

The Facets of Post Colonialism in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*

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Abstract: *Nectar in a Sieve* was a novel which was written by Kamala Markandaya. "Markandaya was a pioneer who influenced all of us Indians Writing in English" said by Shashi Tharoor. This novel was set in two different places. The first place was set in rural background and the second place was set in the urban background. This novel also portrays about the effects of post colonialism, because this novel clearly portrays about the problems faced by the people in that village due to post colonialism. The person who plays as a post colonial figure was Dr Kennington and the thing that denotes the post colonial figure was the tannery industry which means the skin industry. The effect of post colonialism was taken place to Rukmani's family, because her family only faced lots and lots of problems due to post colonialism. Before the colonisation takes place in that village Rukmani and her family lives a happy life with their own agricultural land but when the colonisation takes place in that village the happy life of Rukmani's family got disappeared. After the colonisation Rukmani leads a painful tragic life. Her daughter Irawali involves herself into prostitution. Through prostitution she gave birth to the child called Sacrabani. Her son Raja was died due to the tannery industry and another son Kutti was died due to the deficiency of vitamins. Her one of the son Murugan moves to urban side and lives an awkward life. The tragic end of Rukmani's life was she lost her husband Nathan in urban side and she lived her life with her prostitute daughter Irawali and her son Sacrabani and her one of the son Selvam adapted child.

Key Words- Post Colonialism, Cultural Conflicts and East and Western Culture

I INTRODUCTION

Kamala Markandaya was born in 1924 in Chimakurti village in India and died in the year 2004 in London, England. Her pseudonym was Kamala Purnaya. She was married to a man Bernard Taylor, so she got the married name as Kamala Taylor. She was an Indian novelist and her works were concerned the struggles of the contemporary Indians with conflicting the Eastern and Western values.

A Brahmin Markandaya did her studies in University of Madras and then she worked as a Journalist. In 1948 she settled in England and she got married to the Englishman. Her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* was published in the year 1954. The second book *Some Inner Fury* was published in the year 1955. The third book *Silence of Desire* was published in the year 1960. The fourth book *Possession* was published in the year 1963. The fifth book *A Handful of Rice* was published in the year 1966. The sixth book *The Coffin Dams* was published in the year 1969. The seventh book *The Nowhere Man* was published in the year 1972. The eighth book *Two Virgins* was published in the year 1973. The ninth book *The Golden Honeycomb* was published in the year 1977. The tenth book *Pleasure City* was published in the year 1982 and also published as *Shalimar*.

The novel *Nectar in a Sieve* set in a village in southern India shortly after India gained independence. *Nectar in a Sieve* portrays through the lives of its characters Rukmani, Nathan and their children. The hopes and aspirations of a young nation recently embarked on the path of development, surmounting many obstacles along the way. Few novels ever published have celebrated the human spirit, its sheer resilience with greater success.

The novel *Nectar in a Sieve* was originally published in the year 1954 to instant acclaim. The novel *Nectar in a Sieve* became an international best seller and was translated into seventeen languages. 'Nectar in a Sieve has a wonderful quiet authority', the review given by *New York Times* and the journal called *Milwaukee Journal* review this novel as 'A novel to retain in your heart'.

The novel *Nectar in a Sieve* was one of the master pieces of Kamala Markandaya. This novel was divided into two parts. The first part takes place in rural area and the second part takes place in urban area. The protagonist of this novel was Rukmani. Rukmani, an old woman, reflects on her life. The educated daughter of a village headman fallen on hard times, Rukmani is married at the age of twelve to Nathan, a tenant farmer. Nathan treats her with kindness and respect as she learns the chores her new life requires. Within a year they have a beautiful daughter, Ira, 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 there 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, this time 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, Kutti. Caring for Kutti 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 just 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 calfskin from the tannery. Kutti 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 speculate 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. Now, as Nathan nears fifty, he has no sons left to work 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 greatest 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 reduced to the few bundles they carry, Nathan and Rukmani try to find Murugan in the city. They took 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 with hunger. 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 have no means to make the trip. Rukmani tries to get work as a letter reader but earns only enough to buy rice cakes. Puli take 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, as they save, they begin to hope. 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.

A theoretical approach to analyzing the literature produced in countries that were once colonies, especially of European powers such as Britain, France, and Spain. Postcolonial theory also looks at the broader interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized by dealing with issues such as identity (including gender, race, and class), language, representation, and history. Because native languages and culture were replaced or superseded by European traditions in colonial societies, part of the post colonialist project is reclamation. Acknowledging the effect of colonialism's aftermath its language, discourse, and cultural institutions—has led to an emphasis on hybridity, or the mingling of cultural signs and practices between colonizer and colonized. The Palestinian American cultural critic Edward Said was a major figure of postcolonial thought, and his book *Orientalism* is often credited as its founding text. Other important postcolonial critics include Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Frantz Fanon.

