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Kamala Markandaya in a Social Countour

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Abstract: Kamala Markandaya has been accused of blunted her Indian sensibility by being too lo the West. It could be argued that her expatriation has deepened her tragic vision. (Joseph. The misery and the poverty of the average Indian and the that emancipation whether for the man or for the woman not be separated from poverty are more striking to the visiting Indian; at any rate the author belongs to the group of writers who underwent the trauma of foreign rule and cannot forget easily the repercussions thereof. Through her fiction she gives fresh insights into the ambivalence of change in women and men and in human nature. She is convinced that emancipation is closely linked to the eradication of poverty; hence she provides a platform of propaganda against the evil of society. A hungry man cannot think of any other. This is the reason why she deliberately writes against hunger, want and depravity that inevitably leads to spiritual hunger and apathy. Through Rukmani and Nalini, the author exposes the harrowing experiences of the poor and urges us to find solutions. They do not have enough to guarantee an ordinary mode of living, otherwise they could trace out all the problems. Material prosperity is just half of the picture.

Key Words: Society, Poverty, Prosperity, Propaganda.

Preface: The woman needs a vision of herself with power, enough to assert herself in life, to motivate her and others around her towards the welfare of the human race. Though it is difficult to translate this vision in practical life, Markandaya is successful in the characterisation of Roshan, Mira, Anasuya, Mohini, Usha, Amma, Valli and Zavera in overcoming the inequalities, the invisible barriers against the female sex in the existing social system; they also act as potent forces of social change by themselves. In comparison to the female characters, the men like Govind, Kit, Valmiki, Ravi, Nathan. Bawajiraj. Mr. Boyle, Appu and Cyrus contractor do appear weak, incapable of fulfilling the traditional masculine role. They are failures as husbands, as protectors and as providers. We have found that it is the woman who shores up the male protagonist from collapse. From the first novel Nec tar in a Sieve to the latest A Pleasure City, the pattern runs the same. Rikki is helped by his foster-mother Amma and foster-sister Valli. Cyrus by his wife Zavera; they are there, at every crucial stage, to provide succour.

Suffering as a result of struggle to overcome the inequalities in the social order, calls for the nurturant aspect of the woman. Prince or pauper, Rabi or Ravi, everyone needs the hand of the ministering angel to overcome the difficulties. Rukmani, Sarojini, Premala, Roshan, Mira. Saroja. Mohini. Usha, Amma, Zavera, Valli-cach has her own

way of succouring the people around her, even though the man in her life seems to be a failure in the traditional masculine role. It is easier for a happily married woman to nurture, than a lone woman who has to spend all energies towards battling in order to retain her identity. Markandaya opens a newer maturer frontier in her later novels by stressing the importance of filial and conjugal life. The emphasis on tensions in married life or the east-west encounter is no more seen in the prominent sketching as in her earlier novels. In *A Pleasure City*. "Boyle assigned himself. He had an affection, deep and genuine, for the country in which he had made his fortune. He knew it well and undoubtedly his Indian connections would be invaluable." Sexual attraction, feminine beauty and desirability yield solace to the nurturant aspect of woman. Couples like Arthur and Mary Copeland, Therumal Rao and Vatsala. Manjula and elder Raja, Mohini and Bawajiraj. Appu and Amma, Zavera and Cyrus and finally Usha and Rabi, illustrate conjugal oneness. On the other hand, the relationship of Rikki and Valli or Amma, Ranji and Corinna reflect the nurturant aspect of woman. The woman is unfailingly more intelligent and maturer than her male counterpart. Mary Copeland or Corinna is quicker to know the exigencies of life in an alien protects her family with precision against the inroad Sophic, in all her porcelain perfection with her cornflower eyes, is warned against Rabi, by her mother. Markandaya resolves the tensions between the East and the rich and the poor, the men and the women by for the universality of human feelings as experienced by all members of the family. The silent communion that exists the couples, helps them nurture a family successfully of the parents for the children, white or brown, contributes towards the upbringing of balanced individuals, towards adjusted society in which there could be a perfect blending of all that is best. There is no longer the deep pessimism pervades in & *Handful of Rice*, *Possession* and *A Silence of Desire*. What is pictured here is a harmonious concord of mature, human beings, who join together to find human solutions to the existing problems.

Markandaya's novels while dealing with different relationships, be it of husband and wife, mother and son, brother and sister, a woman with another woman or man is like the merging of two different personalities whose mutual fulfillment and growth depends upon deep understanding of each other complimentary process of give and take, of tender nursing each other's emotions and aspirations and sharing alike the rhythm of life. For her, life is extremely complex and cannot be categorised into one or the other groove no matter what one's predilections be. Tully does not leave his station as Rikki was hospitalized. He was guilty. He felt Corinna was the cause of Rikki's accident. Zavera. Mrs. Lovat, all go to the hospital to visit Rikki before leaving. Valli is ready to do anything for her loving foster-brother Rikki. Markandaya tries to make a distinction between modernization as epitomized in Lalitha and westernization as in Anasuya and Mecra. She tries to emphasize the fact that westernization modernization. Meera and Anasuya are modern and emancipated girls though they are not westernized. They are girls of simple tastes and values, are balanced and have mature perspective on life. Markandaya's women characters have the ability to care as human beings and also the rejection of the false and superficial values, Lalitha is not an emancipated woman for all her westernization. Her act of throwing herself to the film-producer leads her to her own destruction. Whereas Markandaya's early novels depict the women submissive, silent and of fortitude, her later novels depict the theme of a more courageous, independent woman who tries to change her prescribed life for the better as it is reflected in Usha, Mohini. Valli and others.

