

**A Thematic Study of Select Novels of Kamala Markandaya's
Nectar in a Sieve and A Handful of Rice**

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DECLARATION

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**A Thematic Study of Select Novels of Kamala Markandaya’s Nectar in a Sieve and A Handful of Rice**” submitted by me for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A) is the record of work carried out by **R. HARINI** during the period from **DECEMBER 2020- MAY 2021** under the guidance of **K. USHA SAVITHRI**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore and has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship, Titles in the University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

Signature of the Candidate

CERTIFICATE

CERTIFICATE FROM THE SUPERVISOR

I certify that the dissertation entitled “**A Thematic Study of Select Novels of Kamala Markandaya’s Nectar in a Sieve and A Handful of Rice**” submitted for the degree of **Master of Arts (M. A) in English** by **R. HARINI** is the record of research work carried out by her during the period from **December 2020- May 2021** under my guidance **K. Usha Savithri** and supervision and that this work has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship, Titles in the University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

**Signature of the
Head of the Department**

**Signature of the
Supervisor with Designation**

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CHAPTER-1

Introduction

Chapter - I

Introduction

Literature is also defined as the mirror of life which helps the reader to understand the important moral and political issues. It provides a solution to the problem faced by people in their day-to-day life. Thus, it becomes a mode of expression of feelings. It modifies and brings new dimensions to the life of the readers. It also helps to expand the terms and provides wide knowledge on current world issues and culture, history of the past, and hope for the future. It improves personal recollection and self-discipline of the individual. All these special elements make literature an unavoidable part of learning.

It is a critical documentation of what men have seen in life, what they have skilled of it, what they have thought and felt. Literature reflects human nature and a way they can learn and related to others. They can fully involve us into a different mindset and figure out how others think and feel. This is significant within today's society are becoming increasingly disconnected from human interaction through iPhones, Face time, and social media.

It is one of the fine arts that employ language as the same medium of expression. The word literature commonly carries the language of criticism and everyday contact. It is a critical record of what men have seen in life, what they have skilled of it, what they have thought and felt. It is classified as fiction, non-fiction, prose, and poetry. It can also be classified as a novel, short story, and drama. It is thus a fundamental expression of life through the medium of language and it grows directly out of life. It truthfully expresses the thoughts and emotions of the writer. According to Mathew Arnold, literature is, "an analysis of life". There are many types of literature. Some of them are British literature, American literature, Indian literature, African

literature, Bangladeshi literature, and Canadian literature, etc. “A great age of literature is perhaps always a great age of translations” (Ezra Pound, 19).

It is listed according to whether it is fiction or non-fiction, and whether it is poetry or prose. It can be further according to major forms such as the novel, short story, or drama; and works are often categorized according to historical periods or the loyalty to certain artistic features or potential genre. What really knocks me out is a book that, when you are all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen much, though. (J.D. Salinger, 16)

It emerges from all parts of the world. It takes the form of prose when it is written on a general topic with facts. It becomes poetry when a rhythm is added to it and becomes a drama or a novel when it is spiced with imaginary incidents and characters.

Indian English Literature has a practically recent history, being only one and a half centuries old. In its early stages, Indian English Literature was prepared by the Western novel. Early Indian writers used English completely by Indian words to convey a knowledge that was essentially Indian. The first book written by an Indian in English was *Travels of Dean Mohamed* (1794) a travel narrative by Sake Dean Mohamed published in England

Once you allow yourself to identify with the people in a story, then you might begin to see yourself in that story even if on the surface it's far removed from your situation. This is what I try to tell my students: this is no great thing that literature can do- it can make us identify with situations and people far away. If it does that, it's a miracle. (Chinua Achebe, 21).

The 'novel' as a literary phenomenon is new to India in 1858. Epics, lyrics, dramas, short stories, and fables have their proper ancestries, going back by several centuries, but it is only

during a period of little more than a century that the novel has occurred and taken source in India. Novels are being published in a dozen Indian languages, and also in English; and the reciprocal influence between the novel in English and the novel in the regional languages has been rather more personal and purposive than such influence in the fields of poetry or drama. Modern Indian writings in English have progressive literature with quality and vividness. Truly, it represented the culture, history, and all the variants necessary for the enrichment of the literature worldwide poetry or drama.

Modern Indian writings in English have enlightened literature with quality and vividness. Truly, it acts for the culture, history, and all the variants necessary for the enrichment of the literature worldwide. India is the third-largest creator of novels after the USA and UK. Although the writings profoundly dealt with regionalism, they crossed the natural boundaries with universal themes. India is a land of diversity with so many languages, religions, races, and cultural. This range gave the writers massive liberty to deal with various themes. These modern Indian writers also dealt with historical, cultural, and philosophical and much more found their themes around sociological, diasporic elements, feminine subjects, science technologies, explorative writings, and much more. India has notably contributed to the overall world literature.

Fantasy is escapist, and that is its glory. If a soldier is imprisoned by the enemy, don't we consider it his duty to escape?.. if we value the freedom of mind and soul, if we are partisans of liberty, then it's our plain duty to escape, and take as many people with as we can(J.R.R. Tolkien, 204).

This role of India has been chiefly through the Indian writing in English, novelists being in the forefront in this respect. Several novelists on the contemporary scene have given

expression to their creative urge in no other language than English and have brought credit to the Indian English fiction as a distinctive force in the alien medium has seldom happened in human history, and its speaks of the prolific quality of the Indian mind to assimilate the newly approach situations and the complex dilemmas of the modern world. The new English fiction exhibits confidence in tracking new themes and experiments with new techniques and approaches to handle these themes. The novelists come to their task without preconceived notions of what constitutes literary content. This encourages them to focus on a vast and inclusive canvas and to invest their themes with epic dimensions.

Literature is at once the cause and the effect of social progress. It deepens our natural sensibilities, and strengthens by exercise our intellectual capacities. It stores up the accumulated experience of the race, connecting past and present into a conscious unity; and with this store it feeds successive generations, to be fed in turn by them. (George Henry Lewes, 2).

As far as Indian is disturbed, it has perhaps been easier for these modern novelists to reflect on the new challenges and changes because of the simple fact that its vehicle itself is a globalized language. Again, the writers of the new fiction have mostly been a part of the Indian diaspora. Living in the west, and using English almost like a mother tongue, they have been thoroughly exposed to significant modern western literary movements like post-modernism, and various narrative techniques like magic realism. This has enabled them to give a new orientation to fiction. At the same time, the best of them maintain to have strong roots in India, so that they remain true to the kindred points of India and the west. Significantly, the spirit of the age is more pervasively and effectively reflected in modern fiction than in other forms like poetry and drama. The novel, by its very nature, is better equipped to deal with society's reality, whatever liberties it

may take in projecting it. It is hardly surprising therefore the most substantial contribution of the current period comes from the new generation fiction. We are men without ambition, and all we want is to be alone, in peace so that we can try and be happy. So few people will understand this simplicity (Upamanyu Chatterjee)

Beginning from the Sangam period till the present day, women's writings have contributed much to the growth of literature and have presented issues highlighting a women's world. However, the success of women's writings is highly acclaimed that it has won international recognition. Indian women's fiction is associated with multiple issues relating to self and society. In a socio-cultural setting women suffer internally, hence much of women's writing is primarily an analysis of social justice and equality in a patriarchal society. Today fiction by women writers contributes a major segment of contemporary Indian writing in English. Modern women's fiction is facing to master narratives. It focuses on "differences that make a difference" to women in leading masculine culture.

It is also considerable that women writers have not merely been confined to the private realm but have moved further than it. It provides imminent, a wealth of understanding, reservoirs of meaning, and the basis of discussion. The world is seen in a new dimension through the eyes of women fiction writers.

The argument between the east and the west, the strange love-hate relationships, cultural alienation, and the loss of identity faced by the exile and immigrants are some of the aspects accessible with deep insight by writers like Kamala Markandeya, Ruth P.Jhavbala, Anita Desai, and Nayantara Saghil. The Indian women novelist like Bharati Mukherjee, Gauri Deshpande, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri these authors used realism as the main theme of their novels.

A substance of great pride that Indian women's fiction has come into its own and is accepted as literature with a matter. Over the past few decades, women have provided significantly to life and literature by questioning and exploring their own lives and that of other women. Today Indian women's fiction is dealing with multiple controversy concerning self and society. An Indian woman novelist is proceeding to leaps and bounds. However, the success of women's writings is highly acclaimed that it has won international recognitions breaking the barriers of Gender, Race, and Region.

The image of women in fiction has changed during the last four decades. Women writers have encouraged from the traditional picture of continuing, self-sacrificing women towards female characters searching for individuality, no longer characterized in terms of their sufferer status rather they emphasize themselves and challenge marriage and motherhood. They need to look at women's writing, not as a monolithic whole dealing with the question of self and identity. Much of Indian women's writing in English is focusing on the middle-class woman and her succeeding roles in a vertically mobile society.

These roles are well within the parameters of a family. Many Indian women novelists have investigate female bias to establish an identity that is not imposed by a patriarchal society. Ruth Praver Jhabvala's first novel *To Whom She Will* (1995) and her later *Heat and Dust* (1975) which was awarded the Booker Prize, and Kamala Markandaya's *Two Virgins* (1973) are good examples. Sex is indirect in these novels but depicted more clearly in *Socialite Evenings* (1989) by Shobha De, in which she describes the exotic sex lives of the high society in Mumbai.

In recent times Indian English literature has fascinated worldwide interest, both in India and abroad. It has now been commonly accepted as part of world literature in English. Fiction,

being the most powerful form of expression today, has not only acquired a prestigious position in Indian literature but is independently recognized as Indian English Fiction.

According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, “Indo-Anglican fiction, the last to be born and to grow up among various branches of Indian fiction” and gained momentum after the nineteen-sixties. The path to establishing the genre as an independent body saw two major impediments “first, it endeavors to create literature in a language which in most cases has been acquired rather than spoken from birth: second, it seeks to establish a distinct literature in a language in which great literature already exists.” (However, the rich literary harvest produced by the Big Three (Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, and M.R. Anand) superior Indian English Fiction to a new height. The offerings discover by some other highly commended novelists along with these three masters confidently grounded the genre in world literature. Apart from the present male novelists, women’s writing too occupies a unique place in enriching this genre.

In Indian background, the first woman novelist of this genre was Toru Dutt who wrote both in English and French. Some of the early women novelists include Raj Lakshmi Debi. In recent years we have a sequence of novelists who made their mark in this field; they include Rama Mehta, Dina Mehta, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, and Namita Gokhale.

The major themes explored by these women novelists include gender issues, female oppression, the concept of being ‘other’ in a patriarchal society, the theme of growing up from childhood to womanhood, liberation through a self quest, sexual autonomy, human relationships, realism, magic realism, fantasy, the image of ‘new woman, Indian culture, urbanization, Indianness, migration, east-west confrontation, a clash between tradition and modernity, the struggle for independence and division.

Indian women novelists in English have developed a position for themselves which becomes clear from the famous critics award they have received in recent times. They were given with the prestigious award Booker Prize, Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (Eurasian section), and the esteemed Sahitya Academy Award which unquestionably establishes that women novelists are no longer 'others' in Indian English literary situation. Although the recognition and approval that Indian English fiction has received in recent years have suddenly attracted a lot of attention from the critics and readers in India and abroad. But what remains evident is that the early writers of Indian English Fiction have been read and analyzed from various points of view, however, the present-day novelists and especially Indian Women Novelists despite the onus of the work produced by them have yet to be analyzed. "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but triumph of principles" (Ralph Waldo Emerson).

A few of them like Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya are exceptions, whose works have been analyzed and explored from various aspects but several recent novelists have produced works that remain deprived of thorough analysis. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word contemporary means "belonging to the same age, living or occurring in the same period, existing period the present time, in compliance to modern or current ideas in style, fashion, design etc. Having about the same age as one another".

Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004) was an Indian novelist and Journalist. She has been called one of the most significant Indian novelists writing in English. A Novelist works worry the struggle of contemporary Indians with inconsistent Eastern and Western values.

Markandaya's "*Nectar in a Sieve*" (1954) focus is on the poverty and suffering of rural life. Along with the simple inhabitants of the village, she depicts its simple beauty being bulldozed by the establishment of a tannery. On one hand, the novel is a passionate cry against social injustice on the other, it is critical of technical progress and materialism. In *Coffer Dams* (1969), Markandaya tries to combine the traditional Indian values with growing materialism. In this novel, British Engineers set out to build a dam across a river in South India. Like the multi-corporation of *Pleasure City* (1982), there are British technicians, Indian Engineers, and the local tribals. The tribal settlement with its world of nature is in direct clash with the world of technology.

Kamala Markandaya has also themes of the man-woman relationships through her various novels. She symbolizes the dominating forces of the British. Her selfish nature proves overpowering for Valmiki. She exploits his talent, molds him into a man, an artist, and a lover, but takes away his Independence in the process. Valmiki, who stands for the spiritual strength of India, wrests himself free from Caroline's influence and comes back to India.

Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice* is an emotive novel about the plight of poor, desolate life. A novel about the struggle for survival, it was published in 1966. The protagonist finds life a struggle everywhere. Everything has needs is a handful of rice, but the struggle to gain it is not less difficulty for a poor. The protagonist was very poor and hunger in and around an Indian village at the time when the novel was written.

Raja Rao (1938-1998) has produced four novels and a collection of short stories to date. *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), *Comrade Kirrilov* (1976), and *The Cow of the Barricades* (1947- short story collection). *Kanthapura* (1938) is the story of a South Indian town that is artificial by the Civil Disobedience

Movement. What is interesting about the book; however, is the narrative technique used by Raja Rao. The story is told through the voice of the old woman native of the village who uses the arrangement of the traditional folk epic, the Puranas. The books combine the spirit of the traditional religious faith of the village with that of the Nationalist Movement.