This novel also portrays about the effects of post colonialism, because this novel clearly portrays about the problems faced by the people in that village people due to post colonialism. The person who plays as a post colonial figure was Dr Kennington and the thing that denotes the post colonial figure was the tannery industry which means the skin industry. The effect of post colonialism was takes place to Rukmani's family, because her family only faced lots and lots of problems due to post colonialism. Before the colonisation takes place in that village Rukmani and her family lives a happy life with their own agricultural land but when the colonisation takes place in that village the happy life of Rukmani's family got disappeared. After the colonisation Rukmani lead a painful tragic life. Her daughter Irawadi involves herself into prostitution. Through prostitution she gave birth to the child called Sacrabani. Her son Raja was died due to the tannery industry and another son Kutti was died due to the deficiency of vitamins. Her one of the son Murugan moves to urban side and lives an awkward life. The tragic end of Rukmani's life was she lost her husband Nathan in urban side and she lived her life with her prostitute daughter Irawadi and her son Sacrabani and her one of the son Selvam adapted child puli.

II THE FACETS OF POST COLONIALISM IN KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S *NECTAR IN A SIEVE*

The chapter studies Kamala Markandaya's novels from a postcolonial perspective. The post-1945 period of anti-colonial and usually nationalist upsurge produced the first literature which invites the name postcolonial, in the words of Elleke Boehmer, "was a literature which identified itself with the broad movement of resistance to, and transformation of colonial societies." In the post-colonial era, writers of the once colonized countries have expressed the imperative need to help change the colonized world by rewriting their history, telling their own stories, waging a battle of the mind with colonialism by re-educating readers. To a certain extent, Markandaya has done her part in using India, Indian culture, beliefs, myths, and Indian values for the foreign readers, and writing in a way she would like the non-Indian readers to perceive India. Thus, incorporating indigenous cultural material, defiant of western authority, the post-colonial quest seeks mastery not in the first instance over land or other people, but over history and self.

Post-colonialism refers to a set of theories in philosophy and literature that grapple with the legacy of colonial rule. As a literary theory, it deals with literature produced in countries that were once colonies of other countries. It may also deal with literature written in or by citizens of colonizing countries that take colonies or their people as their subject matter. Post-colonialism may mean many issues for societies that have undergone colonialism: The dilemmas of developing a national identity in the wake of colonial rule, the ways in which writers from colonized countries attempt to articulate and reclaim them from the colonizers, the ways knowledge of colonized people have served the interests of colonizers, and how knowledge of subordinate people is produced and used, and the ways in which the literature of the colonial powers is used to justify colonialism through the perpetration of images of the colonized as inferior. In this regard, Edward Said line from the introduction to *Orientalism* comes to mind:

"The relationship between Occident and orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony..." Creating a binary oppositions structure, distinctions were made between the oriental and the westerner: one being emotional, the other being rational. This opposition was used to justify a destiny to rule on behalf of the colonizer, or as is popularly known as 'white man's burden.'

Postcolonial writing requires a comparative framework based on some common ground shared by all postcolonial literature. This is provided by the concept of a 'common colonial experience' that is held to be the determining force to shape postcolonial literature as such. The term "postcolonial" according to Bill Ashcroft et al., "cover all cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression." Thus post-colonial literature deals with the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary culture and literatures. These literatures have their own special and distinctive regional characteristics. Besides, another feature of such literatures is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power and by emphasizing their differences from assumptions of the imperial centre. This also makes them distinctively post-colonial. Literatures of former colonized countries like African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries and Sri Lanka are all post-colonial literatures.

Though not all post-colonial writings are the same, there are some common features and themes that are similar for most post-colonial writings. The dominance or control over language is an important and inevitable feature of imperial oppression. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* writes, "The imperial education system installs a 'standard' version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalizes all 'variants' as impurities." Colonized people responded to the colonial legacy by writing back to the centre. This came about as indigenous people became educated and began to write their own histories, their own legacy. They used the colonizer's language for their own purposes. The language in which the post-colonial writers write is either by a total abrogation or denial of the English language or by appropriating the language. As language functions as a medium of power, post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place.

Bill Ashcroft et. al describes two distinct process in which post-colonial writing does this. "The first, the abrogation or denial of the privilege of 'English' involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication. The second, appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remolding the language to new usages." Almost all the writers from the former British colonies have accepted and appropriated the English language according to their suited conditions and environment. Markandaya wrote in the English language like most other Indian writers by appropriating the language of the imperial centre to describe appropriately the culture and sensitivity of India and Indians in most of her novels. Most of the post-colonial writers belong to the literate elite and wrote in the language of the empire. But these writers need to undergo a thorough study of their national traditions which become the first and most vital stage in the process of rejecting the claims of the centre to exclusivity. They also try to give voice to formerly suppressed people. One can also say that it is a literature of protest and resistance which in the beginning started as a nationalist literature. It can be said that the major theme of literatures from post-colonial countries can be taken as resistance to the former colonizer and that the writers who write back to the centre represent the people of their society authentically.

Another concern is the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place giving rise to the special post-colonial crisis of identity. Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* is a perfect example for this special post-colonial crisis of identity. Thematic parallels are found across the different post-colonial literatures in English. For example, the theme of the celebration of the struggle for independence emerges in novels as diverse as Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Ngugi's *A*

Grain of Wheat, Reid's *New Day* and Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* and *The Golden Honeycomb*', the theme of the dominating influence of a foreign culture on the life of contemporary post-colonial societies is present in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin* and in Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury*, *Possession* and *Two Virgins*.

