

**KAMALA MARKANDAYA’S SENSE OF INVOLVEMENT IN  
THE SOCIAL LIFE OF INDIA REFLECTED  
IN THE NOVEL “NECTAR IN A SIEVE”**

**Dr. K. Krishnasamy**  
Prof, HoD/English  
Erode Sengunthar Engineering College  
Thudupathi, Erode- 638011,  
Tamilnadu, India

Being an Indo-Anglican novelist, Kamala Markandaya, has earned an international reputation and recognition through her contribution of her first novel “Nectar in a Sieve”. Her novels, are, in general, social documents. Her novelistic documentation deals with rural poverty, hunger, tension between tradition and modernity, racial antagonism, problems of Indian immigrants and husband and wife relationship. In her novel, she projects the image of changing Indian traditional society in terms of the growth of the individual as well as national consciousness. It is observed through all her novels that she struggles to upgrade the status of women in the Indian society.

She focuses upon the feminine sensibility too. She portrays Rukmani as a heroine in her novel “Nectar in a Sieve”. It is true that the village of rural India became the focal point of fictional observation for the novelists of the pre-independence era. Never she fails to make a faithful and realistic attempt to project pictures of rural India. In rural India, the peasant, Nathan is a sufferer in many ways. He is tortured by both man and Nature. He is a tragic victim of the vagaries of Nature. Due to excessive rain and drought, Nathan and his family verge on the starvation.

The novelist not only pleads for a proper distribution of privileges, power and prosperity between men and women but also raises a passionate cry on behalf of plain humanity. Rukmani’s story of one rural family’s struggle against adversity and search for self-respect and autonomy mirrors the collective history of the rural women of India. Rukmani is not at all a woman defeated by circumstances. Her quest for autonomy is checked repeatedly by nature and society. However, she sustains it with her inner strength of forbearance and resignation which supports her all along to face any adverse circumstances. She feels sad over person’s death. Though she is tortured and tormented by her intense feelings, she suffers in silence.

Rukmani, being a staunch moral supporter, extends possible help to Nathan and consoles him. Nathan who is not able to repay the loan to the zamindar, is evicted from the land by the zamindar. Eviction from the land seems to be the greatest tragedy for a peasant. Both Nathan and Rukmani became homeless. Thus in rural India, a peasant becomes victimized to man and Nature. Being a traditional woman, she is totally devoted to her husband. She stands by him in weal and woe. The novel is divided into two parts: the first part depicts Rukmani’s life as the wife of a poor farmer and second deals with the troubled wanderings of the aged couple in search of their son, their hardships and their final disillusionment.

Rukmani, the main protagonist of the novel grows from a girl into an old woman. She meets with a gamut of experiences. She emerges dynamic and positive. She sustains her

husband, her daughter and even herself in times of adversity and progressively attains a clarity of perception and a lucidity of soul. During feminine, she tries to console herself with thoughts such”

“ Well, we are in God’s hands. He will not fail us”

In the evening of her life, leaving her eventful past behind, she sets out with Nathan on her voyage. She undergoes extreme mental conflict but she dares to face life but never fails to share her love and support to Nathan. After all, her hopes are frustrated, Nathan and Rukmani work hard and strain themselves to collect the money so that they could go back to their village. This claims life of Nathan .This is the final shattering blow to Rukmani. She says “If I grieve.....it isnot for you but for myself beloved for how shall I endure to live without you, who are my love and life?”

The novelist’s sense of involvement is truly reflected in the comment of R.S.Sharma “Kamala Markandaya’s sense of involvement “ in the social life of India, her keen observation, her involvement in the social life of India combined with critical acumen and the feminine sensibility brought her international fame with the very first novel”

### Reference

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