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) develops his career with the novel *Untouchable*. (1935). It was a distinctive work because the gathering of Indian works having the highborn and the private as the central protagonist was broken down. The hero, Bakha is a low caste sweeper boy and the novel is an account of the experiences that he undergoes in one day and as they impose on his consciousness. The structure of the novel draws broadly from James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) in the use of stream-of-consciousness method. Apart from this Western power (he was a member of the famous Bloomsbury group of writers in London too) another important quarter, which affected his writing, was the idea of socialistic society as offered by Mahatama Gandhi. The solution to Indian unfairness that was given in *Untouchable* was following Gandhiji's idea of dignity for the low-born. Anand other novels, *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) are working with a reformative agenda.

Unlike the showy, Anand with Western influence was the modest and ordinary person. R.K. Narayan whose first book was *Swami and Friends* (1935) created the invented region of Malgudi a small South Indian town "a blend of oriental and pre-1914." *The Dark Room* (1938) is the story of Savitri married to a heartless husband Ramani. *The Guide* (1958) was one of his most valued works. It communicate the story of Raju the guide and his love for Rosie whom he first meets as a client's wife.

Khushwant Singh (1915-2014) made his offensive into writing he immerses in Journalism and law. His two novels: *Train to Pakistan* (1956) Published as *Manomajra and I*

Shall not Hear the Nightingale (1959) represents the human tragedy behind the division of India in 1947. He is also recognized as a learned Sikh historian.

Anita Desai (1963-) is the primary Indian novelist of the Post- Independence era. She is undeniably one of the celebrated Indian - English fiction writers. Anita Desai holds a unique place among the modern women novelist of India. She was born of Bengali father D.N.Mazumdar, a businessman and German mother Toni Nime, on 24th June 1937, in Missouri. She has published ten novels and other literary works of enormous value. She is interested in the subconscious life of her characters. '*Cry, the Peacock*' (1963), the first novel of Anita Desai is concerned with the protagonist Maya's psychological problems. In her novel '*Where Shall We Go This Summer?*' (1975) Anita Desai propagates the reality of a women's plight and her agony to be a part of society with her own identity. Self-revelation is the main thrust of the novel '*Where Shall We Go This Summer?*' (1975). The entire story deals with psychological and emotional struggle an inner fury which makes us think about the various problems of the Indian women in society and life.

After 1980 Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1927-2013) has written four novels which include In Search of *Love and Beauty* (1981), *Three Continents* (1987), *Poets and Dancer* (1991), and *Shreds of Harmony* (1995). But according to the well-known critic M.K.Naik, "Jhabvala is seen to have no new insight to offer now, comparable to her acute and sensitive presentation of middle-class life in India in her earlier works". Apart from this statement, we find little critical appreciation about her later works.

Arundhati Roy (1961-) is the author of novel, *The God of Small Things*, (1997) which received the prominent Booker Prize in 1997. Arundhati Roy's maiden novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997) claimed vast critical acclaim from readers and critics throughout the world. The

novel received praise for various aspects like the shifting of past and present with extraordinary finesse, her flair for description, and its narrative style which includes magic, mystery, and sadness. The novel narrates the tragic story of Velutha, the central character, whose life is eventually destroyed by the combined forces of faith, tradition, and society. Arundhati Roy uses a narrative that is satiric in tone and whips her anger on the rigid age-old caste system which dominates our society.

From 1864 to 1920 witnessed sparse publications like Krupabai Satthinandhan (1862-1894) *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* in (1894), Sarath Kumar Ghosh's *The Prince of Destiny* in (1909), S.N. Mitra's *Hindupore, A Peep behind the Indian Unrest: An Anglo-Indian Romance* in (1909), *Bal Krishna's The Love of Kusuma, An Eastern Love Story* in (1910), and T. Ramakrishnan's *The Dive for Death: an Indian Romance* in (1911).

Esther David (1945-) came to the Jewish author and stay in Ahmedabad. She presently works for the development of art in poor areas of Gujarat. She received the Sahitya Academy Award for her novel, *The Man with Enormous Wings* in the year 2010. Her award-winning novel is based on the community which rocked the city of Ahmedabad in 2002. Her narrative creates the false impression of Mahatma Gandhi, who is shown mournful over the violent bloodshed that charred the peaceful city of Ahmedabad. With several scenes, the author successfully describes the rich heritage and culture of Ahmedabad. It also reveals the sheer terror and bloodshed on the other hand that changed the face of this peaceful city forever. Esther David's comprise novels like, *The Book of Esther* (2003), which is autobiographical, *By the Sabarmati* (2001), and *The Walled City* (1997).

Manju Kapur (1948-) is an Indian novelist and professor. Her first novel, *Difficult Daughters* (1998) with the divider issue in the background, narrates the story of Virmati, her

interpersonal relationships, her search for control over her own life. Her first novel won the 1999 commonwealth writer's prize. Manju Kapur in her later novels, *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), and *Custody* (2011) projects strong self-confident female protagonists who raise female concerns and show courage to capture their destiny.

Githa Hariharan (1954 -) is one of the international novelists of India. She received individual credit by winning the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1992 for the Best First Novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night*. The magnitude of versatility in the theme is visible in her immense output. Her first novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) is based on the leading role Devi's progress towards independence and search for identity through her relations. Devi becomes the victim of traditional customs while trying to adjust herself to her husband but the marriage fails and Devi is left to decide about her life. She flees with a musician but that too proves futile. She finally returns to her mother and take care of the mother-daughter relationship. Her novel, *When Dreams Travel* is based on the theme of the search for identity. Her other novels *In Times of Siege* (2003), *The Art of Dying* (1993), *The Ghost of Vasu Master* (1994), *A Southern Harvest*, and *Fugitive Histories*.

K. R. Usha is a writer and an editor who lives in Bangalore. Her novel, *Monkey Man* (2010) was short by Man Asian Literary Prize for the year 2010. Her collection of work comprises *Monkey Man* (2010), *A Girl and a River* (2007), *The Chosen* (2003), and *Sojourn* (1998). Her novel, *Monkey Man* (2010) expresses the lives of the fastest-growing international IT city, Bangalore. Through her deep understanding of human nature, she examine deep into the lives of her characters and bring out their destiny with the city. She explores how the lives of the citizens change along with the fast changes and development of this modest city. The theme of her novel, *A Girl and A River* focuses again on altering relations, moving between past and the

present in search of family history through a couple of books and letters. Her novel, *The Chosen* (2003) and *Sojourn* (1998) is based on the theme of change.

Anita Nair (1966-) is another term amongst the emerging modern women novelists. She has proved her potential by her constant work. She has five published novels to her credit and the overview of her work consists of an understanding of men and women's psyche as well as her strong and in-depth knowledge of mythology which she uses in her novels with expertise. Her novel, *Mistress* (2005) deep into the closed area of Kathakali Dancers and gives a sensitive portrayal of their lives both from outside as well as inside. Her novel, *Ladies Coupe* (2001) is a strong supporter of feministic concerns where she presents Ahkila, the protagonist in search of her identity. Her latest novel, *Lessons in Forgetting* (2010) is a novel of trust and forgiveness, of a new life after disaster, thereby giving a second chance to bring back of her life and move ahead.

Kaveri Nambisan is a surgeon by profession and she fined her novels enriched by her medical experience. She has published six novels, in which her medical experience is importantly visible. Her novel, *The Hills of Angheri* (2005) is an autobiographical touch. Nalli, the protagonist, pursue to become a doctor and dreams of building a hospital in her village. But as the story develops Nalli's emotional dream remains her life becomes a tale of little satisfaction as against much dissatisfaction. Her other important novels comprise *The Story That Must Not be Told* (2010), *The Truth about Bharat* (1991), *The Scent of Pepper* (1996), *Mango-coloured Fish*, and *On Wings of Butterflies* (1998)

Namita Gokhale (1956 -) is a famous well know person in Indian English Fiction. She has involved reader as well as critic's interest through her novels like, *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1984), *Gods, Graves, and Grandmother* (1994), *The Book of Shadows* (1999), and *The*

Mahabharata (2009) which has explored numerous themes from status of women to the reinterpretation of age-old mythology. In her first novel, *Paro: Dreams of Passion* projects and gives voice to a woman's vision and her idea of independence. Her novel, *Gods, Graves, and Grandmother* (1994) delivered the hypocrisy that is practiced in our society in the name of ethics, where women are forced to follow immoral ways and are cheated by their male counterparts. *The Book of Shadows* (1999) novel based on the theme of the supernatural and in *The Mahabharata* (2009) she has interlink the real-life characters with age-old mythological characters to create new meaning.

Nina Sibal (1948-2000) is a civil servant and she married to India's top lawyer and cabinet minister Kapil Sibal. She has delivered her writing skill through her three published novels. Her first novel, *Yatra* (1987) narrates the emotional story of a woman's journey towards self-realization. Her other novels, *The Secret of Gujjar Mall and The Dogs of Justice* (1998) are based on the gender and individuality, faced by the Kashmir Valley during its political disruption. Shobha De is the most popular women novelists. As quoted by the famous critic M. K. Naik in his book *Indian English Fiction: A Critical Study*, "she is focused on writing, entertainments' rather than novels proper". She is the creator of best-sellers like *Starry Nights* (1991), *Sisters* (1992), *Sultry Days* (1994), *Small Betrayals* (1995), *Second Thoughts* (1996), and *Surviving Men* (1998), *Spouse: The Truth about Marriage and Strange Obsession* which are sagas of high society, its cocktail circles with low ethics.

Shashi Deshpande (1938 -) novel deals with a realistic and positive description of the Indian middle-class educated women. Deshpande effectively presents these women as they are engaged in the complex and hard social and psychological problem of major an authentic self. Deshpande's novels remind us of the reality that habitually India has a pessimist society and

culture. Her first novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980) is a feminine novel where Saru, the protagonist is discriminated against by her mother who values her son Dhruva above her daughter. She is the winner of the Sahitya Academy Award, for her novel '*That Long Silence*' (1990). The mission for genuine selfhood on the part of the protagonist finds an artistic expression through the heroine's rebellion against the patriarchal core of society.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1994) was the greatest Bengali novelist. *Rajmohan Wife's* (1864) first Indian English novel appeared in 1864. This novel was set in a Bengal village. Through a simple household story, it highlighted the central trouble: that of the virtue of rejection over self-love. Salman Rushdie referring to the same sense of disturbs and discomfort of the earliest users of the English language calls this first novel written by an Indian in English a 'dud'. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) who went on to complete a high figure as a writer produced other novels in his mother tongue, Bengali, of which *Anandmatha* (1882) and *Durgeshnandini* (1890) deserve mention.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw a slow growth of the novel form English in India. Romesh Chandra Dutt (1848-1909) was a vital figure in writing at that time. He occupied Government posts before retiring as the Diwan of the Royal Baroda State. He wrote six novels in Bengali, out of two he translated into English: *The Lake of Palms* (1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra* (1909). Both these novels were published in London and were address as writings with dense plots and dramatic characterization. Some other writers of this era include T. Ramakrishna wrote *Dive for Death* and Swarna Ghoshal wrote *The Fatal Garland* (1910).

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was an Indian poet writer, playwright, and composer. His novels are *The Home and the World* (1916), *The Wreck* (1921), and *Gora* (1923) have all

been change from Bengali to English. The following years saw many a stories reach success in the field of Indian Writing in English.

William Walsh, the English critic chosen out three of the most famous writers of the literary Circuit at that time. Mulk Raj Anand (1905), R.K.Narayan (1906-2000), and Raja Rao three became the trinity of Indian writing in English. Speaking of The Big Three, Walsh said:

It is these three writers who defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate. They established its belief; they sketched its main themes, free the first models of its characters, and elaborated its particular logic. Each of them used an easy, natural idiom that was unaffected by the opacity of a British inheritance. Their language has been free of the dim taste of Britain and transferred to a wholly new setting of brutal heat and brilliant light.

However, the three being early representatives of the use of the English language in describing an Indian experience a struggle characterized their attempts. The continued structure of the novel form too added to the difficult nature of instead of Indian life in English. The novel being an essentially Western form forced certain limits and also modified the Indian experience.

In the novel *Nectar in a Sieve* the protagonist Rukmani suffered by repetitive disasters that occur in the family, Rukmani chooses to view suffering as predictable and unremarkable; rather than trying to avoid calamity, she focuses on shepherding her family through it.

A Handful of Rice the protagonist Ravi agonizes with poverty and hunger in apathetic and ruthless society. Due to their poverty and hunger the character Ravi mentally affected by depression.

Depression is a mood disorder which prevents individuals from leading a normal life, at work socially or within their family. Seligman (1973) referred to depression as the 'common cold' of psychiatry because of its frequency of diagnosis.

Behaviourism emphasizes the importance of the environment in shaping behavior. The focus is on observable behavior and the conditions through which individuals' learn behavior, namely classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning theory. Therefore depression is the result of a person's interaction with their environment. It is a mood or emotional state that is marked by feelings of low self-worth or guilt and a reduced ability to enjoy life. A person who is depressed usually experiences several of the following symptoms: feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or pessimism; lowered self-esteem and sharp self-depreciation; a decrease or loss of ability to take happiness in ordinary activities; reduced energy and vitality; slowness of thought or action; loss of appetite; and disturbed sleep or insomnia.