Themes with a powerful metonymic force are seen to emerge in postcolonial literatures. For example, the construction or demolition of houses or buildings in post-colonial locations is a recurring and evocative motif. The destruction of farmland and dwelling houses for the construction of a tanning factory, destruction of native huts for construction of coffer dams, the construction of pleasure complex or luxury hotels in place of the dwelling houses of the fisher folks etc. are seen in Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, *The Coffey Dams* and *Pleasure City* respectively. Another theme is that of the journey of the European interloper through unfamiliar landscape with a native guide. This is found in many post-colonial texts as wide ranging as Wilson Harris's *Palace of the Peacock*, Patrick Whites' *Voss* to name a few. One finds a similar situation in Markandaya's *Coffey Dams* where an English woman, Helen takes an Indian native, Bashiam to guide her in a hunting expedition in one of the unfamiliar forest region of India. In another novel *Possession*, the protagonist, Lady Caroline Bell takes an Indian, Anasuya to guide her through the remote Indian villages.

Similarities across different post-colonial literatures do not end with thematic parallels; they extend to certain features such as a distinctive use of allegory, irony, magic realism, and discontinuous narratives. Another feature is that most post-colonial writers often move to England or North America. They may have been exiled, or because they find a more receptive audience there, or simply in search of a more comfortable mode of living. As for Markandaya, she left India for England at the age of 24, after her marriage to a fellow journalist, John Taylor.

The novels written in India or about India by the whites in colonial period deliver a strong indictment of the moral character of the East India Company officers or their white counterparts. Indians themselves are no more than massed shadowy figures in the background. The Europeans represented the people who inhabited the lands they claimed as "the natives, the colonized, and the subaltern." While the Indians are protagonists occupying centre stage and the whites lose their stature and esteem in Markandaya's novels. There are scenes of protests against unequal distribution of power and wealth, and of mass independence movements in *A Handful of Rice*, *Some Inner Fury* and *The Golden Honeycomb* of Kamala Markandaya as well as in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) and Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* (1936). There is no distinction between castes nor clan nor family when it comes to resisting the empirical government in these novels. R.K Narayan on the other hand, writing in English like the others, ignored the British in his early novels and thus keeping them marginal. Far removed is Frantz Fanon, the leading anti-colonial thinker who radically invoked the self-determining powers of colonized peoples. In his major work of revolutionary politics, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon called for the entire structure of colonial society to be changed from the bottom up, violently. For him, to decolonize thoroughly meant that the indigenous be forcibly substituted for the alien, in literature as in life. Indians writing in English practices a different approach of decolonizing. They have adopted the language of the imperial centre inducting in different Indian words, phrases and idioms according to their suitability and availability. Indianizing the English is what these writers have done. They do not call for a radical change like Fanon. Instead they have even adopted and accepted what is thought to be practical and rational in customs, dress and habits of the English while insisting that Indian faith and ethics remain superior to Western rationality and reasoning.

Post-colonialism and feminism have something in common. In postcolonial societies the colonized are relegated or oppressed and marginalized just as women in many societies have been relegated and oppressed. In a colonial society, if the strengthening of patriarchy within the family became one way for colonized men to assert their otherwise eroded power, women's writings often testify to the confusion and pain that accompanied these enormous changes. Even the nationalist male who wants to fashion his wife into new role including her education and freedom from older orthodoxies also want to fashion her into a fresh subservience. The position and function of women for a colonialist as well as nationalist is rightly expressed in Ania Loomba's words. She says:

"Women are not just a symbolic space but real targets of colonialist and nationalist discourses. Their subjection and the appropriation of their work is crucial to the workings of the colony or the nation. Thus, despite their other differences, and despite their contests over native women, colonial and indigenous patriarchies often collaborated to keep women in their place."

Millions of women took part in anti-colonial struggles. Most of them were not feminist, nor did they necessarily perceive a tension between their own struggles and those of their community at large. Women's struggles for equality continue even after formal independence as their position in pre colonial as well as post-colonial period remained more or less the same. It is for this same reason that writings of women who worked alongside, within or in opposition to the nationalist and anti-colonial movements have become increasingly available for feminist scholars.

All over the world, especially in the Indian sub-continent, when a woman begins to write, she is reversing the power balance and committing an act of transgression against the conventional social codes. She has trespassed into the male intellectual bastion and thereby aroused a silent hostility. The act of writing for a woman is essentially an act of breaking her silence because her repressive patriarchal/racial society has taught her to be culturally silent. The feminine is essentially the marginalized consciousness that operates on the periphery of patriarchal discourse. Post-colonial women's writing speaking from seeming silence has not been confined to studies from life alone. As Elleke Boehmer states that "In novels, short stories, poems, plays,

postcolonial women have for decades sought to overturn preconceptions of the Third World women's experience as uniformly degraded, passively oppressed, or lacking in powers of self determination."

Like many other schools of thought- Marxist, Gramscian, Faucauldian and various feminist schools, Kamala Markandaya shows a determination to analyze unjust power relationship in her novels. She too considers herself engaged and committed to some variety or other of the liberation process. Her novels attempt to define relationships between the settler or colonial invader races and groups and the first nation races and groups which articulated the newly emergent voices of nationhood after colonialism. The desire of the colonizer for the colony is transparent enough, but it is much more different to account for the inverse longing of the colonized.

