

PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S NOVELS, NECTAR IN A SIEVE AND SOME INNER FURY

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Abstract :

In the novels of Kamala Markandaya, women play a significant and complex role. They have more depth more richness than the menfolk. Kamala Markandaya has a varied repertoire of women characters in her fiction ranging from the harassed, victimised peasant women to the princesses of havelis. Many complex and realistic women characters have been created by many other talented novelists, but Markandaya's women character are undeniably the forerunner of the doomed female of modern India. They are portrayed in a unique manner, neither merely imitative, nor exotic nor mythic.

Key words : Women, menfolk, victimised peasant, princesses of havelis, modern India, exotic, mythic etc.

Introduction :

In Markandaya's women characters, we can see the predicament of the Indian woman who is hampered by her sex, society, and financial status in Markandaya's female characters. For her right to love and happiness, the woman battles silently and alone for a long time. But because she has a strong sense of dignity, she decides to retire alone, just in time. All she can do is gather the guts to admit that she doesn't deserve to be happy in this life and make a compromise. To accomplish the same in the next life, she will fast and pray. Nonetheless, there is a change in how Kamala Markandaya writes about women in her work. The dominating male and submissive female union that is the archetype of the perfect man-woman partnership is ingrained in Indian culture to such an extent that questioning of the concept comes as a fresh breath of air. With a calm assurance, the woman confidently walks into the uncertain future, resolved to provide herself with a better future.

Portrayal of Women Characters in Kamala markandaya's Novels :

1) Nectar in a Sieve :

Kamala Markandaya's debut novel 'Nectar in a Sieve' (1954) presents the story of a peasant family. Three of the characters from this novel are taken into consideration Rukmani, Ira and Old Granny.

Rukmani :

Rukmani, Nathan's wife, is the most remarkable character in the novel. She is nearly fiercely independent. The collapse of the rice crop and the industrialization that obliterates his



community devastate Nathan. Nathan's family disintegration and eventual demise are seen through Rukmani's eyes. Rukmani, however, is still a courageous and fiercely independent lady. She battles the family's unending poverty as well as the ruthless whims of the natural world.

To keep her narrative local, Markandaya allows Rukmani, the last living daughter of the village headman, to wed tenant farmer Nathan at the age of twelve. Rukmani maintains a life of terrible simplicity as a wife, mother, and grandmother with stoic resistance, despite Nathan's love, generosity, and effort. There is Her whole life's drama is devoid of any enjoyment.

Rukmani would never address her husband by name since, as an Indian wife, "it is not meet for a woman to address her husband except as husband." This work deftly interweaves the degradation of the female. "Tears of weakness and disappointment, for what woman wants a girl for her first born?" Rukmani weeps as Ira is born. This is in line with the traditional Indian peasant woman's belief that a daughter is worthless. At first, Nathan doesn't even give the infant child much attention. "..... he had wanted a son to continue his line and walk beside him on the land, not a pulling infant who would take with her a dowry and leave nothing but a memory behind..."

Instead of a tugging baby who would accept a dowry and walk with him on the farm, he had desired a son to carry on his line and ultimately, due to having previously paid dowries for all of his other daughters, Rukmani's father was unable to arrange a wealthy marriage for her. "Four dowries is too much for a man to bear." her mother would warn her. Rukmani agrees with her husband that although a female kid is a liability to the family, a boy child is an advantage.

An Indian woman's existence is full of uncertainties. When we observe what happens to Ira, Rukmani's daughter, it becomes clear. Her parents' choice of spouse is accepted without protest, "with her usual docility." For generations, arranged marriages have been the acknowledged and customary social norm, particularly in traditional, rural, and orthodox societies.

The local matchmaker, Old Granny, was the one who brought the two groups together. However, Ira's husband claims that she is infertile, therefore the marriage only lasts for five years. She is rightfully returned to her parents as she is unable to conceive boys. However, Rukmani comes to terms with the unpleasant and inevitable circumstance and accepts Ira's unfortunate fate. She comforts her daughter.

