Exploring the portrayal of women's role and their connection to the environment in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Exploring the portrayal of women's role and their connection to the environment in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*** submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.,)** is carried out by me **S** during the period from **JANUARY 2024 - MAY 2024** under the guidance of **Dr. (Mrs.) Grace Priyadarsini Appadurai,** Assistant Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (SF), Coimbatore, and, has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Exploring the Portrayal of Women's Role and their Connection to the Environment in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a sieve*** submitted, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.,)** is a dissertation carried out by **SARANYA.S** during the period of her study from **JANUARY 2024 - MAY 2024** , under the guidance of **Dr.(Mrs.) Grace Priyadarsini Appadurai,** Assistant Professor, Department of English Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (SF), Coimbatore, and, has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associate ship, Fellowship or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

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NOTES

In the text, abbreviation is used for the name of the primary texts in the parenthetical references which are follows:

- Nectar in a Sieve NS

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ABSTRACT

Kamala Markandaya, an Indian writer exposes the issue of women in relation to nature in her exceptional work *Nectar in a Sieve*. She elaborates how women are marginalized and devalued on large-scale in male chauvinistic societies. Similarly, another oppressed non-human body, the environment has also been degraded, devalued, and mistreated by the local domination of masculine regimes. In these villages, women and nature are regarded as equal and same due to the inerter in gandre productive qualities and all the lower traits are assigned to them by the male members of thesesocieties. Hence, both women and nature are abused, underestimated, exploited, and dishonored by the agents of patriarchal domination. This degradation of land and the environment has become a critical issuewithin agrarian, rural South- Asian societies, particularly among women, who took stance in favor of setting up reverence for women and nature. This project examines and explores the subtle and sublime relationship of women and nature within the critique of selected text and explores Markandaya's creation of women and environment as two parallel but independent entities even in a complex environmental perspective; and on the other hand, women's struggle to establish not only their own worth but also to give value to nature, environment and even animals. In *Nectar in a Sieve* the development of characters, such as Rukmani and Ira are made beautifully and, in the end, we find a complete image of these rural women. She elaborates how women are marginalized and devalued on large-scale in male chauvinistic societies. Similarly, another oppressed non-human body, the environment has also been degraded, devalued, and mistreated by the local domination of masculine regimes.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Literature is life". The word “Literature” originated from the Latin word "Litera," means an "acquaintance with letters. It is a body of work, either written, oral, or visual, having imaginative language that realistically portrays the human's thoughts, emotions, and experiences in their lives. It is also a product of a culture that connects a man's values, emotions, actions, and ideas. It is, therefore, a creation of human experiences that talk about people and their world. Put another way, Literature is an artistic form that embodies imaginative, artistic, and creative literary pieces that stand out for their exquisite style or expressive power.

"Literature raises life to a new level of meaning and understanding and restores sanity and justice in an insane and unjust world," says Cirilo F. Bautista. The Anglo-Saxon settlers' Germanic heritage is where English literature history starts. Among them is Beowulf, the first and the most famous work in Old English Literature. As the Normans conquered England, Middle English replaced the Old English, and the father of English Literature, Geoffrey Chaucer, used it in his famous work, The Canterbury Tales. There by, William Shakespeare was admired for his renowned plays and sonnets, making him the most famous and finest writer in English literature history.

In general, Literature refers to anybody of written work. However, in a more restricted sense, it can also refer to works expressly regarded as artistic, such as plays, poetry, and prose fiction. Oral Literature, a large portion of which has been transcribed, has been included in the criteria in recent decades. In addition to serving as a means of amusement and knowledge

transmission, Literature can also serve social, psychological, spiritual, or political purposes. Works in various non-fiction categories, including biographies, diaries, memoirs, letters, and essays, can also be considered Literature as an artistic medium. Literature encompasses non-fiction books, journals, and other printed materials on a specific topic within its broad definition.

Literature is a form of human expression. Indian Literature refers to works produced in the Indian subcontinent in a range of vernacular languages, including Bengali, Bihari, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Lahnda, Siraiki, and Sindhi, in addition to English. The Literature created throughout the Indian subcontinent before and after the Republic of India was set up in 1947 is called "Indian Literature.

The Vedas, considered the authorized Hindu sacred scriptures, were composed in Sanskrit and represent the earliest known works of Indian Literature. Prose commentaries like the Brahmanas and the Upanishads were added to the Veda. Sanskrit literature was produced between 1500 BCE and 1000 CE, with the first through seventh century CE marking its pinnacle of growth. Religious and philosophical writings gave way to other forms, including dramas, narrative folktales, court poetry, and sensual and devotional songs. Pali and Ardhamagadhi, two other literary languages, were adopted by Buddhism and Jainism, respectively, because Sanskrit was associated with the Brahminical religion of the Vedas. The contemporary languages of northern India sprang from these and other similar languages.

The Literature of those languages was heavily influenced by the Literature of ancient India, which included the Bhagavata-Purana, the other Puranas, and two epic compositions in Sanskrit, the Mahabharata and Ramayana.

Furthermore, the Sanskrit schools of rhetoric significantly influenced the development of court poetry in modern Literature, and the Sanskrit philosophies served as the foundation for philosophical writing in later Literature. Tamil, a language spoken in South India, is an exception to this three-pattern of Sanskrit influence because of its classical heritage. Sindhi and Urdu are two more outliers.

Western literary styles began to influence Indian Literature in the 19th century, especially during the height of British rule over the subcontinent. The most notable outcome of this influence was the widespread introduction of vernacular prose. Indian writers started to embrace genres, including novels and short stories, as well as realism, social issues, and psychological depiction. In the subcontinent, an English literary tradition was also formed.

In Markandaya's early years, India was formally a territory of the British Empire. This resulted in a fusion of modern English and traditional Indian cultural elements, chief among them being the extensive usage of English. In the 1920s and 1930s, a popular movement advocating for India's independence gained strength, partly because of Mohandas Gandhi's leadership. 1948 was the final year of the 1954 book written by Kamala Markandaya, Nectar in a Sieve. The novel tells the story of the marriage between Rukmani, the youngest daughter of a village headman, and Nathan, a tenant farmer. It is set in India during rapid urban expansion—India's independence from Britain and Markandaya's departure.

The story is told in the first person by Rukmani, beginning from her arranged marriage to Nathan at the age of 12 to his death many years later. Nectar in a Sieve presents familial love and sacrifice as the most critical aspect of life. While this point of view is beautiful and inspiring, it is also poignant because Rukmani's deep love for her family coexists with her inability to

protect and support them. The novel's title is from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Work Without Hope" poem from 1825. An excerpt from the poem is the epigraph of the novel: Work without hop Nectar in a sieve and hope without an object cannot live. In the novel, "Change I had known before, and it had been gradual," remarks Rukmani. However, the transformation that suddenly swept through my life and the lives of all of us, crashing into our town, appeared to have happened in the blink of an eye."

Kamala Markandaya is one of the foremost woman novelists of Indian origin writing in English. She won international fame and recognition following the release of Nectar in a Sieve, her debut book (1954). Kamala Markandaya occupies a very prominent place in Indian English novels. An excellent storyteller, she can comment upon the Indian reality authentically.

Kamala Markandaya was born in a well-to-do orthodox Brahmin family in Mysore in 1924. Her father was a rail transport officer. This allowed her to travel widely in India and abroad. In this way, she was able to see and study the manners and the morals of the people from close quarters. These experiences helped her a lot when she took up writing. She entered Madras University at the age of sixteen, but she became more interested in Journalism and graduated much later. After leaving the university, she first tried her hand at journalism but then became an army liaison officer. Soon, she gave up that job and started working as a freelance journalist in Madras and Bombay.

To have a first-hand experience of rural India, she lived in a south Indian village for some time. Hence, we find such extraordinary depth and realism in her treatment of rural Indian life. She migrated to England in 1948 and took up a variety of jobs. She married John Taylor

and is now finally settled in England. In her novels, she takes an anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist stance. East–West encounter is also a significant theme in her works.

Among the most renowned and active Indo-Anglican novelists is Kamala Markandaya. She worked as a journalist during the Second World War; her 1954 work Nectar in a Sieve, a masterpiece, brought her renown and international attention. It became a bestseller and was recognized by the American Library Association as a noteworthy book of 1955. In 1974, she was recognized for her literary accomplishments and service when she was awarded the Asian Prize.

Her books stand out for accurately capturing Indian life and its rich experiences. Her debut novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1955), tells the tale of a peasant couple's struggles. Human relationships are strained against the backdrop of the Quit India Movement in Some Inner Fury (1957). The 1960 novel A Silence of Desire highlights the tensions between reason and faith. The contrast between Indian spiritual beliefs and the materialistic world of the West is highlighted in the 1963 film Possession. The films A Handful of Rice (1966) and Two Virgins (1973) explore how Western modernism affects and motivates the main characters to speak out against their milieu.

The British engineering business that is requested to build a dam in India is shown in The Coffer Dames (1969). In the 1972 film The Nowhere Man, the plight of Indian immigrants in England is examined. Three generations of the Devpur royal dynasty are chronicled in The Golden Honeycomb (1977). Her most recent book was Pleasure City (1982). It talks about the arguments and discussions that start. Many Indians appreciate Kamala Markandaya for being an outspoken voice, and she is often given credit for popularizing Indian Literature. According

to Charles Larson of American University in Washington, most Americans' impression of India was shaped by Kamala Markandaya; she aided forgather American readers' perception of India in classrooms and book groups. Following her husband's death in 1986, Markandaya continued to write while traveling often to India. She found herself as an Indian expat. Due to renal disease, Kamala Markandaya passed away in London on May 16, 2004, at the age of 79.

Although she is no longer alive, her voice will teach others in the West about a culture otherwise largely unfamiliar. Markandaya brings to light the complications of postcolonial. She is one of the first generation at the play of Indo-English writers born during the height of the British Raj in India, along with Manohar Malgonkar, R. K. Narayan, and Mulk Raj Anand. More than any other writer, her stories depict the tension of the love-hate relationship between the Indian aristocracy and the British. Markandaya, along with Attia Hosain, Raja Rao, and others, is among the pioneering group of Indian diasporic writers Ramachandra Rajan. Between 1940 and 1947, she worked as a journalist and published short stories in Indian newspapers. She married an Englishman and immigrated to England in 1948, where she had one daughter.

Markandaya published Nectar in a Sieve, her first novel, in 1954, to wide critical acclaim. A few years after India, Nectar in a Sieve was first published in 1954 and obtained formal independence from Britain. It is set in an era of rapid urban expansion in India. It is the heartbreaking tale of a vast Hindu family living in extreme poverty in a far-off rural town in southern India. Rukmani tells the story in the first person, starting with her forced marriage to tenant farmer Nathan when she was twelve years old. Kamala Markandaya is known to give apt and suitable titles to her novels.

The title *Nectar in a Sieve* has been derived from Coleridge's famous lines, which the novelist has used as a prelude to her novel on rural India: Hope without an object is like work without hope in a sieve cannot live. The couplet above is an apt and succinct description of the novel's rural life drama. 'Nectar' means the drink of the Gods (Amrit). This drink is the source of joy, peace, and contentment. A sieve is a small circular utensil with holes at the bottom. It is used to separate grain from chaff.

The rural Indian living in beautiful and natural surroundings is naturally expected to enjoy the Nectar of happiness. However, he is so poor that all his hope, joy, and happiness – the Nectar – pass through the holes of the sieve, i.e., his poverty. Collecting Nectar in a sieve is futile – it will flow out drop by drop. In the same way, the nectar happiness in the life of an average Indian is short-lived. This is what we see happening in Rukmani's life. Her life is the microcosm of the Indian reality. Her fate is the fate of almost every rural Indian.

Hope without an object is like work without hope in a sieve. The Nowhere Man (1972) is often considered the author's best book. The epic-scale narrative centers on the cultural fallout from South Asia's mass migration to Britain after World War II. Once more, the novel is prophetic and expects the writing of modern writers Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, and Hanif Kureishi. Markandaya's masterwork was followed by Pleasure City (1982), The Golden Honeycomb (1977), and Two Virgins (1973). Her publisher fired her when her last book, released as Shalimar (1982) in the US, garnered negative reviews from critics. She lived another twenty-two years but never wrote or published a book.

Markandaya's first book to be published, Nectar in a Sieve (1954), was her third book. The book was translated into seventeen languages and became an international bestseller. The

American Library Association appointed it a Notable Book a year later. It continues to be a top pick for university reading lists in the United States and Great Britain. Markandaya ensures the story's timeless quality and global appeal by never showing the novel's setting or placing the action in a specific period or place. This tactic is particularly successful because the work was released less than ten years after India gained independence from Britain.

Anita Mazumdar Desai was born on June 24, 1937. She is an Indian novelist and the professor of humanities in Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1978, the Sahitya Academy, India's National Academy of Letters, awarded her a Sahitya Award for her novel Fire on the Mountain. She also won the British Guardian Prize for The Village by the Sea. She is a writer who has made the Booker Prize shortlist three times.

Anita grew up conversing with friends in Hindi and German at home. Since she began learning English in school right away, she has always connected it to writing and reading. She attended Queen Mary's School in Delhi and graduated from the University of Delhi in 1957 with a bachelor's degree in English literature with honors. In 1958, she wed Ashvin Desai.

Lyrical descriptions of India's scenery are common in Desai's novels, and the alienation of foreigners from society is a significant source of tension in several of them. Her novels cover a wide range of topics, including modern family dynamics and the place of women in Indian society. Following the end of British colonialism in India, her characters grapple with identity issues and different language' roles. For instance, they saw the poetry-rich Urdu language being replaced by the more widely spoken Hindi and English, the language of global trade and contemporary education in the West.

In 1963, Desai published her debut book, Cry, the Peacock, about a lady trying to figure out who she is. Desai used her seemingly hopeless relationship with her elder husband to explore gender roles and traditional Indian marriage. In the 1971 film Bye-Bye, Blackbird, Indian immigrants in London are examined, as is their effort to reconcile their Eastern sensibilities with their Western environment. The 1978 novel Fire on the Mountain, winner of the Royal Society of Literature's Winifred Holtby Award, explores the relationship and contrasting viewpoints between an older woman and her great-granddaughter to highlight generational shifts. The novel's poetic beauty was commended, and its complexity was likened to Russian Literature of the 19th century. In the 1980s, in Clear Light of Day, the two sisters reflect on their past and recollect their memories at a family get-together.

The book received much attention for its vividness and depth of writing. An invitation to enter the pre- and postcolonial Indian family's world is extended to the reader. The family was formerly wealthy, but they now dwell in a dilapidated house and remember the good old days. Like many of Desai's books, most of the action in this one take place inside. Voices in the City (1965), Where Shall We Go This Summer? 1973, Games at Twilight (1979), The Village by the Sea (1983), which was adapted into a movie in 1992 and won the Guardian Prize for Children's Fiction in 1983, In Custody (1984), which was filmed in 1994, Baumgartner's Bombay (1988), and Journey to Ithaca (1995) are some of Desai's other books. The 1999 film Fasting, Feasting explores the similarities and differences between Indian and American culture, while the 2004 film The Zigzag Way narrates the tale of an American scholar who visits Mexico in search of his Cornish heritage. Three novellas collected as The Artist of Disappearance were released in 2011.

In 1972, Desai served on the National Academy of Letters in Delhi's English advisory council. As it is known in India, the Sahitya Academy gave Desai its highest honor in 1979. She started teaching in the 1980s at universities Including Smith, Mount Holyoke, and the University of Cambridge's Girton College in the US and England. Desai was appointed the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's first writing professor in over two decades in 1993. She also authored short stories, which were included in Fesmina, Thought, Harper's Bazaar, Quest, and other magazines. Desai took part in the Royal Society of Medicine and the American Academy of Arts and Letters Literature. Her daughter Kiran Desai's book The Inheritance of Loss won the Booker Prize in 2006.