Nectar in a Sieve (1954) portrays the sad picture of life in India for many people. It's the story of a deprived family a fourth daughter who, because she has no dowry , cannot marry well but must settle for marriage to a landless occupant farmer who brings her home to a sludge shed he built himself. Rukmani, her husband Nathan is "poor in everything but in love and care for me, his wife, whom he took at the age of twelve." Rukmani narrates the story in first person, telling of the birth of her daughter, the long wait during which the couple think they will have no more children, and then the birth of her five sons. The village where the family lives is on the edge of poverty and starvation, a bad year with too much rain or too little rain will push Rukmani's family over the edge. Change and new economic opportunities come to the village, however, these new ideas and possibilities are full of danger too, for peasants who have nothing in reverse and are unable or unwilling to move with the times. At last Rukmani came back to the village and accompanied with their sons.

In *A Handful of Rice* the protagonist of the novel, Ravi, the child of a laborer, moves from a foundation tormented by neediness and craving to a metropolitan, materialistic milieu in

the expectation of superior patience. Ravi has transformed his lifestyle. The picture of a joint family with its many psychological stresses and strains is nearly drawn. *A Handful of Rice* begins and ends with the hero's to secure food with the little money he has, Ravi drinks in order to forget his sorrow.

Review of Literature:

The article "Nectar in a Sieve: A thematic study" by M.R. Raval is based on the desperate of the vagaries of natural calamities, the resultant constant hunger, ruthless machines and heartless men. The peasant community suffers both physically and mentally because of industrialization in the village. Their life is an example of the havoc caused by industrialization. This article also shows the different themes dealt by the author related to the suffering people ideas.

The article "Social realism in kamala Markandaya's Novel *A Handful of Rice*" by S. Nabiya Banu is represent by the novel are poverty and hunger, exodus from the village to the city and the destruction of artisan by the industrialization. The novel depicts the real Indian life and is universal in appeal. The problems, thoughts and hopes are quite similar to that of the common man of the present generation. This article also reveals the various themes of isolation.

The intension of the present work is to understanding the purpose of struggle between traditional and Indian values of western modernity. The researcher deals with two novels by Kamala Markandaya. Both characters of the novels are suffering from poverty hunger and alienation. Due to this suffering, the characters thought will lead to mischief. . At the end of the novel the author justify the positive words hope and honesty. This dilemma, including the

tension between rationalism, faith, materialism and spirituality, urban and rural ways of life, has become a part of India's identity over the last several decades.

The researcher of this thesis has classified into four chapters. The First chapter analyses the understanding of literature and how it works in life and also discussed about the various Indian authors and their works. Indian authors are very unique to reveal the fact of the life. So people can understand their life through the authors. The Second chapter discussed with the struggle between life and death for the poor in an unjust society, but the novels magnificent struggle is between the forces of good and evil in a human life, characterized by generosity and greed, compassion and selfishness, and joy and sorrow. The Third chapter shows that a man lives as long as his roots are pure and rootlessness or alienation becomes the cause of his suffering. The Final chapter represents the solution of the characters and shows the positive vibes at the novel. At the end of the novel with the fine word "Honest". So, the researcher has plan to prove the theme of the novel has been focus on humans will do everything in their power to survive.

CHAPTER-II

Solitude of Woman in the Novel Nectar in a Sieve

Chapter - II

Solitude of Woman in the Novel *Nectar in a Sieve*

Nectar in a sieve is the first novel by Kamala Markandaya. It was published in the year 1954. This novel based on the poor peasants. It is a semi autobiographical novel. A Novel set in India during a period of strong urban development. The idea of hope is centralized to this novel.

The title of the novel '*Nectar in a Sieve*' 1954 is taken from the poem 'Work without Hope' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Kamala Markandaya utilizes the lines of Coleridge as an epigraph: "Work without hope draws Nectar in a Sieve and hope without an object cannot live."

These lines deal with the main idea or theme of this novel. Indian cultivator cultivates the rice field, standing and sweating in the burning rays of the sun. Rice for him is like nectar. It cannot be held back in a sieve; rice slips down the fingers of poor farmers and vanishes in the pockets of the landlords and money Landers. It is a tale of rural life in south India. Hard and difficulties lived by the tenant farmers of India are represented through the simple peasant, Nathan, and his family.

The title is an attractive way to talk about the inevitable draining of life in the face of suffering and death. The events of the novel parallel this time quite closely. The title gives out the beauty and the sadness of life next to each other and raises the upper hand, the nectar in life, or the sieve of devastation.

The novel has often been compared with Pearl Buck's "*The good earth*" 1931. The novel which has a close relationship in K.S Venkataramani's Murugan "*The Tiller*" 1927 takes us to the heart of a south Indian village, Rukmani who is also the narrator of the story, and several

other depressed characters like Nathan, Ira, Kennington, Ammu. The novel shows the peasants, their activities, their problems and anxieties, hopes and expectations. The emphasis is on rural ethos and rural values system. Industry and modern technology invade the village in the shape of a tannery which ultimately changes its complexion and causes irreparable damage to the villagers who depended on the land made available to them by their landlords. Panic, hunger, and misery are the characteristic feelings that lead the village, and its people. As Rukmani comments hope and fear are double forces that pulled the people first in one direction and then in another.

Kamala Markandaya *Nectar in a Sieve* deals with full of suffering. Many people suffer throughout the novel. The suffering mainly focuses on the character Rukmani. She has faced her children starve through poverty and have her family slowly break apart. Rukmani even held her husband as he died, suffering through massive amounts of grief and sorrow. Kenny and Rukmani discuss that suffering and decide whether or not it can be stopped, but Rukmani decides that nothing can be done in the end and accepts that pain and tenderness will come to anyone. These characters question whether there's any purpose in being angry about the injustice of suffering is there's nothing they can do about it. Suffering brings sacred refining, but it also inspires people to hope that there is something beyond suffering.

Usually, suffering inspires empathy and sympathy from others. In this state, though, everyone is suffering, and it seems no one has anything to share or give each other. Ruku deals with this emotional situation in a rather matter-of-fact way by denying help to her friend. It might seem a little harsh to us, but in distracted times, everyone's appealing much on his own. It's a bit jarring, and it makes us think that when Ruku's family falls on tough times, no one will be there to help them. Still, Ruku is supposed to be treated that way, so maybe it's not a big deal

when she treats others that way. "At least it stood until the worst was over," said Kali to me, "and by God's grace we were all spared." (23)

She looked worn out; in the many years, I have known her I had never seen her so depressed. She comes to ask for some palm leaves to cover the new hut, her husband was building; but I could only point out to the blackened tree, it accepts and hanging by a few fibers from the dry up stump. "We must cover our roof before the night," I said. "The rains may come again. We need rice too." (12)

In this novel suffering is bigger than the small failures of crops and harvests. Nathan's whole life is protected in the land. When his sons cruelly point out that they won't work on the land because the land will not be theirs, they aren't just getting out of fieldwork. They're crushing their father's spirit. Suffering doesn't only come from droughts and monsoons. Sometimes the closest people hurt you the most.

Nathan said not a word. There was a dense look about him which spoke of the deep hurt and he had abide more than any words could have done. He had always wanted to own land, through the years there had been the hope, growing unclear with each year, each child, that one day he would be able to call small portions of land his own. "Now yet his sons knew it would never be." (27)

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, father and sons are hurt in different ways. Ruku doesn't grab any of it, perhaps because it is the gently anxious suffering of men who cannot provide for their families. Because this burden does not go to Ruku, she cannot understand this problem. Nathan feels helpless because he cannot provide for his family. Still, the departure of his sons only adds

to his suffering and his injured pride. He must now go at it alone, and they have robbed him of both physical help and self-esteem.

"Enough!" he shouted. "More than enough has been said. Our children must act as they choose to, not for our benefit. Is it not enough that they suffer? "The veins on his forehead were bulging. I had never seen him so angry before. Kali went away. Then the men went too, father and sons, leaving me alone who had no understanding." (30)

It seems that misery only exists in the world because people who are not agony can close their eyes to it. It would be difficult to eat dinner while watching one of those "Save the Children" commercials, but it is appealing easy to change the channel. Sivaji the Collector is essentially the means for the Zamindar not to have to see the suffering he causes others.

"That is why he and his kind are employed," Nathan said bitterly. "To protect overlord such from unpleasant tasks. Now the landlord can wring from us his money and care not for the misery he evokes, for indeed it would be difficult for any man to see another starve and his wife and children as well; or to enjoy the profits born of such travail." (23)

Kamala Markandaya in *Nectar in a Sieve* describes the theme of the rural folk being badly affected by the fickle behavior of Nature and by the invasion of machines on the tranquillity of the village. According to Uma Parameswaran : *Nectar in a Sieve* is the story of a faceless peasant who stands silhouetted in the unending twilight of Indian agrarian bankruptcy.

The novel is a realistic chronicle of the sufferings of peasants. In the novel, Nathan's family is worried by poverty, hunger, deprivation, and starvation created not only by

socioeconomic factors but also by the vagaries of nature. Nathan is "A tenant farmer who was poor in everything but loves and cares for... his wife."(21)

Nathan and Rukmani feed themselves and their children. Somehow with the little grains, they grow. As nature does not favor the peasants and plays disaster with their lives, they have to face famine at one time and drought at another and they have no grains. They have to satisfy themselves with water only. Ira, Rukmani's daughter, is forced into prostitution, as she is unable to see her baby brother Kuti starving. Shyamala Venkateswaran comments: "Poverty of the villagers, along with their ignorance of modern agricultural techniques, is stressed"(14)

Nathan and Rukmani have to survive not only natural calamities but also the cause of progress the tannery. The tannery has shattered the calm and quiet rural life. It is swallowing up land month by month for new buildings. Nathan and his family are also ejected from the land they have cultivated for thirty years. Hunger becomes their permanent companion. Rukmani's son Raja, driven by the despair of hunger goes to steal from the tannery and gets killed by the watchmen.

Nathan and Rukmani face a lot of hardship and struggles when they are left with no land in the village, they leave for the city in the hope of meeting their son, who had left the village a long time ago to earn his livelihood in the city.

They are innocent and helpless people who face the cruel, clever urban value system when their belongings are stolen and they are left with no money. They cannot even meet their son as he has left the city abandoning his family. They have to work in a quarry to earn their livelihood and save a little money to return to the village, but before they can return to the village

Nathan dies of poverty and ill health. Rukmani stoically bears it. Tragedy bends her body, not her spirit. It is because peasants leave everything in the hands of God and bear all sorrows and sufferings with a sense of pessimism that Rukmani does not see any use in fighting or protesting. She draws support from the thought that she only missing the little she had, and thinks that want is her companion from birth to death, familiar as the seasons or the earth, varying only in degree. She says: "... We are taught to bear our sorrows in silence and all this is so that the soul may be cleansed." (20)

This passive acceptance is the result of economic insecurity and religious teaching. So, the heart that is tempted in the flames and faith of suffering and sacrifice will not easily accept defeat. Kamala Markandaya, in the novel, "... takes us to the heart of a South Indian or Tamil Nadu village where life has not changed for a thousand years..." Nature always victimizes the peasant through floods, drought and the net result is famine, starvation, and sometimes death. So, fear, hunger, and despair are his constant companions - fear of the dark future, fear of the sharpness of hunger, fear of the blackness of death.

A peasant has to work without any hope. There is no cure for the hopeless condition of the helpless. Their helplessness seems predictable and it also seems that they are pitted against a force beyond their capacity to face. So, *Nectar in a Sieve* is a passionate cry of protest against social injustice, the portrayal of patience in the face of suffering, of labor even when there is no hope. The novel delineates every possible problem that peasants can face. They have to face the cruelty caused by inescapable fate, but it is disappointing, that they have to face the problems caused by an unjust social order which may be alleviated.

While Rukami's family is difficult and tragic in many ways, the one thing that sustains her is her permanent love for her family. *Nectar in a Sieve* presents domestic love and household sacrifice as the most important aspect of life. While this point of view is beautiful and inspiring, it's also emotional because Rukmani's deep love for her family coexists with her inability to protect and provide for them. The novel points out that while the family's emotional unity is important and praiseworthy it doesn't help them fight the calamities that repeatedly occur. Ultimately and tragically the novel presents the devastating poverty and oppression they experience as more powerful than family bonds.

Both Rukmani and Nathan adjust their lives totally around their children. Rukmani finds deep approval in maternity even though she wants sons because they are more important than farmhands; she loves her first born daughter Irawaddy, whom she describes as an ideal beautiful baby. Nathan also adores his daughter, and his behavior is presented as unusual for a man. Nathan's devotion to his children pushes back against that familial guidance in an innately female role.

Gestures of familial sacrifice are frequent. In times of famine, Rukmani goes without food so her children can eat, and Irawaddy offering her honor by working as a prostitute to feed her younger brother, Kuti. Family is also more important than a social conference. Rukmani loves and supports her daughter even later she turns to prostitution, and she cares for her grandson even though he's born out of marriage.

However, Rukmani's consuming love for her children compare with her frequent inability to provide for them. In times of famine, the entire family is quickly reduced to starvation; at that moment, Rukmani has no resources to draw upon. Even though without food

she goes, and provides spiritual comfort to her children, it's not always enough. For example, despite Rukmani's and Irawaddy's sacrifices on his behalf, Kuti dies of starvation. She is unable to protect her children from the social forces that threaten them. Raja accidentally kills a tannery protector, for instance, she's unaware that she's entitled to justice and doesn't seek legal recourse. For Rukmani, deep maternal love does not necessarily support on behalf of her children.

Ultimately, the novel argues that strong and selfless family bonds can survive even among desperate circumstances, family love is not an effective weapon against social injustice or domination. Rukmani's and Nathan's love for their children does not enable them to fight the bigger tenant farming system which prevents them from keeping enough food to feed them, nor does it allow them to combat the tannery, which kills poor children with privilege.

