IN
THE NOVELS OF KAMALA MARKANDAYA**

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Abstract:

*Kamala Markandaya is one of the most outstanding novelists in an arena of Indo-Anglian fiction. Her novels reflect the awakened feminine sensibility in modern India. Markandaya has seen India very closely and her observations regarding ideas and various modes of the life influencing man-woman relationship is very appropriate and proper. The major themes of her novels are social, cultural and economic clash of these two modes. East-West encounter is also one of the major themes in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, *A Silence of Desire*, *Possession*, *The Coffers Dams*, *Two Vergins*, etc. novels have been taken into account and an attempt is made to explore certain threads of love, faith and respect among the couples depicted in these novels.*

Keywords: Indo-Anglian, Desire, Alienation, Individuality, etc.

Kamala Markandaya and Jhabvala have tried to recapture the socio cultural life of Indian Society. Kamala Markandaya tends to raise her voice against the sufferings caused by social tension. She is still haunted by the memories of colonial past. Jhabala's novels reflect the European predicament in India. Both of these writers are actually sensitive to India's grinding poverty. The apathetic attitude of the wealthy Indian is very shocking to Jhabvala. Indian women, according to Jhabvala, have been influenced by western culture. According to her, Indian women follow into practical life the Western culture because she finds them attractive. Indian women feel it disgusting to keep up the 'Seeta-Savitri' image which they are asked for by their parents, brothers, friends and husbands. For Jhabvala an Indian wife is silent sufferer. Markandaya has glorified the image of the mother in her novels. Mother always protects the daughters in her novels. The girls or daughters as depicted in her novels are not nearly docile and obedient. But they are depicted as taking their own decisions. They act in a defiant way when the situation warrants them to do so.

It would be right to say that, Kamala Markandaya's novels present the picture of India struggling against odds and trying to rise above them. Kamala Markandaya concentrates on economic, political and cultural problems of India.

Kamala Markandaya's first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) portrays the village life of south India. But the irony is that the nature frustrates all their hopes and aspirations. Markandaya writes that fear, hunger, gloom and despondency are the constant companions of the peasants. Rukmini the narrator heroine has to face lot of adversities and calamities despite this she does not lose faith. At the time of her marriage she was teenager, she doesn't know the meaning of marriage. She was only twelve years old at the time of marriage. Her departure from the native place is much more painful for her. She is weeping after completing the religious ceremonies she found herself sitting in the bullock cart in finery, with downcast eyes. Her husband Nathan tries to console her, "It is a thing that might happen to anybody do not fret. Come dry your eyes and sit up here beside

me”(Markandaya,3). But after the marriage, Rukmini has suffered because of her husband’s infidelity, her daughter’s sacrificial going to prostitution to protect family, the premature death of child Kutti

alienation from the village and adoption of Puli. Rukmini trusts her husband. She is a very loving mother but she has to allow her sons to go away to find out sustenance for themselves because she could not afford to support them. She swallows the disloyalty of her husband because she loves him and supports him at every step. Nathan and Rukmini’s alienation from the village and their subsequent wandering in the city in search of their son and job, this situation tends to bring tears down in our eyes. The trial and tribulations of Rukmini was common among the peasant women of the contemporary society calm after storm, spring after winter in the unending cycle. What is needed is hope and faith if one desires to discover.

A silence of Desire (1961) is the third novel of Kamala Markandaya. The title of the novel indicates the theme. The title is taken from Longfellow, who refers to the types of silence-silence of a speech, of desire and of thought. The story concerns the middle class family. The theme of the novel is clash between faith and reason. Dandekar is a government servant. He claims to have the knowledge of modern science. Sarojani is a typical traditional wife. She has no trust in modern science and scientific developments. She dislikes hospitals because her mother and grandmother died during surgery. She therefore, decided to undergo a kind of faith-cure, for her cancerous growth in the womb. Sarojani, becomes his disciple and hopes that Swami would provide her the right treatment. She does not tell Dandekar about the Swami. Her absence from the family makes Dandekar doubtful about her character. Peace and the tranquility of the family is disturbed. Dandekar comes to know about the swami’s influence on his wife. He persuades his wife to get operated in a hospital. Sarojani does not change her mind. Finally, only after the removal and departure of Swami Sarojani becomes disillusioned and undergoes an operation in the hospital. Peace and harmony in the family is restored.