British Indian author Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie, an essayist and novelist, was born on June 19, 1947. He belonged to a well-educated family. His father was Anis Ahmed Rushdie, a lawyer from Cambridge University who had his own business. His mother, Negin Bhatt, was a teacher. He went to the Cathedral and John Connon School in Mumbai and Rugby School in England. His college was King's College, and for graduate studies, he went to Cambridge University like his father, receiving a master's Degree in History in 1968.

He had aspired to become a writer since he was five. He started by acting briefly, after which he did freelance advertising for almost ten years. Rushdie's first book was 'Grimus' which was published in 1975. It was a story about an immortal Native American Eagle who goes on an expedition to find out life's true sense. Meanwhile, Rushdie was still working as a freelance ad writer, and it took him nearly five years to finish his second book, Midnight Children, released in 1981.

His book 'The Satanic Verses' (1988) turned Rushdie's life into a nightmare. The book's story refers to certain Quranic verses that were removed because they were about a time in the Prophet's life that was offensive to the Muslims. This spread outrage among the Muslim world, and Ayatullah Rahola Khomeini issued a 'fatwa' or 'death sentence' for Rushdie. The largest bookselling chains removed his book from their shelves, and Rushdie went into hiding. There were book burnings all over the world condemning the book that had insulted the Muslims so severely. Those who talked about taking Rushdie's side publicly were murdered, and Rushdie also became the center of many jokes later. His marriage had also previously been dissolved due to a life threat to his wife. Rushdie, however, remarried and had a son.

Rushdie made a public apology and embraced Islam but continued to live in isolation for many years. In 1990, Rushdie's novel, Haroun and the Sea of Stories, was released. His book 'The Moor's Last Sigh' also received criticism from Hindus. 'The Ground Beneath Her Feet' was published in 1999. It chronicles the tale of a singer who becomes lost during an earthquake.

Arundhati Roy, born in 1959 in Shillong, Meghalaya, is one of the best-known representatives of the contemporary generation of Indian writers who write in English.Roy's maiden novel – The god of Small Things – was greeted in 1997 by unprecedented attention from critics, pundits, and the media alike. The book, set in the Christian Syriac community of the southern state of Kerala, was a personal account of a tragic love story cutting across India's caste, religious, and political divides, as told through the eyes of twin children.

During in its theme and innovative in concept and language, the novel had many detractors in India but won international acclaim and secured the author the prestigious Booker Prize for the best novel by a Commonwealth author. She was the first Indian writer to win that

award. In an interview, Roy claimed she did not see herself as a writer; she merely had to write. The god of small things but did not know whether she had another novel in her.

In the intervening years, Roy has used her celebrity status in India to write instead in defense of causes she believes in, to become "a writer for the victims of Modernity." Almost unique among intellectuals, Roy publicly excoriated the Government for its decision to launch nuclear tests in 1998 in an extended and passionate essay – The End of Imagination – published simultaneously in India and Pakistan. Among the general euphoria and nationalistic pride generated by the test, Roy dared to declare herself, in a sentence often quoted for its courage as well as its felicitous hyperbole, “an independent mobile republic of one.”

In 1999, Roy pointed her sharp pen against the Narmada dam, which was under construction in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat states, in another highly critical essay entitled The Greater Common Good.Trained in architecture at the Delhi School of Architecture, she has worked at the National Institute of Urban Affairs, acted in a film, spent eight months in Italy studying the restoration of monuments, and wrote the script for an award-winning film.

Rukmani, an older woman, reflects on her life. The educated daughter of a village headman fell on tough times. Rukmani is married to Nathan, a tenant farmer, at twelve. Nathan treats her with kindness and respect as she learns the chores her new life requires. They have a beautiful daughter, Ira, within a year and good rice harvests. During the next six years, Rukmani does not conceive. Troubled that she cannot produce a son for Nathan, Rukmani visits her ill mother and meets Kenny, a foreign doctor. He treats her infertility without Nathan's knowledge. In quick succession, Rukmani bears five sons. With each birth, however, the family has a little less to eat. When a tannery is built nearby, unpleasant changes come to village life. Rukmani's

two oldest sons eventually go to work there. They help the family a great deal with their wages but are eventually dismissed for being ringleaders in a labor strike.

The year they arrange a good marriage for Ira, monsoon rains destroy all their crops. Rukmani sacrifices her savings to buy food for the family. Ira's husband returns Ira to her parents' home because she is barren. Again, Rukmani turns to Kenny without her husband's knowledge to help Ira conceive. His treatments are too late, however, since Ira's husband has taken another woman.

Rukmani becomes pregnant again and bears her last son, Kuti. Caring for Kuti lifts Ira out of her depression and despair until the crops fail from drought and the family once again goes hungry. They sell most of their possessions to pay half of what they owe the landowner for their lease. Reduced to foraging for roots and leaves, the family begins to weaken and starve. Kenny secures a servant's position in the city for Rukmani's third son. Rukmani's fourth son is killed stealing a calfskin from the tannery. Kuti suffers the most from hunger, and Ira prostitutes herself to feed him. Despite her efforts, he dies. A good rice harvest arrives too late to save Rukmani’s sons.

Kenny returns from one of his long absences with money raised to build a hospital in the village. He offers to train Rukmani’s remaining son, Selvam, as his assistant. Some villagers guess that Kenny is kind to Rukmani because they have an illicit relationship. Kunthi, a neighborhood wife who became a prostitute, spreads this rumor out of spite. When they were both young, Nathan fathered Kunthi’s two sons.

Kunthi uses this as leverage over them until Rukmani learns the truth and forgives Nathan. As Nathan is nearing fifty, he has no sons left to work in the land. He suffers from

rheumatism and debilitating fevers. Rukmani and Ira try to help, but they are not strong enough. Ira has a baby to care for, an albino boy conceived in prostitution but loved, nonetheless. The family experiences its most significant loss when the land agent tells Nathan and Rukmani their land has been sold to the despised tannery. No one else will lease land to a man as old and ill as Nathan, and Rukmani and Nathan must leave their home of thirty years to go to their son Murugan in the city. They leave Ira and their grandchild under Selvam's care.

Their possessions are reduced to the few bundles they carry, and Nathan and Rukmani try to find Murugan in the city. They rest one night at a temple, where thieves steal their bundles and all their money. A leprous street urchin named Puli helps them find the home of Kenny's doctor friend. They learn that Murugan has not worked there for the past two years and that he left the position for better wages at the Collector's house. At the Collector's, Murugan's wife informs them that Murugan has deserted her. Her older boy, their grandson, is thin and hungry. Her starving baby is too little to be Murugan's son. Rukmani sees that she and Nathan cannot impose upon their daughter-in-law. They return to the temple, where food is distributed each night to the destitute.

Rukmani and Nathan dream of home but need a means to make the trip. Rukmani tries to get work as a letter reader but earns only enough to buy rice cakes. Puli takes them to a stone quarry where there is better-paying work. He helps them learn to break stones, and they come to rely on him. They entrust him with their earnings and begin to hope as they save. One evening, Rukmani splurges on extra food and toys for Puli and her grandson. When she returns to Nathan at the temple, she expects him to be angry, but instead, he is violently ill.

During a week of monsoon rains, Nathan continues to work in the quarry despite his fevers and chills. One evening, after she gets paid, Rukmani begins to plan for a cart to take them home. Hurrying to catch up with Nathan, she finds him collapsed in the mud in the street. Kind strangers help carry him to the temple, where he dies in her arms after reminding her of their happiness together. After his death, Rukmani rashly promises Puli his health if he returns to the country with her, a promise Kenny and Selvam will help her keep. She introduces Puli to Selvam and Ira as the son she and Nathan adopted while they were away. Demonstrating both hope and compassion, Ira hastens to prepare a meal for Puli, and Selvam promises his mother they will manage.

CHAPTER II

RURAL LIFE

Kamala Markandaya analyzes various social problems in her novels. She describes the sufferings of the villagers and the workers, their poverty and destitution, and their miseries in the wake of unemployment. This novel also presented the problems of beggars in the novels. It realizes the sufferings of growing children brought up in utter poverty.

Poverty can lead people to moral downfall. The sufferers forget all morality when they are the victims of poverty. Under the impact of poverty, Kunthi in *Nectar in Sieve* blackmails Rukmani about her visit to Kenny. In possession, Ellie must resort to prostitution under the pressure of poverty. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Ira also becomes a prostitute of poverty. The conflict between the rich and the poor classes finds a good expression in her novels.

India is the largest democracy in the world. It is often said that India is a nation of villages. The village is the soul of India, without which it cannot survive. Despite the recent significant increase in the urban population, the rural economy and way of life remain crucial to India's existence and identity. Villages or village societies did not suddenly spring up but developed slowly due to environmental adjustments.

People from various parts of the world lead different types of lives. Their native place directly affects their ways of living, which are as different as their mentalities. All over the world, people are divided into two distinct groups- Urban and Rural. From a distance, an Indian village seems to be a simple community of individuals based on agriculture. It has many images of harmonious simplicity, such as a group of walls covered in mud, surrounded by a few trees and situated amidst a stretch of fields colored green or dun, with a few people moving slowly in and out of the area, birds singing, cattle lowing and oxcarts creaking, etc. When we talk about the village, we also remember the city. Though it is possible to distinguish between village and city landscape, there are some difficulties as both are interrelated.

The cities are characterized by multi-ethnicity, skilled craftsmanship, brisk trade, and commerce. In villages, the general masses lead a simple life, depending on agriculture. When we compare urban and rural areas, we find interdependence between both areas. Urban living supplies excellent prosperity and development, but the decline in peace has eclipsed the prosperity.

The rural regions have a slow-paced life, but they have room for emotions and affection. In villages, humanity is still alive. In India, after independence, revolt and resistance movements against colonial oppression can be seen in the villages of Bipin Chandra et al. India's Struggle for Independence (1987) is an exemplary description of the widespread revolts in rural India, which reveals the rural communities' reaction to injustice and oppression at the local and regional levels. The Gandhian movement was a significant force in focusing on the reform of rural communities. This shift of focus on the rural areas encouraged the urban youth who were politically active, so the gap between the city and the village began to be bridged.

Literature gives similar importance to rural and urban areas. However, Indian literature is mainly based on society, culture, and conditions. Although it has no boundaries and limitations, it is closer to Indian society than any other culture. The village, as the dominant part of Indian society, affects Indian literature. If the village is the soul of India, literature gives breath to this soul.

Indian literature depicts the village as a simple and backward place. However, it also reflects upon the changes that have occurred over the years. Vedic literature gives a correct picture of ancient rural India and its customs. The Arthashastra (400 BC-200AD) provides us with a picture of an ancient village with a classification of the king's duties related to the administrative affairs of the village. Manuscript, the book of Brahminical laws (100 AD-300 AD), classifies villages in size and habitation. Classical literature does not treat villages and towns as opposites.

The dharma-sutras and the grihya-sutras throw light on the various aspects of the lives of villagers. However, classical literature gives some facts to distinguish one from the other. The village is inhabited by peasants, artisans, and food suppliers, and the city is portrayed as a seat of royal power in classical literature.

Krishna-Sudama's narrative, the vrat-kathas, differentiates both on the basic discusses the poverty of Indian villages. It is the story of the conjugal life of Nathan and Rukmani, the peasants! Poverty forces them to wander from door to door in search of rice. In "A Handful of Rice", the novelist opens the novel with the problem of beggars. In her novels, under the pressure of hunger and poverty, characters must leave their native villages in search of food and

meet a tragic end. In Nectar in a Sieve, Arjun and Thambi Ceylon get jobs. Murugan also goes to the city to become a servant.

In “A Handful of Rice”, Ravi has to leave his house because he has to live. The weakest people, the elderly and the infants were the ones who resorted to the wall throughout periods of both severe and elegant poverty. The novelist also presents a graduate through people who have given rise to a new class of the Indian- English novel called the "The Hunger Theme." Millions of the country are shown as victims of periodic outbursts of hunger and famine. They meet all "sinister consequences flowing from such calamities: moral lapses, illicit trafficking, and all the ghastly scenes accompanying a famine in India." Characters in these novels are shown leaving their native village in search of food and employment.

Her first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* discusses the problems of rural India in detail to Western students. She tries her best to manifest the common problems connected with Indian farmers. Nathan and Rukmani represent Indian farmers who face unlimited trials and tribulations of life. This novel, based on the traditional pattern of life in countless villages all over India, is a passionate cry of protest against social injustice.

Nectar in a Sieve is the sad story of a large poverty-stricken Hindu family in a remote rural village in Southern India. Despite valiant efforts, the family did not extricate itself from abject poverty caused by hardships of nature and economics. This poverty forced the only daughter into prostitution and caused three sons to leave the village to seek employment. With little to eat, it was a miracle the family remained alive. Despite their hardships, the family showed love, contentment, and hope that their situation would improve, but this hope never became a reality.

Plot and character are the most essential elements in a work of fiction; characterization holds a prominent position. Mrs. Kamala Markandaya 's characters reveal a tremendous variety. Her novels have both the English and the Anglo-Indian characters. Her characters are realistic and convincing. Nayantara Sahgal (1912), a distinguished women novelist, appreciates Mrs. Markandaya' s art of characterization.

She sees: "She (Mrs. et al.) develops her characters very well, more so than male writers. I am not saying that because I am a woman, but her characters seem to be made of flesh and blood" (The Hindustan Times Weekly, 1975). Industrialization mars the countryside's natural beauty and creates various problems. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, the tannery owners invaded Rukmani 's village with "chatter and din and had taken from us the maiden where our children played and had made the bazaar prices too high for us."

Kamala Markandaya pre-sents South Indian life in its traditional, conservative, and rural aspects, with convincing sincerity and fascinating power. In the pre-independence era, Mulk Raj Anand presented the peasant's tale of woe and suffering in rural society. Kamala Markandaya, with her capable representational realism and evocative description of the rural atmosphere, achieves perfect poise between the rural reality and disciplined urbanity of tragic delineation of the effect of poverty, natural disaster, and unwelcome modernization peasant family.

Nectar in a Sieve by Kamala Markandaya (1996) is a relatively short novel that introduces a Western student's life in rural India and the changes that occurred during the British colonization of the nation. The story is poetic and poignant, yet simple to read, and it may be

enjoyed on many different levels. At its core, it tells the tale of a rural peasant life and an arranged yet love marriage.

Additionally, it is a story about the indomitable human spirit that overcomes poverty and unending misfortune. Additionally, it is a story that has been compared with Pearl Buck's 'The Good Earth, though a nearer and proper analogy would be K.S. Venkatramani's Murugan the Tiller. She takes us to the heart of a south Indian village where life has not changed for a thousand years. Now, industry and modern technology invade the village in the shape of a tannery, and from this impact, sinister consequences issue. Markandaya writes that fear, hunger, and despair are the constant companions of the peasant.

Kamala Markandaya is a city–dweller, but she knows the Indian village well and the price of rice for Indian peasants. The novel Nectar in a Sieve' can be called 'Struggle for Rice' because she raises the peasant problem of India in it. Such issues were highlighted in the works of Munshi Premchand, the singer of Indian Village. While authoring novels and short – stories, he emphasized presenting the realities of life, and Munshi made the Indian villages his writing theme.