"You must not blame him. He has taken another woman,"
When Rukmani's last son, Kuti, passes away from famine and poverty, her sorrows escalate and become horrific. Rukmani finds it a terrible experience to watch her kid become weaker and eventually pass away. She remembers with pain:
"Yet, although I grieved it was not for my son, for in my heart I could not have wished it otherwise. The strife had lasted too long and had been too painful for me to call him back to continue"

The tannery is a symbol of materialistic and money-focused ideals that render human existence essentially meaningless. Rukmani's fourth son, Raja, is slain at the tannery. When the tannery authorities



bring her son's lifeless body home, Rukmani is appalled and disturbed. Rukmani, who is deeply saddened and heartbroken, tells the following tragic tale:

"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 limb and yourself departed without trace, leaving this huddle of bones and flesh without meaning. "

She isn't brave or strong enough to stand up to her spouse. Because she loves her husband so much and to such an extent, she embraces him with all his flaws and shortcomings. She can forgive and embrace him completely because of her sincere love for him. As Uma Parmeswaran notes:

"Without the least break or imbalance of body, mind or spirit, she lives on now supporting her husband and her younger children"

Ultimately, the tannery's development transforms the village's appearance and the lives of its residents. The proprietors of the tanneries have purchased Rukmani and Nathan's land. When they are ordered to leave the country, they suffer a devastating blow.

They have a strong bond with the earth. They see land as a sign of optimism. Rukmani reveals how industrialization profoundly impacts the uncomplicated life of peasants:

"Somehow I had always felt the tannery would eventually be our undoing. I had known it since the day the carts had come with their loads of bricks and noisy dusty men staining the clean soft greens that had once coloured our village and cleaving its cool silences with clamour. Since then it had spread like weeds in an untended garden, strangling whatever life grew in its way. It had changed the face of our village beyond recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants in a myriad ways. "

When the land is taken away from them, Rukmani turns into a pitiful lady. Nathan and Rukmani move to the city in search of work after the eviction. They are unable to reconcile with their son Murugan. Nathan perishes in a quarry from the pressure of breaking stones. The sudden passing of her spouse is a devastating blow to Rukmani. Her writings describe the heart-wrenching emotional torment, sorrow, and suffering.

"If I grieve, I said, it is not for you but for myself, beloved, for how shall I endure to live without you, who are my love and life?"

Rukmani returns to the community with Puli, her adopted leprosy son. Her acceptance of disasters and losses exudes dignity. Her acceptance of tragedies and calamities as necessary components of life exudes dignity. Her silent pain combined with her valiant effort has given her this higher viewpoint. She represents the all-encompassing, devoted, and understanding mother figure. As Krishna Rao remarks:

"The real truth of the novel is the spiritual stamina of Rukmani."

According to Rukmani, suffering and disasters are necessary components of existence. She is well conscious of the disclaimers. Her outlook on life is hopeful, nevertheless. She continues: "We would be pitiable creatures indeed to be so weak, for is not a man's spirit given to him to rise above his misfortunes?"

The result of her heroic battle, quiet pain, mute acceptance, and deep and honest character is her elevated, philosophical viewpoint. Regarding the function of a physical relationship in married life, Rukmani's considerations centre on spiritual and emotional fulfilment. She has moved past the idea of sex as only bodily fulfilment. It's neither ritualistic nor is it mechanical. It's on a higher plane. Rukmani,

then, has similar thoughts on sex to even the most contemporary lady. A vital link exists between Scottish doctor Kenny and Rukmani. She sees Kenny to get her infertility treated. Her bond with him is built on understanding, closeness, and friendship. Her life is completely transformed by Kenny's therapy.

He is someone she admires and regards as a benefactor. Kenny provides Rukmani's boys work and brings fertility to an otherwise barren age. She appreciates Kenny's assistance. Says she: "You have done so much for me and mine. Your presence means a lot to u He is only a friend with whom she may talk about her issues and ideas. The moral and societal norms that apply to conventional women do not encompass the entirety of this relationship.

Ira:

The first kid of Rukmani, Irrawaddy alias Ira, serves as the novel's representation of the contemporary, progressive woman. She agrees to marry the man her parents have chosen for her. She is promptly returned, allegedly due to her infertility. Social norms allow men to reject infertile women. Nathan acknowledges the circumstances and remarks, "I do not blame him. He is justified, for a man needs children. He has been patient." Ira faces overwhelming odds that threaten to ruin her life. She goes to Dr. Kenny for assistance since she is anxious and wants to be back in her position. However, her spouse has already remarried, so it's too late into "that chill hopelessness," she withdraws. Ira and other young ladies rely on their judgment and self-assuredness.

