
Integration of Social Realities in the Fiction of Kamala Markandaya

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Abstract

Kamala Markandaya in her novels projects the image of the realistic India in turmoil. Her fictional world presents the Indian reality, a pitiable and pathetic picture of wild brutality, ignorance, dire poverty, mental and physical tension in the world of her protagonists. The intent of this paper is to observe the socio-economic concerns of her men and women. Her Indian sensibility enables her to grasp the plight of her Indian characters. The paper examines the experiences of the Indian woman in her novels.

Keywords: Indian sensibility, intense suffering human existence.

Introduction:

Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004) as a novelist of repute has added successfully to the movement of projecting social realities and the place of woman in her novels. Neetar in a Sieve (1954), reminiscent of Thomas Hardy's novels, paved the way for a succession of fine books: *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Coffer Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), *The Pleasure City* (1982) and *Bombay Tiger* (Posthumous 2008). Her skillful craftsmanship, in the portrayal of craftsmanship, in the themes of tragic waste, despair, hunger, deprivation and the tussles of life, has put her into the forefront of contemporary Indian English fiction. "To these themes she has brought the extra-dimension of India, a contemporary India racked by confusion, violence, convulsive, social and political change." H.M. Williams. Just, as Hardy takes us to the Wessex Countryside in his novels, Markandaya takes us to the south India soil. It is a countryside where fear hunger, and despair are the constant companions of the rural poor peasants. Behind all these themes is the image of woman predominant in her novels.

Markandaya projects the image of the changing traditional society. The variety and complexity of her novels represents a major trend in the history and Indian-English novel. "Remarks A.V. Krishnanas. She like Jhabvala, does not deal with the caste and class problems only. She gives a distinct sociological bent to the female figure in her novels. As a matter of fact her concern and commitments are basically socio-economic. S.C. Harrix remarks, "This Indian reality begins with the conventional image of a venerable, wise, spiritual, unsophisticated Mother India, a land of contrasts, paradoxes, poverty and parade of riches."

R.S. Singh remarks, Markandaya's "Sense of involvement in the social life of India, her keen observation combined with critical acumen, and the feminine sensibility brought her international fame with the very first novel *Nectar in a sieve* (1954). The novel brings to us the picture of the impoverished gruesome conditions, the human suffering and degradation of landless peasantry of India. Like Bhabhani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* (1947), the novel effectively portrays the agonized torments of body and soul endured by peasants during the years of drought and hideous famine. The woeful tale of innumerable famine-stricken people, narrated by the heroine sign herself, reflects the passivity and helplessness of the simple minded. Indian peasants. The theme suggests an aspect of man's predicament showing pain and suffering as the outstanding characteristics of human existence. Markandaya through Rukmani's character portrayal seems to suggest that man himself is not the author of his woes and that man is irresistibly flowing in the cataract of life, carried forward by an unpredictable and incomprehensive fate. *Nectar in a Sieve* has been acclaimed as a "fictional epic on the Indian life. It gives a full view of the village world where peasants grow and life, suffer and endure and emerge more dignified." H.M. Prasad.

A Handful of Rice (1966) can be called an elaborate rendition of the theme of suffering. The novel could be considered a sequel to *Nectar in a Sieve*. Ravi the protagonist in *A Handful of Rice* begins where Rukmani ends in *Nectar in a Sieve*: the desperate struggle for substance. Markandaya dwells on the economic repercussions on lower middle class Indian urban families. Ravi the hero confronts a different problem. He represents a class of the new proletariat of India unmindful of his poor peasant past; Ravi goes to seek his fortune in the raw and risky life of a large city. Financial stringency completes him to fall back on others for help.

Two Vigrins (1973), gives us an in-depth study of the problem of growing up into an average woman in an average family of contemporary India. The novel unfolds the growing consciousness and experiences of two real sisters in a "closely knit impoverished joint Hindu family in a South Indian village of the two sisters Saroja and Lalitha, the latter's aspirations lead her to choose the glamorous and polished city culture like Thomas Hardy's novel "*Far From the Madding Crowd*".

Two Virgins too is a choice between the country life or the enticements of the city. Markandaya dwells on the predicament of the sensitive intelligent rural persons insecurely poised between the country life to which they belong and the city million that their imagination tantalizes them with Social change and it's impact on the lives of people seems to be the theme of the novel.

Some Inner Fury (1955) opens with the tragic memories of the heroine narrator's past as she in a reminiscent tone recalls the ambience, raging with fury, during the Second World War and the upsurge of the national movement the novel is about a love affair between a middle class westernized Indian woman Mira and an Englishman Richard. Mira's love for Richard grows as the country's agitation against the British gains intensity. The novel deals with the dilemma of a young woman who sacrifices her love for an Englishman at the altar of the Indian national struggle. Love comes in conflict more narrowly but more fiercely with politics too.

Markandaya's other novels *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence OF Desire* (1960) and *Possession* (1963) throw light on existing cultural dualism and East-West relationship in context of human identities.

The conflicts of traditionalism and modernity between Sarojini and Dandekar (*Silence of Desire*), Ellie and Valmiki (*Possession*), between Helen and Bashiam (*The Coffe Dams*) (1969)), cultural synthesis and compromise of East and West between Srinivas and Mrs. Pickering (*The Nowhere Man*) (1972), and Mira's dilemma of adopting Indian cultural heritage or western values of Richard in *Some Inner Fury* are the themes showing the predicament of facing the two worlds.

At the same time there is a long varied and unchallenging cavalcade of women characters in Markandaya's Novels that express the social realities of the Country. Rukmani of *Nectar in a Sieve*, facing the grim conditions of poverty wages a constant combat against the problems of life. Nalini of *A Handful of Rice* (1967) puts up with the pathetic and pitiable picture of Urban Civilisation. In, *Silence of Desire*, through Sarojini, Markandaya brings out the theme of religious faith, adherences to religion, tradition and finally accepting reason and scientific temper of the age and modernity. Mira (*Some Inner Fury*) is a woman sincerely in love, who gives up her love for the greater cause of national struggle. Roshan (*Some Inner Fury*) Anasuya (*Possession*) and Usha (*The Golden Honey Comb*) herald the emergence of a new class of emancipated Indian Woman, who are no longer to be down trodden in society but fight to assert their rights. Queen Mahjula (*The Golden Honey Comb*) is clearly patterned after the great warrior Queens of Indian History.

The variety and complexity of Kamala Markandaya's novels represents one of the major trends in the history of the Indian English Novel. Like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabhani Bhattacharya, in her earlier novels, is projected the victimized poverty stricken rural agricultural farming class of India. She treats of the theme of tragic human waste, the clash of temperaments in the meeting of East and West, the agency and despair of unfulfilled love and the transition in the rural areas influenced by the westernized ways of city life. On the vast canvas of life Kamala Markandaya colorfully portrays a variety of characters, showing their dilemma of cultural change gradual development, their trials and triumphs that life gifts them.

The protagonists especially women of Kamala Markandaya are embodiments of self-renunciation, suffering and human compassion but they are never weak willed and have the strength to fight the toughest battles against fate, natural calamities hunger or inhuman conditions imposed upon them by society. Thus, the study examines the integration of social realities in her fiction Thus a wide range of experience can be seen in her novels. "The changing image of man and society is thus subtly projected in the Kaleidoscope of her art, imparting in the process to various vignettes of life a sense of the dynamics of change" A.V. Krishnarao.

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