The novel presents a comprehensive account of the different nuances of man woman relationship. The relationship not only between husband and wife but between father and daughter and other male and female is also highlighted in the novel.

The fourth novel of Kamal Markandaya is *Possession* published in 1963. Surendran considers this novel as “a continuation of *A Silence of Desire*” (Surendran, 07). Valmiki and Caroline are the chief protagonists of the novel. The story of the novel is narrated through Anasuya who is perhaps the author herself. The novel presents an encounter between the East and the West. The wealth, talent and the treasures of the East are desired to be possessed by the West for commercial purposes. The talent of Valmiki is exploited by Caroline for her own personal gratification. The presence of Swami brings this novel closer to *A Silence of Desire*. Swami in this novel is different from that in the previous novel. The swami in possession flies to London and continues to influence Valmiki. The monkey image is very appropriately used as *The Pet Monkey*. ‘Minou’ stands for the pet Valmiki. Ellie has got nightmarish experiences of Nazi concentration camp where she was defiled and deflowered. She develops a relation with Valmiki. The disclosure of this relationship irks and angers Caroline. Ellie is summarily dismissed from service. Caroline wanted to possess valmiki completely. Anabel is another character whose brief relationship with Valmiki reveals that he has come under Western influence where what matters much is the physical of relationship. Uma Parmeshwarn says how the relationship is influenced by human experience and behavior which are in turn affected by external forces.

Ravi hails from village but he dislikes the village life. The novel begins with the incident of Ravi’s forceful entry into the house of Apu. Apu is a tailor by profession and he is family supporter. The other members of the family like Puttanna, Kumaran. Verma are all parasites upon

Apu. Apu is a very simple- minded fellow who has his own theory of politeness and promptness, which are indispensable in business. Jayamma is a dominating figure. Most of the actions and decisions of Apu are influenced by Jayamma. Instead of being despised and chased away, Ravi is allowed to marry the beautiful daughter Nalini. Ravi's desire to become rich and provide all kinds

of comforts to his wife remains unfulfilled. There are certain reasons for this. The first reason is that his wife Nalini prevents him from indulging in any moral act which would tarnish the image of the family. Ravi is greatly influenced by his wife though he has urge to rebel to fulfill his financial commitment to his wife and children but he cannot rebel against moral integrity. The second reason is that initially he feels attracted to Damodar. Damodar has relations with the underworld. He lives the life of a criminal. In his eyes women are no more than flesh to satisfy the sexual instincts of men. But later on, Ravi develops repulsiveness to Damodar. While Damodar possesses the constant threat to Ravi's honest life Nalini is the constant counter- foil to the dishonest one that Ravi would have otherwise embraced. Ravi says, "But now my wife-she - she does not want me to do anything dishonest, she and family I mean, they are respectable" (Markandaya, 116).

The third reason is that. Ravi's sense of responsibility to Appu and his children and to his oneself keeps him away from Damodar. After the death of Appu the responsibility of running the house is delegated to Ravi. He turns out all the parasites away from the house. Ravi has to face a lot of unpleasant situations like a death of his son and other economic problems. But he overcomes all of them with the help of Nalini.

The Coffer Dams is published in 1969. British engineer Clinton comes to India for building a dam across a south Indian River. The British technician is assisted by Indian engineers like Krishnan, Bashiam etc.

Clinton is married who comes with his his wife Helen to India. Helen lives in small British colony where chief engineer's wife Millie Rawlings also lives. Helen is drawn towards the tribes. She is very much fascinated by Bashiam. Her fascinations for Bashiam culminate in a sexual indulgence between the two. Clinton sees Helen as a soul mate. Helen on her side can intellectually subscribe to Clinton's way of looking at life though emotionally she cannot. Helen and Clinton separate from each other. The separation causes much more anguish for him than for her. Clinton need here for his wholeness. Helen drifts away from Clinton because he lacks certain qualities. According to her some qualities are essential for human being which she cannot find in Clinton. She finds these qualities in Bashiam.