Ira is forced to sell her body during severe famines. as she needs to sell everything to pay her brother's medical expenses. Ira persuasively demonstrates that prostitutes are created, not born. Something weird and disorienting shifts within her. Bhagwat Goyal comments on Ira's predicament, saying: "For her preservation of life is a matter of greater sanctity than the observance of a false morality"

This work deftly interweaves the degradation of the female. When Nathan, Ira's father, finds out about her prostitution, he becomes enraged. Ira is forbidden by him from going on her nightly rounds. Yet Ira argues obstinately: "Tonight and tomorrow and every night, so long as there is need I will not hunger any more"

Nathan is adamant that her not turn into a "harlot," "a common trumpet." But Ira declares, standing tall and uncompromising, "There are just words. Other ones exist that are nicer, for the sake of decency." Ira had already told her mother, "It is better that you should not know," in response to Rukmani's question about where she travels at midnight. The truth is unpalatable."

Therefore, Ira persists in her lifestyle and disobeys everyone. A woman can operate emotionally as a mother even when she is not one biologically. Ira raised her brothers as a surrogate mother when she was a small child. Despite her infertility preventing her from having a happy married life, she gives birth to an albino kid. A mother does not know the difference between her kid and an illegitimate one. However, neither traditional Indian society nor society in general accept such a kid or an unmarried mother. Ira demonstrates the mental fortitude and willpower needed to give birth to an albino kid. When P. Geeta speaks about Ira "She is simply being herself in choosing her own life..... That is a move of the Indian woman towards liberation"

Her feminine nature of nurturing takes over from anger, sadness, and hatred when Ira's brother Kuti is born. She treats her younger brother as though he were her child. Ira is a shy, devout young woman. She deviates from the correct road, but not because she is being consumed by fire, unlike

Kunthi. She did this just to feed the little Kuti, who was slowly starving to death from a lack of milk. Ira's natural tenderness, together with her nurturing

Old Granny :

Old Granny is another minor female character in the book. It is she who sells vegetables and uses defense mechanisms. She was the one who had set up Ira's match. She is therefore more angry than everyone else over how her marriage turned out. She feels bad about not succeeding. However, Rukmani informs her that fate is to blame and that neither she nor her daughter nor her husband are to blame. However, Granny Ira is more concerned about the girl's prospects. She responds to this. "Why fear?" "Am I not alone and do I not manage" In addition, she says, "It is not bearable" and "One gets used to it."

Old Granny's opinions so imply that she can boldly put up with her alone stature. Being a woman and living alone is not a scary experience at all. It is tolerable, and getting used to it is not difficult. It is important to note that even an ignorant lady like the Old Granny has opinions on what it means to be a single woman living on her own.

2) Some Inner Fury :

In "Some Inner Fury," Kamala Markandaya's second novel, Mira, Premala, and Roshan are female characters. This novel discusses upper-class Indians and the issues that educated Indians face while their country fights British colonialism. In addition to the political and national themes, the novel depicts Mira's intense love for an Englishman, Richard Marlowe, a British government officer.

Mira:

With her tenderness and creative energy, Mira is the most well-rounded character in the novel. She is the protagonist of the novel. Her family is westernized and she grows up in it. Her exposure to a Western lifestyle and her extensive Hindu upbringing have given her the insight to choose the best aspects of both Indian and British culture.

She struggles to balance her patriotism and her intense love for Richard. She is old enough to recognize the obstacles in their way of being together, even despite their intense and abiding love for one another. It's a romantic relationship between two people who just so happen to be of different races. She can comprehend the customs of her caste thanks to the rigidity and orthodoxy of her own culture. Mira is the one who abandons her love because to patriotism. After her hopes come crashing down, Mira consoles herself: "What had been given us had been gifted freely, abundantly, lit with a splendor which had coloured and enriched our whole living. It could never be taken from us. We had known love together, whatever happened the sweetness of that knowledge would always remain."

The teenage Indian girl in Mira transforms into a fully grown adult. She is prepared to take on life's obstacles. She is so courageous and resilient. When Roshan breaks free from the constraints of family and society, Mira finds it difficult to sacrifice her personal fulfillment for the sake of nationalism. "You belong to one side if you don't, you belong to the other," she replies, her expression dejected.

