

Gender Perspectives in Kamala Markandaya's Works: A Study of Relationships Between Men and Women

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ABSTRACT

In an effort to better understand Kamala Markandaya's work, this comparative study of her books aims to look closely at the man-woman dynamic in her works and how the characters deal with adversity. Reading both authors' works side by side is an interesting and fulfilling exercise. Two outstanding artists in the field of English fiction are Kamala Markandaya. However, few research have sought to compare and contrast the portrayal of married Indian women in the works of these two authors, with the exception of a few of articles. They are prepared to give their lives if necessary. They go from denying themselves to asserting themselves, and vice versa. Each of the two authors has been the subject of a plethora of critical essays and even full-length monographs. The purpose of this research is to examine female characteristics through the lens of four major life events: marriage, migration, motherhood, and midlife. This paper's overarching goal is to analyze how these two modern Indian female authors depict female characters. There have been a plethora of critical pieces and even full-length monographs published on the writer. The purpose of this research is to examine female characteristics through the lens of four major life events: marriage, migration, motherhood, and midlife. This research aims to analyze how these Indian women novelists depict women. In order to conduct a thorough analysis and comparison of Kamala Markandeya's depictions of women characters and family, it is necessary to first examine the significant historical events that influenced the author. Kamala Markandeya addressed the female protagonists' social, political, and external environments.

KEYWORDS: *Novels; Kamala Markandaya; man-woman relationship; problems; female; women characters; woman's life.*

1. Introduction

In these books we read about Indian women's pain, marital strife, existentialism, rage, and dual tradition. She has done an incredible amount to shed light on women and to reveal hidden parts of the world that were previously hidden from the outside world. Marital strife is a common motif in modern literature, whether written by British, American, or Indian authors. Each of the two authors has been the subject of a plethora of critical essays and even full-length monographs. However, few research have sought to compare and contrast the portrayal of married Indian women in the works of these two authors, with the exception of a few of articles. They are prepared to give their lives if necessary. They go from abstaining from some activities to actively engaging in them, and vice versa. This research aims to

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analyze how modern Indian women novelists depict women. This kind of female writer best depicts the feminine experience of disappointment, frustration, despair, perplexity, yearning, and generalized pessimism.

Famous worldwide for her 1954 masterwork *Nectar in a Sieve*, Kamala Markandaya is among the most illustrious post-colonial Indian authors writing in English.

Markandaya is able to paint a realistic picture of a modern lady because of her innate understanding of women's issues. With compassion and insight, she investigates and makes sense of women's spiritual and emotional responses to their situation. Ten books have been written by Markandaya.

Rural India is the setting of her first book, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954). A humble peasant couple from southern India are the protagonists of this narrative. The effects of industrialization on rural communities are the central theme of the book. Hunger, along with other societal issues including poverty, beggary, crime, unemployment, the zamindari system, industrialization, and demoralization, are efficiently addressed.

The East-West conflict against the background of the country's fight for independence is vividly and graphically described in Kamala Markandaya's second book, *Some Inner Fury* (1955).

The female heroine Sarojini's eastern faith is challenged by the notions of western skepticism in Kamala Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire* (1960). By focusing on the dynamics between the husband and wife, the story reveals a family drama. The psychological discord experienced by a conservative, devout middle-class lady is imaginatively explored in *A Silence of Desire*, as pointed out by A.V. Krishna Rao.

Kamala Markandaya depicts the attack of western cynicism on the oriental faith of Sarojini, the female protagonist, in her third book, *A Silence of Desire* (1960). By focusing on the dynamics between the husband and wife, the story reveals a family drama. It reveals how people torture themselves and one another by keeping quiet when they need to express themselves when they really should be speaking out. The female heroine Sarojini's inner struggles take center stage in the narrative.

