

SOCIAL REALISM IN KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S *NECTAR IN A SIEVE*

1. M Meena, M.A, M. Phil, (Ph D), Asst. Professor of English,

2.P.MUTHULAKSHMI, M.PHIL (STUDENT)

Sakthi College of Arts and Science for Women, Oddanchatram

Abstract:

Kamala Markandaya is one among the documented Indian women novelists writing in English. She won international fame and recognition with the publication of her maiden novel *Nectar in a sieve*. The most striking feature of Indian English Novel is the appearance of women novelist who gave new dimension to Indian English Novels. In the beginning of the 1980s, Indian English literature received an International status. After Independence, women writing have acquired an importance more than even before. They have started questioning the age old oppression and colonization. Indian women writers in English fiction have been presenting women as the centre of concern in their fictional world. Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004) is unquestionably one of the most popular Indian women novelists in English of post-independence period. She has ten novels to her credit.

Key words:

English Fiction, English Novel, Indian English Literature, Indian women writers, Poverty, Rural India effect of modernization.

Looking at the growth of the Indian English novels, we witness three important stages of its development. In the mid-1930s, we see the appearance of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, the real beginning of Indian English novels. Then starting from the mid of 1950s-1960s, writers like Arun Joshi, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal made significant contribution that changed the face of Indian English novels. The most striking feature of Indian English novel is the appearance of women novelists who gave new dimension to Indian English Novel. It was in the beginning of the 1980s that Indian English literature received international status. Writers like

Salman Rushdie, Vikram Sheth, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri etc. Had a mass breakthrough, women writers have been coming forward to give expression to their feelings especially in the field of fiction. Kamala Markandaya is one of the greatest and popular women Novelists in Indian English fiction. Her original name was Kamala Purnaiya which links her with the Dewan Purnaiya, a well-to-do aristocratic family of Mysore in South India. She was born in 1924 in a Tamil Brahmin family of Mysore, South India, where from time immemorial her grandparents and their ancestors lived. She migrated to England in 1948.

Half of life in the East, Half in the West-fate has in this way determined the life of Kamala Markandaya. In the beginning there was life in the motherland at the Madras University. In her latter life in London, we see first success and failures in the literary fields, the family joys, sorrows and consequently recognition. Kamala Markandaya is one of the most popular Indo Anglican novelists with a huge concourse of readers in India and abroad.

Depiction of Woman Consciousness and Poverty:

The lady cognizance is key to every one of her books. She utilizes fiction as a vehicle for imparting her vision of life. Markandaya's elevated familiarity with neediness in India likely was the consequence of her visits to the nation and records for the successive redundancy of this subject in her books. She began composing books when India was exactly at the limit of recently won freedom. She won acknowledgment with the distribution of her absolute first novel *Nectar in a strainer* in 1954. *Nectar in a strainer* has been contrasted with Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*.

Despite the fact that an ever closer analogy would be, K.S. Venkatramani's *Murugan the Tiller*, Markandaya takes us to the core of a south Indian town where life has evidently not changed for a thousand years. Now industry and current innovation attack the town looking like a tannery and from this effect vile consequences. Markandaya composes that fear, hunger and despair are the consistent associates of the laborers.

Kamala Markandaya is a city-dweller but she knows the Indian village and the price of rice procured from Indian peasants. The novel *Nectar in a sieve* can be called 'Struggle for rice' because in it she raises the peasant's problem in India.

Such issues were highlighted in the works of Munshi Premchand, the singer of Indian village. While writing novels and short stories, he emphasized in presenting the realities of life and Munshi made the Indian villages in his theme of writing.

The title *Nectar in a sieve* is taken from the poem 'Work without Hope' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Kamala Markandaya uses the lines of Coleridge as an epigraph: "Work without hope draws nectar during a sieve and hope without an object cannot live." These lines contain the main idea or theme of this novel. Indian farmer cultivates the rice field, standing and sweating in the hot rays of the sun. Rice for him is like nectar. It cannot be held back in a sieve, rice slips down through the fingers of poor farmers and disappears in the pockets of the landlords and money lenders. It is primarily a tale of rural life in south India.

The cruel fate of Indian tenant farmers is represented through the simple peasant Nathan and his family. His wife Rukmani is a young daughter of a village headman. Nathan pays exorbitant rent for land which was owned by some other. Poverty and starvation cross the edge of the wretched dwelling simultaneously with the young couple. During the primary year, they have a daughter Ira and for subsequent six years, Rukmani does not conceive. Troubled that she cannot produce a son for Nathan, Rukmani visits her ailing mother and meets Kenny, a foreign Doctor. Rukmani seeks help from Kenny who treats her infertility without Nathan's knowledge. In quick succession, Rukmani bears six sons- Murugun, Thambi, Selvam, Murugan, Raja and Kuti. With each birth however, the family has a little less to eat. Rukmani and Nathan find it difficult to manage things and are forced to lead a life of poverty.