Rukmani's family is reduced in size; two of her sons have died, while three others have left to make their fortunes in remote places, never to see their parents again. Although Rukmani has been a devoted mother, her family structure fully collapses by the time she reaches old age. The novel highlight the tragic deaths of Raja and Kuti and the loss of Arjan and Thambi not to emphasize Rukmani's failure as a parent but to show how personal love and initiative inevitably fail against the structural injustice of the society within which the family romanticizes family life. The disasters the family undergoes are an implicit call for social structures that promote and emphasize strong bonds among family members, rather than imperiling lives. While the novel creates a moving picture of Rukmani's family, it refuses them at every turn.

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, the theme of harmony in marital relations is depicted through the relations of Nathan and Rukmani. Socioeconomic factors, as well as cruel nature, affect their

relations. At the age of twelve, Rukmani married Nathan. Since then, despite their poverty, they lead their lives suitably. The problem arises only when they have to face famine at one time and drought at another and they have no grains. At first, a half-empty cooking pot makes life miserable for them, and later they are to satisfy themselves with water only.

They are suffering from poverty, hunger, descent, and malnutrition. Murugan, the son of Nathan and Rukmani, too faces a similar problem as his parents. He leaves his home and village and comes to the city, to earn money and lead his life happily and he marries a girl there, but his lot does not change. He feels disappointed due to poverty and hunger. As a result, he leaves his wife and children and disappears. In both cases, economic factors are responsible for the cracks in the husband-wife relationship, but in the case of Ira, daughter of Nathan and Rukmani, social conditions play a significant role. Ira's marriage is also broken. Social evils caused by cruel customs come into being. As Ira could not bear a child for some time after the marriage, her in-laws become dissatisfied and her husband rejects her and he remarries.

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, the theme of the clash between traditional ideas and the forces of material progress is also depicted. The destructive force of progress, in the novel, is the tannery which stands for materialism and agro-industrialism, while the rural life stands for traditionalism and it is depicted by the protagonist Rukmani. The tannery is owned by an Englishman. The busy industrialism spoils the peaceful countryside. In the name of progress, the atmosphere of the village is completely dishonored. The tannery that pollutes the vernal atmosphere of the village with its smells and clamors and corrodes the values of the people is the main target of Rukmani's attack. She accepts that it brings more money, but there are counter-balancing evils. Greater commercialization, and strange population, labor unrest, and the death of a son are some of its

consequences. The tannery initially caused high market prices and later swallowed the rented land of the peasants from the Zamindar and shattered the calm and quiet rural life. The tannery, on the one hand, symbolizes the growth of materialism and on the other hand, it keeps on appropriate the land of peasants for new buildings.

Nathan and Rukmani too lose their land which they have been farming for thirty years. Peasants till the rented land year after year in the hope of buying it, one day but when they are left with no land they feel helpless and unsure of what to do. Rukmani says that while there was land, there was hope, but there was nothing left of the sort. The Indian peasant has to “work without any hope.” That is why Rukmani thinks that there is no use putting up resistance as the peasants have to leave everything in the hands of God and bear all the sorrows and sufferings, Rukmani says, "We are in God's hands." (13)

The Westerner cannot stomach all this and reacts to the Indian peasant’s value system. An English doctor tells Rukmani

Times will not be better for many months. Meanwhile, you will suffer and die, you meek suffering fools. Why do you keep this ghastly silence? Why do you not demand - cry out for help- do something? There is nothing in this country, oh god, there is nothing! (46)

So, the traditional Indian attitude to suffering clashes with modern ideas. This traditional acceptance of people cannot be accepted by the modern man, whose philosophy is to fight evil, whether the outcome is victory or defeat. So, the traditional hesitation of the universal, the eternal, is challenged by the modern thing with the particular, the contemporary. Not only the

Westerners but the younger generations also show their distrust of traditional values. They protest against the passive attitudes of accepting their lot. Even one of the Rukmani's sons cannot understand, why his father did not protest when he was ejected from the land he had been tilling for years. When Rukmani's sons can no more endure injustice and their parent's attitudes, they leave home in the hope of improving their fortunes. So, the generation gap leads to the conflict between traditionalism and modernism.

It portrays a family living as survival farmers in rural India. The parents Rukmani and Nathan are faithful to their agricultural life, but most of their sons, who have a slightly higher level of education, question their parent's values and at last leave the farm for good. Rukmani regards the land and lifestyle it provides and initially views her children's lack of interest as a tragedy; in her opinion, education has rendered them impractical when it comes to daily life. However, in the novel, Rukmani herself becomes disillusioned with dependence on the land, which often fails the family and leads to desperate famines. In evaluation, her son Selvam's higher education and information of the outer world enables him to provide for his sister and aging parents when they can no longer live on the farm. At the beginning of the novel, the land symbolizes stability, but at the end, education represents a more secure way of life.

As a young wife and mother, Rukmani derives huge fulfillment from living off the land. However, as the farm repeatedly fails to provide for her family, she gradually becomes disappointed. Although she initially resists living in a mud house, Rukmani proves an adroit housekeeper and gardener, taking pride in the size of her vegetables. In one romantic explanation of the farm, Rukmani reveals that the fields, which "are green and beautiful to the eye," just before she says that her husband notices beauty in her "which no one has seen before."

Associating the land's beauty with her own, she exhibits how closely she identifies with the farm and derives her sense of self from it.

As the novel progresses, multiple natural disasters, from storms to crop failures, leave the family on the point of starvation. During the period of famine, Rukmani's son Raja is killed while looking for food in town and her youngest, Kuti, dies of starvation. Rukmani says that after Kuti's death, the crops began to prosper "with a bland indifference that mocked our loss." Once, she saw the land as a benevolent force that ensured stability for her young family. Now it seems not only defective but actively wicked.

While Rukmani initially believes that education has led her sons into unwise decisions, Selvam's educated career eventually saves the family when their farm fails. Rukmani feels proud of being able to read, which few women possess. She teaches her sons, and with this improvement and access to the growing town, they develop a political awareness that she fears and opposes. As young men, Arjun and Thambi protest at the power held by "white men," like the British doctor Kenny, which Rukmani has always taken for granted; they keenly perceive the inequality of working land they will never own, refusing to join Nathan in the fields.

When they arrange an unsuccessful strike with fellow tannery workers, putting their instruction and new beliefs to work, Rukmani says that she does not even know "what respond to make" because "these men are strangers." Worker's rights are irrelevant to Rukmani increased education has damaged the structure of her initially tight-knit family. Arjun and Thambi's disappearance in search of work does chip away at the family's integrity, seeming to prove Rukmani right.

However, Selvam follows another way towards education by the learner with Kenny. Taking this job implies an explicit choice between agriculture and education: Nathan is growing too old to work on the farm alone, but he gives up his adored work so that Selvam can follow his own need and build a better life. Eventually, this choice proves clever.

When the landlord evicts Rukmani and Nathan from their land, they experience the vital failure of the agricultural system to provide a secure way of life. At this critical stage, it's only Selvam who can provide for Irawaddy's illegitimate son. When Rukmani goes back home from her failed search in the city she depends on Selvam's future livelihood as a doctor to maintain her. From Rukmani's relative narration as an elderly woman, it's plain that Selvam has achieved some success in this field. While Rukmani thought education would tear her family separately, it's exactly Selvam's education that secures the family members together.

Rukmani never describes the knowledge and learning with the style she extends to the land. Even at the end of the novel, agriculture is confidential because it represents the most joyful period in Rukmani's hard life. However, in this novel, her love for the property is balanced by her sensitive understanding that living off the land has directly caused many of the family's tragedies. Through Rukmani's regular shift of view, the novel argues that the benefits education can bring to hard-up groups outweigh its trouble of traditional life.

The transformation has many surfaces in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Characters are transformed by poverty, learning how to bear and transcend difficulties. The town is transformed by the tannery, which disrupts class traditions and the environment. The world is becoming modern and trade, a change from rural and agricultural. Character's values change when faced with the reality of what poverty drives people to do (prostitution, thievery, etc), and their hopes for themselves are gently

dull and often deviate throughout the novel. Change is predictable, and the story directs its focus toward watching people grow and adapt to the world as it changes around them. They have no option but to change if they are to survive, and this transformation.

The whole novel is full of love. Family love, romantic love, love for children, and conceptual philosophical love of life and land, are all middle to the novel. The capability to suffer all through adversity is one of the most present motifs in the novel, and frequently takes the form of love. Rukmani fears she cannot go on without her love, and when she comes back to her home, she has made peace with herself, likely inspired and calmed by her love for Puli and her children. An interesting note on family loves it's not a promise that love and understanding follow from being related or married in this novel a lot of the novel is about the genesis of love between people. Nathan and Ruku come to recognize each other, and Ruku comes to know Puli in a way that shows love is about the growth of relationships.

Rukmani, lives in poverty for her entire life, the novel tracks her initially rural environment as they become increasingly developed from the entry of the tannery to her self-sustaining village and the industrial slums it creates to Rukmani and Nathan's exile from their land and decision to seek out their son in a large city. While Rukmani finds great happiness in her life as a poor farmer, navigation towns and cities prove a bewildering and miserable experience. Her life's great tragedy is the ending of her rural society. However, Rukmani's sons sharply assess the farming life their parents enjoy, pointing out that they live at the mercy of their landlords with no chance of improving their situation. The novel thus make a loving picture of rural life but refuses to romanticize it, showing that farmers like Rukmani are just as vulnerable and opposed as the urban poor.

For Rukmani and Nathan, life on the farm primarily provides an opportunity to live in relative independence and freedom even though they are poor and uneducated. Rukmani's narrative style is usually easy and blunt, but when she describes her small farm she slips into lyricism. As a young bride, she asks herself, "When the fields are green and beautiful to the eye and you have a good store gain laid away for hard times... what more can a woman ask for?"

Nathan especially gets his self-worth from working the land. He's proud that "he had no master". Even though the family has no money or possessions, Rukmani and Nathan feel that the farm allows them to live with freedom and pride.

The village's transformation into a larger and larger town coincides with the downfall of the family's destiny; their eventual journey to the city marks the lowest point of Rukmani's life. When a large tannery comes to the village, for instance, it immediately transforms the family's lifestyle.

Rukmani is apprehensive because the arrival of workers drives prices up and makes the town unsafe for children; besides these material concerns, she complains that "they lay their hands upon us and we are all turned from cultivating to trade." Perhaps because it involves interchange with an outside world she doesn't quite understand, Rukmani sees transactional labor as less honorable than farming, and she credits a larger psychological melancholy to the town's development. Later, attack the tannery forces Rukmani's two oldest sons to escape the town; a tannery guard kills another son, Raja. The urbanization of the city, then, directly corresponds to the dissolution of the family.

When Rukmani and Nathan lose their land, and they travel to a city where their son Murugan is living. In the city, thieves steal all their belongings and money, which results in a strengthening of their material poverty and exhibit that the city to encourage a less common and moral way of life than do small towns. Even Murugan is not immune to this degradation; to her shame, Rukmani discovers that he has run away from his wife, Ammu, and their child, rejecting his obligation to provide for them. It is no accident that Nathan's health quickly decreases and he dies in the city; his physical weakness points out the sharp contrast between the completion he derives from life as a farmer and the sense of bewilderment and loss he experiences trying to make his way among the urban poor.

While Rukmani and Nathan believe that rural effort is infinitely better than urban poverty, their more educated sons face these notions, pointing out that whether they live in the city or country, the lower class is a disadvantage in the same ways. To Rukmani's disappointment, her oldest sons, Arjun and Thambi, seek jobs at the tannery; they don't want to be like their father, who "labors for another and gets so little in return". Thambi also points out what Rukmani favors not to notice that Nathan doesn't own his land and will never be able to save up enough money to purchase it. After Thambi makes this comment, she even acknowledged that "almost all we grew had been sold to pay the rent of the land". The boy's concerns prove legally, as eventually the land agent, Sivaji, informs Nathan that the landlord has sold their plan to the tannery.

In light of their unexpected eviction, against which they have no legal recourse, the independence that Rukmani and Nathan connect with their farm seems like ridicule. They are just weak to development and hardship as are urban wage laborers Rukmani sees in the city.

The novel portraits of rural farming filled in Rukmani's life and work with beauty and dignity. However she praises her protagonist, Markandaya sharply criticizes the excessive systems under which the rural poor function, pointing out that while urban poverty looks worse, the rural poor are subject to many of the same drawbacks.

Day by day, the health condition of Kuti, the youngest child of Rukmani, declined. Social injustice, poverty, and malnourishment are also largely responsible for the moral humiliation of Ira as she sells herself to townsmen to save her brothers but her sacrifice goes unsuccessful and cannot protect Kuti, so she says: Tonight and tomorrow and every night. So long as there is a need, I will not hunger anymore then, Ira gave birth to her illegal son.

The old granny, a well-wisher of Rukmani's family also becomes ruined from hunger in the street. Such an incompatible situation plays an important role in the development of rural poverty and social justice in India.

Here, Markandya tries to show that a lack of family planning is one of the reasons for poverty and starvation in rural India. Nathan and his wife undergo a terrifying and traumatic experience when the family finds itself in the grip of upsetting, hunger, starvation, and agonizing fear. Rukmani recognize that famine, starvation, and fear have become element and parcel of peasant's lives. So, the villagers cannot easily defeat these cruel factors.

Ironically, death appears to be a delight for the suffering family as they did not mourn for the death of the boys Kuti and Raja. Rukmani painfully says: "What are you crying for?... you have little enough strength, without dissolving it in tears"(17). At the death of Kuti, Rukmani feel relax as she says, "I grieved; it was not for my son, for in my heart and could not have wished it otherwise. The trouble had lasted too extensive and had been too agonizing for me to call him back to continue its" (23).