Some of Kamala Markandaya's books take place in London. *The Nowhere Man* (1975) and *Possession* (1963). Novels like "A Silence" and "Possession" both assert that spiritual forces may triumph over material desires. Death is a major subject, and there is a lot of pain in the plot. The protagonist, Lady Caroline, and the protagonist, the youngster Valmiki, go through a lot of pain during the novel. A triumphant note of the spirit concludes *Possession*.

Similar to her first book "*Nectar in a Sieve*," Kamala Markandaya's sixth work, *A Handful of Rice* (1966), explores the tension between eastern stoicism and western insurrection. In addition to providing Markandaya with a handful of rice, this book allows her to express her pain about societal injustice.

The Coffer Dams (1969), Markandaya's sixth book, explores the issue of East-West encounter via the conflict between Western technical perspectives and Indian human ideals.

The No Where Man (1972), Markandaya's subsequent work, explores the identity crisis faced by Indian immigrants in their twilight years. The characters, Vasantha and Srinivas, struggle mightily to forge their own identities in England, the country from which they were adopted. *No Where Man* is Markandaya's most notable work on the subject of racial animosity and hate.

Kamala Markandaya depicts the invasion of traditional beliefs and long-established family and community connections by contemporary Western ideas in her 1977 eighth book, *Two Virgins*. Lalitha and Saroja, two young women who have never sinned, are the protagonists of Markandaya's narrative. This work revolves about the importance of personal freedom.

In her tenth book, *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), Kamala Markandaya depicts the life of a Maharajah who is used as a pawn by the British. There is an overwhelming sense of patriotism and nationalism throughout the book, which is set against a political backdrop.

"We may say that the one persistent theme, that underlines all the novels of Kamala Markandaya is a constant search for identity mainly by the female protagonist," Dr. Patnaik summarizes Markandaya's work, *Pleasure City* (1982), as

an attempt to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western cultures through the development of love and intimacy between Tully, an English officer, and Rikki, a poor and rustic Indian boy.

Kamala Markandaya demonstrates in her works that women are not inherently less worthy of respect than males, and in fact may possess higher levels of dignity due to their inherent human traits and abilities. Because it has the potential to improve the lives of all people, Markandaya has given us the strong female protagonists in her work. In this way, Kamala Markandaya has ensured her place in English literature for all time.

The story of "the female protagonist Rukmani's attempt to retrieve and revive elements of her families" rural existence and deep connection to the soil is told in Kamala Markandaya's 1954 book *Nectar in a Sieve*. They have a unique bond with the land since they both work it. On the other hand, they are impoverished since they rely on this plot of land alone for sustenance. In order to comprehend Rukmini's feeling of belonging to her rural surroundings, it is necessary to consider the significance of the land connection to her.

2. Review of Literature

Through in-depth analyses of romantic and family connections, Kamala Markandaya's works convey her feminist moral concern. The need of believing in women's moral superiority in protecting the family is emphasized by her. She emphasizes the restriction against loose living in works like "A Handful of Rice" and even "Nectar in a Sieve" out of concern for the stability of the household and the purity of women. When Ira's poverty forces her into prostitution in "Nectar in a Sieve," Rukmani acts as a stifling influence. As a female author, Kamala Markandaya utilizes her books to further her own process of self-definition and to strongly identify with her characters. The female protagonists in Kamala Markandaya's works almost always have a more optimistic view on life and manage to come out on top than the male protagonists do. They find success and happiness in life when they are free to be themselves and show the world who they are. Kamala Markandaya has used a novel style by showing ladies from a masculine perspective. She gives her male characters lines to say so that we may hear their perspectives on women.