The novel *Nectar in a Sieve* derives its title from the 'Work Without Hope' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Kamala Markandaya uses the lines of Coleridge as an epigraph: "Hope without an object cannot survive and work devoid of it draws nectar through a sieve." These lines have the main idea or theme of this novel. Indian farmers cultivate the rice fields, standing and sweating in the sun's rays. Rice, for him, is like Nectar. It cannot be held back in a sieve; rice slips down through the fingers of poor farmers and disappears in the pockets of landlords and moneylenders.

It is primarily a tale of rural life in South India. Hard lived by the tenant farmers of India are represented through the simple peasant, Nathan, and his family. His wife, Rukmani, is a young daughter of a village headman. Nathan pays exorbitant rent for the land which belongs to another. Poverty and starvation cross the threshold of the wretched dwelling simultaneously with the young couple.

During the first year, they had a daughter, Ira, who, after seven years' interval, brought many sorrows and sufferings to Rukmani and six other children. There is genuine pathos and tragic intensity in her description of the youngest child of Nathan, who is slowly dying of starvation, which is very touching and full of tragic intensity.

Kamal Markandaya with the problems of rural India before independence. Among many ailments, hunger, and degradation were the most torturing and disgusting. References to human degradation can be found in almost all of her novels, especially in Two Virgins, A Handful of Rice, and a Sieve Filled with Nectar. Her tragic vision found its best expression in her novels, which she filled with her social concerns. In the novel Nectar in a Sieve, Kamala Markandaya realistically spotlights the farmers' despair. Many other writers have written about poverty and the struggles that families face.

Kamala Markandaya must have seen hungry people to give such impressive descriptions. They were also journalistic and generalized. As she had stayed in England, she had not seen the harrowing scenes of hunger that affected Bhattacharya. Kamala Markandaya justified the title by making her readers realize the true meaning of hunger and starvation. Unlike other Indian – English novelists, she presented things authentically based on her experiences. Hunger and starvation led people to degradation.

They are desperate because of the rampant hunger, vagaries of natural calamities, ruthless machines, and heartless men. Kamala" 's first novel, Nectar in a Sieve, was a fervent protest social injustice, hunger, and degradation, which were the common factors of countless villages in India before independence. The novel was a powerful presentation of patience in the face of suffering. It was also a glaring example of labor when there was no hope.

The narrator, Rukmani, married Nathan at twelve; he was a tenant farmer, prosperous in nothing except love. Despite their poverty, they lived happily in their small mud hut and paddy fields. They ate well and were contented with their lot. However, misfortunes come upon them quickly, so they can no longer eat. The available food supply had to be shared by so many hungry mouths; there was not enough left for each. Then their daughter Ira was returned to them by her husband, for she was barren, and he wanted a male child. He had waited for five years and could wait no more. It was a great tragedy, but they bore it silently for "it was to be," and they could do nothing about it. They sold utensils, saris, and other domestic things and suffered patiently.

The starvation problem sprang up when their children grew, and there was not enough land to accommodate all. An English man set up a tannery in the village, which ruined the peaceful atmosphere of the village in the name of progress and advancement.

"Destructive in its side effects, it indicates a new way of life." The tannery was growing as a token of industrialization and mechanization, but it symbolized disaster and destruction for the villagers. Hunger had a degrading effect on people; it drove Ira to prostitution and made Nathan as thin and dry as a hollow bamboo stick. It took away poor Kuti" 's life, and they

remained insatiated even after Nathan and Rukmani left the village. They went to the city and sought Murugan in Vail, but they worked pathetically in the stone quarry.

In this novel, Markandaya firmly said that poverty, hunger, and starvation could lead to the family's disintegration with many misfortunes and problems. The younger generation, the sons of Nathan and Rukmani, got fed up with hunger and degradation and wanted to revolt against them. However, when their parents passively accepted their children, they left home thinking their attitude would never change. They were impatient at injustice; they wanted to improve their fortunes. Thus, the family was disintegrated, brought about by hunger and degradation. Selvam became angry when his father was evicted. He angrily asked: "You have made no protests."

The managers of the tannery managed to break the strike. Arjun was angry: Rukmani did not understand what it was to learn. She went to Kenny, who satisfied her: "I have told you before –you must cry out if you want help. It is no use to endure suffering in quiet. If the drowning man does not cry out for help, then who will save him?" Rukmani felt that it was a sign of weakness if one cried out. One must rise above one" 's misal powers to solve their problems of hunger and degradation. At this, she replied: "Yet our priest, we are instructed to bear our grief in silence and too fast and punish ourselves severely to purify the spirit."

In the great epics, some hostile supernatural force, some demon or giant, worked against the hero and was the cause of tragedy and suffering. Here, it is nature that works against Nathan and Rukmani, and despite their heroic struggle against the forces of destruction, first kills Kuti (he dies of starvation) and ultimately drives Nathan to his doom. Whatever savings they had spent paying the landlord's dues, hunger was dominant.

The novelist painted a tragic picture of hunger: "After that, we ate whatever we could find, including two charred sweet potatoes and the soft, ripe flesh of the prickly pear. Additionally, half-rotten, thrown away by some more prosperous hand; sometimes a crab that Nathan managed to catch near the river". Sometimes, they were forced to eat grass to satisfy their hunger. Their struggle has been universalized and imparted epical grandeur and dignity.

Their village had no name, and its locale was vague and indistinct. This was so because it symbolized rural India, and Nathan and Rukmani symbolized the Indian farmer, and their tragedy was the tragedy of rural India. The novelists had imparted epical dimensions and significance to the tragedy of a poor tenant farmer and his family. Hunger is not only killed but it is also degraded and dehumanized. It drove Kunthi to prostitution, and later, she resorted to blackmailing Rukmani and Nathan during their most difficult days when they were starving. It obliged Ira to take to prostitution in a 17heroic attempt to save the life of Kuti, her child-brother, who was ill and dying. Raja stole from the tannery and was killed. "Poverty is the worst of crimes and the root cause of all other crime and disease," said Bernard Shaw, and the truth was illustrated by the story of Nathan and Rukmani.

Nathan’s sons left him one by one; two went to Ceylon and one to the city, lured by the prospects of higher wages there. Thus, the themes of exodus and rootlessness were also brought into the city. Rukmani and Nathan had to leave their village and go to the city and the countryside. Poverty was the same everywhere, yet it was also different. In this way, the urban-rural theme was also suggested.

Beggary was widespread, but there were also amateurs and those who begged without calling themselves beggars. Rukmani and Nathan stayed in a temple for some time and lived on

charity like other beggars. It was all a harrowing hair-raising account of poverty, both urban and rural, which was a great evil and the root cause of all other evils. One's hearts were touched, and one felt the sorrows of Rukmani and Nathan. The intensity of the suffering of the poor had been realistically and graphically conveyed.

The other novels had equally moved and vivid accounts of poverty, hunger, and starvation. In Some Inner Fury, a crowd of beggars surrounded a car that had broken down, pressing their demands with increasing vigor. A Silence of Desire mentions the large number of beggars who throng the roads and depend upon Swamy' s kindness for their food. No observer of the Indian scene could afford to forget the horror of a railway journey in this country, particularly by third class.

India was a land of glaring contrasts, with prosperity and poverty existing side by side. The novelist described in Some Inner Fury the house of an upper-class family with plenty of food left over after meals and outside, the hungry children waiting to pounce on any crumbs that may be had. So, they waited, watchful even while they played, brown wily urchins with warped bodies, perpetual hunger, and bright, uncomplaining eyes of children who somehow contrived to ignore it.

Poverty and hunger, whether urban or rural, move the heart of the novelist, and its tragedy and pathos were fully brought out with rare art and skill. People experiencing poverty suffer in the village or the city, at home, or on a journey. Migration was often forced upon them, as on Rukmani and Nathan, intensifying their suffering. The coming of industrialization did not improve their lot; instead, it opened them to the cruelest forms of exploitation.

The construction of the tannery brought misery to people experiencing poverty, like Rukmani and Nathan. It resulted in the death of their son Raja, two of their sons going away to Ceylon, and their eviction from their land. It resulted in migration and exodus to the city. In Two Virgins, Markandaya presented another aspect of degradation – moral degradation. It was not the result of hunger and starvation; it was a part of modern society which claimed to be advanced.

Mr. Gupta, the film director, symbolizes a corrupt modern man of society who efficiently exploits innocent girls for sexual purposes. Laithan, under the impact of the Western civilization, fell victim to the temptations of Gupta and ultimately became pregnant. The entire family fell into the most significant degradation. Miss. Mendoza and Mr. Gupta were intended to symbolize the corrupting influence of Western culture on India. Both were instrumental in taking Laitha away from her family. They tempted Laitha to fall into her ultimate degradation. She was charmed by the glamour shown by Mr. Gupta.

According to the Eastern concept of life, people had to suffer calmly from hunger, degradation, and other problems like social injustice. Rukmani told Kenny: "Do not concern yourself – we are on God’s hand." This was the primary cause of peasant hunger and degradation. These people had a traditional resignation to Fate, God, and even the vagaries of climate and nature. They had developed the mentality of passive acceptance.

In another novel, A Handful of Rice, Kamala presented the other sides of poverty and starvation. It was hungering that compelled people to commit crimes. Ravi, the hero, entered Jayamma's house forcefully as a thief because hunger overpowered him. The conversation reflected the whole situation: "What do you want? Food, I told you, he said Impatiently.

Moreover, be quick. Ravi did not face only economic insecurity but also moral degradation. He was in a constant predicament that honesty and prosperity would not go together. Leaving the penury and apathy of the village, he came to the city – Madras, to make a better living. However, he could not get anything else than unemployment, frustration, and encounters with the police. His meager education made him useless working alone, and he could not get into other jobs. Damodar, another young man, told him about the profits of the underworld. One night, Ravi was heavily drunk during prohibition time to get rid of his hunger and frustration.

A policeman ran after him; he forced his way into the house of a tailor, Apu, to get food and escape from the policeman. Kamala depicted the condition of Ravi' s starving: Ravi was choosey in his choice of food, and he told Damodar: "All I want is a meal- a nice, hot, home-cooked meal, not bazaar muck."

The following day, the housewife gave him a thorough beating; the husband scolded and advised him to behave decently as a decent boy like him ought to do. Ravi was transformed into a decent boy; he went back to replace the bars he had broken. He married Nalini and joined Apu as his apprentice. However, he wanted to improve himself; he wished to offer more to his wife. He was dissatisfied with the resigned acceptance of the older man Apu. He again went to Damodar to improve his sources of prosperity. Damodar promised him to work, but it put Ravi in tension The novel was based on this conflict of conscience. Being tortured by conscience, Ravi started behaving cruelly with his wife, Nalini. That afternoon, Ravi joined a mob in looting a granary.

Kannan recommended him against such an action: "The rice is for all, this way is wrong, this way the innocent suffer." However, he went and was beaten by the police. Ravi was a young man who symbolized thousands of unemployed men who intended to lead respectable and honorable lives.

Hunger always forced people to leave their lands; Rukmani and Nathan left their land in Nectar in a Sieve. Ravi left the village in A Handful Rice for the city. He thought of himself. Poverty and hunger brought all sorts of suffering to him, including the disintegration of his family.

Ravi was so degraded by poverty, hunger, and starvation that he used to beat his wife badly and even had sexual intercourse with his mother-in-law. Ravi 's son, Raju, became a victim of poverty. When Nalini requested him to call a doctor, Ravi burst out. It does not mean that Ravi does not love his son, but he is helpless because of his poverty. He was broken by his son 's death and went to Damodar and cried out. But Damodar refused him. At last, he joined a group of young people to loot grains, but again, he lost his courage as he was thoroughly broken by his son "s death.

Kamala presented a problem of hunger and degradation in villages; she also gave a solution that by following the Western methods, one could improve one 's standards. Even the tannery was good because it reflected the modern mechanical revolution, Dr. Kenny’s establishment of the hospital was also a unique thing for the poor and the sick. Kamala Markandaya's description of hunger and pain was poignant and impressive.

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had not seen the harrowing scenes of hunger that affected Bhattacharya. Kamala Markze the true meaning of hunger and starvation. Unlike other Indian – English novelists, she presented things authentically based on her experiences. Hunger and starvation led people to degradation.

Poverty and hunger, whether urban or rural, move the heart of the novelist, and its tragedy and pathos were fully brought out with rare art and skill. People experiencing poverty suffer in the village or the city, at home, or on a journey. Kamala Markandaya knows that hardship and suffering are the lots of the poor peasants and manual laborers in urban areas.

Beggary is widespread, but there are also amateurs and those who beg without calling themselves beggars. Rukmani and Nathan stay in a temple for some time and live on charity like other beggars. It is all a harrowing, hair-raising account of poverty, both urban and rural, which is a great evil and the root cause of all other evils. Our hearts are touched, and we feel the sorrows of Rukmani and Nathan as our own.

The novel unfolds the story of Rukmani's life. She is a widow. In the novel, she looks at her own life in a flashback. She narrates various and varied experiences and records her observations about life. Her life story gives us first-hand information about the hardships faced by the Indian rural people.

Rukmani was the fourth daughter of the headman of a south Indian village. Her elder sisters were married off with good dowries. At the Time of her marriage, her father was not well off and could not afford a good dowry. So, she was married to a poor tenant farmer called Nathan. It was not considered a good match, and she felt humiliated. However, realizing her husband was affectionate and considerate, she started feeling attached. Initially, Rukmani was slightly uncomfortable with her husband, but Nathan was a loving man, and soon she started

liking him. Rukmani was blessed with a daughter. For seven years, the family lived happily together.

During this period, Rukmani became friendly with many of her neighbors, but she realized her husband desperately wanted a son to continue the family line. She consulted Dr. Kenny, a Whiteman. The doctor was a sympathetic man, and she conceived again with the help of his treatment. One after the other, she gave birth to six sons. The eldest was Arjun. Then came Thambi, Raja, Murugan, Selvam and Kuti. It was now a large family. Since they did not have many sources of income, Rukmani and her husband had to face regular financial difficulties.

Despite all this, she was happy with her lot. The calm and quiet life of the village was disturbed when a tannery was set up. Though it generated jobs for a large number of young men in the village, it also created a large number of complications in the village life. Many social evils like gambling, drinking, and whoring came into the village. Rude hooligans could be seen roaming about the streets. Soon, the tannery began to expand.

The owner of the tannery started buying the neighboring lands. Thus, more people in the village became landless. By this Time, Rukmani's daughter Ira was past fourteen. However, even after five years of her marriage, she could not bear a child – so her husband deserted her. Dr. Kenny treated Ira also, enabling her to conceive. However, it was too late now, as Ira's husband had married another woman. Under these circumstances, poor Ira was forced to live with her parents.

Rukmani's two elder sons were grown enough to take up the tannery job by this Time. Soon after, they organized a strike for higher wages and were dismissed. The two went to

Ceylon to work in a tea plantation. They got a job there on the recommendation of Dr. Kenny Rukmani's third son. Misfortunes continued knocking at Rukmani's door. First, her crops were destroyed by heavy rains. The family was on the verge of starvation. Still, they had to pay the rent to the landlord. Even then, somehow, they carried on. Then Rukmani's third son, Raja, was caught stealing a skin from the tannery. A lathi-blow of the gatekeeper of the tannery killed him. Rukmani was helpless and could not do anything.

The following year, a severe drought destroyed their good crops. There was nothing to eat. Now, they were penniless. The little rice Rukmani had was taken away by the wily Kunthi. She blackmailed Nathan and took away the central part of the rice. Things came to such a pass that Ira took to prostitution to save herself and her younger brother Kuti from starvation. In this way, she conceived and gave birth to Sacrabani. Dr. Kenny came to help the family and took up Selvam, the fifth son of Rukmani, as an assistant, but the condition of the family was so bad that Kuti died of starvation.

