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*Abstract-* Kamala Markandaya is a well renowned Indian novelist and journalist whose work reflects the contemporary conflict between the Eastern and Western values. She was born in the year 1924 in Mysore, in the state of Karnataka. The works of Kamala Markandaya feature the modern traditional and spiritual values of Indian societies. Her works have exposed the intrinsic woes of womanhood and feminism in a distinctive and unique style. She also portrayed through her writing the very existence of women is tortuous and the condition is the same everywhere. In most of her novels, Markandaya attempted to project the independent minded women and their traditional bounds. She belonged to the revolutionary group of Indian women authors who made their mark in the literary field not only through their chosen subject matter but also through their polished presentation style.

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# Feminism in Kamla Markandya Novels

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## I. Introduction

Kamala (Purnaiya) Taylor, who wrote under the pseudonym of Kamala Markandaya was born in the town of Mysore in Southern India in 1924 to a Hindu-Brahmin (the highest Indian caste) family. In 1940, she went to study history at the University of Madras. During this time, she also worked as a journalist and published short stories in Indian newspapers. In 1948, Markandaya moved to England; she married Bertrand Taylor, an Englishman, and made England her adopted home although she continued to visit her homeland regularly. The couple had one daughter, Kim. Her husband died in 1986 and Markandaya died on May 16, 2004 at her home outside London, England.

Markandaya first gained success with *Nectar in a Sieve,* although she had written two novel before it. Published in 1954, the novel quickly became popular; it was a Book-of-the-Month Club main selection and was named a Notable Book by the American Library Association in 1955. *A Handful of Rice*is her second best-known work. Both novels are studied widely in American schools and universities.

Markandaya's novels dealing with a wide range of Indian topics from the poverty-stricken peasants of *Nectar in a Sieve* to Indians issues of racism while living abroad in *The Nowhere Man.* She is regarded as a pioneer for Indian writers writing in English; Uma Parameswaran, who has written about Markandaya's work wrote: "Markandaya's strength as a novelist comes from her sensitive creation of individual characters and situations which are simultaneously representative of a larger collective; her prose style is mellifluous and controlled." Her most famous work, *Nectar in a Sieve,* exemplifies this statement.

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## II. Feminism

Indian English novel has a late beginning. It began to appear in the nineteen twenties and gathered momentum in the following two decades. When India became free, Indian English novel had already established itself as a branch of literature. The ideals of Indian struggle for freedom are reflected in many novels. Nineteen sixties and seventies are remarkable for output of Indian English novel. The growth of Indian English novel is not regular. V. A. Shahane opines: It is among these prominent writers that Kamala Markandaya had established herself a place of prominence and fame. A brief look into her life in the real world and a short sojourn through her fictional world would be but a fitting effort for the good, before endeavoring to analyse her art and genius in the field of fiction. It is to her credit that A.V. Krishna Rao comments, "Kamala Markandaya's novels, in comparison with those of her contemporary women writers, seem to be more fully reflective of the awakened feminine sensibility in modern India."(55) Stephen Ignatius Hemenway praises her highly: "she is definitely one of the most productive, popular and skilled Indo- Anglian novelists and a superb representative of the growing number of Indian women writing serious literature in English.

Among Indian women novelists, Kamala Markandaya painted woman as the center of concern in their novels. A woman's search for identity is a recurrent theme in their fiction. Kamala Markandaya is one of the finest and most distinguished woman novelists in Indian literature of the post- colonial era. She recognized for her masterpiece work 'Nectar in a Sieve' published in 1954. For her literary achievement in 1974 she has achieved a world-wide distinction by winning Asian Prize award. As an Indian woman novelist, she depicts Indian women issues and problems very deep in her novels. A woman's quest for identity and redefining herself finds reflection in her novel and constitutes a significant motif of the female characters in her fiction. She explores the emotional reactions and spiritual responses of women and their predicament with sympathetic understanding.

In her novel The Nowhere Man (1972) Kamala Markandaya delineates the problem of identity of elderly Indian immigrants. The protagonists, Vasantha and her husband Srinivas find it not only difficult but impossible to create their own identity in England, the land of their adoption. The theme of racial rancor, social reality and feminism more prominently in The Nowhere Man than in any other novel of Markandaya. Vasantha, who embodies the Indian traditional values and virtues of



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patience, tolerance, love and fellow feeling, dies of despair and frustration in this atmosphere of racial antagonism, leaving her husband in a state of shock. The novel depicts mainly the tragedy of Srinivas, the lonely man in an alien land. Old and alone, Srinivas is to be friend by an English widow, Mrs. Pickering who looks after him and protects him and develops intimacy with him still she can never replace Vasantha, Srinivas Indian wife, in her calm and intense spiritual love. Kamala Markandaya observes: But she cannot fill the gap left by Vasantha because the affection between Srinivas and Vasantha is the product of India marriage,

There are detective novels and novels using the stream of consciousness technique. Virginia Woolf is the prominent figure using this technique. In the context of this new technique, Kamala Markandaya is not afar. Anita Desai's Cry, the Peacock has made the use of this method. Women in modern India have not only shared the exiting and dangerous roles in the struggle for Independence but have also articulated the national aspirations and the consciousness of cultural changes in the realm of literature. Women novelists have made a significant contribution to the English fiction. They are like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, R.P. Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Attia Hussain, Kiran Desai and Arundhati Roy have presented a woman's world very poignantly. They have developed their individual styles of writing. They voice the feministic concerns objectively and appealingly. Writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal and Kamala Markandaya go beyond feministic concerns and portray in the wider context the themes of alienation in modern, urban city, tradition and modernity, east-west encounter and social conflicts. The Indian English writing impact Gandhian thought and philosophy. Indian English writers treated the figure of Gandhiji as a myth, a symbol or a tangibal reality. It was not merely the character of Gandhiji that looms large in Indian fiction but for the first time focus changed from urban life to rural life, from educated characters to sweeper like characters as in 'Untouchable' by Mulk Raj Anand. K.S. Venkatramani, Krishnaswami Nagarjun, Humayun Kabir, K.A. Abbas, D.F. Karaka wrote novels. Mulk Raj Anand, a social novelist, was influenced by Indian Philosophy, Indian literature,