Rukmani comforts herself by saying that her son escapes from the cruel rule of hunger and also she has no strength to battle against it. Thus Markandaya marked that her characters are willingly accepting death as a permanent relief from the suffering of hunger and poverty. “It is not enough to cry out, not sufficient to lay bare your woes and catalog your needs; people have only to close their eyes and their ears, you cannot force them to see and to hear or to answer your cries if they cannot and will not” (34).

They accept that two events lead Rukmani to continue her indication on crying out for help, the one is the death of an old granny, and the next, setbacks in the hospital structure. “They found her body on the path that led to the wall, an empty mud-pot beside her and the gunny sacking tied around her waist. She had died of starvation” (20)

After the death of the old granny, Rukmani feels guilty, partly because she stopped selling her vegetables to earn her livelihood and partly because she accepted one rupee from her at sacrabani’s birth. Bitterly, Rukmani feels that the villagers, herself included, closed their ears and eyes to Oldgranny’s troubles though she lived nearby them. Here, she thinks that old granny might have been saved by the hospital had it been finished, but Nathan points out that a hospital is not a soup kitchen, and it will helpless to serve all those who need help.

Unfortunately, social injustice and rural poverty are increasing over time. Markandaya also succeeds to show the feudal exploitation that is another important characteristic of rural India. Nathan is forced to pay the land taxes of the Zamindar, even after the failure of the harvest. After nature’s anger, human assault comes. One day the landlord said to Nathan to vacate the land within a week to which he does not disapproval, without any recompense or any condition for his future. He is fully alert that it is not immediately and also not accurate. But it is a cruel reality: “There is no law against it... we may grieve, but there is no redress.” (51) At the

same time, he knows that he cannot live except by working the land for he has no other information or ability.

The landless Nathan and Rukmani find no any other option but to go to their son “Murugan” in the town, but Selvam and Ira, decide to stay in the village. Kamala has given a dramatic and graphic account of scarcity and social injustice in the city and how Rukmani describes the harsh struggle for survival in the city. Even in the city, they come across poverty, hunger, disease, and iniquity, in its most uncovered, miserable, and horrible form.

In the city they establish an equally brutal environment and their few belongings and money were stolen so, they sought shelter in the temple, and they were forced to survive mainly on the help of food given as contributions to the gods. “For where shall a man turn who has no money? Where can he go? Wide, wide world, but as narrow as the coins in your hand. Like a tethered goat, so far and no farther. Only money can make the rope stretch, only money” (10)

In this quotation, one believes that Markandaya shows the picture of Indian villagers at the advent of industrialization makes villagers landless and they know no other skills. So, it makes them hurry to the cities but due to their ill- educated and lack of any other skill they either turn to beggars or die. In the city, they are no work available, Rukmani rues the fact that only money counts. The city’s resolve upon cash reduces a person to an animal state and deprives Rukmani of the free will that characterizes her as human.

At the age of twelve Nathan marries Rukmani, and the rest of her life is extreme by the hard labor of maintaining a house and raising several children on little resources. Although she represents a superficially conservative view of femininity, Rukmani actively encourages her way of life, asserting her contentment with Nathan. Moreover, by describing her loving and a quite reasonable relationship with her husband, her unabashed sexual desire, and the authority she

acquires as a ruler, Rukmani challenges stereotypes of traditional Indian society as naturally brutal of women. Meanwhile, Rukmani's daughter, Irawaddy, and her neighbor, Kunthi, provide two less conservative views of women's roles. Both work as prostitutes, but Irawaddy does, to provide for her siblings during a scarcity, whereas Kunthi appears to do so out of dullness and a desire to spread confusion.

By the end of the novel, Irawaddy achieves liberation by becoming a loving mother, while Kunthi disappears from the narrative in general. *Nectar in a Sieve* is radical for its depictions of women as intelligent, capable, and sexual partners however, through Kunthi's end, the novel argues that such qualities are only valuable if they help women fulfill habitual roles within the family.

Rukmani both fulfills and disobeys stereotypes of traditional Indian womanhood. She's married off at a young age, but after short unhappiness at leaving her family, she quickly adapts to her new life, describing with pride her first garden and increasing facility with household affairs. Through her happiness as a young bride, the novel questions the statement that traditional Indian culture is regressive and oppressive of women. While Rukmani is externally submissive to Nathan, he must respect her deeply, praising her for being able to read and write even though it could not have been easy for him to see his wife more learned than he was. Rukmani frequently makes decisions in the house, and it's she who handles their limited supply of money.

Rukmani is also frank about her sexual desire for Nathan *Nectar in a Sieve* is one of the first novels to address the prohibited topic of sexual desire among Indian women. Rukmani explains that while people say "a woman always remembers her wedding night," she derives more sexual satisfaction later in her marriage, when I went to my husband matured in mind as well as body. Here, Rukmani establishes a female wish as natural and positive, rather than

disgraceful. She also gently insists that her narrative focuses not on the act of marriage as the climax of a woman's life, but rather on the importance of maturity and development throughout a growing marital relationship.

Through her failed marriage and her brief term as a prostitute, Rukmani's daughter, Irawaddy, challenges her mother's approval within conservative gender norms. Like her mother, Irawaddy marries young. Her husband, however, comes back Irawaddy to the family after she fails to bear children. Because Irawaddy is unlikely to find another husband and there are not generally acceptable ways for women to support themselves, she'll likely become a beggar after her parents die. Irawaddy's strict fate shows that, despite Rukmani's happy marriage, her culture does often fail its women.

Irawaddy herself infracts and fulfills the expectations of women by working as a prostitute to buy food for her youngest brother, Kuti after a crop failure. While Rukmani is shocked when she finds out, she comes to respect Irawaddy for her realism and sacrifice. Eventually, Irawaddy develops a son; although her child is a public statement of her social disgrace, Irawaddy and Rukmani love him deeply. Because she's acting to save her family and because personal relationships are more important to her social norms, Irawaddy emerges as extremely brave. However, it's important to note that if society provided any rightful methods for women to make money and provide for their families, Irawaddy would not have been forced into prostitution. On another side of Irawaddy's bravery is the hidden critique of a society that limits women's freedoms without providing any safeguards against scarcity and starvation.

Irawaddy, Rukmani's neighbor Kunthi disobeys social norms and eventually becomes a prostitute. While her exact motives are unclear, it seems that she is acting for personal fulfillment; the novel characterizes this misbehavior of social norms as cruel and threatening.

While Rukmani relates her sexuality as positive, when she encounters Kunthi poorly clothed and wearing sandalwood paste on her throat, she characterizes the other woman as unpleasant and threatening. In her description, Rukmani stays on the makeup, Kunthi uses to alter her look; Kunthi's physical trick suggests moral cunning as well. When Rukmani finds that Nathan has slept with Kunthi and fathered her two sons, Rukmani's suspicions prove correct. Kunthi uses this secret this blackmail to Nathan into giving her the family's supply of rice, frightening them with starvation. She threatens the unity of Rukmani's family, both emotionally, by apparently seducing Nathan (Rukmani largely absolves her husband from guilt in this affair), and materially, using her sexuality to take their food. Kunthi's sexuality earns her punishment.

By the time she begs for food, Kunthi is tired and thin; she tells Rukmani that she has left her husband, although it remains unclear how this split occurred. While Rukmani and Irawaddy's sexuality strength is familial unity, Kunthi's contributes to her family's collapse at least; Rukmani explains the situation this way. Normally sympathetic, she is uninterested in Kunthi's dilemma because she considers her an enemy. However, it is important to note that the two women are very parallel. Like Rukmani's family, Kunthi's teeters on the edge of starvation; and like Irawaddy, she may have been driven to prostitution by circumstances beyond her control. The novel uses Kunthi to point out that warning gender norms encourage even kindhearted women to judge other women in black-and-white terms, rather than appreciating the problem of their circumstances.

While Rukmani and her family accept Irawaddy's unusual sexuality because it is selfless and benefits the family, Kunthi emerges as immoral because it threatens the family unit. Kunthi shows that the novel is only willing to challenge current expectations for women up to a point. *Nectar in a Sieve* provides a vital meditation on the place of women within a conventional

but rapidly changing society. While its treatment of women's roles within traditional marriages is groundbreaking, it's finally unwilling to articulate a way for women to live outside the roles of wife and mother to which their society confines them.

"Everything that has happened to a writer especial in his/her childhood will affect his/her writing to and perhaps his/her social sufferings will prove to be the greatest value."(12). Nectar means the drink of God because it is sweet, rich in nutrition and this drink is the source of peace, joy, and happiness. But what happens when putting nectar in a sieve, here, it leaks through the sieve and it no longer has the power to give energy and joy. In this novel nectar symbolizes happiness of life, the land is the real happiness in farmers' life and the sieve is the symbol of poverty and social injustice. Her life is the microcosm of Indian reality. The fate of Rukmani is the fate of almost every rural Indian. "*Nectar in a Sieve* exposed the cruel lot of typical Indian peasant who suffers silently a victim of the vagaries of nature, of the feudal system of zamindari, of the forces of technological progress which dislodge him from his native soil and force him to relocate an alien environment"(114).

Rochelle Almeida's interpretation that Markandaya's novels tell a personal story, but the story is told against an enormous social background, and also told of the conflicts and tensions which cause suffering and tragedy. She shows how the antagonism of nature and fast industrialization provide the farmer's family to famine and poverty. She does not worship poverty or see it as an inspiring human experience but it is depicted sensibly as an evil force, which degrades and dehumanizes. The flow of life in rural India is such that fear, hunger, and despair are the constant companions of the peasant. The conditions are much worse in villages that stand at the edge of urban society.

The researcher believes that *Nectar in a Sieve* deals with the tragic turmoils caused by socio-economic factors in the life of Rukmani, the narrator 'heroine'. It is a realistic chronicle of Rukmani's life in particular and the sufferings of peasants in colonial India in general. *Nectar in a Sieve* 1954 is a sad story of a large poverty-stricken Hindu family in a remote rural village in southern India. It is not the story of a specific individual and a specific town. That is the reason Markandaya has not relegated any name to the town. Indeed, even the area of the town is obscure and uncertain. It isn't just the narrative of Nathan or Rukmani. The story of all Indian people lives in a village. They represent the poverty-stricken peasantry of India. They occasionally enjoy the nectar of being, but this nectar flows out from the sieves of their lives. There has been a battle for joy in the existences of the Indian ranchers through ages however it has to end up being a useless battle.

Rukmani the protagonist and storyteller in the novel is a basic worker woman whose determined fight has been against hardship and social rank play. The more youthful girl of a town headman, she weds Nathan, a landless sharecropper, at twelve years old. The decreasing monetary situation of Rukmani's dad compels her to wed Nathan is a helpless sharecropper of a South Indian town. After some time of their marriage, Rukmani brings forth Ira, a little girl yet Nathan who needs a male.

Their idyllic life, however, goes on with the help of Kenny, an English doctor who works in the rural area, and she bears many more children- all-male ones- Arjun, Thambi, Murugan, Selvam, Raja, and Kuti."It was my husband who woke me-my husband, whom I will call Nathan, for that, was his name, although in all the years of our marriage I never called him that, for it is not meet for a woman to address her husband except as husband"(6).

Here, despite the remarkable difference between her status and that of her husband, she loves her husband very much because of his innocent nature. This loving and kind nature makes her conceited of him.

She studies the values of mutual love, understanding, respect, acceptance, and adjustment. Both Rukmani and her husband lead a simple and satisfying life with simple requirements such as food, clothes, and shelter.

There are not many hurdles during the first six years of their life. But they have to encounter annoying poverty after the birth of each child. Their economic condition aggravates to such an extent that they have to spend days half-fed but starving until they can grow vegetables in their field (4).

Unfortunately, poverty plays an important role in the life of the Rukmani family when Irrawaddy marries a poor, landless farmer due to the lack of money to spend on dowry. The rising price of agricultural commodities forces them to sell their cattle. The flood devastates their crops. They have to live on herbs, leaves, and roots until they can harvest in the next year. Rukmani boldly assures, “to those who live by the land there must come times of hardships, Sometimes we eat and sometimes we starve” (136) and again asserts, “Never fear all will be well” (84). But, the circumstance becomes not as good as when after four years of her wedding, Ira returns to her parents as for not giving him inheritance her husband abandons her.

In a rural society, it is quite difficult to accept a woman without a husband or a woman with a daughter. The existence of a woman, who has no youngsters by any means, is more awful. The woman in the country territory has the social assent to dispose of his desolate wife. Along these lines, Ira had been stepped as an infertile lady and she is dismissed by her significant other

because she can't bear kids. In the man-centric culture, desolate women are viewed as reviled and gloomy. They are not perceived and regarded.

Men have the social assent to dismiss infertile spouses. Nathan recognizes the situation and says, "I do not blame him. He is justified, for a man needs children. He has been patient" (28). Indeed, superstitions and beliefs are a result of illiteracy. So, the villagers have many blind beliefs. The rustic people perceive proud of having more children, considering it not only a concrete indication of great blessing but also a chance in that there will be more hands to work on the farm.

At one time there had been kingfishers here, flashing between the young shoots for our fish; and paddy birds; and sometimes, in the shallower reaches of the river, flamingoes, striding with ungainly precision among the water reeds, with plumage of glory not of this earth. Now birds came no more, for the tannery lay close except crows and kites and such scavenging birds, eager for the town's offal (69)

Poverty is bigger than just economic poverty. This novel focuses on the financial troubles of Rukmani's family caused by industrialization, but the industrialization's impact is even greater. Industry and modern technology invade the villages in the shape of the tannery. In one day, townsmen appear to build a factory on the unwedded near the village. But Rukmani is hostile to this sudden intrusion of modernity, industrialism enters rural life. She is happy and contented in so far as industrialization does not touch her family. But the transformation comes blasting when the octopus of hunger raises its ugly head and it envelops the peace and joy of their life. One by one her sons join tannery.