One misfortune followed another and struck Rukmani's family. Since they could not pay the rent to the landlord, they were evacuated from the land. The land was sold to the tannery. Rukmani had no other choice but to leave the village and go to the city. They decided to go to their son Murugan, who worked in the city and seek shelter. However, Ira decided to stay back in the village with her son. Her brother Selvam, who worked with Dr. Kenny, promised to help her. Nathan and Rukmani went to the city with heavy hearts and equally heavy feet.

Nathan was not keeping well. They tried to find their son in the city but failed. They were forced to seek shelter in a temple where the priest gave them something to eat. At night, someone stole their bundle of clothes also. Now, they were entirely helpless. They continued to

search for their son, and a little orphan boy, Puli, came to their help. At last, they reached their son's house only to find that their son had already deserted his wife and children.

The poor woman was struggling hard to survive. They realized that Ammu, their son's wife, could not shelter them. She coldly and bluntly asked them to go away. Once again, they returned to the temple and lived on charity like common beggars. This was the worst phase of their life. Soon, they realized that they could not feed themselves on charity. They earned little, yet they hoped they would soon have enough money to afford the return fare to the village. Once again, fate was cruel to them. One day, Nathan was drenched with rainwater; he developed a high fever and soon breathed his last. Poor Rukmani was left alone.

However, the little boy, Puli, came to her rescue. He stood by her and gave her solid emotional support. Rukmani soon started liking the boy and ultimately adopted him as her son. They returned to the village, and her son Selvam and daughter Ira warmly welcomed them. Selvam took good care of his mother. Thus, Rukmani came back to her home and went on living her life in abject poverty, suffering pain and agony till Time, a great healer, healed some of her wounds. She was later able to regain her spiritual harmony and balance. It is in this mood of spiritual harmony that she surveys her past life and her pains. However, it is not merely the story of Rukmani and Nathan but also the story of the Indian rural population, whose Nectar of life flows out of the sieve of poverty and hardship.

Though Nectar in a Sieve's protagonist, Rukmani, lives in poverty for her entire life, the novel tracks her initially rural surroundings as they become increasingly urbanized—from the arrival of the tannery to her self-sustaining village and the industrial slums it creates to Rukmani and Nathan's eviction 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, navigating towns and cities proves a bewildering and miserable experience. Her life's great tragedy Is the dissolution of her rural society, despite its desperate poverty and the loss of security she enjoys within that society.

However, Rukmani's sons sharply criticize the farming life their parents enjoy, pointing out that they live at the mercy of their landlords with no chance of improving their circumstances. The novel thus creates a tender picture of rural life but refuses to romanticize it, showing that farmers like Rukmani are just as vulnerable and oppressed as the urban poor.

For Rukmani and Nathan, life on the farm initially supplies an opportunity to live in comparative independence and freedom even though they are poor and uneducated. Rukmani's narrative style is usually straightforward and blunt, but when she describes her small farm, she lapses into lyricism. As a young bride, she asks, "When the fields are verdant and visually stunning. You have a good store of grain laid away for hard times. What more can a woman ask for?"

Nathan mainly derives his self-worth from working the land. He is proud that "he had no master" as a farmer and is never happier than when instructing his sons "the ways of the earth." Even though the family barely has any money or possessions, Rukmani and Nathan feel that the farm allows them to live with freedom and dignity.

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

Rukmani is suspicious because the influx 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 tilling to barter." Perhaps because it involves interacting with an outside world she does not quite understand, Rukmani sees transactional labor as less honorable than farming, and she attributes a larger psychological malaise to the town's development.

Later, strikes at the tannery force Rukmani's two oldest sons to flee the town; a tannery guard kills another son, Raja. The urbanization of the city, then, directly correlates to the dissolution of the family. When Rukmani and Nathan finally lose their land, they travel to a large city where their son Murugan lives. In the city, thieves steal all their possessions and money, intensifying their material poverty and proving that the city fosters a less communal and principled way of life than small towns. Even Murugan is not immune to this degeneration; to her shame, Rukmani discovers that he has run away from his wife, Ammu, and their child, disowning his obligation to support them. It is no accident that Nathan's health quickly declines, and he dies in the city; his physical weakness points out the sharp contrast between the fulfillment 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 struggle is infinitely preferable to urban poverty, their more educated sons challenge these notions, pointing out that whether they live in the city or country, the lower class is disadvantaged in the same ways. To Rukmani’s dismay, her oldest sons, Arjun and Thambi, seek jobs at the tannery; they do not want to be like their father, who "labors for another and gets so little in return." Thambi also points out what Rukmani prefers not to notice—that Nathan does not own his land and will never be able to save enough money to buy it.

Thambi makes this comment and acknowledges that "almost all we grew had been sold to pay the rent of the land," an injustice she has never acknowledged before. The boys' concerns prove valid, as the land agent, Sivaji, eventually informs Nathan that the landlord has sold their plot to the tannery. Considering their abrupt eviction, against which they have no legal recourse, the independence Rukmani and Nathan associate with their farm seems mockery. They are just as vulnerable to exploitation and hardship as the urban wage laborers Rukmani sees in the city.

The novel's depictions of rural farming imbue Rukmani's life and vocation with beauty and dignity. However, while she praises her protagonist, Markandaya sharply criticizes the unjust 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 disadvantages.

Some of the best Indo-Anglican novels written after independence have hunger, starvation, and the degradation that hunger causes as their theme. Nectar in a Sieve, written by Kamala Markandaya, is a powerful novel with themes of poverty and hunger. The theme is studied in a rural setting, and natural forces, such as excessive rains or utter drought, cause hunger and starvation here.

The theme of hunger has been realistically depicted, and the heroic struggle of Nathan and Rukmani, the central figures, against heavy odds raises the novel to the lofty heights of an epic. It is a novel of epical dimensions and records vividly the poverty-stricken, heartbreaking existence of the poor tenant farmers of Madras. In its particular theme- the story of Rukmani, her husband, and children- universal love and loyalty will appeal to readers worldwide."

They must face drought. Whatever savings they have are spent on paying the dues to the landlord, and then hunger, and nothing but hunger, is dominant. The novelist paints a very tragic

picture of hunger: they fed on whatever they could find: a couple of scorched sweet potatoes; the juicy, velvety fruit of the prickly pear half-rotten, thrown away by some more prosperous hand; sometimes a crab that Nathan managed to catch near the river.

Early and late, their sons roamed the countryside and returned with a few bamboo shoots, a stick of sugarcane abandoned in a field, or a chunk of coconut taken from the town's gutter. There existed a fierce competition that turned friends into rivals and ultimately led to the extinction of humanity for each edible plant or root. Sometimes, they are forced to eat grass to satisfy their hunger.

It is all a grim-heroic struggle for survival. The hero in an epic wage a heroic war against his enemy; here, Nathan and Rukmani wage a heroic and relentless war against hunger and starvation. Their struggle is no less heroic and much more poignant and heart-rending. Their heroic response to the forces of destruction- hunger, starvation, and death- makes the novel an epic of rural India, in which heroic rural characters- Nathan and Rukmani- struggle patiently, heroically, persistently, and relentlessly against heavy odds. Their struggle has been universalized and imparted epical grandeur and dignity.

Their village has not been given any name, and its locale has been kept vague and indistinct. This is so because it symbolizes rural India, and Nathan and Rukmani symbolize the Indian farmer, and their tragedy is the tragedy of rural India. Thus, the novelist has imparted epical dimensions and significance to the tragedy of a poor tenant farmer and his family. Because of the successive natural calamities, Nathan cannot pay his landlord, and the tannery needs his land, so he is evicted from the field, which he had cultivated and irrigated with his blood for many long years.

Nathan was deeply rooted in his land, and his eviction shook him. Though outwardly, he bears the tragedy with the same heroic endurance that has always characterized him. Nathan and Rukmani are compelled to migrate to the city to seek shelter with their son Murugan. Their journey to the city to search for Murugan, their son, has been described in detail. It is like the descent of the epic hero, or some other epic personage, into the underworld.

Portraying the lives of Indian subsistence farmers, Nectar in a Sieve is permeated by unflinching depictions of unspeakable suffering. Even at the best of times, Rukmani- ‘s family is only precariously secure, growing just enough to eat. When beset by sickness or agricultural failure, they have no resources to sustain them, and when they are evicted from their land, they have no other way to make a living.

To cope with the repeated disasters that befall the family, Rukmani views suffering as inevitable and unremarkable; rather than trying to avoid calamity, she focuses on shepherding her family through it. Kenny, a British doctor who befriends Rukmani, repeatedly chastises her for this viewpoint, saying that suffering is preventable, and people should constantly struggle against it. Ultimately, the novel argues that Rukmani and Kenny's stances are valid but incomplete. While Kenny's actions often provide Rukmani with crucial aid, her beliefs ensure she maintains peace of mind despite the suffering she experiences throughout her life.

Rukmani is highly stoic, accepting without question that her life will rarely be secure and often full of suffering. She describes the events of her life, many of which disturb the reader, with a bluntness that helps her confront these situations. For instance, when she throws up from fear while driving away from her wedding with Nathan, virtually a stranger, she does not dwell on this fear but instead on Nathan's gentleness intending to her. Later, while listening to a

destructive storm destroy her family's crops, Rukmani says she “understood a vast pervading doom.” However intensely aware she may be of the suffering that is going to befall her family, she has no plans or hopes to evade it; instead, she only braces herself to endure it.

Even when it comes to her children, Rukmani prefers to accept their suffering rather than work to avoid it. When her daughter Irawaddy's husband leaves her because she cannot have a child, Rukmani knows that without a man's support, Irawaddy will become a beggar once her parents die.

However, she says that "one gets used to anything" and that after thinking it over, she "accepted the future and Ira's lot in it." When her two sons, Arjun and Thambi, who work at the tannery, strike for a more extended lunch hour, Rukmani believes the attempt to change their working conditions is foolish, asking "of what use [it is] to fight" when "one only lost the little one had" by doing so. To Rukmani, the dominance of the rich over the poor is part of the natural order, and it is easier to accommodate oneself to the suffering this causes than to strive against it.

Kenny, a gruff but charitable doctor, challenges Rukmani's belief that suffering is natural, arguing that people can mitigate the calamities that threaten them through active struggle. Kenny arrived in India working for an unnamed British company. However, he makes his home in Rukmani's rural province to supply medical care to people who desperately need it. Although he often belittles his patients, he is also remarkably assimilated into their society and provides Rukmani and many others free medical treatment.

Most importantly, Kenny acts on his beliefs by founding a hospital in the town with money he fundraised in Britain. The hospital stays unfinished by the end of the novel. However,

it has the potential to seriously mitigate suffering from curable diseases, thus supporting Kenny's argument that it is possible to combat human suffering through thoughtful action. By contrast, when Rukmani encounters Kenny during a famine, she bravely assures him the family will endure their suffering until better times arrive; Kenny explodes in frustration, telling her that "you will suffer and die, you meek suffering fools" and exhorting her to "demand—cry out for help—do something." To Kenny, Rukmani's refusal to strive against her desperate circumstances is a character deficiency and, in a broader sense, a quality that prevents her society from advancing.

The novel refuses to definitively endorse either character's mindset, acknowledging that each has its benefits. While Rukmani is skeptical of Kenny's beliefs, she also profits from them: instead of accepting her infertility, she seeks treatment from Kenny and after bears several sons. One of those sons, Selvam, becomes Kenny's apprentice, pursuing an educated career that will insulate him from the suffering and poverty of his parents' lives. Moreover, it is essential that Kenny's views are shaped by membership in an imperialist society bent on arranging the world to its benefit.

In contrast, Rukmani's country has been subject to British rule for generations, so it is reasonable that the futility of controlling outside events permeates her culture. Rukmani and Kenny are informed by their positions as citizens of colonized and colonizing nations. However, even as his mindset benefits Rukmani's family, Kenny's constant striving has alienated him from his wife and child, whom he left behind in Britain. Moreover, though Rukmani is often incapable of protecting her family, her tendency toward acceptance allows her to derive peace of mind and deep calm from her husband and children. While the novel does not definitively endorse either character's outlook, it is also essential that Rukmani's mindset allows her to

weather a tough life and to look back on it as an older woman with contentment rather than bitterness.

Rukmani marries her husband, Nathan, at the age of twelve, and the rest of her life is consumed by the grueling labor of keeping a house and raising several children on scant resources. Although she stands for an ostensibly conservative view of femininity, Rukmani actively endorses her way of life, asserting her contentment with Nathan.

Moreover, by describing her loving and relatively fair relationship with her husband, her unabashed sexual desire, and the authority she acquires as a matriarch., Rukmani challenges stereotypes of traditional Indian society as inherently repressive of women. Meanwhile, Rukmani's daughter, Irawaddy, and her neighbor, Kunthi, provide two less conventional views of women's roles. Both work as prostitutes, but Irrawaddy does so to provide for her siblings during a famine, whereas Kunthi appears to do so out of boredom and a desire to sow them.

By the novel's end, Irrawaddy achieves redemption by becoming a loving mother, while Kunthi disappears from the narrative altogether. Written in the 1950s, Nectar in a Sieve is revolutionary for depicting women as intelligent, capable, and sexual partners. However, through Kunthi's demise, the novel argues that such qualities are only valuable if they help women fulfill traditional roles within the family.

Rukmani both fulfills and defies stereotypes of traditional Indian womanhood. She is married off at a young age. However, after brief unhappiness at leaving her family, she quickly acclimates 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 assumption that traditional Indian culture is regressive and oppressive to women.

While Rukmani is outwardly subservient 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 she 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 taboo topic of sexual desire among Indian women. Rukmani remarks 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 female desire as natural and positive rather than shameful. She also quietly insists that her narrative focuses not on marriage as the climax of a woman's life but on the importance of maturity and development throughout an evolving marital relationship.

Through her failed marriage and her brief stint as a prostitute, Rukmani's daughter, Irawaddy, challenges her mother's satisfaction within conventional gender norms. Like her mother, Irrawaddy marries young. Her husband, however, returns Irrawaddy to the family after she fails to bear children. Because Irrawaddy is unlikely to find another husband and there are no socially acceptable ways for women to support themselves, she will likely become a beggar after her parents die. Irawaddy's grim fate shows that, despite Rukmani's happy marriage, her culture often fails its women.

Irrawaddy herself contravenes and fulfills expectations of women by working as a prostitute to buy food for her youngest brother, Kuti, after a crop failure. While Rukmani is devastated when she finds out, she respects Irawaddy for her pragmatism and sacrifice.

Eventually, Irawaddy conceives a son; although her child is a public declaration of her social dishonor, Irawaddy and Rukmani love him deeply. Because she is acting to save her family and because personal relationships are more important to her than social norms, Irawaddy emerges as incredibly brave. However, it is essential to note that if society had provided any legitimate methods for women to make money and provide for their families, Irrawaddy would not have been forced into prostitution. The other side of Irrawaddy's bravery is the implicit critique of a society that limits women's freedoms without safeguards against poverty and bitterness.

Like Irrawaddy, Rukmani's neighbor Kunthi defies social norms and eventually becomes a prostitute. While her exact motives are unclear, she acts for personal gratification; the novel characterizes this transgression of social norms as malicious and threatening.

Rukmani describes her sexuality as positive; when she encounters Kunthi scantily clad and wearing sandalwood paste on her throat, she characterizes the other woman as unwholesome and threatening. In her description, Rukmani lingers on the makeup Kunthi uses to alter her appearance; Kunthi's physical artifice also suggests moral deception. Eventually, when Rukmani eventually discovers that Nathan has slept with Kunthi and fathered her two sons, Rukmani's suspicions prove correct.