Mira's choice displays a great deal of bravery. Her own life and thoughts are the mistress of her own. A timid and generally considerate girl develops into a self-assured and impulsive young lady. Haydn Moore Williams says of her: "The impulse to freedom in her character is foretold in her leaving home to become a journalist under the wing of an emancipated woman who is also a dedicated nationalist, "



Premala:

Premala is a symbol of the conventional Indian woman. She is the most heroic character. She is wed to Kit, Mira's brother who is educated at Oxford University. Yet the pairing is inappropriate. She makes an effort to change who she is to suit her husband's contemporary, westernized interests. Their differences in culture drive them apart. Premala, in Mira's opinion, embodies all perfection and is innocently pure. She is completely Indian in her temperament, attitudes, and ideas, and she has a great desire to obey her husband and carry out his requests regardless of her own feelings. Premala is seen as having no depth. For her own pleasure and independence, she gives up all hope. However, she is unable to overcome Kit's cultural differences. Mira sympathizes with her. She states: "If she had not loved Kit so much, she would not have tried so much to please him."

Premala's pain and frustration are prolonged as a result of the traditional Indian spirit enclosing her. She uses raising an orphan as an outlet for her unsatisfied maternal instincts. Kit is concerned about the opinions of others. She is unaffected, though. To her, the most important thing is pure kindness of heart. The young orphan receives the care she needs. She finds some relief from her loneliness, disappointments, and suffering via her job at school. However, she meets a terrible demise there. According to Srinivasa Lyengar, regarding Premala: "She is symbolic of Mother India who is compassion and sufferance who must indeed suffer all hurts and survive all disasters" Markandaya portrays the confusion and helplessness of a traditional Indian woman facing a changing society through Premala. When she puts her own life in danger to put out the school's fire, she demonstrates a streak of inner strength. She struggles between her traditional background and her husband, who is focused on the West. She sacrifices herself to transcend herself. Srinivasa Iyengar remarks about her:

"Her silence is stronger than all theoric, her seeming capacity for resignation is a true measure of her unfathomable strength."

MerchantRoshan:

The most remarkable and unique lady in the book is Roshan Merchant. She is an educated Parsee who is divorced. She is well-liked by everybody. Unlike Premala, she is articulate and well-educated. She was current, yet she didn't annoy the young or old around her. Regarding her, Mira expresses gratitude: "It was this same ruthless simplicity, as I was to discover, that she always looked at things, so that veils fell and veils lifted, and somehow when you were with her she lent you her vision, and you saw things as they were." Roshan transforms from a columnist to the proprietor of the publication for which she writes. Even the traditional Premala finds her captivating vitality appealing. Her ambition for national independence and her quest for identity and autonomy are inextricably linked. She has a positive outlook. "There is no power in violence... destruction... I m not interested in destruction," she firmly informs Govind, Mira's brother, I'm not Even though she does not support terrorism, she does not hold back while providing Govind with a credible alibi. She can even maintain control over a ferocious crowd with her simplicity, calmness, and poise. Her education abroad does not make her any less connected to her people. But it instils in them the necessity of both national and personal independence. She is shown as a lonely figure.

Mira

appreciates

her:

"Born in one world, educated in another, she entered both and moved in both with ease and non chalance. Roshan is a very exceptional person. In the novel there are two minor female characters named Dodamma and Amma.



Conclusions :

We conclude that Kamal Markandaya has created a galaxy of remarkable female characters that touch on various aspects of their lives after closely examining their works. Anita Desai focuses on the psychological side of human relationships, whilst authors such as Kamala Das address the physical side. In Bharathi Mukherjee, identity is an issue. As a result, the feminist movement, which began as nothing more than "consciousness" in the works of authors like Kamala Markandaya, has evolved into a more forceful voice. Markandaya's genuine depictions of her female characters are what sets her works apart.

Markandaya as a novelist is a talented writer with a straightforward style and flawless creative execution. Kamala Markandaya has portrayed women in a variety of roles, including middle-class conventional ladies and rural women. Markandaya as an author has explored every aspect of the female experience, including mother, wife, and daughter. She has presented a fresh perspective and perception of Indian women. We may say that Kamala Markandaya's accomplishments extend beyond the realm of fiction. Markandaya has identified itself as an innovator and an adventurer.

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