Forty men; most of them tribes, are killed during the work construction of dam. But for Clinton it doesn't matter he says, "Their bodies can be incorporated in the structure" Clinton doesn't find any difference between the dam and the tribes. He never takes it seriously. The dam and machine are important for him. Bashiam also dies and his death shocks Helen. She doubts Clinton's hand in Bashiam's death.

The man woman relationship is treated very skillfully in this novel. Kamala Markandaya tends to say that relationship between husband and wife based upon instincts, urges are more important and lasting than that based upon customs and traditions.

Her Novel *Two Vergins* depicts very truthfully the relationship between man and woman. In the male dominated society a widow like Aunt Alamelu has no Value. Her existence and individuality is not at all important in the eyes of Appa and even Amma. Saroja and Lalitha; the two daughters of Apa, can no longer remain virgins in the society which is sex-starved materialistic and male-dominated society. The virginity of Lalitha is defined by the film maker Mr. Gupta. Still Lalitha does not repent that her loss of virginity has tarnished the image of her family. On the Contrary to the character of Lalitha is that of Saroja. Saroja lives a restrained life. She is afraid of the male company because she has observed how her sister has suffered due to her restrained

behavior and her honest faith in Chingelput she has to undergo the nightmarish experience of her being embraced by Chingelput.

What Markandaya seems to suggest is that the relationship between a woman and a man who are not in blood relations cannot be entirely a spiritual one. The attraction between opposite sexes is natural and it is beyond human capacity to prevent the attraction.

Amma is depicted as very sensible mother and devoted wife. Apa is very dominating. Despite all this Amma has some secret extra marital relationship with other persons. As Indian social norms it is very much illegal that a married woman has extra marital affairs. It is one of the major reasons behind the disturbance of family. Belief, faith among them is the base of family. But sometimes one of them made the mistake and the whole family loses peace. But in the novels of Kamala Markandaya characters possess qualities of patience love and concern for their partner which makes the relation strong.

Husband and wife is the principal component in a family. The relationship between husband and wife has been tremendously influenced by the growing enlighten and the movement for emancipation of woman. These changes combined with the changes in socioeconomic conditions have changed the patriarchal attitude to gender.

The new changes have brought forth a new woman. The women today are characterized by conflicting opinions about the values, culture and the traditional ethos of Indian society. The new forces at work demand the woman to follow the life based on Western philosophy of freedom and liberty whereas the traditional self in them requires them to adhere to and abide by the age old customs and norms. The result is that most of woman had developed a kind of indecisiveness. They are neither willing to adhere the age old custom nor are they courageous enough to assert themselves in the society which is largely dominated by the men.

The novels of Kamala Markandaya depict woman who embody the conflicting character which in a significant manner determined and influenced their relationship with the males. Markandaya portrays the man- woman relationship from various angles. What is most striking about her is that she doesn't repeat herself in her novels.

Her female characters are as subordinate and submissive to their male counterparts. e.g. Rukmini in *Nectar in a Sieve* has no choice but to marry a tenant farmer Nathan. She is not concerned about whether the marriage would prove detrimental to her desires for freedom and liberty. It illustrates that what is important for family and man-woman relationship is an affirmation of faith of hope of love etc. Rukmini and Nathan experience possession in life. Rukmini is fully developed and loyal to her husband. Marriage is not a matter of contract for men and women in India. Divorce is not a serious matter for the people of west. In India men and women are very sensible about the marriage and family. So they go on making every possible adjust in life. They do not allow their marriage to be total adjust in life. They do not allow their marriage to be total failure as long as the circumstances are under their control.

Regarding the relationship between husband and wife Markandaya endorses and accepts the traditional Indian view, according to which man's affinity with woman is most often the bond that exists between a master and his slave. But among Markandaya's character the beauty of this relationship is enhanced by the presence of Love, faith and respect for each other.

In Markandaya novels all the female characters who are married are morally very strong. They are very loyal to their husbands. They are never portrayed as practicing promiscuity, they always encourage their husbands to follow the path of virtue and eschew evil. Rukmini is a source of inspiration to Nathan. Jayamma and Nalini provide moral support to their respective husbands. Similarly character of Sarojani as revealed to her husband after his doubts and skepticism are dismantled which make him feel very proud of his wife.

To sum up, it can be said that the husband- wife relationship as delineated in the novels of Markandaya can be properly understood only when the various themes and issues of the novels are analyzed and studies.

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