The Indian English novel has been more obsessed with cultural interaction between the East and the West. The encounter examines, "the mutual contagion and subtle intimacies between colonizer and colonized." Some outstanding writers who have explored cultural interactions between the East and the West and the transcultural dynamics of the colonial encounter are Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Ruth Jhabvala and a few more. The ever expanding European empire conquered and ruled over many countries of the world. They were far superior in their knowledge about themselves and the rest of the world. It was only natural that they considered the conquered or colonised people inferior to them. Seeing them live in a less civilized and less human manner, they were considered to be wild savage without a ray of civilization. The natives were perceived whether they had souls or minds, minds capable of adult growth. This mental state is found in the whites who appear in Markandaya's novels.

In the novels of Markandaya, we find the Westerner put in a whole series of possible relationships with the Indians without ever losing him the relative upper hand. The English who are more educated and well equipped with knowledge of the world at large though small in number, ruled over the ignorant Indians. Edward Said has rightly said, "To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it." An account of Cromer mentions what Sir Alfred Lyall once said to him: "Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind. Every Anglo-Indian should remember that maxim." This lack of accuracy and reasoning may be due to lack of knowledge which in turn may be due to lack of education and backwardness. The Orient's lack of knowledge about the world and about themselves served as a fitting condition for the all powerful and learned conquerors who had come to exploit the weaker race. The relation developed between the oriental-European naturally could never be on equal terms. The colonist exercised their superiority over the colonised. Theirs is a relation opposite to one another. When one is the master, the other is the slave or when one is rational and wise, the other is irrational and stupid. These are the elements Markandaya ingrains in her characters, the whites and the Indians and shows the different facets of their love-hate, master-slave relationships in her ten novels which will be studied one after the other.

Markandaya's first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* captures the dichotomy between the fatalism, spiritualism and idealism of the East and the pragmatism, materialism, and individualism of the West. It is a conflict between the tradition and change, the rural and the urban, the agrarian and the industrial. While Rukmani and Nathan, the landless, poor tenant farmers represents the poor, passive, submissive and patient East, Dr. Kennington the English doctor, stands for the rational, enlightened, active, and dominant West. Markandaya's close contact and intimate relationship with both oriental and occidental values of life give her a rare advantage as the presence of two cultures in one mind. This forms a wider and therefore a saner basis with which to originate the quest for identity, and that the discordance between these cultures can be creative as well as merely confusing.

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, the quiet and serene life of the village is disturbed and everything in it changes with the construction of a tannery. Like a mythical demon the whole village is devoured by the tannery that turns it into a spiritual wasteland. The change from a peaceful serene village life to the chaos of a developing township is clear from the picture shown in the line: "Now it is all noise and crowds everywhere, and rude young hooligans idling in the street and dirty bazaari and uncouth behavior, and no man thinks of another but schemes only for his money." (NIS: 46)

Nathan is left homeless being uprooted from the land while the inexorable laws of necessity and destitution forced his daughter, Ira into prostitution. The tannery has given jobs to many but it has also left many homeless. The poor villagers are exploited with no adequate wages and the time-honored peasant code is destroyed with no substitute.

The younger generations are not as submissive and fatalistic as the older has been. The two elder sons of Nathan and Rukmani - Arjun and Thambi want more from life. They do not want to suffer meekly as their parents did. Their work and pay at the tannery do not satisfy them anymore. They leave for Ceylon to work in the tea plantations there, for they are offered more money. This is much to the displeasure of the parents for Rukmani knows very well that she will not see them anymore. Nathan realizes they have made their decision and will not listen to his pleading. They argue: "There is nothing for us here, for we have neither the means to buy land nor to rent it. Would you have us wasting our youth chafing against things we cannot change?" (NIS: 68) And in a way, this is true for they have nothing at all. Nathan's younger son, Selvam's eyes smolders with anger and hatred when he comes to know that his father has been evicted from the land and so he asks: "you have accepted it? But Nathan's concept is totally different, his simple reply is: "what options have I, my son"(NIS: 68). The sympathetic Western doctor Kenny is also affected by India's grinding poverty though it is the West that is in many ways responsible for it. He too "has no patience with the passivity of the starving and suffering villages for the amelioration of whose miseries he works indefatigably." Kenny tells Rukmani: "You must cry out if you want help. It is no use whatsoever to suffer in silence. Who will succor the drowning man if he does not clamor for his life?" (NIS: 113)

He is moved by the suffering Indians and very often exhorts them to agitate for better conditions of life. Rukmani's meek acceptance of fate and every misfortune without a word of protest and her hope that times will be better angers Kenny and leaves him disgusted for his face grew grim and long and shouts at her

"Times are better, times are better.... Times will not be better
for many months. Meanwhile you will suffer and die, you

meek suffering fools. Why do you keep this ghastly silence?
 Why do you not demand - cry out for help - do something?
 There is nothing in this country, oh God, there is nothing!" (NIS: 44)

Dr. Kennington belongs to the privileged class of the whites but he has sacrificed his life for the poor Indians. He is sympathetic and kind and at the same time, cannot bear to see the meek acceptance of fate. His better learning and status in life enables him to offer his ideas and knowledge especially to Rukmani with whom he shares a close affinity. As always, when the East meets the West, there is always a difference in opinion and points of view. This may be because of their difference in knowledge and upbringing. Family ties matter a lot for Rukmani and marriage is a sacrament which cannot be easily abandoned. She could even forgive Nathan, her husband who has fathered the two older sons of Kunthi. On the other hand, marriage seems only a contract for when asked, Dr. Kenny tells Rukmani: "My wife has left me, my sons have been taught to forget me." The East leans on its spirituality, cultural strength and strong family ties though the West may be more developed or practical or materially wealthy.