The feminist author alludes to the unsaid obstacles that women face in her work "Some Inner Fury". "It is believed, and this may be universal, that women shouldn't be concerned about anything, and that the best way to make sure of that is to keep them completely ignorant of the world around them. Indian women learn early on not to step on men's toes." Kamala Markandaya's works reveal the strong impact of a feminist literary tradition. Through her diverse cast of female characters, which includes princesses and harassed rural women, Kamala Markandaya highlights the struggles faced by Indian women due to their gender, society, and economic status. Half of the population is too big to ignore in this era of constant change and innovation across all industries. Additionally, Indian authors writing in English have emerged from the slumber of "nonattachment" and "non-involvement" to begin recognising the place of Indian women in a patriarchal culture. Throughout India's long and varied history, the very idea of femininity has evolved and transformed in profound ways. Through spiritual ascent, communal battles, imprisonment, independence, the agricultural revolution, and cyber technology, India has gone from a magnificent past to a deterioration. In India, women are a window into the culture in which they reside. Looking back at the rise and fall of Indian women's position, one can see that they were once highly esteemed, free, and privileged in many spheres of society. However, things took a turn for the worse for women as the years passed. "To be explored, experienced, and understood in its entire vicissitudes, multiplicities, contradictions and complexities" is the mantra that must resonate with Indian women. Throughout her life, an Indian lady fulfils several tasks within her family, from birth to death. Still, she's a mystery. Her spirit remains unbreakable, even in the face of social constraints, loss, and misfortune. Indian women are often portrayed in literature and popular culture as Pativrata, the embodiment of perfect morality.

It seems that Markandaya's first criticism of progress and modernity is that "the rural peoples...are always already left behind in colonial modernity that speeds [them] into the future" (Graham, 2009), as stated by James Graham. Such a reading of the story would be at odds with Rukmani's newly acquired skills in reflecting on her experiences and navigating the tensions between tradition and modernity in the context of future planning. Rukmani uses her reading skills to her advantage in the city by offering to write letters for individuals, which helps her earn money to live and save. Rukmani, on the other hand, has a hard time making ends meet as a letter writer due to the pervasive gender prejudice in the field. Rukmani and Nathan chip away at stone at a quarry, aided by the leprous street urchin Puli. They have to be on high alert for dynamite explosion alerts the whole time they work, which adds stress and risk to the soul-destroying quarry labor. When Nathan's grip becomes too weak, he fully releases his grip. According to Rao and Menon (1997), he experiences a gradual decline in his bodily and mental power, as well as a sense of being torn

apart and unable to continue living. Even after Nathan's tragic death, Rukmani intends to return to her country, a testament to her newfound strength and her will to take charge of her own life. This shows that Rukmani is stronger in spirit than Nathan. Since Rukmani no longer has the property to hold onto or her husband to lean on, adopting Puli is her last act of hope. Puli's adoption is a means by which she may reconnect with the community at large and continue to foster the relationships she had in her hometown. Rukmani takes Puli in as her own and promises to cure his leprosy at the rural hospital that Kenny and her son Selvam operate (Barbato, 1991), giving her deed more weight. Promising anything reduces the planning process to its barest essentials. So, the picture that captures both tradition and modernity as the narrative begins with Rukmani reflecting on her life: A massive spruce and white structure can be seen in the distance on the ground. It was erected with not just money but also men's aspirations and pity, as many who have seen it grow year after year can attest (Markandaya, 2002). Symbolic of both modernity and heritage, the hospital sits on ground that was formerly part of the community. Rukmani's vow is fulfilled as the edifice that embodies both heritage and modernity cures Puli of leprosy.

Markandaya appears to be implying that the two cultures can harmoniously coexist when they can incorporate the best of both worlds, namely the modernity (West) and the tradition (East), and we observe this merging of cultures in the construction of the hospital, with the British (Dr. Kenny) and the Indian (Selvam) (Barbato, 13). In order to overcome her identity crisis, Rukmani deals with the postcolonial environmental condition that she must navigate in order to survive and thrive materially. This condition is characterized by ambivalence towards nature and spaces, such as rural villages and urban cities, human nature and social customs. Since she has already negotiated with the land and the city, and both have rejected her, her decision to return to the land—which is beginning to embody both parts of itself—is evidence of the distillation and acceptance of this ambivalence in negotiating tradition and modernity. Once she has reconciled her faith in the land, spirituality, and the Gods with man's capacity to plan and exert control over his or her life, she will consciously choose to return. Here, Rukmani disproves the idea that she is most equipped to tend to the land since she refuses to be passively and fatalistically linked to it because she is a peasant lady from the third world. As a result, it defies the easy interpretation of a jubilant and idealized homecoming of the indigenous person who is at one with nature.

