

Eco-Feminism in Nectar in a Sieve

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Abstract: *The eminent personalities and writers who were fraught with the pathetic feelings towards the Indian woman, Kamala Markandaya comes foremost. In almost all of her novels beginning with 'Nectar in a Sieve' she seems to be undergoing strenuous efforts to upgrade the status of women in the Indian society. She is never satisfied with the stand of the Indian woman that "A woman's place is with her husband." It is a general outlook of an Indian woman about the Indian women due to which again Shanta Krishnaswamy writes about the virtues and merits of this Indian lady of Nectar in a Sieve 'faced with great odds like famine, death, infidelity and prostitution amidst a backdrop of bone-chilling poverty, she wages a constant battle.'*

Keywords: *Kamala Markandaya*

I. INTRODUCTION

The eminent personalities and writers who were fraught with the pathetic feelings towards the Indian woman, Kamala Markandaya comes foremost. In almost all of her novels beginning with 'Nectar in a Sieve' she seems to be undergoing strenuous efforts to upgrade the status of women in the Indian society. She is never satisfied with the stand of the Indian woman that "A woman's place is with her husband." It is a general outlook of an Indian woman about the Indian women due to which again Shanta Krishnaswamy writes about the virtues and merits of this Indian lady of Nectar in a Sieve 'faced with great odds like famine, death, infidelity and prostitution amidst a backdrop of bone-chilling poverty, she wages a constant battle.'

The first novel of Kamala Markandaya published as Nectar in a Sieve by Putnam and company, London in the year 1954 is centered round a poor lady Rukmani, who is the symbol of the deepest and crudest poverty of India. Emerging from the dreams of childhood when she sees her 'heaven' of husband, all her castles of cards are flown and she says "I wanted to cry. This mud hut, nothing but mud and thatch was my home."

There is no end to the grievances and misfortunes of this poor lady, who continues to suffer as a wife, as a mother and then as a grandmother. Poverty, inertia, famishment and disease torture her till the end of her life, when even her husband leaves her on his eternal journey. An Indian woman can hardly endure that her own daughter should go for prostitution to maintain the family-life. Kamala Markandaya has been crude and unflinching to the extent of Romantic Fervor in her narration of the unfortunate conditions of the Indian woman. Though at times she realises this fact, also, that is directly related to the human psychology.

Basically mind and physic have got immense elastic powers, due to which, a woman, poverty-stricken so despairingly, can have an eye to smile. Rukmani of this novel also is the same kind of lady. The writer says "While the sun shines on you and the fields are green and beautiful to the eye and your husband sees beauty in you, which no one has seen before and you have a good store of grain, laid away for hard times, a roof over you and a sweet stirring in your body, what more can a woman ask for?"

Kamala Markandaya here has been to ventilate the grievous scars in the image of Indian woman, on the other hand, she was always embellished this image with the virtues of endurance, forbearance, compassion and self sacrifice. So, this enterprising effort does not project an Indian woman as an image with a weak physic but an image of a far stronger moral concept. Some times these women remind us of the pious heroines of Thomas Hardy. but we know simultaneously that Hardy's heroines are guided by supernatural powers and they develop an epos-making mythology. In that comparison the women of Kamala Markandaya are restricted to the phases of Indian society. We find some

close resemblance of these women in the women characters of Virginia Woolf. B. Sudipta is justified in writing in her article on 'A feminist perspective of women characters in the novels of Virginia Woolf and Kamala Markandaya, "The travails and tribulations which she encounters are labeled as her predestined faith or as the reprisals of her past Karmas, Rukmani was one such creature, born to shoulder the plough and reap the harvest if any.

While Kamala Markandaya presented the degraded condition of the Indian woman, not only in *Nectar in a Sieve*, but in other novels also, she has tactfully upgraded her status in the moments of adversity and doom. This she has done not under the overwhelming lap of emotions but through a tactful strategic plan. The long discourses on the women persecution, fraught with political zeal, have been of little significance, viewing the continuous injustice being done to the women society even today. The superfluous thinkers have become satisfied with certain idealistic comments like the one quoted here "Philosophers and Feminists" have concluded that submission is the only virtue, compulsorily nurtured in woman as her faculties have been numbed by restrictions."

Kamala Markandaya in this way has devised a method to idolise the image of woman by showing her down-trodden to the extremity but in that condition retaining the degree of confidence and forbearance to the extent where commonly the male character fails. She has looked outside the limitations of nationality and has tried to look towards the Western world also for guidance, but it is needless to comment that she had to come back to the same concept of Indian woman as nurtured by the Indian sociologist. Gayle, Greene and Coppelia, Kahn have made a significant comment about the vestality of the woman concept. They write "Actual behaviour is likely to be more varied than is suggested by social myths or stereo-types and the relation of the Ideology of woman to social reality remains difficult to measure."

Literature presents the personality not through the political concept but through such deeper layers of aesthetics and psychology which have far greater impact upon man and its history. Though C.T. Indra considers the achievements of Kamala Markandaya on the basis of normal human thought so she writes "Kamala Markandaya has managed to give full play to a women's self cast in a relatively unadventurous social milieu and that is a remarkable achievement."

Through all the dimensions of woman, as a daughter, then as a wife, as a mother, Rukmani has defeated the traditional concept of a weak woman. Kamala Markandaya, the artist in fiction, has drawn forth a new vision and image of Indian woman, dormant behind the garb of poverty helplessness, inertia and famishment. It is to be concluded that the achievement of Kamala Markandaya is not limited to the field of fiction and philosophy only but she has come forward as an explorer, an inventor as well.

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