Kunthi uses this secret to blackmail Nathan into giving her the family's supply of rice, threatening them with starvation. She is a threat to the cohesion of Rukmani's family, both emotionally, by ostensibly seducing Nathan (Rukmani essentially absolves her husband from culpability in this affair) and materially, using her sexuality to take their food. Kunthi's sexuality earns her punishment. When she arrives to beg for food, Kunthi is haggard and emaciated; she

tells Rukmani that she had parted from her husband, although it remains unclear when or how this split occurred. While Rukmani and Irrawaddy's sexuality bolsters familial unity, Kunthi contributes to her family's disintegration—at least, Rukmani interprets the situation this way.

Normally compassionate, she is uninterested in Kunthi's plight because she considers her an enemy. However, it is essential to note that the two women are remarkably similar. Like Rukmani's family, Kunthi teeters on the brink of starvation, and like Irawaddy, she may have been driven to prostitution by circumstances beyond her control. Implicitly, the novel uses Kunthi to point out that restrictive gender norms encourage even kindhearted women to judge other women in black-and-white terms rather than appreciating the complexities of their circumstances.

While Rukmani and her family accept Irawaddy's unconventional 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 contemporary expectations for women up to a point. Nectar in a Sieve provides an essential and nuanced meditation on the place of women within a traditional but rapidly changing society. While its treatment of women's roles within traditional marriages is groundbreaking, it is ultimately unwilling to articulate a way for women to live outside the roles of wife and mother to which their society confines them.

Indian society is a caste-ridden society, and this makes Mrs. Markandaya's characters miserable. ShivKumar (1978) remarks, "Tradition is too much with them, that is why they do not dare to break it. Sometimes the individual must sacrifice himself for it". Rukmani is a

conservative character in "Nectar in A Sieve." She opposes Arjun and Thambi's joining the tannery because they do not belong to the caste of untouchables.

The conflict between the rich and poor is a good expression in the novelist—the clash between the rich and the poor results from societal inequalities. Kamala Markandaya depicted chief characters from both classes. Some of the best heroes and heroines belong to the lower stratum of society. She tries to stress the fact that people with low incomes should not be looked down upon.

The novel shows Kamala Markandaya as an outstanding creative writer and a champion of the realistic trend in literature. Despite having lived in England for many years, her depiction of India is as authentic as the writing of any Indian who has not left the boundaries of his/ her village.

The portrayal of rural people in *Nectar in a Sieve* who live in terror, hunger, and despair is fantastic. It is "fear of the dark future, fear of the sharpness of death." Almost all the characters in the novel lead a miserable life, and most fail to survive. It deals with the significant theme of hunger and the concomitant theme of human degradation and debasement that hunger brings.

Hunger forces Raja, one of Rukmani's sons, to the compound of the tannery, perhaps to steal the costly hides. Ira, who cannot see Kuti starve, takes to prostitution and sells her body to workers belonging to the tannery and feeds him with the money thus earned. Rukmani's life has experienced minimal disruption and upheaval due to the tannery. Their tragedy stems from nature's whims and the consequences that follow. There is no plantation, so naturally, the Old Granny has nothing to sell in her shop. She also dies of starvation.

The women in Kamala Markandaya's fictional world are on a quest for autonomy, and the hindrances that stem from nature, from irregularities in the social system, confine her to the time-honored and taboo-ridden mores. In her first novel, Nectar in a Sieve, the narrator, a heroine named Rukmani, describes the pathetic plight of villagers in a nameless south Indian village in colonial India. She is also “a mother of sorrows” (Iyengar 438). She must endure shock after shock: her husbandry infidelity, her daughter taken to the streets to save the family from sheer starvation, the death of the child Kuti, and the final disaster of being evicted from their house. On the one hand, the villages are subjected to the varying modes of nature; on the other, modern technology invades the simple village folks through the tannery, generating exploitation and misery.

Intermittent collision with hunger and starvation gives rise to fear, "fear of the dark future, fear of the sharpness of hunger, fear of the blackness of death." The trauma of privation exists in the disintegration of Rukmani's family. She wins our sympathy by the dink of her sheer willpower that endures a life without hope like "nectar in a sieve." P.P. Mehra rightly holds: “This first novel of India recalls in its savage power and authentic atmosphere that great novel of China, 'The Good Earth.' It records vividly the poverty of Madras province. However, in its theme, the story of Rukmani, her husband, and children, there is a universal love and loyalty that will appeal to readers worldwide".

To indicate the contrariness of human life, writers use a literary device known as irony. Since literature is the mirror of life, irony plays a vital role. Irony has become a solid medium that creates tragic effects. Kamala Markandaya, like the Greek Tragedians, puts the responsibility for man's misery on 'fate' that will not allow mortals to exercise free will successfully, 'Her characters are all the victims of life, of 'fate.' What happens to them is contrary

to their wishes and expectations. They face sorrow and suffering since their happenings are not desired and are unexpected.

The life of Rukmani and Nathan becomes a tale of unexpected and undesirable problems. Both are good at their hearts, yet here to face the irony of fate. They seem to become playthings in the hands of men who think she would marry like her three sisters. However, her father's poverty ruins her fate, and she is married to a poor tenant farmer, Nathan. After the marriage, Rukmani and Nathan lead a peaceful married life despite their poverty. Later, Rukmani gives birth to a daughter named Ira. Nathan seldom pays attention to Ira because he wishes for a son.

After the birth of Ira, Rukmani gave birth to many children, such as Arjun, Thambi, Murugan, Raja, Selvam, and Kuti, and Rukmani had much difficulty feeding her children. Natural events usually crush Nathan and Rukmani. Sometimes, it is heavy rain that ruins their fate, and other times, drought becomes the cause of their decline.

After Ira's marriage, it rained so hard that water was everywhere. Both lose their peace of mind. Thus, heavy rain ruins them completely. Ira's fate is the best example of irony of fate. Since she is a barren lady, her husband rejects her, and she comes back to her parents. After some days, there is a drought, and all the peasants are bound to starve. Ira loves her brothers so much that whatever is given to her, she provides it to her younger brother.

Therefore, she prosecutes her body at the hands of tannery workers to feed her younger brother. The irony of fate reaches its climax when that barren Ira becomes pregnant and gives birth to an albino child. When Nathan dies, all hopes of Rukmani get shattered to the core.

In the words of Kai Nicholson, "In Nectar in a Sieve, Kamala Markandaya has, with pointed clarity, portrayed life in its most gruesome and degrading form; undoubtedly, her realism is purposeful, and she intends to awaken polite society to the real problems." Al Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews Laxmi R. Moktali observes. “In *Nectar in a Sieve*, the narrator Rukmani is a little educated woman and narrates the story, perhaps, in her language, and the whole novel could be considered as tradition”. Thus, *Nectar in a Sieve* is a simple and powerful novel. It is a subtle study of the traditional social milieu under the disturbing impact of change and modernity. Unlike Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya lends no intellectual substance to her themes in this novel.

She is concerned with men's struggle with hunger, nature, social change, and modernity. As S.C. Harrex states, "Nectar in a Sieve is characterized by tragic pathos. If tragedy lies only in combat and clash ending in death, it is not a tragedy, but tragedy denotes silent suffering and the gradual erosion of life". Genuinely speaking, Kamala Markandaya portrays a village so realistically that it may be taken as a documentary novel. However, the novelist uses exquisite craftsmanship in narration and characterization to present a simple woman's conflict with her sufferings.

As a multifaceted personality, a woman plays several roles, exhibiting many facets of her character. All those roles reveal her traits. Bettelheim holds as: "As a woman, she can be a loving daughter, or she can be an affectionate sister; she can be a responsible wife and a sacrificial mother as a woman's greatest fulfillment is motherhood as much as women want to be good scientist or engineer Their primary desires are to become mothers and to be the womanly companions of men. This again reveals a deeply entrenched patriarchal image of women. It is how men expect and want women to be in the society.

Suppose a woman does not fit into the code of societal norms formulated by the male. In that case, she is considered deviant and either ostracized from society or isolated as an individual. She is said to possess a dark side to her personality and is dismissed as an ugly, arrogant, quarrelsome, and immortal woman who is not worth her name. In short, she can lead an evil life if she so desires. Thus, if a woman unresistingly conformed to the cultural and social moves of a male-dominated society, she is beautiful, virtuous, and good; if not, then she is a pervert and possesses a deformed psyche.

The image of a woman as a wife is central in Indo-Anglian fiction. Dorothy Spencer recognizes this phenomenon and comments thus: “It seems clear that in the case of women as wives, we are dealing with a literary tradition. Sita, Savithri, Shakuntala… at any rate, they exemplify the ideal and thus express the society's values. Further, they serve as models and exert an influence on living men and women". Here, Kamala Markandaya amply illustrates the traditional image of ‘Patriate' in her female characters who silently suffer in their sacrificial role. However, her misery is primarily the result of natural disasters and poverty. They have inherited ancient customs that they do not follow because they are the daughters of the soil. Dare to question. Their courage lies in meeting the challenges of poverty or calamity with a cheerful fortitude and a stubborn determination. Such is Rukmani's position in Nectar in a Sieve, too. The reason for the woman's submissive role is, as Dr. Radhakrishnan points out, that "centuries of traditions have made the Indian women, the most patient women in the world, whose pride is suffering."

In this novel, Kamala Markandaya disapproves of the superstitious practices of the rural people. When rain was not enough for the fieldwork, Rukmani threw herself on the ground,

prayed, and offered the goddess a pumpkin and a few grains of rice, but no rains came. The standard of living of rural people is almost primitive.

Nathan's house is a small, thatched mud hut near a paddy field in the vicinity of a couple of similar huts. A garland of mango leaves is a symbol of happiness and good fortune. So, they always hang this kind of garland across the doorway. The hut has two rooms; one is used as a storehouse for grain, and another is for everything else. The popular means of transport is the bullock cart, moving amid sights and sounds from nature, making the journey enjoyable to animals and passengers.

Despite social evils present in the world, Kamala Markandaya has an assertive vision of life. Nathan and Rukmani believe there is an affirmation of life amid colossal human suffering. The characters show great powers of heart and soul even in moments of crisis and calamities.

The novel does not end on a note of despair. All the characters in the novel experience troubles and turmoil in life. However, they rise above their desperation triumphantly because of their endurance and hope. Thus, the sharp edges of life are blunted. Kamala Markandaya establishes the fact that poverty, hunger, and starvation, followed by innumerable suffering, can lead families to terrible degradation.

CHAPTER III

ECO FEMINISM

In Kamala Markandaya's 1954 novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani's heroine is forced onto the threshold of India marked by the centralization of power, increased economic activity, and urbanization. Unlike her neighbors, who "threw the past away with both Hands that they might be the readier to grasp the present," Rukmani "stood in pain, envying such easy reconciliation." *Nectar in a Sieve* chronicles Rukmani's attempt to retrieve and recuperate those elements of rural life that she feels most deeply about, namely her sense of Community and Connection with the land. Her struggle to maintain dignity and control over her life reflects some of the complex ways rural women of the global South negotiate modernity. By emphasizing Rukmani's movement towards becoming an active agent the author has reversed the standard critical reading of her as a peasant woman.

I argue that this standard reading is incredibly flawed considering the under-studied relationship between Rukmani and Kenny, the white doctor. Through her discussions with Kenny, Rukmani sharpened her social critique and developed her perspective on India's future. Here, I analyze Rukmani's actions and Practices considering de Certeau's writings on every day, arguing that her awakened agency is a form of 'making do.' Most importantly, though, I see in Rukmani's character the opportunity to revisit ecofeminist theorizing about the relationship between rural women of the global South and India and the environment. Rukmani and her husband are rice farmers, and her relationship with Nature, like his, is thus mediated through their labor.

Through gardening, Rukmani develops closeness with the land, which is represented in early Ecofeminist writing on the body and spirituality. At the same time, her acute dependence on the land for survival reveals a vulnerability that Troubled the celebration of this closeness. In the end, however, Rukmani favors this precarious direct relationship with Nature over the Alienation of city life. Through her adoption of a young boy, the novel Ultimately forwards a land-based community ethic that emphasizes Connection with the more-than-human world.

Rukmani, Her Garden, and Ecofeminism to understand Rukmani's relationship with the land and her environment, focusing on the novel's beginning is essential. This is because *Nectar in a Sieve* is structured in much the same way as another early Postcolonial novel, Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, where the slow Pace and predictable pattern of rural village life is suddenly and irrevocably altered by a disruption brought on by outside forces. Of her early married days, Rukmani recalls: “What more could a woman ask for when she has a roof over her head, a healthy supply of grain put away for hard times, the sun shining on her, the fields green and lovely to the sight, and your spouse seeing beauty in you that no one else has seen before?”.

The easy rhythm of her narration, and in particular the way she links the beauty of the fields with the beauty her husband saw in her, reflects a harmoniousness and fullness of life that sets the tone for the contrasts to follow. Markandaya's novel, like Achebe's, bears witness to the first arrival of white missionaries and officials, and the presence of both religious (Sikhs and Muslims) and racial foreigners is an essential element of the text. Rather than emphasizing this theme of first contact, Markandaya's novel portrays the eruption of large-scale industrialization that marked postcolonial development policies. Interestingly, Rukmani bears these changes much better than Okonkwo does.

Nectar in a Sieve begins with the young Rukmani's marriage to Nathan, a tenant farmer. The villager's gossip that the match is beneath her Family, who had managed to marry their three older daughters to wealthier Husbands. This unenviable coupling directly resulted from her father's diminished role in the Community. He was the village leader, a position that had once conferred authority, respect, and relative wealth. However, centralizing government powers meant that his position had become little more than a figurehead: "The headman is no longer of Consequence," Rukmani's older brother explains. There is the Collector, who comes to these villages once a year. The Collector, who visits these communities once a year, is in charge and has the authority to designate people, not the headman." Her brother's words are the First crack in the veneer of her life and prove a hard truth to bear: It was as if a prop on which I leaned had been roughly kicked away.

Markandaya thus carefully inflects the peace of Rukmani's early life with small hiccups that foreshadow the immense shifts to come. In a subtle Example of dramatic irony, the reader remains alert to these changes. At the same time, the characters cling to a vision of the future that seems to offer the promise of equilibrium. He is eager to prove himself when they relocate to Nathan's village, far from Rukmani's family home. He holds up a handful of grain and promises that with "Such harvests as this, you shall not want for anything." With this turn towards the future, Markandaya successfully buries the suspicion—in her characters—that Things are falling apart.

The promise of a bright future is represented in her husband's body, as well as the paddy that runs through his hands. A symbiotic relationship is thus established, in theory at least, Between the farmers/producers and Nature. The farm soon becomes the center of their lives, and Rukmani finds her passion for tending the land. Susheela Rao identifies Rukmani's special

relationship with Nature in her "heightened awareness of nature's beauty" and her Connection to the rhythms of the seasons. Rao points to many passages in Which Rukmani comments on the aesthetic and atmospheric beauty of the Landscape. However, an analysis of her Connection to Nature needs to go deeper. If we look at the depictions of Rukmani's work in the Garden, we can see that this practice links her with the land through her body and her labor a theme that will become clearer below considering Vandana Shiva's work.

The garden has a special place in her life and is strongly associated with her coming-of-age. Being as young as she Is, having married at twelve, "I was young and fanciful then," She recounts,... it seems that each of the complex, dry pellets I held in my palm contained the tightly curled secret of life itself, rather than growing as I did subconsciously within, beneath the leaf following the protective leaf. Her first planting of the most remarkable thing is not just how happy or proud she feels but the Pleasure that the growth provokes in her:

Pumpkins began to form, growing bigger every day and maturing to a yellow and red color until they were finally ready to be eaten, fattening on soil, sunlight, and water. Moreover, I removed one after cutting it. Nathan was enthralled with it upon seeing it.