There are several issues that have come to light in the novel that are still relevant today. Firstly, the women in the story seem to be deeply connected to nature. Secondly, the women are violently displaced from their homes and land by the postcolonial state and new elites. Thirdly, the text and the women resist being easily divided into nature and culture. Lastly, the women express their individual decisions by expressing their mixed feelings about development, land, and nature. The ownership of the land that women in the Third World labor and till is also a central theme in Markandaya's book. The story underscores the conflicts between what Hughan and Tiffin (2010) call the "ontological insistence to belong" and what they call the "disputed object of discursive management and material control" in relation to land. *Nectar in a Sieve* revolves on the central topic of whether one has a birthright to the land or whether one has a legal entitlement to it. By depicting the women's intolerable living and working circumstances, the book departs from the idealized portrayal of land and environment.

3. Kamala Markandaya's Novels

"Some Inner Fury" and "Nectar in a Sieve" are two very distinct novels written by Kamala Markandaya. An emotional motherhood may exist even in cases when a woman does not have the biological ability to have children. Ira acted as a surrogate mother to her younger brothers when she was a girl. When Ira's little brother is born, her maternal instincts take priority over her feelings of anger, sadness, and contempt. In order to provide for her sick brother, she turns into a "harlot" and a "common strumpet"—not to satisfy any desires she may have. Something bizarre and perplexing shifts inside her. Rather of being a helpless little girl "to be cowed or forced into submission," she transforms into an independent strong woman. She goes against the grain of society, but her brother dies. In exchange, she receives an albino kid who is not her own child. A mother's inherent love and understanding cannot be eradicated by the physical or mental abnormalities of her children. Ira is unfazed and takes great pride in her child's "fairness." The fault-finders were amazed and even intimidated by her manner. When Kamala Markandaya's brother Kit comes home from Oxford with a new way of life and his buddy Richard, she starts to doubt her views (Some Inner Fury, author). The more the nation rebels against the British, the more Richard means to Mira. Kit, his wife Premala, and Kit's and Mira's adopted brother Govind—who is said to have planned the anti-British uprising—are all caught up in the chaos. Kit is now a district magistrate. Tragic events compel Mira to choose between her love for Richard and her responsibility to her nation, and the plot thickens as a result. Kamala Markandaya asserts in "Some Inner Fury" that in a divided nation, no one can remain aloof and indecisive.

The wrath of the Quit India Movement tears Mira and Richard apart, preventing their love affair from ever materializing. Mira laments the loss of her beloved, who perished in a riot, and the indifference of destiny and time that impedes the progress of some formidable social forces and change-making juggernauts in this Research Expo International Multidisciplinary Research Journal sorrowful reflection on futility and waste. "I told myself it was all one," Mira explains. After a century, it will all be one, yet my heart will still be lonely and tearless as it quietly sobs to itself. But what does it matter to the cosmos if every so often a planet is born, every so often a star dies, every so often a man falls, every so often a head or a heart breaks? Despite Richard and Mira's heartbreaking separation, the story concludes on a patriotic note as Mira gives up her own happiness for the better good of the country. Truth, about the intricacies of life, about the formation and development of personal character, is what art is all about. In the context of Indo-English literature, two notable female authors of the post-modern period are Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai. They have a lot in common when it comes to the ideas they explore in their works. Novelists Kamala Markandeya and Anita Desai both write from the female perspective, drawing on their knowledge of and personal experiences with Indian women. In their work, Anita Desai and Kamala Markandeya portrayed the aspirations, challenges, and fights of women for independence and self-determination. These authors bring women's actual needs and experiences to the forefront of society's consciousness. All of a woman's innermost thoughts, wants, and pains are known and understood by them.