There is genuine pathos and tragic intensity in her description of the young toddlers of Nathan. The way they die slowly of starvation is very touching and heart breaking

But of all us Kuti suffered the most. He had never been a healthy child; now he was constantly ailing. At first he asked for rice, water and cried because there was none; but later he gave up asking and merely cried because there was none; but later he gave up asking and merely cried. Even in his sleep he whimpered, twisting

and turning endlessly, permitting no one to rest. Ira was gentlest with him and tirelessly patient, nursing him in her skinny arms and giving him most of what can to her but more often than not he turned away, unable to require the rough food we offered then she would hold him against her and give him her breast, and he would pull at the parched teat and be soothed, and for a while his thin wailing would die away. (Nectar 53)

The lines of chapter-27 of this novel are very important:

But how? We have no money. My husband can till and sow and reap with skill, but here there is no land I can weave and spin, or plait matting, but there is no money for spindle, cotton or fiber. For where shall a person turn who has no money? Money where can he go? Wide, wide world, but as narrow as coin in your hand....Only can make the rope stretch, only money. (Nectar 27)

Poverty and Starvation:

Poverty and starvation stalk the threshold of the couple from the beginning of their married life. When Rukmani comes to live with Nathan, his house reflects her withered future, "Across the doorway a garland of mango leaves, symbol of happiness and good fortune, dry now and rattling in the breeze". (Nectar 4) Rukmani accepts her adversity calmly and reveals her stoic acceptance of the inevitable. In her relationship with her husband, she learns the values of mutual love, understanding, respect, acceptance and adjustment. Both Rukmani and her husband lead a simple and contented life with the barest necessities such as food, clothes and shelter. Nathan was a poor peasant in every sense of the word. He possessed a very small hut: "Two rooms, one a sort of storehouse for grains and the other for everything else. A third had been begun but was unfinished, the mud walls were not more than half a foot high". (Nectar 4) The wife of a neighbor had told her that Nathan had built the hut with his own hands. Nathan had his own problems but he made it a point to see that he was always good to his wife. He had great patience to put up with her, especially during those early days of their married life: "Not one crossword or impatient look and

praise for whatever small success I achieved.” (Nectar 8) He showed great concern for his wife when she was pregnant. Rukmani begets her first child and sheds, “tears of weakness and disappointment; for what woman wants a girl for her first-born?” (Nectar 14) She knows that irrational conventions and anachronistic traditions decry a female offspring. As a typical village farmer, Nathan also believes in the notion of the superiority of a male child. After the birth of Ira he was not happy as he should be, since Ira was a girl.

A Realistic Picture of Rural India:

Nectar in a Sieve is the primary Indian epic in English where an earnest endeavor has been made to extend a practical image of India in the entirety of its shades and subtleties – starvation, dry season, over the top downpour and battle for endurance, ousting, strange notion, craving and starvation. There is a sensible depiction of a town which is emblematic of provincial India. The caption of the novel "A Novel of Rural India", provides some insight into the writer's prevalent occupation in the novel and its internal substance. It portrays with striking clearness and sharp perception the financial states of rustic India. Especially, the horrendous debasement that human life carries is delineated with undeterred authenticity.

Kamala Markandaya spotlights the lose faith in regards to the ranchers everything being equal. They are edgy as a result of the fancies of regular catastrophes, the widespread appetite, savage machines and inhumane men. At the point when an Indian town is on the limit of industrialization, the laborer network endures both truly and intellectually. Nathan and Rukmani are agents of a great many sharecroppers in India and their life is a case of the devastation brought about by industrialization. The entire novel in this way uncovers the tale of an Indian town shaken to its foundations by the surge of modernization.

Kamala Markandaya builds up the way that poverty, hunger and starvation followed by endless sufferings can lead families to horrible debasement.

References;

- 1.Dodiya,Jaydipsinh k. and Surendran,K.V.(2000)(.Ed).Indianwomen perspectives.Sarup and Sons, New Delhi.
- 2.Markandaya, Kamala(1956).Nectar in aSieve.P. 27
- 3.New Lights on Indian women Novelists in English. Pp. 53, 65
- 4.Indian women writers: Critical perspectives, P.19