The advance of industry causes the decay of natural beauty, creates confusion in the village economy, and brings in social poverty too. Rukmani's husband 'Nathan' likes to see his sons beside him, to teach them the ways of earth, how to sow seed, the transplant, and reap but he now helplessly watches his sons getting employed in the tannery. In Nathan's helplessness, we find the expression the traditional Indian folk caught in the inevitable sweep of urbanization and industry.

Poverty often hinges on making enough to get by but provides no buffer. For individuals endeavoring to make a living in a real sense barely enough to live on the solitary security cradle they have is making arrangements about what they will do when they mysteriously bring in some additional cash. This cash will not ever come and Rukmani advises us so much, yet it appears to be these fanciful and idealistic plans are important to keep one going despite certain destitution. Here, Nathan used to deceive himself about purchasing a little land, Rukmani used to consider putting something aside for Ira's subsequent settlement; it is just when Rukmani sees others making arrangements that she has the objectivity to acknowledge they're all private tricking themselves. Poverty is their parcel, and anticipating an idealistic future is their calm lie.

Nectar in a Sieve is a tremendous story of the sons of the soil, who live from hand to mouth on what their small tenant holdings produce in India. So, Rukmani's two sons, Arjun and Thambi work in a factory to improve their economic condition. Unfortunately, very soon they have no longer their jobs and have a journey to Ceylon in search of work. Rukmani's son "Raja" expires of excessive beating by the tannery watchmen and Murugan got a job in a city and went away. The tannery is the main cause of social justice and poverty that uproot the sons of Rukmani from their native soil and force them to go to alien places against the wishes of the

parents. Thus, Rukmani's family started disintegrating. The famine destroyed whatever was left. Nathan sold everything because he had to pay half the dues of the Zamindar.

CHAPTER - III

Misery of Hunger and Poverty in the Novel A Handful of Rice

Chapter -III

Misery of Hunger and Poverty in the Novel *A Handful of Rice*

Kamala Markandaya who's *Nectar in a Sieve* 1954 was a small epic about India's poor people, returns to the earlier worry of that book in *A Handful of Rice*. *A Handful of Rice* novel was published in the year 1966. It is the fifth work of Kamala Markandaya. A novel deal with Ravi is a rural son who has left his deserted, poor home for the promise of the city. It represent with urban economics, poverty and Hunger.

Markandaya is one of the most productive, popular Indo-Anglican novelists, and an excellent representative of the growing number of Indian women writing serious literature in English. Markandaya excels in recording the internal working of the minds of her characters, their confusion, and social clash which become the cause of their alienation. Kamala Markandaya is more worried with telling the sense of distancing of her protagonists.

Alienation composes the most striking theme in *A Handful of Rice*. The novel fictionalizes the humanism of India by arousing the respectable company to the fix of the rustic individuals. The protagonist of the novel, Ravi, feels a strong feeling of distance all through the novel. He is a vagabond and as a proletarian product of the fifties, he is trapped in the maelstrom of change, in the transition from a traditional and rural society to the machine-ridden, materialistic urban milieu.

However, Kamala Markandaya does not believe in depicting the sense of dissatisfaction at the disintegration of the old order and at the loss of traditional values rather she shows her firm

confidence in the constant spirit of the Indian social order to sustain itself through the worst of trials and tribulations. Uma Parameswaran rightly observes:

It is easy to writing tears of pity for the plight of peasants, underfed, uneducated, exploited easier still to rouse anger and contempt for the superstitions and slow-moving masses. They should stand there vulnerable and open to every attack, be it indifference, contempt, or emasculating charity. But to evoke admiration, even envy, for the simple faith and unswerving tenacity they hold needs, sympathy, and skill. Kamala Markandaya has both. (Uma Parameswaran 92)

In her novel *A Handful of Rice* the author shows that a man lives as long as his roots are flawless and rootlessness or alienation becomes the cause of his suffering. The novelist portrays the modern man in Ravi who suffers from depression, maladjustment, emotional imbalance, and psychological instability caused by poverty and unemployment, and cruel treatment by society, resulting in his alienation. *A Handful of Rice* contains symbolic portraits of the starving people, the exploited working class who struggle badly for exposed subsistence both in the rural and the urban areas.

A Handful of Rice represent with the separation. Ravi lives in urban life which he struggles for survival. Kai Nicholson rightly points out that in *A Handful of Rice* Markandaya uses the village as a pretext for her hero, Ravi, to flee the countryside and plunge into the turmoil of urban life. Ravi, the central character in the novel is a proletarian product of the fifties. Belonging to the generation of 'angry young men' who rebel against the fatalistic attitude of subservience, Ravi had the initiative to fight for a proper place in society. But, he is ultimately forced by socio-economic oppression to go back into his inherited destiny. What is, however

remarkable about Ravi is: He preserves his integrity at the cost of his family's suffering: alienation from them and the suffocation of his passionate rebellious democratic spirit. (Harrex 256)

Ravi is the poor peasant's son in a village. Having been a continuous victim of poverty, he becomes tired of hunger. And so, to escape from the rural poverty and hunger, he leaves his village and joins the general migration to the city. He sees that the villagers:

Had all lived between bouts of genteel and acute poverty- the kind in which the weakest went to the wall, the old ones, and the babies, dying of tuberculosis, dysentery, the 'falling fever' 'recurrent fever' and any other names for what was, simply, nothing but starvation (12).

In the hot and overpowering urban environment of Madras, Ravi has the tiredness of hunger, and ...The terror of losing his identity in an indifferent city was related to death. Of course, much of this world, this dazzling world, lay in the future: but every kind of fear and privation became bearable in the light of its bright promise (27).

Though the cities, like the villages, have nothing to suggest for poor people like Ravi "it held out before them an incandescent carrot the hope that one day, someday, there would be something" (25)

In his attempt to save himself from starvation, Ravi jumps into the unsteady confusion of urban life. He runs a hurdles race, which leaves him disappointed and hopeless. After facing a series of trials and tribulations and floating through different streets in the city, he joins a gang of loafers and criminals. Beginning into the obscurity of urban survival by Damodar, Ravi becomes a

part of the underworld of smugglers and bootleggers. He is showing to the evil that fury in the city in many forms-

The insensitiveness of the affluent, their mania for conspicuous consumption, their hardness of heart; the exploitation of small fish by big, the worker by the capitalist, the Apu of the world by the Big Shops in Mount Road; and the internal success of the bootlegger, the black market, the drug-peddler at the cost of the poor, the down and out the desperate. (Iyenger 445-46)

As a member of Damodar's coterie, Ravi witnessed life in all its raw hunger, want, and exploitation. He finds in city life with the violent battle for survival. With its 'crime' and 'darkness', the city is a jungle. Ravi realizes how "in this jungle one had to fight, fiercely, with whatever weapons one had. Or go under." (198)

However, in his earnest effort to strike roots within the city environment, Ravi finds Apu's tailoring convenient, though monotonous, falls crazy with the tailor's daughter, Nalini, and decides to put an end to his criminal career. He agrees to work as an apprentice with Apu and becomes a member of his family by marrying his daughter. One may wonder how men like Ravi with a spirit of rebellion against the injustice of the world, besides being used for the exciting life of pick-pickets and bootleggers, could become a tailor's apprentice, a craft which is neither exciting nor lucrative.

A close reading of the novel, however, reveals that together with his spirit of protest Ravi has been influenced to a substantial degree by the normal values upheld by people like his father and Apu. That is why black marketing, at the expense of the starving poor, is morally repugnant to him. The rebel in him is not so much against the traditional values as

against the insincerity of those who champion the cause of the usual values. The crisis of principles leads to a steady decline in the faith which means a total collapse of culture and civilization. A civilization based on a distortion of values, on corruption, discrimination, exploitation, obsequiousness, murder, robbery, incest, and all forms of social evils is strange and meaningless.

It is a scramble that imprisons the human psyche and suffocates man's passionate, rebellious democratic spirit. Ravi cannot become part of such a civilization. Hence, he prefers a cheerful conjugal life with Nalini to realize mental peace and emotional richness. From all sides, the urban setting with its connected evil presses down on him, and for him, there is no escape route. For him there is no divine underground; he has to encounter its darkness, poverty. The city lacks a conscience. The novel takes the turning point when Apu dies and Ravi becoming the top of the family, shoulders the responsibility of the whole family only to urge bogged in an atmosphere of gloom and despondency. He loses his job in the hospital.

On top of all, the price of rice goes up day by day. With the upward spiraling prices, Ravi's family fortune "slips down with increasing momentum" (96). His dog-eat-dog condition compels him to sell Apu's bed for eight rupees the bed on which he has slept with Nalini for less than ten days after their marriage. They had to consume rice full of black stones. Bad Harvest! Then the drought! Ravi proves himself a misfit for the role Apu wanted him to play therein big family. His unwillingness to toe Apu's code of conduct leads to a decrease in income. And with soaring prices, he has got to raise loans to form both ends meet. He says: I have borrowed on the sewing machine, I have to keep up the interest payments and the rent is mounting up...and the light bill...and there's no water (213). This

affects his temper also. He becomes a man of anxious nature and beats his wife. Nalini leaves the house. Damodar, no doubt, is prepared to assist him provided he joins him in black marketing and hoarding. But Ravi is opposed to the idea. Life becomes so miserable.

His son dies of meningitis. Unemployed and desperate, Ravi approaches Damodar again. But he is told that people with 'no guts' cannot work with a person like him. Damodar advises him to go back to your village. It's more your size. You are not fit for anything else. (214). With his moral indignation Ravi "rose unsteadily. He felt like retching but he controlled the spasms and went down to the street." (216) Thus, Ravi's integrity finally alienates him.

The novel involves an in depth with the gang episode. Ravi joins the hungry mob which robs the rice godowns in the market place rending the sky with the slogan: Rice today, rice. Rice today, rice! (233). Ravi struggles and goes very on the brink of the rice bags, but fails to urge even a couple of rice:

He struggles to succeed in the grain, this point a minimum of , and he wrenched his empty hands and watched with frantic eyes because the rich help dwindled, and therefore the empty sacks flopped and sagged and were snatched up and filled or humped away full of shoulders that could bear them(235).

Again he rejoins the regrouped mob, pampers in raiding and destruction. When his turn comes he takes a brick to throw at the Nabobs' Row but suddenly he could not. The strength that had inflamed him the strength of a suppressed, laminated anger ebbed as quickly as it had risen. His hand dropped (23). The novel ends with Ravi dissatisfied,

despairing, and weary. Ravi's tragedy is that of the 'economically weak' who search for answers to problems, not only of day-to-day life but of existence itself. The foundation of his tragedy is hunger. Kamala Markandaya presents Ravi's moral dilemma convincingly. Caught between two values, 'the almost dead and therefore the other powerless to change state ,' Ravi is faced with an impossible choice.

While it is true that Ravi has a choice, it is also true that free will in this situation operates morally only in a life-denying way. As K.R Srinivas Iyengar puts it, "Caught between the pull of the old tradition that all but strangles him and the pull of the new immorality that attracts as frightens him; Ravi lurches now this side now the other side, and has the worst of both" (Iyengar 446). Alienation of Ravi is conceived not just of the contention among custom and advancement yet additionally of the amazing issue of the human inner voice itself, in the decision among good and bad. It is this struggle in Ravi's conscience that constitutes the essential part of the novel. His active ethics has got to choose from poor honesty and affluent disrespectability. He wants to be honest but, at an equivalent time, he realizes that honesty buys no rice and pays no bill.

As Margaret P. Joseph puts it, "in this dichotomy between idea and fact, in the impossibility of bridging the gap between desire and honest fulfillment, lies the essence of the tragic." (Joseph 62)

Ravi's soft conscience which is a proletarian product of the fifties is enmeshed in the maelstrom of change, in the transition from the tradition-bound rural society to the machine-ridden; materialistic urban milieu degenerated in human values. The modern man is given to money and machines, skepticism, hypocrisy, and corruption and so suffers from melancholy and

maladjustment, emotional and psychological instability. Consequently, man ceases to have faith even in his self. And this happens with Ravi who look for a world where he can breathe freely, a society where he can save out a living separately. He struggles for a place in society but is pushed back to his ill-assorted destiny. Even though he is an educated person, he tries to find for himself a 'decent way of life in the city where he is an outsider without caste, in a no man's land between collie and clerk'. (Harrex 74). In the stifling and suffocating urban milieu of Madras, he comes across "the terror of losing his identity in an indifferent city which was akin to death" (27)

Ravi feels anxious about his true individuality in a city where people hardly have any sense of social principles and human values. In such circumstances he becomes self-alienated and feels insecure:

To get rid of impoverished conditions, Ravi takes refuge in the city but the city disowns him. He is dispelled and discarded. He is in the quest for identity. His neck is gripped by poor financial condition...He is always worried about his identity whether in the village or city. In the sprawling city, people are insecure and there is violence, despair, and disillusionment. (Md. Irshad 75-76)

The life of Ravi in Madras passes as if he is living in the jungle. Kamala Markandaya uses the symbol of the jungle, in the novel. This the author does to indicate that the quality of life in the urban scene is not also healthy for the poor. Staggering under the hard blows of poverty, Ravi finds himself alienated in this jungle:

He was alone in the jungle, and in the jungle, one fought or died. The knowledge was an incandescent light at the core of his being like the single eye set in the

forehead of a demon. Lying, sleeping, waking, even in his frenzied acts of love its beam scorched and excoriated him. (217).