In addition to delving into the ethical and psychological challenges faced by oppressed women, these works also depict strong female protagonists who fight against the odds to find their place in the world and find purpose in their lives. Not only do these female authors want to reimagine women's roles in society via their works, but they also want to highlight their individuality and declare their autonomy as women. They also show strong female protagonists that battle societal obstacles like prejudiced religious views and long-held conventional beliefs as well as psychological ones like shyness, insecurity, lack of confidence, and a lack of self-esteem. Ruth Praver Jhabwala, Anita Desai, Santha Rama Rau, Vimla Raina, Bharathi Mukherjee, Veene Nagpal, Kamala Das, Rama Mehta, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, and Santha Rama Rau are prominent women authors among them.

The majority of Indian writers who penned works in the pre- and post-freedom eras were more concerned with the economic, political, and social aspects of Indian society. Their motivation came from seeing the social regeneration that had occurred as a result of Gandhi's influence, as well as the liberation struggle and his arrival. An obvious concern for the harsh realities of the Indian scene was evident in the Indian novels written in English, starting with those of K.S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R.K. Narayan. All of the political, economic, and social issues that the Indian people faced were accurately portrayed by these authors. Novelists like Anand and Bhattacharya penned works that radiated a sincere desire to see reform and change implemented. This century has produced female authors like as Shobha De, Arundati Roy, Anita Desai, Nayantra Sahgal, and Sashi Deshpande. Not only that, but these female authors address feminist themes in their writings. Many Indian women authors have written works in English, notably works of fiction and poetry. The rise of Indian fiction in English has been greatly enhanced by Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabwala, Santha Rama Rau, and Attia Husian; the growth of Indian poetry in English has been similarly enhanced by Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu. Thanks to the amazing abilities of Indian women authors, English literature from India is now something to be proud of and admired in the West.

Novels with a female narrator and an autobiographical feel often employ this first-person narrative style, with readers unable to discern any difference between the author's actual self and the "I" of the narration due to the pervasive personal and autobiographical threads. The East-West encounter is a significant theme in the writings of several female authors. Notable women authors such as Santha Rama Rao, Anita Desai, Ruth Praver Jhabwala, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, and Kamala Markandaya were part of the second generation that built upon the work of the first. An additional facet to the expansion and improvement of the English-language Indian novel was introduced by these female authors. This research aims to examine the portrayal of the man-woman relationship in modern Indian literature by discussing the works of Indian women authors who have written in English.

Fiction is a medium through which Kamala Markandaya expresses her outlook on life. When India was on the cusp of its newly-won independence, she began penning books. During that period in India, communal upheavals caused widespread poverty, which in turn led to widespread famine and starvation. The foundations of rural life were crumbling under the weight of industrialization and urbanization. As obstacles to communication, Kamala Markandaya portrays racial tensions, cultural differences, temperamental differences, and sexual deviance. Industry and modern technology wreak havoc on a South Indian village in her first book, *Nectar on a Sieve*. The fundamental themes of this book are on deprivation and hunger. A political plot causes a tragic event in her second book, *Some*

Inner Fury. The spiritual world is the center of her third book, *A Silence of Desire*. Urban economics are the subject of her book *A Handful of Rice*. Her writing genuinely portrays the East's and West's genuine attitudes towards one another, as well as the natural sensations of hunger and famine, whether in *Hunger and Degradation* on the East-West encounter or elsewhere. The *Adventuress* and *Remember the House* are the books written by Santha Rama Rau, a renowned author of travelogues. There is no restless inquiry into things, yet her art takes on the quality of a journey. In it, we see a basic interest for the world and its inhabitants, as well as an accurate depiction of these places with some creative flourishes here and there. In her work *The Adventuress*, Santha Rama Rau displays her preference for a tender romance placed in a contemporary, cultured, global context. Because of her fundamentally Indian sensibility, Santha Rama Rau is fundamentally an Indian writer. The protagonist, a young Indian woman raised in the West who returns to her home country and finds herself caught in the middle of a value system that is at odds with her own, is based on Mrs. Rama Rau's own struggles with identification and cultural identity. A character similar to the author herself, Baba, investigates her dilemma within the framework of Indian culture and finds a solution or compromise, in contrast to her own, in her book *Remember the House*.