I said, pleased with him and myself, "One would have thought you had never seen a pumpkin before," but I kept my eyes down.

"Not from our homeland, Nathan remarked. Are indeed a clever woman."

As a result, it is valuable, and you, Ruku, an effort to hide my pride. I attempted to be casual. I stored the pumpkin. However, Pleasure was causing my heart to race, blood unexpectedly surged hot and close to my face.

There are several things worth noting about this passage. The first is Frank's open way Markandaya describes Rukmani's Pleasure. The sensuousness and overtones of sexuality, indicated by her Blushing and experiencing "pleasure," are some of the qualities that make Nectar in a Sieve such a remarkable book for its time.

In the introduction to the novel Indira Ganesan remarks on her own experience of Encountering Indian women's sexuality in Markandaya's novel as Something alien to the picture of Indianness fed to her during her Indian American girlhood: "At seventeen, I believed all Indian women to Be modest and old-fashioned, like my mother". It was Markandaya's Depiction of Rukmani's neighbor, Kunthi, a sex worker, that particularly stood out for Ganesan. Here, too, Markandaya is frank in revealing the facts about prostitution to her readers. In a struggle With Rukmani, Kunthi's sari "fell from her shoulders.

[Rukmani] Saw that it was not tied at the waist but below the navel, like a strumpet's". In contrast to the image of Kunthi as an intentional object of desire, Rukmani's garden-variety sexuality may appear naïve and banal, but taken Together, these two representations show that female sexuality is an essential theme in Markandaya's novel. Any reading of the text as a Feminist novel or as part of the canon of women's writing needs to consider This. This is especially important in the case where we will see that critics have been too quick to label Rukmani emblematic of a particular ideal of chaste Indian womanhood.

Although the pumpkin scene uses sexual Pleasure as a metaphor for natural Pleasure, in other places, the text uses Nature as a metaphor for sex. In these scenes, Rukmani comes closer to the overt sexuality of Kunthi by Expressing not only Pleasure but Something nearing desire.

In the only Description of amorousness between Rukmani and Nathan, she recalls her "senses opening like a flower to his urgency," a description which Directly echoes the green leaves of her plants "unfurling" under her own "eager gaze."The reliance on nature symbolism here does not Naturalize sex itself so much as it does relationships of Pleasure and Connectedness.

This metaphoric reversal reinforces that the fecundity of Nature is linked to Rukmani's sexual maturation. This embodiment of Nature is one of the forces that ultimately connects her to her land and determines her commitment to it later in the text.

A second thing to note about this scene is how it calls to mind the theorizing of women's spirituality in early ecofeminist writings. The force behind much of this writing was an attempt to purge Western thinking of the rigid patriarchal binaries that maintained the oppression of both women and non-human Nature through the historical associations of women with Nature and, therefore, inferior to men (see, for example, Karen J. Warren and Susan Griffin).

The combined effect of these hierarchies was a denial of women's direct experiences in, though, and as Nature. One vision of liberation that emerged from this field involved embracing this woman-nature Connection, often described as spiritually and deeply rooted in bodily experience. For example, this valorization of the embodied experience can be seen in how Starhawk uses the birth metaphor to try to alter Western value systems.

This emphasis on life, particularly the female body as the giver or sustainer of life, was a common theme in early ecofeminist writings and is echoed in the way Rukmani experiences a sort of embodied spirituality through her Connection with the growing pumpkins.

Several problems arise, however, when attempting to read Nectar in a Sieve directly through ecofeminism. Firstly, the novel predates the emergence of ecofeminism (as an intellectual field and recognized movement) by at least two decades. Secondly, ecofeminism, especially its spiritual branches, has almost received heavy and continuous criticism since its inception. Of particular concern is the critique that white Western academic feminists constructed harmful romantic stereotypes about women of the global South in their search for ecological idols.

As an example, Noel Sturgeon points to how "The Chipko movement [became] a symbolic center of a discourse about Third World women those paints them as 'natural environmentalists' or 'ultimate ecofeminists,' reducing them to an idealized peasant woman who is integrated into 'nature' through her daily lived activities." For this reason, I have been skeptical about my analysis of Rukmani and felt it was important to frame her commitment to the land about larger socio-political and interpersonal frameworks.

However, the amount of critique leveled at ecofeminism has meant that the field has undergone many cycles of self-reflection. Today, it continues to be a critical "strategic discourse" to use Sturgeon's words in more extensive conversations about feminism, environmentalism, and social change. Faced with this dilemma of how to proceed with an ecofeminist reading within the historically problematic context of the postcolonial, I will follow the lead of postcolonial ecocritic Graham Huggan and begin with the writings of Vandana Shiva, a longstanding figure in ecofeminism whose work deliberately intersects with post-colonialism.

One of Shiva's main interests is the effect of what she calls maldevelopment on rural peasants, and women. In Staying Alive, she expresses a particularly negative view of applying Western science and technology to the processes of Nature, a stance echoed by another prominent ecofeminist, Carolyn Merchant, in The Death of Nature.

In protest of this harmful Western scientific approach, this seeks knowledge through division and reduction, Shiva advocates a comprehensive approach that recognizes nature as a creative force. This creative force for Shiva is also feminine, based on the Hindu concept of Prakriti, or life force. Shiva sees in women's routines like Rukmani the possibility of ecological care.

It is easy to read this novel as a simple expression of Shiva's pronouncements about the potential of rural women of the global South to act as stewards of the land. However, as many critics have pointed out, this representation risks being reductionist and essentialist.

According to Niamh Moore, Shiva continues to be what Sturgeon has called ecofeminism's "straw woman" for critiques of the woman-nature Connection. In her attempt to articulate anti-racist ecofeminism, Noel Sturgeon points out that in the search for a salve for the perceived Western Alienation from Nature, ecofeminists have inappropriately borrowed from and appropriated the identities of non-Western women, including Indigenous women, historic, pre-patriarchal European women and, especially, Indian women.

Moreover, by denying Western science and technology altogether, such a stance denies that so-called progress and modernization represent changes that some rural women of the global South (for example, Rukmani's neighbor Kunthi) may be enthusiastic about.

However, I believe that much can still be recuperated from Shiva's portrayal of Indian women farmers and peasants. Shiva's emphasis on labor is instrumental, especially in Rukmani's relationship with the land.

She writes, "Nature and women are linked, not in a passive way, nevertheless, in the preservation of life and creativity, which could be read as an essentialist comment on women's reproductive capacities. However, when taken alongside Shiva's interviews with women living and working in the Himalayan forests, the "active maintenance of life" refers to the social and sometimes domestic labor of the women instead. In these interviews, the women define freedom as the ability to work (in a relatively unalienated way) instead of freedom from work. One interviewee said the three most essential things are "freedom and forests and food." "Our freedom to work in the forests and farm," she says, "is fundamental."

Another woman claims their shakti or strength, "comes from these grasslands and forests; we see them grow yearly through their internal shakti, and we obtain our strength from it.". We consume food grown on our farms. All of this provides us with physical sustenance and moral fortitude—we realize that we are our rulers and that we create and manage our own wealth. Nature's power is our power.

These are descriptions of the creative, productive, and non-alienating forms of work lauded by Marx as a necessary expression of a full humanity. Hooks has called this "humanizing labor. "This commitment to a particular mode of rural labor and belief in the value of labor to themselves motivated the women to advocate for the forests against deforestation.

This same commitment moves Rukmani. The satisfaction and Pleasure she gets from Nature are not defined by leisure or recreation, as William Cronon argues, more typical of the

Western/North American expression of environmentalism, but rather through work and production.

Rukmani describes work and fulfillment in the same breath: "Planting a seed disciplined the body, and watching it sprout raises the soul. However, nothing does equal the deep delight of harvesting good rice when the grain is placed in front of you in gleaming mounds in the rice dusts your hands."

Her perspective on labor becomes outmoded when her sons mastermind strike at the tannery where they work. Their discourse on rights, labor, and power is foreign to Rukmani: "I do not know what reply to make— [my sons] are not acquainted.

Nathan grabs my hand and pulls me away, saying, "We do not understand; we should not get involved. "Her experience of working the land structures her ideas of labor relations, and she is unable—at this point, at least—to divorce the worker from her work. For this reason, she cannot grasp the idea that her sons would take a contradictory stand in their work.

What is most striking about Markandaya's novel, from a postcolonial ecocritical perspective, is how her text first offers and then resists the pastoral. For example, the farm's descriptions evoke ideas of an unspoiled, fecund, provincial landscape that is at peace with, and always nostalgic for, it’s even more harmonious past—all features that Lawrence Buell variously associates with the pastoral. On the other hand, the text is not shy about the downsides of country life.

The following description of the storm-ravaged farm defies the idea that the rural countryside is a place of refuge: "Trees that had been uprooted covered houses and streets with horrifyingly dispersed limbs. It is flattening both their bodies and the bodies of men and women

without distinction. This tension between the pastoral and the anti-pastoral is, according to Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, a common theme in postcolonial writing.

They discuss some of the complexities of the postcolonial pastoral in Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, environment, where they write that it "offers a helpful chance to discuss the conflict between belonging and ownership in a range of colonial and postcolonial contexts: marked contexts mostly by involvement, either direct or indirect, in frequently tragic situations involving loss and dispossession."

Markandaya's novel reflects on this loss directly through the land-grabbing machinations of the tannery. Patrick D. Murphy further notes that when writing about Nature in the postcolonial context, "It is impossible to address the environment without considering government corruption, transnational conflicts, violence and corporate greed". In developing the field of postcolonial ecocriticism, most critics agree that contextualizing the text within particular (environmental) histories is crucial. Through my reading, I see that many postcolonial writers are doing this work themselves.

Consider, for instance, how Epeli Hua'ofa's Tales of the Tikongs engages the histories and politics of indigeneity and Development with the environment of the coastal South Pacific. Another example can be found in Derek Walcott's Dream on Monkey Mountain, in which the history of coal production leaves its mark on the narrative Landscape of the play. In postcolonial literature, environmental concerns are often very visibly tangled up with the politics of daily living to the extent that "nature" is fraught from the outset with social meanings. This prevents a clean pastoral and invites the more negative sides of Nature that Markandaya portrays.

When Nectar in a Sieve is read in the context of the post-Independence Indian "hunger novel," the necessity of politicizing the environment becomes clear. Although there is much to celebrate in how Rukmani understands and values the world around her, the unrelenting cycles of flood and drought remind her of the material reality of living on the land.

It is this dire reality that Indian and Indian diasporic writer like Markandaya has sought to expose. S.Z.H. Abidi writes, "After the Independence, the novelists were free from the moral obligation of voicing the political aspirations of their people in throwing away the foreign yoke, and the national freedom had brought their revolutionary activities to a standstill. Naturally enough, they diverted their attention to the internal problems of India". These problems included hunger and near starvation for millions of peasants. Uma Parameswaran agrees that hunger and the subsequent will to live drive the plot and theme of Markandaya's text.

The novel focuses on the debasements brought on by hunger: starvation, prostitution, emigration, the splitting up of families, cheating, blackmailing, and so on. Rukmani's Family's dependence on Nature is so severe that it is pitiable for most of the novel. Her survival is so often evaluated and tried by rains and droughts that the reader cannot help but despair at what she calls the "mighty impotence of [the] human endeavor." This struggle leads Parameswaran to argue that "In Nectar in a Sieve [nature] is neither the all-intimidating protagonist found in early Canadian or Australian literature nor a mere backdrop, but a character, as it were, in action."

To say, however, that "Nature" is a character risks reducing the complexity of the representation of Nature in the novel into one force capable of acting, in Parameswaran's words, as a "savior/tyrant." At the same time, suggesting that Nature is a character in the novel opens

the possibility of developing relationships with other characters. It is thus a helpful way of imagining the role of Nature in this text.

Rukmani herself, in what Rao calls the most crucial passage in the novel, describes Nature thus: "Nature resembles a wild animal that you have domesticated for your use. It will assist you for as long as you are watchful and go cautiously with consideration and care, but if you glance away for even a moment or get careless or forgetful, it will have you by the Vikings.

There is a sense in this passage that Rukmani is trying to come to terms with her role in this significant yet strangely ambivalent relationship. Although she appears to speak from a position of power and control in this passage, throughout most of the novel, she seems to accept her position at the mercy of Nature. She expresses fear and hope but rarely anger. For the more significant part of the novel, she and her Family are undernourished and overworked.

In one prosperous season following a year of brutal drought, she depicts the conflicting feelings as they watch over their crop: "Seeing the paddy mature cheered us up. We observed it with the jealousy of a hound watching a bone, fearing that it snatched away, or as a mother, her child, with pride and affection. And most of all with fear".

A sense of loss of control is palpable in this scene. The Family is hungry; their youngest dies of starvation outside, and the harvest ripens slowly—"indifferent to [there are] needs. “It is almost as painful to watch the death of her son as it is to watch Rukmani's passive acceptance of her situation. She is barely even roused to anger by this turn of events; instead, she accepts the situation as part of her way of living: "This is one of the truths of our existence as those who live by the land know," she writes, "that sometimes we eat and sometimes we starve … Still, while there was land there was hope".

The land offers the opportunity for self-sufficiency but does not guarantee it. Most importantly, the land represents self-determination through owning (or at least being in charge of) the means of production, which is to say, the land. Without this one avenue of power and promise, life loses its meaning and runs, as the title suggests, like Nectar through a sieve. The industrialization of her village changes these dynamics and eventually robs Rukmani of the comfort of her land. For her, the first crime of the tannery is that it is built on the maidan, an open field shared by all. She recalls, "They had made the bazaar prices too high for us, taken from us the maidan where our children played, and invaded our village with clatter and din." Markandaya is, intentionally or not, echoing a pattern of the division and privatization of land that has been the hallmark of industrial Development.

Shiva and Mies demonstrate that the loss of the commons is a symptom of neocolonialism in the postcolonial context, arguing that "colonialism and capitalism transformed the Development carried on the unfinished business of colonialism by turning land and soil, which were once a source of life and a commons from which people drew sustenance, into private property that could be purchased, sold, and conquered.

The intrusion of industrialization brings with it the commodification of land and bodies. Without this free space and with the imposing presence of male strangers in the town, Rukmani keeps her young daughter Ira close to her. Indeed, the arrival of the tannery marked "the end of [her] daughter's carefree days … She had been used to come and go with her brothers, and they went whither they wished".

Rukmani's daughter was not the only one whose freedom was disrupted by the presence of the tannery. Rukmani noticed the way the animals avoided the village now, too. "At one

time," she recounts, "There had been kingfishers here, darting between the immature shoots for our fish; paddy birds; and occasionally, in the river's shallower reaches, flamingos, striding among the water reeds with ungainly precision, their plumage a glory not of this earth." Birds stopped visiting now that the tannery was nearby.

The significance of the tannery also lies in its consumption of animals. In addition to disturbing the local wildlife, the primary function of the tannery is to transform animals into leather for consumer goods. Rukmani describes it as a sort of mass (post)killing machine:

A month passed, but somebody's land was swallowed up, and another building appeared. Day and night, the tanning went on. A never-ending line of carts brought the raw material in—thousands of skins, goat, calf, lizard, and snake skins—and took them away again tanned, dyed, and finished. It seemed impossible that markets could be found for such quantities—or that so many animals existed—but it was, incredibly.