In contrast with Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai (1937), youngest of the major Indian English women novelist, is more interested in the interior landscape of the mind than in political and social realities. Her novels can be examined as the manifesto of female predicament. She has deep psychological insight into her characters. Her novels reveal feministic concerns with the predicament of women in male dominated society. Most of the women novelists are concerned with human relationship, social realities and woman's predicament. "Mainly it is a political novel rendering the high incandescence of national liberation struggle of the Indian people against the English colonizers". Santha Rama Rau a widely travelled writer, has written beautiful, travelogue in which she narrates her observations of men, manners and culture. Her two novel, 'Remember the House' 1956 and 'The Adveturess' 1970 are charming pictures of the East-West encounter while Nargis Dalal's experience of journalism has hardly proved a salutary influence on her fiction.

In most of her novels Kamala Markandaya shows the female characters as a constant search for meaning and value of life. In her novels she presents an existential struggle of a woman who refuses to flow along the current and refuses to submit her individual self. Such characters exhibit a sense of insecurity due to their traumatic psychic experiences and also due to the collapse of one value system and the absence of any enduing values. Kamala Markandaya traces a woman's journey from self-sacrifice to self-realization, from self-denial to self-assertion and from self-negation to self-affirmation. The feminist voice plays a vital role in all her novels. In her first epoch-making novel, 'Nectar in a Sieve' (1954) the narrator-heroine, Rukmani emerges a greater and stronger character than her husband. The author displays Rukmani's life which is full of hopes and frustrations, pleasures and pains, triumph and defeat, rise and fall. Before writing this novel Kamala Markandaya went to live in a village, which gives her an opportunity of getting the first-hand experience of village life and the problems of rural folk and therefore this novel is mainly a product of her personal experience in rural living.

Kamala Markandaya shows that before the advent of tannery the life of Rukmani with her family was simply peaceful with her simple joys and sorrows. She was proud of the love and care of her husband. She needed nothing else, no wealth, no luxury, and no material pleasure. Her calm and placid life suddenly begins to change under the impact of the industrialization i.e. the establishment of a tannery by an Englishman. The building of tannery brings about a change in the life of Rukmani and her village. From the very beginning Rukmani opposes the advent of tannery, the symbol of modernity and industrialization which spoils the natural calm and beauty of the countryside. Rukmani feels great pain in her heart when her tranquil and serene life is spoilt by the din and bustle, the filth and dirt. The loss not only of natural beauty but also of human virtues and values is the natural outcome of industry. The sweet peace and tranquility of the village fade away giving rise to the urban squalor and vice. Rukmani stands for the traditional values of life and so she revolts emphatically against the encroachment of the western industrial values on rural life. The simple rural human values are replaced by those of materialism. Rukmani becomes a mute spectator to this horrible scene, while the tannery flourishes and creates havoc in her life.



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It is necessary that rural women be awakened to new realities, challenges and opportunities. For this, a university education is not needed, technical training is not necessary, nor possession of any of the sophisticated skills. Only their 36 The Maternal Instinct instructive motherliness - sum total of their capacity to love, sacrifice and serve has to be awakened. Their essential femininity is to be invoked, their spiritual core should be touched. That is all. In the context of different types of women, Markandaya shows the different qualities of a mother. She depicts peasant women, lustful women, spiritual women traditional women having motherly feelings. "Many literary analysts have suggested that the value of suffering is an important component of Markandaya's novels because she portrays her positive woman characters as ideal sufferers and nurtures".

"The East-West conflict" is the major theme in the novels of Post-Independence novelist. Kamala Markandaya herself shows this conflict through her novels. She was born in the East and settled in West. She is well able to understand the racial conflicts, and faces difficulties to exist in this alien country. Her chief purpose to express the feeling of the people in an alien country and her novels deal with the tension between the two races and two countries.

"Feminine Superior" shows the superiority of a woman over a man. Todays women are new woman. They have been changing in all walks of life. Today, nobody can bind them. They are free individually as well as economically. Being a woman novelist, Markandaya has expressed her own views and thought about women as they are progressing in all fields. She suggests to the woman to go ahead and win all fields. Living in London, she has sympathy for the suffering Indian women and crisis over her misfortunes and plight. She depicts the condition of a widow. Aunt Alamelu lives under the protection of her brother and sister-in-law. She feels no positive attitude towards life. She has no freedom to express her opinions in the house, she has no status at home.

## III. Conclusion

In Markandaya's fiction Western values typically are viewed as modern and materialistic and Indian values as traditional and spiritual .Kamala Markandaya' s works has been given and a critical review of her literary contribution was presented. She represented an era that dominate coming up of women writers on fore front. Further, the role of Kamala Markandaya as a novelist was examined. A brief review of her basic work was given. Further art vision and spirit in her novels was highlighted. she is a feminist. she wrote about rural Indian women .She passed away on may 16 year 2004.

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