The novelist has made Rukmani, the protagonist, narrate the tale, in order to show the subtle intensities of the moving fabric. She has made a woman the central character because she knows that woman is at the centre of the socio-economic structure of the Indian peasant families. Rukmani is a symbol of an Indian rural woman.

Rukmani's views are reflections of typical socio-cultural ethos which is designed to make an Indian woman accommodative, obedient, inoffensive and easily happy with her lot. The story takes place in one of the small south Indian villages of India. Rukmani, the youngest of the four daughters of a once wealthy village headman is married to a tenant farmer, Nathan, who is poor in all respects. By the time Rukmani is married, the heydays of her father had come to an end resulting in her marriage to a poor peasant. Rukmani becomes the victim of the dowry system as her father is unable to pay her dowry. The fourteen year old Rukmani comes to her new home, the sight of which sends a chill down her spine. "This mud hut, nothing but mud and thatch was my home." She could not adjust herself to such a poor family condition and surroundings. But when she comes to know that the hut has been built by her husband with his own hands, her fear and humiliation turn into pride. The Indian dowry system throws her in poverty and the Indian value system makes her to accept it as her fate.

The first six years of married life are spent without much complexity. However with the birth of every child they are thrown into deeper levels of poverty. Rukmani says, "we no longer had milk in the house except for the youngest child; curds and butter were beyond our means apart from on rare occasions" (NIS 24). Till the birth of the sixth child their economic condition worsens to such an extent that they have to remain half fed, though not starving, till they started growing vegetables in their own field. The rise in prices of the essential commodities compels them to sell the cattle. When Irrawaddy, her only daughter turns fourteen she is married to a landless laborer. The family spent all their savings on her marriage. Unfortunately the flood destroys their crops in the same year and they have no other way but to survive on roots, leaves and plantain till the next harvest. To make the matters worse, four years after her marriage, Ira returns to her parents as her husband abandons her for not giving him an heir.

Arjun and Thambi, Rukmani's two sons, start working in a tannery and improve their economic condition. But soon they lose their jobs and go to Ceylon in search of daily bread. The rains fail that year. As a tenant, Nathan, husband of Rukmani, is compelled to pay the tenant rental in order to continue to keep the tenant-farming land. For this they sell their household materials and bullocks. Rukmani's third son Raja dies of brutal beating by the tannery watchmen. The condition of the youngest child Kutti becomes more and more critical. Ira becomes a prostitute to save her brother; her sacrifice, however, fails to save Kutti. Old Granny, a well wisher of Rukmani's family, also dies of hunger in the street. The novel appears circular in structure as the story ends where it begins. Bhagwat Goyal in his book *Culture and Commitment* rightly says that it indicates the endless cycle of misery and deficiency in which India's rural and urban poor are eternally trapped.

All the members of Nathan and Rukmani's family contribute to the realistic depiction of the poor and suffering in India. So the novel, rightly described as 'a novel of rural India' is an authentic picture of the Indian rural society, in which most people lived in continuous poverty and hunger and often died of hunger. However, M. K. Naik in *A History of Indian English Literature* says that "Rukmani's village exists only in the expatriate's imagination of her creator" This position is not valid. Those who have been part of the period depicted in the novel (and there are thousands of people of that period still alive), do remember the horrid conditions of landless tenant farmers. Their suffering is well-recorded in realistic fiction in various Indian languages. Modern Tamil fiction in the hands of progressive writers such as Jayakanthan depicts the miserable lives of the landless workers, coolies and others.

The novel deals with a number of themes such as beggary, prostitution, lack of family planning, zamindari system, dowry system, superstitions, low status of women and evils of marriage system. Parvati Misra in her *Class Consciousness in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya* observes: *Nectar in a Sieve* is a vivid record of the hungry rural peasantry whose life is afflicted by the existing social institutions and rituals such as child marriage, widowhood, and negligence of female child, slavery, landlessness, casteism and illiteracy." (Misra 2)

An old woman, Rukmani, who had lost her husband and five of her six sons, who live in her mud thatched hut, narrates her tremendously tender life's story which fills us with deep sorrow. Being a daughter of this soil, she knows what it means to be poor. She considers it as the 'sixth great sin'. Poverty breeds hunger. Anil Kumar Bhatnagar in his *Kamala Markandaya: A Thematic Study* says, "she makes her readers understand the true meaning of hunger and starvation. True one cannot judge the impact of hunger and starvation without passing through the terrible ordeal of being hungry. Markandaya lived in South-Indian villages and shared the sufferings of villagers as independent observer." (Bhatnagar 21) She shows her minute observation of the effects of hunger on the human body and the human mind. Rukmani says, for hunger is a inquisitive thing: at first it is with you all the time, walking and sleeping and in your dreams, and your belly cries out insistently and there is a gnawing and a pain as if your very vitals were being devour, and you must stop it at any cost, and you buy a moment's respite even while you know and

fear the sequel. Then the pain is no longer sharp but dull and this too is with you always, so that you think of food many times a day and each time a terrible sickness assails you, and because you know this, you try to avoid the thought, but you cannot, it is with you.