Rukmani appears to object to the speciesist Nature of this industry that profits from the slaughter of non-human animals. When taken alongside Rukmani’s fears for her daughter’s safety, Markandaya’s novel becomes an exemplar of the feminist theorizing of Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan, among others, who have worked to highlight the connections between the subordination of women and the subordination of animals, often in terms of direct physical harm.

Of course, when the guards kill Rukmani's son at the tannery, it becomes clear that Markandaya's critique is not only about gender; class and caste vulnerabilities are also her concerns. Despite what may look like a growing lower-middle class because of the wage work

the tannery offers, Markandaya shows that its natural effect exacerbates the gaps between variously positioned people, making the vulnerable even more so.

This shift is evident in the local marketplace. Rukmani had always sold her vegetables—those nice enough to fetch a price, "leaving the spoilt or bruised vegetables for ourselves" —to Old Granny to trade in the market. However, with the rising prices of goods, petty moneylenders had begun to seize greater control of the buying and selling trade, able to pay growers like Rukmani more for their goods. However, as Rukmani astutely points out, the higher costs of goods outweighed the benefits. "No sugar or dhal or ghee," she explains, "have we tasted since they came and should have none so long as they remain." Despite their hunger, Rukmani remains fixed on acting according to caste dictates.

When her son says he will work in the tannery to earn money to buy the food they desperately need, she admonishes him: "You do not belong to the tanner caste. What will our family members say? Prejudices are further revealed when she discusses the wives of the high-ranking Muslim men who run the factory under its white owner. She is unable to see past their differences, calling the women “a queer lot” and expressing pity for the way their veiled lives “deprived [them] of the ordinary pleasures of knowing warm sun and cool breeze upon their skin."

On one occasion, one of the women called Rukmani into her home to buy produce from her. Rukmani's observation that "Her fingers, fair and slender, were laden with jeweled rings, any one of which would have fed us for a year" is invested with the multi-layered ways in which class, caste and religious differences are exacerbated by the tannery; or, that the tannery, by

bringing those of different class, castes, and religions into one place, at least, showcases the existing hierarchies and power differentials between the groups.

The result of the tannery's existence, however, is the displacement of vulnerable groups, such as the small farmers who do not even own the land they farm. Eventually, after too many bad seasons, and after her sons have all been lured off the land by paid work, she and her husband can no longer pay their dues; the landowner sells the land to the tannery, thus confirming Rukmani's fears that "the tannery would eventually be our undoing. [For] it had spread like weeds … strangling whatever life grew in its way".

Still, even in her disappointment, she cannot sustain this rage. The same acceptance with which she put up with starvation drives her to concede that "whatever extraneous influence the tannery might have demonstrated, the country's misfortunes are solely its own; they are the result of wind, rain, and weather. She has once again suppressed her anger in favor of tolerance. Rukmani's philosophy of acceptance mimics Nature's disinterest in her fate. She may have cursed the "cruel, blue skies" when they refused to give rain, but at the bottom, she knew this was an impersonal act on the part of the skies, that they were "indifferent" to her need rather than spiteful towards it.

Rukmani takes this same approach to the social world, acknowledging its injustice but never being roused from her tolerance. Of her hungry children, she says, "their expressions dimmed; the two younger ones started sobbing merrily from exhaustion and hunger. I had no words to comfort them". When the landowner's man comes to collect the dues following the drought from which no harvest was produced, Nathan tries in vain to plead with the man that they have nothing to give; Rukmani merely says that he is just doing his job. Most critics focus

on this aspect of Rukmani's character when they call her a "typical Indian woman. … an upholder of Indian tradition".

In this reading, Rukmani embodies values stereotypically associated with Hinduism and Hindu women, including a philosophy of fatalism, acceptance, cautious optimism, and devotion to Family. Rekha Jha remarks that in contrast to Western cosmologies, Indian values often come across as conservative. Indeed, Rukmani does express a keen dislike and distrust of the changes being wrought in the name of modernization. However, what may initially be perceived as static conservatism is a negotiation tactic encapsulated by Nathan's advice to "bend like the grass that you do not break."

Diverting from the standard literary interpretation of Rukmani's character as traditional, I focus instead on how she can be seen to interact with and even embody modernity. Here, I build on Uma Parameswaran's work of trying to reintroduce Kamala Markandaya into the postcolonial canon from a new perspective.

To this end, I will examine the relationship between Rukmani and Kenny. Her intellectual affair with the worldly white doctor reveals a different dimension of her character. It represents one of the critical steps she makes in asserting control over the conditions of her own life.

Rukmani develops into a stronger, more assertive character through her interactions with Kenny. Her boldness in this relationship can be read as a gesture to Something more significant than the local, indicating that she is not a victim of modernity but is instead in dialogue with it.

I am particularly interested in the avenues of power Rukmani adopted to make this change. De Cocteau’s writings about the politics of everyday life, particularly his essay

'"Making Do': Uses and Tactics," offer a valuable perspective. De Certeau is interested in how people, through their repetitive, daily experiences, succeed in actively navigating the immense and nearly flattening systems of authoritative power that govern the world in which they operate. According to de Certeau, these systems of power, or strategies, do not render subjects powerless. Instead, he writes that people "make do" in these strategic spaces by employing tactics: the maneuvers of the weak.

Put differently, tactics are the avenues of power accessible to the ostensibly powerless people like Rukmani. One of de Certeau's more exciting examples of a tactic is taken from the French, la perruque, also known as poaching. This is the practice of workers using work time, or spare workplace resources, for their creative production. "It is different from absenteeism," he writes, "in that, the employee is now formally employed. A secretary penning a love note during "company time" could be considered a straightforward case of la perruque, as could a cabinetmaker "borrowing" a lathe to construct furniture for his living room.

His theories of everyday resistance have great potential for resonance within postcolonial theory; I use his concepts of "tactics" and "making do" to help us transform our understanding of Rukmani. She is participating in everyday resistance through her relationship with Doctor Kennington. Here, she relates with a representative of the colonial power—the foreign white doctor—and instead of employing mimicry, she tries to enter a somewhat egalitarian, or at least human, relationship with him. She sees herself reflected in his eye as a stupid peasant, but this neither frightens nor dissuades her. Instead, she continues to be herself determinedly.

Kenny first enters Rukmani's life when he helps to ease the death of her ailing mother, and Rukmani later consults him for treatment. At first, she is intimidated by Kenny because of his foreignness, gruff manner, and impatience with her cultural customs. However, she quickly becomes used to his presence and comes to appreciate his honest yet compassionate bedside manner as he tends to her dying mother.

Over time, their relationship grows, and their friendship is different from his friendship with other villagers. It may be due to Rukmani's literacy; her father taught her to read and write, and she values these skills very highly. This prized education may be what gave Rukmani the confidence and initial encouragement to relate to Kenny on a different level.

Theirs is not a romantic relationship but an intellectual affair. Rukmani seems to enjoy conversations with Kenny that she never engages in with her husband, who can neither read nor write and shows little interest in the world beyond their village. She and Kenny are both adversaries and collaborators. They share secrets that Nathan does not know and would not necessarily understand—such as the fact that he helped her, and her daughter overcome their infertility.

I can demonstrate my argument for Rukmani as an active negotiator on this point of their collaboration. When Rukmani finds that she is having trouble conceiving after the birth of her first child, she and her mother visit the temple regularly to make offerings and pray for a child, all to no avail.

Kenny learns of her difficulties; he offers to treat her. His intervention makes it possible for her to have many more children. However, fearing that Nathan would be upset that she had put herself "in the hands of a foreigner," Rukmani never tells her husband about this. By seeking

out his help and concealing it from her husband, Rukmani is exploiting gaps in the system; by taking control of her body and getting the medical care she needs to start a family, she is challenging what she perceives to be the restrictive patriarchal control over her life that she wants.

To explain Rukmani's medical visits as tactical, I borrow from Claire Colebrook's interpretation of de Certeau. Colebrook writes, "A tactic works metaphorically: rather than returning the logic to some ground, it thinks the logic from a different point of view." Referring to the idea of la perruque again, she explains that: "from the point of view of the worker—who both recalls his home and anticipates the relocation of the [made] object into the home—it is the nonpresence of this other time that transfigures the object. There is nothing disobedient in his action (yet).

What renders the object as an instance of the tactic of la perruque is its anticipated relocation, the thought of another site, a metaphorical shift that takes this present object as the sign of something other than itself". Likewise, what I am trying to say about the doctor's visit is that it is not so much that she sought medical treatment that signifies her adoption of tactics—there was 'nothing disobedient in that action (yet).' Instead, what matters is what that visit says about her relationship to the strategies of the local patriarchy—namely, that she is willing and prepared to circumvent its control where it does not suit her needs. The doctor's visit has meaning outside the visit itself.

In addition to resisting the constraints of the local patriarchy, Rukmani's visit to the doctor, as an assertion of her agency over her body, is also a way of undermining Kenny's

perception of Indian peasants as "meek, suffering fools." This "metaphorical shift" visits a "sign of something other than itself."

As an adversary, Kenny is a pessimist to Rukmani's complacent optimism (often read as fatalism from the outside). At the end of a terrible drought, Rukmani insists that she has a little rice stored away that will last "until times are better"; the doctor lashes out by responding, "Times will not be better for many months. Meanwhile, you will suffer and die …Why do you not demand—cry out for help—do something?".

Kenny believes that his worldliness allows him to see the larger picture and pass judgment on the attitudes of the peasants he treats. At times, his diatribes against the Indian people verge on racist and are at the least paternalistic (such as when he says, "I can only take you people in small doses".

It must be said, though, that his frustration at the plight of the Indian peasants often reflects that of the (white, Western) reader: his frustration, for example, over Rukmani's fatalistic attitude and her refusal to demand more from the State, especially as her Family suffers from severe malnourishment, reflects the reader's desire for a particular kind of heroin—one who will fight unthinkingly to succeed; Markandaya resists this easy characterization of Rukmani, though, by positioning her instead as neither victim nor hero (much in the same way that Markandaya allows Rukmani to be a product of her times, with all the class and religious prejudices that entails).

Although Rukmani and Kenny have markedly different perspectives and priorities, it is just as clear that a closeness exists between them. For her part, Rukmani can often be found

reaching out to the doctor or longing for his presence as she does at the birthday celebration of her first son. On one occasion, when she hears that the doctor has returned after one of his long absences, she goes to welcome him, as others have done, with a garland of marigolds and some limes. Finding herself alone with him, her curiosity finally overtakes her shyness, and she begins to ask about his home life, whether he has a wife and Family back in England, and so on.

When she presses him about why his wife does not accompany him, they debate gender roles and the concept of duty. She says it was his wife's duty to follow him to India: "A woman's place is with her husband." He says that she simplifies everything because her world knowledge is limited. At first, then, he seems as dismissive of her as ever. However, she finally speaks back to him, defending her intellectual standing, saying that her knowledge is "Limited, yes … Yet not wholly without understanding". At this act of self-defense, she notes a change in him: "For the first time since I had known him, I saw a spark of admiration in his eyes."

This encounter is thus a turning point in their relationship and Rukmani's ability to speak up for herself. When cast adrift in the city, she relies on these newly developed skills to set herself up, first as a letter-writer and then, with the help of a streetwise boy, as a stonebreaker in a quarry.

This ability to "make-do" sets her apart from other characters, like her neighbor Kunthi. Although Rukmani initially envies her neighbor's ability to "[throw] away the past with both hands that they might be the readier to grasp the present," it becomes apparent through the novel that unthinkingly changing with the times is not necessarily the best response. Kunthi, for example, ends up working in the sex trade to service the town men that the new tannery brings to their village—this is not the path Rukmani would have wanted to choose.

By the end of the novel, Rukmani has lost nearly everything. After being evicted from their land, she and Nathan head to the city in hopes of living with one of their sons, who had left the farm in search of work years ago; they never do find him. Immersed in the chaos of the city, they feel alienated. They are suddenly without a home, a community, or means. Rukmani then makes two significant responses to this downturn in her life. The first, her decision to return to the land, can best be understood in de Certeau's tactics. However, her second decision to adopt a homeless boy takes us back to ecofeminism through her commitment to an expanded notion of Community.

By rejecting the aimlessness and anonymity of the city in favor of the hard life on the land, Rukmani reverses one of the most remarkable narratives of the 20th century, the rural exodus towards urbanization. This move is perhaps her cleverest tactic of all.

De Certeau writes that "the absence of power determines a tactic. If we understand urbanization and industrialization as strictly as the postulation of power organizes a strategy. Eyes—that is, ways of organizing people and resources and space that therefore produce power—then turning her back on the property, paid labor, and the city becomes a way of embracing her absence of power.

To return to Achebe's Okonkwo, we might say that by rigidly ignoring his absence of power in the new order of things, he was unable to see the gaps in the system that he could exploit (not for his immediate gain, maybe, but to some form of advantage). This is precisely what I argue Rukmani did and what her relationship with the white doctor helped pave the way for. She "maneuvered" her way through the various limiting practices of power until she found

a space for herself in its undercurrent, and for her, this space was back on the land she had never owned, to begin with.

By reconverting the rural into her place, she exemplifies the idea of resistance as "escaping without leaving." That is to say that the grid of strategies cannot be exited, but it can be subverted through "trickery" through maneuvers. Ian Buchanan focuses on this phrase of de Certeau's ("escaping without leaving") to explain how the colonized is never in a state of fixed powerlessness vis-à-vis the colonizer. However, he is instead able to exercise power (again, within the gaps opened by the strategic or institutional power).

Buchanan further shows that the "weak," here the colonized, are the ones who "define the limits of strategy and inform its modes of operation in a fundamental sense, thus forcing the strategic to respond to the tactical." By extension, Rukmani's position becomes not only one of an agent of her own will (as I first suggested) but also a force that the postcolonial state must respond to.

Buchanan suggests that this power to shape the strategic forces can be seen at the individual level; his examples tend towards the collective (saying, for instance, that "prisoners determine the level of security required at a particular institution." If it is challenging to see Rukmani's impact on the postcolonial state, we can at least see her impact on the broader Community.

Rukmani and Nathan find that they are forced to compete with many other newcomers in the city. Changes in the agricultural economy were forcing people off the land and into the cities in droves. Many of these people, like Rukmani and Nathan, lived on charity in the city's temples. If hunger and fear marked country life, it also marred life in the city.

Resources were few, and with each new arrival, the tension in the temple grew: "A few [of the residents] were antagonistic and openly so they saw their share of food shrinking with each additional mouth". Ever industrious, Rukmani sets up a stand as a letter-writer and reader. However, competition is stiff, and the prejudice against a female letter-writer means she earns little money. When Puli, the young boy who functioned as their guide when they first arrived in the city, enquires about her wages, he tells them they could do more work in the quarry. This piecemeal, hard physical labor signifies their lack of social position and is quite the opposite of how they labored on the land they were forced to leave.

Moreover, the quarry, like the tannery, is a direct assault on Nature, again, in opposition to the productive work of their organic farm. Although the job supplies income and some sense of direction, it is hazardous and highly stressful, for they must be on constant watch for dynamite blast warnings. The strain is too much for Nathan, and he dies in the street one rainy day after work.

Throughout these tribulations, Rukmani continues to prove her newfound resilience. Instead of becoming mired in the hopelessness of her situation, she diverts her energies towards the creativity and maintenance of life. Although destitute, she takes Pleasure in passing this creative force to those more vulnerable than herself. Moreover, as is not surprising from one whose Connection with the land was so important, Rukmani quickly proves this ethic of care to non-human animals.