Ravi stunned the horror of this jungle life when he finds himself at the receiving end with a business slipping through his fingers and being gag with the dry husks of desperation. He finds himself, in this jungle, in an experimental situation that is suffocating in the extreme:

As an inalienable associate of Damodar's coterie, Ravi witnessed life in all its raw hunger, penury, and exploitation. Life in the city is a grim struggle for existence for survival. This lawless, subterranean city is a jungle, and people here cherish 'jungle values and an animal conscience, each unscrupulously preying upon the other. He realizes how "in this jungle one had to fight fiercely, with whatever weapons one had. Or go under". Go under, shedding all values and norms. (Pattanaik 115).

Thus Markandaya deals with the struggle of man for survival in her novel *A Handful of Rice*. The novelist also presents a practical picture of the mob of jobless and alienated graduates through the representation of Ravi's life that is led in loneliness. It is the sad story of a dreamy person who utterly fails in establishing his identity and survival due to his hesitant choices, weak resolution, and nettling rootlessness. His desperate quest for identity miserably fails. He is terrified of losing his identity in the indifferent, cold, and inhuman society. He is ultimately crushed by socio-economic oppression and thereby becomes a victim of rootlessness and alienation. Md Irshad writes:

Ravi is not in favor of submission to an ignominious way of life. This integrity and fidelity of his self ultimately bring about his alienation. In depicting alienation the character of

Ravi, Markandaya displays her universal sympathy for those who suffer. Undoubtedly, she does have an experience of slimy poverty and the dry husks of despair of society.

The protagonist Ravi Shankar goes to Madras and life turns to be an unhappy one. Hunger finds the central role in the novel; this is further reinforced by the frequent use of the word 'rice.' Ravi sees the city as a jungle and people with animal conscience each crookedly preying upon the other. Food is considered to be one of the basic needs of a human being but Ravi struggles for it. Ravi lives for human lives. It spotlights the problems of the city about the struggle for survival and accommodation in urban life. Poverty and hunger follow him (Ravi) like shadows in every aspect of life.

It begins and ends with the protagonist Ravi's struggle with poverty and hunger. Every character in the novel grapples and endures to get a handful of rice. The novel is set in the late fifties, the period of Independent India, trying to achieve financial stability. The economic status of the country had a great impact on the people's lives and this was projected in the novel. The novel begins with the life of Ravi Shankar. Ravi tries to flee up from his village life into the city. He is the son of a poor peasant. He is tired of hunger and starvation. To get free from his rural poverty and hunger he joins the general exodus to the city Madras. He never gets any jobs, floating through different streets and shops. Even he did not get protection in the city.

A young man Damodar, suggests the profits of the criminal world to Ravi and stimulates his willingness to earn money illegally. He joins with the local petty criminal. Then Ravi becomes a part of criminal world strugglers and bootleggers. On that night Ravi is chased by a policeman. In the horror sense he tries to run away from the cop, he slips into the house of Apu, an old tailor. Ravi threatens Apu and his wife Jayamma. The next morning Jayamma gave Ravi a

severe ache for his frightening without knowing the painful skill of his hunger. Suddenly she stopped her beating by seeing the blood bleeding from Ravi's head. It was wounded by the Policeman. Apu and Jayamma felt a strong painful feeling for his wounds. They give him compassion. Ravi confesses to his sin committed last night.

Jayamma feeds him and lets him go. Thangam – Apu's elder daughter is married and lived in her father's house with her children. To obey the words of Damodar, Ravi goes to the tailor's house in a daytime and offers to put the bars, in their place in the window he had broken. Jayamma is very economical. She gave him a five rupee note to bring a new bar. Ravi gets the bar from Kannan, the blacksmith with whom he has worked. He bought the bar for free and returns the money to Jayamma. Apu has been looking for a son and after seeing Ravi he felt that Ravi would be apt to his family situation so Apu adopted him as a son. Ravi joined as a learner and falls in love with Nalini, the younger daughter of Apu. He shows the desire to marry her. He goes to fair and even to the film with her. Before the marriage, he needs to be a highly consider person. He wants to shun the bad company of Damodar. He does not receive any offer from her father for his marriage. Ravi after marrying Nalini has the responsibility of taking care of Apu's family and the tailor shop. He was affected by paralysis and his savings and cash were stolen by Puttana. In this frustration, Apu died. Now, Ravi is the only person to take all the responsibilities in Apu's house and then come to the struggles. He is not a skillful tailor so his business is dull. Ravi felt astonished to see his stitched clothes are at high prices at the fashionable shops.

But he did not gain more profit one of their coats. It did not look the same hex; it had become vastly richer, more sumptuous, since leaving his hands- he had to look twice to make sure it was the same. But there was no doubt about it. Pleasure

filled him... until his eyes traveled down the straw hand-span waist where the price tag was Rs. 125/-.... Ravi was stunned (69).

Due to this difficult situation, he cannot handle his family correctly. Thangam already left Apu's house to live with her husband. Ravi becomes a man of fidgety nature and beats Nalini. Nalini left the house with her son Raju. Nalini later come back home, after that Ravi, Nalini, and their son Raju became victims of Poverty. When Nalini pleased and requested him to call a doctor, Ravi exposed his annoyance. It did not mean Ravi did not have any love and affection for his son. It shows his poverty. Ravi helps from Damodar but he refused to help and Raju passed away for lack of medical action. Sometimes, after Raju's death, he wondered if his mind was affected by the erratic way his memory worked, scoring certain Events deeply into his mind, clouding others over (273). Ravi leads his life with a broken heart. At last, he joined with a mob of young notorious people; again he lost his courage as he was fully broken by his son's death. After Ravi's marriage, he leads a tricky life with many problems, which is common to most of the urban Indian population for the problem of accommodation. Ravi is also an overambitious person.

On visiting the house of Damodar he wants to earn a lot of money to buy a luxurious bed, a gold watch, and a car. "I want more. I want more. I want a bed.... Day beds, night beds, double bed, divans" (75). Damodar raised his status of life by the illegal business. Ravi follows the morality in his life, but to give sophisticated life to his wife he follows the life of Damodar. Ravi is in a tension strategy because the value of Damodar's and Nalini's tradition was different; both characters reveal mortality and immortality. The novel was based on the conflict of the predicament of conscience; Ravi started behaving with his wife Nalini in a very cruel manner. He thought that poverty and hunger brought all sorts of suffering to him including the

disintegration of his family. The novel plainly shows that Kamala Markandaya has dealt with the sufferings of the rural society, miseries of the orphan society, poverty, and hunger, the clash between materialism and spiritualism, east-west encounter, the conflict between tradition and modernity. Markandaya does not falsify the picture of Ravi's problems by making easy solutions, but there is always hope.

The flaw of the individual is shown in the eccentric development of Ravi's weakening. In comparison to other works of Kamala Markandaya, *A Handful of Rice* highlights the concepts of rural India, its sufferings, its traditions; it does not remain completely aloof from the cultural values. The life of the city blessed by the transformation is symbolized by the city of Madras. Damodar is a product of the west, and Ravi's interaction with Damodar is the East-West encounter in the novel. The main character Ravi is tempted by the riches of the cities that have nothing to offer the poor. In an offer to earn his livelihood, he becomes a part of the underworld. Thus the hero of the novel has first dealt with hunger, want, and scarcity.

Even tannery was good because it was an indication of modern emotionless revolution. The author's description is about the hunger people to show their needs and sufferings in the day to day life. The cost of shelters and food are too high that he could not sustain it. The character Ravi felt a lot of shortage and poverty and struggles a lot to get a handful of rice. Ravi's perception of city life shows the difference between his fantasy and reality. To overcome his poverty and scarcity he decided to lead a life in the city. But he faced more poverty, scarcity, and mental illness. Ravi gives value to morality in rural as well as urban. But in city life, his situation and his poverty lead him to another aspect of life. The cruelty of poverty and starvation made Ravi immoral in the city. Finally novel is suggestive way of poverty and hunger. Every character in the novel struggles to get a handful of rice in their daily routine.

Rural reflection of the theme defined on the life and culture of rural India. The tragic dilemma of rural India has been depicted with moving realism. It envelopes lack of family planning, tradition, wants for a son, crime, unemployment, class conflict, lethargic attitude as dominant factors of the Indian rural society.

The novel presents Markandaya's terrible vision of life with the genuine concern for the sad through the characters like Ravi, Nalini, Jayamma. The tradition of the joint family system is reflected with its merits and demerits through the family of Ravi. There is also a cultural clash between rural culture represented by Ravi, a poor and hungry boy, and urban culture through the life of Damodar, a notorious criminal. The novel addresses how the desire for a comfortable life also forces one to follow anti-social activities. Ravi is drawn towards Damodar, a criminal to comfort himself from economic injure. Kamala Markandaya's rich experience of the west, rural Indian forms the basis of her innovative inclination.

The issues touched in the novels, whether on the economic, social, or human level, reflect rural India in its true manifestations. The setting of *A Handful of Rice* is given by a South Indian village in the surrounding area of Madras without any imagined locale to universalize the theme.

The migration from the village to a city due to stable hunger and poverty due to the lack of employment opportunities is a common sight of an Indian village and it is equally evident in *A Handful of Rice* as stated by C. Anna Latha Devi too by saying that "*A Handful of Rice* reveals the novelist's deep distress for the simple villagers who migrate from their native villages to the cities in search of green pastures" (Devi 68).

The village youth with their poor education and poverty dream of gratifying all their desires by going to the city. The protagonist, driven by intense hunger, is also the victim of such a dream even with bigger hopes when he leaves his village to set himself up in the city. But the

city already full of university graduates spares little hope for him. Srivastava beautifully comments as such, “Ravi is an impractical youth, wriggling out of the rural shell but dreaming of dizzy heights and then afflicted by the denial” (Srivastava, 134-144).

Ravi knows no laws and is involved in petty criminal activities. He drinks because he wants to forget his sorrows. P.P Mehta suggests that “the struggle between man and consuming hunger, before which honor, morality, and even God do not count” (Mehta, 225). Ravi is caught in the whirlpool of change from the tradition-bound rural society to the machine ridden materialistic urban setting.

Ravi struggles but never becomes a rich man. “The novel adapts the society of India” (Reddy, 154). The problems, thoughts, and hopes of the protagonist are similar to ours i.e. the common rural folk with a worldwide appeal. The tragic dilemma of rural India has been illustrated with moving realism in the novel. The novel depicts here both rural and urban society in true colors. According to Shiv K. Kumar, “Kamala Markandaya is the most skillful of all the contemporary Indian novelists writing in English both in respect of her sensitive conduct of a foreign medium and her authentic portrayal of the Indian scene” (Kumar, 1-9).

Poverty is the keynote of an Indian village. Most of the people are poor in Indian villages as the villages do not offer any chance to the people to earn a better livelihood. The villagers in *A Handful of Rice* are in a wretched plight as the novelist reveals that

“They had all lived between bouts of genteel and acute poverty the kind in which the weakest went to a wall, the old ones, and the babies, dying of tuberculosis, dysentery, the falling fever, recurrent fever, and any other names for what was basically, simply nothing but starvation” (129).

In our daily life, they so often find people begging for a handful of rice, flour, and any other foodstuff. A person lean and his stomach bent internal in appetite and starvation is a common sight in a village as in the case of Ravi's friend Damodar. The problem of a growing population, a common experience of a village, is also highly discussed in the novel when Nalini is going to have a child, according to the tradition, Jayamma sends Ravi out of the house. Outside the house, he meets a man and both are comfortable in conversation.

Ravi comes to realize the man has many children. Now the man also understands the fact and says, "one's easy, two's easy, three and four one can manage but when they keep coming sometimes tell you, brother, "I want to put my hands around their necks and squeeze until I know I'll never again have to think about feeding them, no, never again hear them whimper" (126). Ravi too has many brothers and sisters. Apu has a large family and in time Nalini gives birth to four children. One of them dies. Thangam also has many children. Generally in India, most of the rural families want sons to carry on their generation.

Most often this wish of sons is the sole reason for large families. A son is born to Ravi and Nalini. Apu is very happy. He thinks "there had been babies before: his daughters, the twin sons of whom neither he nor his wife could bear to speak, who had been born dead... Thangam's babies, daughter after daughter. Now, at last, a male child had been born to his house" (131).

Ravi also desires a child, preferably a son rather than a daughter, a little boy who would run after him and call him father, who would look up to him and to whom in time he would pass on his skills, so that he would never have to worry about whom hand over to like poor old Apu"(92).

The novel is full of typical Indian rural scenes. In the very beginning, we have a chance to look into Jayamma's kitchen. It is a typical rural kitchen. A blackened range runs along one wall with firewood and charcoal stacked at the end.

Apu's house is very small and overcrowded. To see a crowd waiting for a religious procession is also a common view in villages. In this novel, Apu's family members are waiting hour upon hour for processions. The novel also presents India's rural tradition. For example, in some of the families it is a tradition that during childbirth, the male members of the family have to go out of the house. When Nalini is going to deliver a child, Jayamma sends Ravi out of the home and he has to spend many hours on the road.

Mostly in villages, the young girls are strictly watched over by their parents. Ravi has sisters and he knows the strict watch that is kept on young unmarried girls in their community. Jayamma also has a watch on Nalini like an eagle. Ravi's wife Nalini is a typical village housewife who shares her husband's poverty with patience. She even bears the anger of Ravi who often beats her. The story of their life is the story of innumerable poor persons who are leading a miserable life under the burden of poverty which is a common sight in villages. Ravi, in his economic crisis, is tempted to be in the company of Damodar, a criminal. Ravi even connects the mob to raid a godown of rice. This present circumstance is also characteristic of the rural scene where individual people in the absence of money-earning opportunities turn to be anti-social agents. It is generally felt that Markandaya's themes reflect the tragic vision of life.

Her novels portray her real concern for the hopelessness of poverty-stricken masses. This fact cannot be denied that Indian villages are full of sorrow and sufferings of a person who can hardly make both his ends meet and this fact is clear in *A Handful of Rice* through the example of

Ravi. Sometimes such families are prosperous, but sometimes the economic condition of the joint family is very critical because there are many dependants in the family.