The nationalism of independent India is satirized in *A New Dominion*. A novel that compares East-West connections, *Heat and Dust* won the 1975 Booker Prize. In order to highlight the issues facing Indian society and provide solutions, Jhabvala use fiction as a potent medium. The political history and personalities of India are well-known to Nayantara Sahgal. An major political event serves as the backdrop for each of her books, since she spent a significant portion of her youth at Anand Bhawan, the ancestral house of the Nehru family in Allahabad. As an example, the linguistic division of Punjab is discussed in *Storm in Chandigarh*. *Rich Like Us* revolves on the 1975 Emergency, which is its central theme. In her book *A Situation in New Delhi*, she depicts the corrupt politicians and the disgruntled young who turn to Naxalism in the post-Nehru political climate. You may recognize some of Sahgal's characters from the real world. Some examples are Kailash Sinha (Krishna Menon) in *This Time of Morning* and Shivraj (Jawaharlal Nehru) in *A Situation in New Delhi*. In their job, her men and women strive for greatness. Sonali is a character like this in *Rich Like Us*. Her heart goes out to this new woman—a careerist who is smart, educated, and striving to establish herself honorably in a patriarchal culture—and her struggles. Nayantara Sahgal is a political and social author who believes that freedom is crucial to a nation's and an individual's development. She discusses this idea in the latter chapters of each of her eight books, and her profound love for India and its people shines through.

4. Conclusion

Lady Caroline notes in "Possession" that the characters played by Kamala Markandaya are conflicted about their allegiances; this ambivalence is mirrored in the characters' love-hate relationships with both the British and India. The *Dark Dancer*, written by Rajan, emphasizes this connection further. An advocate is Pramod Kumar. A love story between an Englishman named Richard and a Hindu lady named Mira brings the tension between the East and the West to the forefront. As time goes on, their love becomes deeper, and the political tension between the Indians and the Britons intensifies. The central struggle in the book is based on the opposites of an increase in closeness and a separation.⁵⁷ An artist named "Valmiki" from Europe is sketched out in the 1963 book "possession," which was translated into Russian as well. While on vacation in India, young Englishwoman Caroline Bell meets the god-gifted artist Valmiki and brings him to London with the intention of preserving his skill. Over time, Valmiki becomes a renowned artist and painter in London.

On a cultural level, however, the book portrays the East-West encounter via the struggle between modernity, which emerged in India as a result of contact with the West, and the spiritual religion of the Indian people. The situation escalates when Dandekar, a government employee, finds out that his wife Sarojini travels to a swamy to seek a religious treatment for her tumour. Dandekar has been in tremendous emotional pain because of Sarojini's unexplained daytime disappearance from the home. Her spouse recommends that she have surgery for a scientific remedy rather than putting her life in jeopardy based on superstitious beliefs, both in his rural retreat and at the whitewashed home. She is certain that she will not be cured until she has faith, and she understands that faith and reason are incompatible. Additionally, her cousin Rajan holds Dandekar responsible for his lack of religious faith, which he attributes to his upbringing under the British. Fearing for his wife's safety, Dandekar decides to enlist the aid of his policemen, Mr. Chari and Mr. Ghose, in their mission to expel the swamy from the town. He experiences a rollercoaster of emotions, ranging from violent trust to profound suspicion. "Kamala Markandaya evokes the twin theme of colonialism and colonial confrontation deftly through her characters, the attraction of certain events serving symbolic, suggestive and in an almost direct expressiveness in the frequent confrontation between Caroline, the imperial English lady, and Anusuya, the self-respecting westernised yet truly Indian narration," says Madhusudan Prasad.

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