R.P. Clarke, in his book *Power and Policy in the Third World*, has made an important distinction between a traditional person and modern person. He says: "A traditional person is inclined to be skeptical towards change. In fact, the very definition of traditional' would probably include reverence for the old and tested, suspicion towards the new and

untied. A modern person, on the other hand, is not only open and receptive to change, but looks about for it, even at the cost of uprooting self and family, and moving to a different location. A modern person's readiness for changes extends to more than just job, home or customs.... Next a traditional person relates to the natural environment with a feeling of resignation and with a sensation that he or she must accept what nature imposes without trying to alter the inevitable.... A modern person, on the other hand, acts decisively to overcome nature, and its obstacles. He or she believes that destiny is in his or her control, and that he or she can influence events that have a bearing on his or her life." The women characters of Markandaya especially Mira, Anasuya, Usha, Mohini, Valli, Amma, Zavera and Mrs. Lovat, are capable of changing their circumstances if they find them unsuitable and are capable of facing situations squarely and intelligently. Mira belongs to an orthodox Brahmin family but does not hesitate to go on a tour with Richard Roshan firmly believed in preserving her identity and self respect and in having honest relationships only. Valli appears active, outgoing, spirited and capable of looking after herself. Unlike Nalini, whose own unquestioning acceptance of her fate was responsible for her suffering. Usha and Roshan embody the views of the author, a continual attempt to discriminate between men and women. She observes that whether a woman comes from the upper class or from the lower class she is invariably discriminated against and exploited and that the women should not be the sufferers. Lalitha is only superficially "liberated." She represents the falsely "liberated" woman. the woman who is eager to flirt with men believing herself to be a free person, when in reality she is only using men as toys and is being used by them as a plaything to be discarded when no longer required. Anasuya, Mira, Roshan and the likes represent the educated Indian girl and put their education to use by taking up a profession and achieving independence thus. In defiance to social convention, it seems they do not wish to marry until and unless their ideal man comes along.

The use of the language had added to the literary worth of the novel. Markandaya confesses that she polishes her sentences endlessly till perfection. One can attribute that exuberance in her language to her 'Indianness' - craving for colour, vitality and music. This quality makes her readable to the point of enchantment. The artistic value of her writing is enhanced by the moral aim to right the wrong. Her solution lies in total absorption but in overcoming strong prejudices out of a genuine love for all. About the East-West encounter Markandaya maintains that the integrity should be such that contact nourishes and does not overwhelm. "Markandaya transcends geo-political and cultural barriers when she speaks of the literature of concern' and of the universal sisterhood/brotherhood of man." Their coming together is a lesson extended to all humanity. The vision is one of togetherness-of people working and living closely together, of people not being segmented internally. This would enable the woman to meet the challenges of life in tune with her own potential and in solidarity with others. Here, in her vision of the sisterhood of the human race, lies the key to the quest of meaningful life in general and individual life in particular. In the evolution of Rukmani towards Usha, Zavera, Valli Amma, Caramen and Mrs. Lovat, we see a process of inner human enrichment where such things as insight, joy and happiness are meaningless unless one also contributes to the inside joy and happiness of others.

Conclusion: Of all the novelists, it is Kamala Markandaya who points out how the distortions in the economic and social order affect women more adversely than man. Through Rukmani and Nalini, she pleads for better education and employment opportunities so that the inherent biases in the social structure can be removed. She evolves towards a larger concept of universal love, caring and concord which by its very extension ensure the endurance and vitality of Indian womanhood. The earlier concept of the woman as a patient, long suffering wife or daughter is changing gradually to be

perceived as having the same drives, ambition needs, egoism and humanity as man Hence Bawajirao's recognition of Mohini as being equal to him in every possible way in The Golden Honeycomb Zavera and Amma proving to be stronger counterpart to the husbands Cyrus and Appu in A Pleasure City Markandava women can express themselves, do things, travel, live with partner of their choice with or without marriage, and come their own conclusion of major issues in life, religion and society. They have the inner strength earning them respect from their male counterpart. Markandaya points the way to a better future through Usha in The Golden Honeycomb and Zavera in A Pleasure City. Through their eyes we see the courage, honour, hope, pride, compassion and sacrifice which have been a part of our common heritage. The vision consoles and reminds us that we too can make it if we have courage.

Though Aristotle chose to ignore empirical evidence and announced that women, as inferior beings, had fewer teeth than men, his society produced a whole line of heroines like Electra, Medea and Phaedra, marvelous beings who not only outshone and outranked their male counterparts but also expressed forcefully the shock, mystery and existential agony and loneliness of the individual, in times of changes. Markandaya's women also emerge out of darkness, throwing off their legacy of humiliation, dependence and resignation and reaching out for an equitable share of man's worldly and spiritual goods.

The day for moving mountains is coming

You don't think so?

It is coming for a while the mountain's sleeps,

But in other times.

Mountains all move in fire. If you do not believe that

Oh Man, this at least believe:

All sleeping women will awake now and move.

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