In Apu's house, they filled with lot of family members and the earning members are only two leading to sadness and acute economic crisis in the family. There is a cultural clash in each of Kamala Markandaya's novels. Ravi, yet, regards him and is drawn towards him quite regularly and pine for the comforts and luxuries enjoyed by Damodar. But, simultaneously, he has had a different sanskara inculcated in him in his early life in the village and this prevents him from straying as also revealed by Dr. S. Nagendra Kumar Singh as such, "Ravi respected him (Damodar) for it. He, he knew, would have gone in for rich food, for silk shirts and enamel cuff links: yet his upbringing had taught him to focus inward, upon the constant light within" (Singh, 113).

Uma Parameswaran also talks of such ethics when she says, "Ravi never does get rid of his bourgeois morality. We are meant to see Gandhian qualities of uprightness; and the ancient hidden strength of the village mind that cleaves to honesty and the simple life" (Parameswaran, 139). She has enjoyed the glittering world of the West which has enriched her stock of themes, yet rural India forms the basis of her creative urge and rural India finds an unforgettable room in her vision which can be felt in the following words: Although She has a gift to creating very lively characters and dramatizing the events with a dense and realistic narrative, she is alert to different conflicting issues that rural India in transition confronts. Therefore, the bear's testimony to the fact that the novel, *A Handful of Rice*, presents a lively and true reflection of rural India.

CHAPTER -IV

Summing up

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Kamala Markandaya was an optimistic author and wheel of Indian English fiction. She published and deals only with urban and village novels. She introduced the characters in the novels related to suffering and hunger. She gives a constructive note at the end of the novel. This encouraging message is an eye opener to the readers. She depicts not only presenting the important aspects and varied colors of human life but also in socio-cultural conflicts in their fiction. She shows more tremendous love with life and naturally, both intend to celebrate life.

Life is so full of significance to them that they discover a chance of heavenly divine music in the chaos of life. However trying to find that divine tune, they attempt to analyze and treat the illness inflicted by people, society, and environment thoughtfully.

In the selected novels of Kamala Markandaya, that have been taken up for the present, study, Kamala Markandaya has depicted some samples of many Indians rural India, urban India, In these novels *Nectar in a Sieve*, *A Handful of Rice* Markandaya., has shown a fine contrast between the rural and the urban and the tradition and modernity. Markandaya uses the South Indian villages, cities, and locations in these novels. The South Indian villages and cities, which had seen and experienced in her childhood and youth, have left a deep impact on her mind. The descriptions of the life of the peasant and the agricultural operations etc.

In her attempt to discover that divine song, they try to diagnose and treat the illnesses inflicted by a human. *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* based on poverty, hunger, alienation, social realism, East-west conflict, and also deals husband-wife relationship.

Her genuine concern for a miserable lot of the poverty-stricken masses and their ruthless exploitation in her motherland in sharp contrast with the glitter, affluence, and comfort of the west and decidedly further deepened her tragic vision. Her distress for the have not has found a continuous expression in *Nectar in a Sieve*, *A Handful of rice*. Further colonialism and following the development of the Indians and the struggle for independence in India have also contributed to her unsuccessful vision.

To give practical touch to her themes, the picture of human nature which presents is not poetic. She does not idealize or glorify but presents life as it is, with its variegated canvas. Jealousies, intrigues, petty quarrels, and rivalries are all there, but at the same time, there is goodness, patient sufferance, and heroic endurance, and living faith in a benevolent god too. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, and *A Handful of Rice*, Markandaya does full of justice to the Indian love of, and attachment to the land and the family. The novels brim with a lie and find an echo in every Indian heart.

The theme of rootlessness points out the vulnerability of man before nature and circumstances. Sometimes floods and sometimes man-made whims like rapid industrialization and lure for modernism uproot people. *Nectar in a Sieve* represents rootlessness caused by industrialization and the rage of nature in the form of floods and droughts. *A Handful of Rice* of the novel caused due to hunger and the unpleasant situation resulting in darkness in the life of Ravi. Thus, all real experiences of life have been alive in Markandaya's novel.

The implied message in Markandaya's novels is that Indians should confidently pursue their path holding fast to their traditional values and using methods appropriate to their culture. It is true that the novelist accepts the evils and deficiencies in Indian life and society and warns her

countrymen against a mindless simulation of the west, yet she desires that Indians should adopt rapidity, quickness, and spirit of struggle for rights from the west.

The most outstanding feature of Markandaya's fiction is the concept of cultural stability in the silence and bustle of social, economic, and political changes in modern India. The purposive direction of her creative sensibility endows her novels with certain representative characters that make them out as an important entity in Indo- English Fiction.

Markandaya takes her characters to form a wide spectrum. All characters are sufferers of circumstances like the people of this world. They try their ability to lead a quiet life by trying to fight various hardships. These struggles can be in the form of environmental and also man-made. It is for manufacture struggles, Markandaya expresses her repulsion. She feels worried to see a man becoming the most enemy of man.

Nectar in a Sieve clearly shows that she was familiar with the countryside. The city life as described in *A Handful of Rice* also reflects on her experience of Indian city life.

Markandaya's short career as a journalist has drilled her to act as a close but disconnected observer of the culture. Her young participation in the liberation struggle, her wide tours in India, her stay in a village, and also her social work has made her awake about the social changes that were brought in, in post-independence India and also the social problems of the rustic and the urban lot alike. Hence, without doubt, there is originality in her faithful depiction of all the contemporary, social aspects in her novels.

Markandaya believes in social institutions like family and marriage and suggests that their traditional image should be maintained. She stresses the need for mutual understanding and love between husband and wife for the establishment of an ideal family. She points out that only

such relationships can give permanence to the institution of marriage. Rukmani and Nathan, in *Nectar in a Sieve*, stand as good examples of such a relationship. Even a little doubt may spoil the delight of a family. The married Life of Murugan and Ammu, in *Nectar in a sieve* could last no longer as Murugan had married on his own.

Markandaya also points out the disorganizations of the family barrenness of women, poverty, and hunger leading to prostitution, etc. With a few exceptions, Markandaya portrays the woman characters with a conventional image, always lesser to men and ready for any sacrifice. She also points out the male right found in Indian society. A girl-child, that too for the firstborn, is most unwanted in the Indian society even today. One should have a son to continue his line. The Hindu philosophy, that one can never attain 'moksha' without a son, is deeply grounded in the traditional minds. They observed such thinking in Rukmani and Nathan, in *Nectar in a Sieve* in Apu, Thangam, and Ravi in *A Handful of Rice*, etc.

A man, though he engaged in extra-marital relationships, expects that his wife should ever be loyal to him. Ravi, in *A Handful of Rice*, even examines the bloodspots on the bedsheet, after his first night with Nalini, to ensure her virginity. Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve*, though not much educated, acts more boldly and assertively than her husband. Thus Markandaya stressing the need for maintenance of social institutions like family and marriage points out the troubles of women in the Indian society. For a student of Indian society, the study of the caste factor is a must. But Markandaya avoids any reference to castes in her novels. In rural India, caste-consciousness is deep-rooted.

The class conflict is shown in *Nectar in a Sieve*, between the zamindar and the tenants, between the tannery owners and the workers. In all these cases always the poor people suffer but

they accept the sufferings respectfully without any protest. Such a nature of meek tolerance angers foreigners like Kenny, the doctor in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Even though some of the characters like Arjun, Thambi, and Ravi, try to raise a voice of protest, it is suppressed ultimately. Whether any of her characters succeed or not, Markandaya succeeds in registering her protest against the exploitation of the weaker section of society. Dr.H.M. Williams remarks; "like Anand she claims to be on the side of the human and life, against machinery, against exploitation of the weak, against war and violence." Social change, caused by industrialization, technology, ecological factors, etc., gets a wide canvas in Markandaya's novels.

In Nectar in a Sieve, social change is brought in by many factors. The starting of the tannery is the most important among all, as it shows a quick effect. Though industrialization helps in taking rural India towards progress, at the same time it acts as a curse for the simple village dwellers. The poor farmers are to face eviction from their lands, inflation, degradation of human values, and pollution. While traditional human values are lost, money has become everything. In pre-industrial rural India, there was morality based on love, unselfishness, and humanity. But these values of community feeling and brotherhood have become hollow words in the industrialized society, where man himself has turned into a machine.

Apart from industrialization, Markandaya also points out the ecological factors like drought and excess rains, which also bring in social change. By criticizing the bad effects of industrialization, Markandaya may invite the attention of the policy and the plan makers of the nation to take due care of the rural, poor, but when she attacks nature itself it does appear that she wants to show the politicians and the bureaucrats, who are ignorant of the real problems of the rural poor, that they cannot achieve nation's progress only by industrialization and technology.

A Handful of Rice, the village youth join a general exodus to the city in search of jobs. Of course, the reasons for deserting the villages are the same as we have witnessed in *Nectar in a Sieve*, the main being the loss or excess of rains. Kamala Markandaya welcomes industrialization and technology, but not at the cost of traditional values and national image. Kamala Markandaya successfully depicts the social problems of rural ' as well as urban Indian societies, with bare realism. The picture of hunger and poverty painted in *Nectar in a Sieve and A Handful of Rice* is not only touching but realistic. Markandaya not only brings out the causes of poverty but also points out its effects. She attributes poverty to unemployment, underemployment, and ill-planned economic activities due to illiteracy, nature's hazards, social and economical exploitation by the upper class, absence of family planning, etc. These causes create downward mobility in the social status. Rukmani and Nathan are a happy, self-sufficient couple, are required to go for begging in the temple. Markandaya also points out the effects of poverty and hunger; beggar, crime, prostitution, etc. Poverty and hunger make one forget one's self-respect.

In *Nectar in a Sieve* Rukmani's family goes to the extent of searching the gutters lot whatever eatables they could get. Both Rukmani and Nathan who once used to throw feasts to others, stand in long queues at the temple to get free food. Even the children, an orphan like Puli, have no other go hut to beg from others. When one gets nothing on begging, lie tries to snatch it from others. This leads to crime. When Puli, and many other parentless children like him, fail to get any charity, they go for theft.

In *A Handful of Rice* Markandava depicts the underground world, which is nothing but the result of violent protest against poverty and hunger. While commenting on the move operations, Markandaya points out that the trade-in limitations of the government itself have given scope to such things. She seems to suggest that if the government liberalizes its import

policies, there would be no illegal smuggling of the goods which are most sought after by the consumers. Markandaya also depicts how unemployment gives birth to crime. Ravi a village youth, simple and innocent, when fails to get any employment, becomes frustrated and joins the gang of Damodar, the petty criminals.

Poverty and hunger force even plain and innocent woman like Ira to prostitution, in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Markandaya depicts the problem of prostitution, not only in *Nectar in a sieve*, and *A Handful of Rice* also. Apart from this social problem Markandaya also refers to other problems like alcoholism, gambling, etc. Markandaya does not suggest any remedies to these problems. But it is also true that if she won have done so; the critics would have classified her writings into the category of propagandist literature. But she succeeds in drawing the attention of the readers to these problems and stimulating their reasons to find a solution for themselves.

The ending of the novel is fulfilling as a conclusion to one part of Ruku's life, yet the start of the novel denotes the near Ruku's genuine story. Toward the start of *Nectar in a Sieve* we see that she is with her kids and grandkids and that she received child, Puli, is still with her, having half fatal leprosy. Ruku has lost her better half and is losing her sight, and her life is finding some conclusion.

The novel must open, yet doesn't end, with Ruku's thought of her dying days. On the off chance that Ruku confronted death at the underlying finish of the novel; the entire issue would be an unmistakable novel about the unproductiveness of affliction, a story of hopelessness covered by death. All things considered, Ruku closes the novel on a cheerful note. She goes back home to her happy place, has her family by her side, and a new part of her life lies before her. They know

she is maturing, and so her dying days are unavoidably upon her, but Markandaya doesn't want her death to be the take-home message of the whole novel.

Instead, as researcher Indira Ganeshan notes in their first experience with the novel, the book closes with "later," which can be taken to show guarantee and any expectation of things to come. Finally the novel invites the reader to imagine the future. To learn what happens "later," one need only to turn over to page one. But to feel the inspiring promise and endurance of the future-which is the real gift of Markandaya's novel-one need only to close the book, and rest attentively on its final word.

In *Handful of Rice* after more hesitations and dilemma, he reverts back to Damodar. But Damodar rejects him. Eventually he tries to rob a granary with the mob, but his conscience holds him back. The novel ends up here with Ravi still searching for a handful of rice which from the beginning remains inaccessible.

Markandaya novels give the clear way to the readers. Through this novel they can realize how the Indian poor people can be suffered due to hunger, poverty and how people can be tolerate the pain. Finally they can analyze the author gives the optimistic view to the readers. The author ends the word "Hope".

From our study, they can observe that the themes and characters in Markandaya's novels focus on the range and depth of her interest in contemporary India. She succeeds in the artistic projection of the socio-cultural setting in which her characters move. Markandaya very realistically mirrors Indian life in terms of its socio-economic and socio-cultural changes. Kamala Markandaya's characters are not pessimistic. They do not run away from life. They have in them, the traditional quality of tolerance. Despite all the problems, her characters have faith in

the future. Thus Markandaya's novels open out into the future. This is what possibly Markandaya expects of the Indians, to have confidence and hope for a better future, at the same time resume our faith in the traditional values of humanity, unselfishness, and love for all. In conclusion say that Kamala Markandaya has triumph in a faithful and realistic representation of contemporary Indian society and that she is a conscious social observer, critic, and thinker, who sympathizes with the poor and preserves a sense of hope.

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