Then that too is gone, all pain all desire only a great emptiness is left, like the sky, like a well in draught and it is now that the strength drains from your limbs and you try to rise and find you cannot, or to swallow water and your throat is powerless and both the swallow and the effort of retaining the liquid, tax you to the uttermost (NIS 87 – 88). Markandaya gives a thorough account of the efforts of farmers and landless labor to make their two ends meet till the next harvest.

The youngest Kutti could not digest the things brought by the elders to eat. Being a weak child he suffers. Rukmani says, at first he asked for rice-water and cried because there was none. But later he gave up asking and merely cried. Even in his sleep he whimpered, twisting and turning endlessly, permitting no one to rest (NIS 88). All of them become so weak that on the death of Raja, her son, Rukmani does not cry and does not allow her daughter to cry. She says, “What are you crying for? ... you have little enough strength, without dissolving it in tears” (NIS 89)

It is hunger which provokes Kunthi to blackmail Rukmani. But through some characters like Irawaddy, Markandaya wants to project that not all choose the immoral path to overcome their poverty. Ira’s choice of prostitution is not due to her hunger but to save her brother’s life. Even in the direst poverty, Rukmani does not lose her morality. She shows her willingness to share her meals with her neighbour Kunthi. She even adopts a poor orphan child. Markandaya tries to show that lack of family planning is one of the reasons of poverty in rural India. When Rukmani gets married, they have enough to eat and store. But with the growing number of children poverty also grows.

Markandaya also succeeds to portray the feudal exploitation, an important characteristic of rural India. Nathan is compelled to pay the land taxes of the Zamindar, even after the failure of the harvest. After nature’s wrath, human assault comes as a wild shock. The landlord orders Nathan to vacate the land within two weeks. The tenant who has been tilling the land for more than thirty years is asked to vacate it within two weeks, without any compensation or any provision for his future. The land is sold to the tannery owner without the consent of the tenant. Nathan mutely succumbs to the exploitation.

Nathan symbolizes the plight of the Indian peasants when Rukmani says, “to those who live by the land there must always come time of hardship of fear and of hunger, even as there are years of plenty. This is one of the truths of our existence as those who live by the land know: that sometimes we eat and sometimes we starve. We live by our labors from one harvest to the next, there is no certain telling whether we shall be able to feed ourselves and our children and if bad times are prolonged we know we must see the weak surrender their lives and this fact, too, is within our experience. In our life there is no margin for misfortune (NIS 134 – 135).

Rukmani’s son, the representative of the younger generation, expresses his anger over the exploitation but keeps mum when Nathan expresses his helplessness for not having any law against it. He says, “We may grieve, but there is no redress” (NIS 136). Rukmani blames the tannery for their exploitation. The tannery becomes the symbol of economic or industrial exploitation. Shiv K. Kumar in his essay “Tradition and Change in novels of Kamala Markandaya” compares it with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. He says, Rukmani, “the devoted wife of a tenant farmer, living in the soul of quietude of her little village, suddenly finds within this garden of Eden a serpent in the form of a tannery that begins to rear its ugly head, devouring green open spaces, pollute the clean, wholesome atmosphere and tempting simple gullible peasants into greed, ambitions and immorality” (Kumar 205).

Through the character of Nathan, Markandaya shows the picture of Indian peasant at the advent of Industrialization. Industrialization makes peasants landless. Peasants know no other skills but for tilling the land. Industrialization makes them rush to the towns and cities. But due to their illiteracy and lack of any other skill they either turn beggars or die. When Nathan becomes landless he goes to the town. He loves his land more than anything else. Knowing no other skills, he becomes helpless when he is compelled to live in the town. He dies on the very day they plan to return. His fight against poverty and hunger comes to an end only with his unfortunate death. Markandaya thus succeeds in proving through this novel that it is the socioeconomic state that is answerable for various kinds of social evils.

The author’s closeness to the central character makes *Nectar in a Sieve* ‘a veritable saga of successful womanhood.’ Most women in fiction and in real life have to struggle with conflicting situations. The Indian woman is caught in the flux of tradition and modernity - the burden of the past and the aspirations of the future. The novel shows that the Indian woman - passive or aggressive, traditional or modern serves to reflect the author’s quest for psychological insight and awareness. The figure of the Indian woman represented by Rukmani, with her inner power and honesty, paving her own resolute way through an exploiting, biased world, serves as an inspiring light of hope. Kamala Markandaya has a message for the new generation. Woman is not an island; she is the main land, the heart land of the human race.