This is clear from the beginning of the novel. Ridwelfare ng on the bullock cart with Nathan to her new home, she comments that when they stopped by a river for lunch, the "poor beasts seemed glad of the water". Her condition is often mirrored in her descriptions of the

enduring but crest-fallen animals: "The raw patch on the bullock I had noticed had begun to fester. As soon as the animals are drunk [their keeper] put the yoke back.

The bullock cringed but accepted the torment, and as soon as the whip fell, it began to pull again". Towards the end of the novel, when her only meals are handouts from the temple, she still takes the time to ensure her well-being of animals: "When we had finished [eating] we threw the empty leaves to the goats that had gathered, expectant but patient for their meal, and that too was a satisfying thing, to see them eating leaves and cups, crunching them in their mouths with soft happy movements and looking at us with their mild benign eyes." That she takes the time to enjoy watching the goats munching on their leaves suggests an ongoing desire for a connection or communion with Nature that she continues to nourish even within the urban environment.

Rukmani's care for Puli can be read in communion with her fellow creatures. The connections between her affection for Puli and her care of animals are made clear in the novel through a few key references. First, Rukmani remarks that the children who are homeless behave "like animals" around food. Second, the child announces that he "is called Puli [tiger] after the king of animals, and I am the leader of our pack."

As a lost newcomer to the city, Rukmani takes pity on the orphan who suffers from leprosy; moreover, she admires Puli's bravado and refusal to be the underdog. Together, by pooling their resources and their labor, Rukmani eventually saves enough money to return to her village, for "with each passing day [her] longing for the land grew." She recognizes the futility of this move, knowing that they "left because [they] had nothing to live on, and if [she] went back, it was only because there was nothing here either."

By deciding to go back home to the land that had deserted her, Rukmani reverses the fate of rural migrants everywhere. She chooses not to accept the jarring cityscape as her fate. Rukmani goes with others, however. Knowing that eventually, leprosy would rob Puli of his independence, she asks him to come with her. Reflecting on his sad fate, she muses that "there is a limit to the achievement of human courage," but in her, there seems to be no end in sight. Rukmani extends the limited conception of care to her non-biological Family and even to the non-human animals in her life.

She takes Puli back home with her, and although, in truth, she knows she has little to offer the boy, by bringing him to live near her old farm, she is sharing the most incredible wealth she has ever known—the nearness to the land; "life to [her] starving spirit." Her son and daughter welcome them back onto their small plot of leased land, and the reader is left to imagine the problematic continuation of their efforts to support themselves both through and against the new order of things.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Novels have high-flying fame in the diaspora of international novels, owing to their somewhat usually dissimilar shades, varied dialects, and traditional flavor. It keeps evolving, expanding, and adjusting to the shifting conditions in India. Social, ethical, political, technological, and industrial changes have brought a new way of life, as a new perspective came into existence in India with the feminine psyche trying to redefine women's role in society. Kamala Markandaya and Shashi Deshpande are among the most significant women novelists in Indian English Literature, and they hold a prominent position.

Kamala Markandaya is a great novelist who explores Indian rural life. Her novels reflect poverty, hunger, superstitions, customs and traditions, etc. Her female characters are the products of their respective environments. Her novel Nectar in a Sieve touches on a chronicle of Rukmani, an Indian peasant woman, her battle for survival, and her unwavering devotion to her spouse. They also reflect the changing times and society.

On the other hand, Shashi Deshpande, the living, dynamic women writer, effectively portrays Indian women courageously, sensitively, and minutely, managing the significant and intractable themes affecting women's lives. Her novel Small Remedies brings out the novelist's professional endeavors, articulating women's aspirations and relationships. Madhu, the protagonist in the novel, frees themselves from the stultifying traditional constraints to cherish a spontaneous surge toward life. In the novel, her female characters are determined to face life's riddles boldly.

Her first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*, details rural India's problems in detail to the Western students. She tries her best to manifest the common problems connected with Indian farmers. Nathan and Rukmani represent Indian farmers who face unlimited trials and tribulations of life.

Kamala Markandaya has chosen the title for this novel from a sonnet, "Work without hope," written by S.T Coleridge in the year 1825; the last couplet of the sonnet clinches the reflection and reveals the deep-seated anguish of the poet. To the poet, all nature seems to be at work with hope. Even winter, unpleasant as it is, has the hope of spring following it. On the contrary, the poet finds himself standing aloof from the rest because he feels that he must work with hope. His life is a life of toil without any hope.

He naturally thinks that his labors often need more hope of success. When one works without hope of success, she and her family must perform all the activities to survive. This work is outstanding in describing a woman's life at this time and will make you realize the hardships that these people had. Work becomes as useless as trying to draw Nectar in a sieve. The poet expresses his intense awareness of his loneliness and a note of despair in the couplet from which the novel's title has been chosen.

This novel, based on the traditional pattern of life in countless villages all over India, is an enthusiastic cry of protest against social injustice. Nectar in a Sieve by Kamala Markandaya (1996) is a relatively short novel that introduces a Western student's life in rural India and the changes that occurred during the British colonization of the nation. The story is poetic and poignant, yet simple to read, and it may be enjoyed on many different levels. At its core, it tells the tale of a rural peasant life and an arranged yet love marriage. Additionally, it is a story about the indomitable human spirit that overcomes poverty and unending misfortune. In conclusion,

the book explores the tensions between an established farming community and a rapidly developing industrial and capitalist society. The novel discusses several significant societal issues, including the value of customs and people's resistance to change.

One literary work from the middle of the 20th century is Nectar in a Sieve. The impact of industrialization and modernity on Indian farming households is discussed in this article. The inhabitants of this era had to reject many conventional values to adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances. Due to poor harvests and soaring prices, many farmers lost their land, and many people perished from starvation of goods. This novel explicitly describes the life of a woman, Rukmani, how her family was affected, and the activities she and her family had to perform to survive. This work is outstanding in describing a woman's life at this time and will make you realize the hardships that these people had.

Several traditional values are handed down to an Indian couple that is expected to be followed and continued. First, the most significant tradition is that the parents choose whom their children will marry. After discussing with another child's parents, they choose who will get married to one another. In the novel, Rukmani's and Nathan's parents decide they are suitable for each other, so they set them up to get married.

Markandaya's 'Nectar in a Sieve' caught a tragedy between two worlds, i.e., the rural and the urban, the agricultural and industrial, which affect one another. She dramatizes the tragedy of the disruption of a Hindu joint family of a farmer owing to heavy industrialization – a typically modern aspect of national economics.

Rukmani is poor and downtrodden, but her life story is a saga of epic grandeur. In the novel, the novelist questions the adequacy of the accepted social norms and the concept of

woman in terms of recognizable images, models, and markers; she criticizes the sociocultural determinants against women. She reveals that women, right from the ages down, have suffered a lot; today, she wants to breathe a new breath of fresh life. Her characters appear as individuals. They achieve this by a gradual process of introspection and self-analysis. They are neither rebels nor conformists but are faced with life's dilemmas. They seek a path that allows them individual freedom and succeed in being individuals and magnificence. She is an archetypal figure symbolic of the suffering soul of India through the ages. Her life is a story of the traditional life of an Indian village in transition. The spirit of tradition symbolizes her. Even though Ira is a minor character, she plays an influential role in the novel. Her supreme self-sacrifice ennobles her and imparts to her a heroic grandeur. Her character testifies that even minor personages get into life in Kamala Markandaya's hands.

In the novel, Rukmani and Ira find in their way of life not only suffering but also sureness and inner peace. They are caught between what is expected of women today and what is expected of them in the past. Earlier pictures of serene, resilient ladies alter to new ones, of aggravated women struck flanked by the Sita Savitri figure and the modern, westernized woman. Hunger, starvation, destitution, desertion, eviction, prostitution, industrialization, and death all combine to make Nectar in a Sieve a tragedy of rural India. Shashi Deshapande's 'Small Remedies' evolves a balance between traditional demands and modern compulsions and renegotiates the power relations to resolve the crisis.

Bai's bold and rebellious act to run away from her family and her love for music is not an isolated, whimsical, and individual decision. Madhu, the protagonist—biographer, is a powerful character who exercises her choices, rejects her husband's ideology of the essentialist approach, and rebuilds her emotional, creative, imaginative, and realistic 'self.' By writing the

biography of Bai as a challenge, she exerts her artistic and intellectual abilities. Leela, who was also a rebel and dared to dream and achieve freedom, Art is beyond caste, class, or religion; Bai comes from an orthodox Brahmin family; Ghulam Saab and Hasina are Muslims. Hasina sings Akka Mahadevi's Vachana at the musical concerts.

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This way, Kamala Markandaya portrays a realistic picture of rural India and its problems through this novel. Nectar in a Sieve portrays rural India with pitiless realism and shows the winds of change blow across it with new social forces. One can compare this novel with the novels of Munshi Premchand, especially Rangbhoomi and Godan. Nectar in a Sieve has absolute 'Indianness' in its theme, the striking contrast provided by an Indian village to the Western cosmopolitanism that pervades much of the modern Western literary traditions. The present novel is the story of an Indian family, Indian womanhood, and the poverty, squalor, and hunger of the bulk of India's population.

One perceptible effect of growing westernization and urbanization has been the gradual collapse of warmth and sincere love and the birth of commercialized love. Nathan and Rukmani in Nectar in a Sieve remain models of loving husband and wife. However, their daughter, Ira,

and son, Murugan, the product of an industrialized nation, have no qualms about forsaking their spouses. Ira's Sacrapani and Murugan's wife's child are clear examples of commercial love and sex. Every writer's vision is not unique but also peculiar. His or her perspective is shaped by the experience he or she gets of the world around him. A writer's feeling may also be influenced by national ethos. Writers like Markandaya, born in India and settled in England, are positioned at a vantage point, giving them committed involvement. Kamala Markandaya, who married an Englishman, chose to live with him in a country that was not hers. She is familiar with the East-West tussle and the resultant identity crisis. East and West never meet. Each has specific and distinct features of philosophy, culture, and way of life.

Despite this fact, in the novels of Kamala Markandaya, the West is presented as dangerous and harmful, wielding its evil power on the East, known for its purity and austerity. Beyond caste, creed, and community, love unites a man and woman.

When the question of finding oneself with one's own country arises, even love loses its meaning and human consideration. The East-West encounter is the most popular, sought-after, and explored theme. Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth P. Jhabvala, and Anita Desai are the leading novelists who have employed this theme in their novels. However, Raja Rao 's The Serpent and the Rope is probably the best novel dealing with the clash between East and West. The novel is an evocation of Truth and reflects the tradition of India and its vitality, especially in its encounter with the West. India is seen not as an area on the map but as an idea. The conflict between the East and West is presented individually and between industry and agriculture as the product of both the Western and the Eastern cultures.

Kamala Markandaya reflects on her own experience through the awareness of her fictional characters. There is no doubt about the fact that Kamala Markandaya is on the side of humans and life, and she is against the exploitation of the weak against war and violence. It is worthwhile and not out of context here to compare Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Prawar Jhabvala. Both are expatriate writers. The former married an Englishman and settled with him in Britain. However, the latter, who is of European origin, married an Indian.

Thus, both chose to live in a country that was alien to them. Again, both show committed involvement and keep their distance to bring the expatriate experience into their fictional focus. Markandaya 's handling of the British and the Indians deserves brief comment. She shows deep intimacy with the British, as seen in her numerous detailed and vivid portraits. She unmasks their hypocrisy, arrogance, and related faults boldly and fort-rightly, but she does so as someone who deeply loves them. Her partiality towards her people is clear, but she does not overlook her limitations and weaknesses.

Though true to life in every way, her novels are not straightforward documentaries; they imaginatively recreate life and manners so that her characters and situations not only stand by themselves in their own right but also illuminate the culture and way of life of a whole people has created a body of contact literature par excellence.

To conclude, Kamala Markandaya, influenced by Western culture, strongly believes in the power of science to improve material conditions and promote progress and equality among all men and women. However, she has adopted Western ways of life and outlook. However, a perusal of her novels throws the hint that the two diametrically opposite cultures, namely the oriental and the Occidental, will never travel in the same direction.

Thus, the novel is a story of the struggle of Rukmani, who gives a message in the chaotic situation that one must have faith in life. She fights with many conditions but does not surrender herself to them. It gives a 48-way view of life; it will have sustaining power if we believe in it. Markandaya can peep into the characters' psyche and depict female characters' suffering, aloofness, and humiliation. Rukmani stands as an undefeated one. She keeps her image as a mother and wife and is more than a struggle to live a peaceful life.

Nectar in a Sieve is Rukmani's story. All the other characters, including Nathan and her husband, are satellites revolving around her. The whole novel is the most hapless and desperate of all. Misfortunes chase her as a shadow one after the other, but her sheer willpower helps her overcome every time. She is the only one with a mighty will that helps her find her way out, even when facing acute turbulence. This tragic story presents the themes of suffering, starvation, and death, but the story ends on a positive note of quiet strength and resolution. Money rules the world, and a person with money will be a misfit. This is precisely what happens to Rukmani.

To conclude, women's identity in India was hindered by a range of social evils in the pre-independence period. There is a widespread feeling that the "social evils" are an outcome of the tyranny of customs and an oppressive living system. The self-realization of women was defeated in rural areas due to social evils. The most threatening social evils of the 20th century were viz., patriarchal system, alien population, castes, prostitution, poverty, inequalities, illiteracy, dowry system, unemployment, barren women, disability, zamindari system, tenant farmers, and money lending. The prevalence of these social evils led to a massive migration of people, the dislocation of families, and the disintegration of joint families in rural areas. These factors had a cascading effect on the rural land and nature, life and death, and tradition and modernity.

Since the novelist is overly concerned with the harsh realities of the lower stratum of society, the novel fights against despair, and the evils are defeated with acceptance, tolerance, optimism, and encouragement of modern thoughts. Given that India's economy is among the fastest-growing globally and wants 49 to become a global power, it needs to warm with the invading modernity while preserving traditional values that do not obstruct the women's identity. Modernity has some power to eradicate social evils and set up women's identity in the 21st century. This will make a road for India to dominate in the digital era.

A few things become clear by revisiting ecofeminism through an early postcolonial classic. The first is that although Rukmani may initially appear to embody a simplistic Western-defined ecofeminist standpoint, she is, in fact, a deeply layered character with a complex relationship to an unromanticized nature. The challenge then becomes reading beyond the dismissal of this stereotype towards a genuine acknowledgment of her relationship with the land. To do so, I balanced a reading of her love of nature with the reality of crop failure and starvation.

In addition, by focusing on labor as an essential aspect of her relationship with the land and contrasting it with her sons' strike and her employment in the quarry, I hoped to problematize the tendency to separate reproductive labor from other forms of labor. It also became clear that it is necessary to situate her experiences of/on the land alongside other aspects of her character, suggesting that an ecofeminist analysis can be productive as long as it is used, as Sturgeon suggests, as a "feminist intervention" rather than "a set of new, independent theoretical arguments."

In leaving the garden to focus on her relationship with Kenny, another side of Rukmani's character is revealed. Her ability to advocate on her behalf and behalf of the Indian people in the face of Kenny's pessimism was an essential complement to the experiential work on the farm and in the garden. Her final (re)turns towards the local must be read, then, as an active, positive choice and not a retreat to the relative safety of her village. Her negotiations with Kenny can be read reverse as practice for this last chapter when her determination is needed most. What is striking about this last transformation is that, in many ways, her life at the end resembles her life at the novel's beginning.

In this sense, the novel privileges a concept of transformation that emphasizes recuperation over linear progression. Rukmani's journey is an example of 'making do' in the face of industrial, social, political, and economic changes. Her decision to return to the land and her desire to share that life with those she cares about constitutes her response to these changes.

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