Kamala Markandaya Novels deal with the theme of Tradition and Modernity. The term tradition signifies certain customs, habits, tastes, beliefs and opinions which have been prevalent in the countries for a long time, which consequently acquires a contextual value. A society is considered to be traditional if its behavior is governed by customs and traditions. On the other hand Modernity implies a gradual change in the attitudes, ideas, and beliefs of the people generated by the Urbanization, Science and Technology advancement in India. Modernization in India is basically an offshoot of Industrialization and westernization introduces a new society. The external distinctive characteristic of modernity is felt in the hysterical process of industrialization. The growth of industrialization means in the Indian context, the peasants being uprooted from their land and their surroundings, the oppression of common workers and the vulgarization of their traditional life and their ancient culture. People who have so far adhered to deep rooted cultural habits are caught unawares by the sudden intrusion of modernization and its evil impact. The remarkable quality that distinguishes Kamala Markandaya from her contemporary writers is her sharp awareness of the shift in values that has been taking place in the post – colonial India.

The conflict between Tradition and Modernity forms a main thematic concern in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. She is aware of the tensions and conflicts caused by the technological invasion and urbanization on the traditional agrarian community. The Novel reflects the authors concern with the evil effects of Industrialization on the agrarian Indian society and the resultant social, economic and political subversion. She voices her genuine concern in her novels over the degradation in human values in the wake of industrialization.

Modernity always appears in her novels as the worst epidemic in Modern India. She censures ruthlessly the very process of modernization which is devoid of concern for human values. *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) portrays the picture of the peasant's life, their toil, their sufferings, and their agonies of industrialization, which ruins the age-old village structure. The Novel depicts the life of Indian villages standing at the periphery of urban civilization. It depicts the sufferings of a peasant family Rukmani and Nathan. Rukmani is a daughter of village headman is married to a tenant farmer Nathan, who is poor but an affectionate husband.

Rukmani makes a heaven out of the ordinary surroundings. She spends her day by watching the serene atmosphere of village. The change came blasting in their lives, in the form of the Tannery, a symbol of industrialization. The peaceful life of them was first and foremost affected with the advent of industrialization. The Tannery brings greater hardships and adversity in the life of villagers. The Tannery is a symbol of mechanical power destroys the traditional village. Hunger raises its ugly head and it envelops the peace and joy of their life.

Industry is the first gift of the Western Knowledge and Culture. Though it is necessary for the development of a nation yet it was the first assault on the innocence of Indian Life. Rukmani is not prepared to accept the tannery because the tannery disturbs the tranquil atmosphere of the countryside with its noise, foul smell and crowds. It will jeopardize the blissful and the harmonious life of the village. The tannery not only disrupts the ecology, but also the economy of village. The entire business of village collapses due to the establishment of the tannery. The businessmen of the village raise their prices in order to exploit the situation. To Rukmani the tannery exemplifies city, modernization, exploitation of the poor laborers and finally the complete destruction of the village community.

The tannery is the main cause of the absolute disintegration of Rukmani's family. When the family is on the verge of starvation Rukmani's two sons joined the tannery despite their mothers' strong opposition. The Tannery is totally responsible for their turning away from their traditional job of cultivation of the land. It has also inculcated a craving for money in villages. Those who have belonged to the earth, so far begins to have a sense of belonging to the machine. The Tannery is quite responsible for the debasement of Ira, the daughter of Rukmani and Nathan; she is forced to take prostitution in order to save her younger brother, Kutti from starvation. Rukmani laments; "Ira had ruined herself at the hands of the throngs that the tannery attracted. None but these would have laid hands on her, even at her bidding" (NIS: 136).

The tannery not only ruins the family of Rukmani and Nathan but also it brings destruction to other families also. Unable to compete with other business people, the villagers quit the village in order to earn their livelihood somewhere else. Murugan, the son of Rukmani and Nathan also leave the village for the city in search of a job, there he gets married without permission of his parents, and since his marriage is not traditional he deserts his wife and children and begins to live with another woman. Finally the establishment of tannery has led to the complete disintegration of the family of Nathan and Rukmani. The land which they have been cultivating for nearly three decades has been purchased by the tannery owners at a high price from the landlords. They suffer a lot when they are asked to move out of the land. Though Nathan is a tenant farmer, he is very much attached to the land, he feels desperate when the land is being taken away from him. Nathan sadly articulates "Where are we to go? What shall we do? (NIS: 133) No doubt the breakdown of such well-established family affects the lives of the villagers. The powerful words of Rukmani in connection with the evils of industrialization deserve to be mentioned here:

"Somehow I had always felt the tannery would eventually be our undoing. I had known it since the day carts had come with their loads of bricks and noisy dusty men.... It had changed the face of our village beyond our recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants in myriad ways.... My sons had left because it frowned on them. One of them had been destroyed by its ruthlessness. And there were others its touch had scathed. Janaki and her family, the hapless Kannan, Kunthi even". (NIS: 63)

Rukmani becomes pathetic when her land is forcibly taken from her. While feeling extremely sorry for her desperate condition. She says, "This hut with all its memories was to be taken from us, for it stood on land that belonged to another. And the land itself by which we lived. It is a cruel thing I thought." (NIS: 132) After eviction from the land, Rukmani and Nathan are forced to migrate to the urban society where their son lives, but owing to their futile attempt at finding out their son, they both enter the occupation of breaking stones in quarry. Unable to cope with the work Nathan dies and Rukmani returns to the village. Kamala Markandaya makes it very clear that Rukmani and Nathan happen to be the desperate victims of Nature, Industrialization and Zamindari system. Though the peasants who earn their livelihood by the soil cannot be sure of a rich harvest every year, yet they can be hopeful of harvest because for them the land symbolizes hope. But as a victim of Modern technology is assaulted by agents of implacable & unrelenting factors

While excoriating the evils of industrialization Kamala Markandaya does not fail to strike both at nature and at landlordism in rural India. Pointing out the disastrous vagaries of nature on a peasant's life. Rukmani says:

"Nature is like a wild animal that you have trained to work for you. So long as you are vigilant and walk warily with thought and care, so long will it give you its aid; but look away for an instant, be heedless or forgetful, and it has you by the throat." (NIS: 43)

Thus through Rukmani, Kamala Markandaya presents a powerful criticism of Industrialization and its intrusion on a traditional village which is a symbolic/symbol of Rural India. The novel clearly depicts the inevitable changes brought by the modernization. Many critics of the Novel see it as the presentation of the conflict between tradition life and modern Industrialization. They consider that Rukmani, devoted wife of Nathan living a simple, harmonious life suddenly finds herself in troubles in the form of a tannery that begins to occupy green open spaces, polluting the environment and tempting the simple peasants into greed.

In the novel the west is represented by the Dr.Kennington (Kenny), an English medical Missionary called as Kenny by the villagers affectionately. He is a philanthropist. He is a great humanitarian, out of love and pity for the poor and suffering people of India he has sacrificed all his pleasures of home. He renders service to the rural folk and helps them to overcome their miseries. He also cures Rukmani and her daughter Ira of their bareness with his medical treatment. In order to serve the people better he builds a modern hospital. His services are very much rewarded and he is very much admired and adored by the villagers.

Kamala Markandaya understands the complexities of present life. She is fully aware of the inescapable demands of modernization. She feels that change is inevitable and the entire world is running behind the technology, every society ought to wake up from its slumbering state and try to enter the stream of modern life.

In *Nectar in a Sieve* Rukmani cannot understand the sudden tangible force of industrialization and therefore she derogates the technological invasion. Though Kamala Markandaya uses Rukmani to attack the intrusion of modern technology, she makes use of another character, namely, Dr.Kenny to build a hospital with modern facilities to cure the diseases of villagers. If Rukmani happens to be the symbol of modernity, Dr.Kenny is a symbol of Modernity in positive aspects. If the tannery stands for destruction, the hospital built by Dr.Kenny stands for the preservation of life. What Kamala Markandaya tries to say in her novel is aptly summed up by Hari Jai Singh in his book, '*India Between Dream and Reality*'. He remarks, "A rich tradition can well be an integral part of modernity. Both can co- exist and supplement each other. It is a matter of adjustment Modernization can be adapted to an extent desirable, depending on the need & receptivity of a society".

The imbalanced deforestation by the colonizer mildly impacts the economic interest of those categories of society, who are basically the women and tribal groups, the livelihood of whom completely depends on the balanced ecosystem. Their continual effort to survive considerably developed a natural instinct among them to protect the environment. Especially, soil and water stabilization, and the provision of food, fodder, fuel, and fertilizer are the most valuable assets for those groups of people. Moreover, in the present world, numerous obstacles encountering third world women are the consecutive fate of colonial mergers between the first and third worlds. Colonization is considered as accountable not only for subjecting third world women but also demolishing and scrounging the natural resources which are divine and earnestly preserved by the third world native community. Rukmani, after her marriage, happily learns the chores of peasants and passionately embraces the life and works as a peasant woman.

Usually the rural people manage their food and expenditure from tilling; most of the families in *Nectar in a Sieve* are also involved with this occupation. But they start encountering the natural disasters and losing their land gradually due to the impact of utmost industrialization. The principles of village trade are influenced by the neo colonial rule. The landowners seize the crops or money from foodless indigent farmers who cannot even manage their everyday meals. The young boys start working in the factory for prosperity leaving their patriarchal profession of tilling. After being abounded by the tannery Rukmani's two sons cannot get back to their land, they leave village for working in the tea garden, which create another scope of being exploited by the neo-colonial concept of development.

III CONCLUSION

An attempt is made here to highlight the insides received from this study of the use of ironic vision in Markandayas novels by way of conclusion. The first section of the conclusion recapitulates the observations made in the course of the present analysis regarding the use of ironic vision in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. It will also reiterate the definition of irony and elaborates different types of irony. Kamala Markandaya is not only the earliest Indian woman novelist of significance; in fact, William Walsh calls her "the most gifted" of them. But also one of the most distinguished writers on the literary scene today. Meenakshi Mukharjee

considers Markandaya as one of the prominent novelists from the commonwealth literary world. Her fiction elaborates socio-cultural relations of the two countries because of her prolonged residence in India as first home and England the second, which enabled her to bridge the gap. She is aware of her indianness and the differences between acquired and inherited value system. In her works she deals with various social problems.

Among her contemporary women writers she occupies an eminent place. Dr. A. V. Krishna Rao considers Kamala Markandaya as the reflective writer who attempted to bring forth the image of changing Indian society. As such, Markandaya merits special mention both by virtue of the variety and complexity of her achievement. In her novels, she not only displays flair for virtuosity that orders and patterns her feelings and ideas, resulting in the production of a truly enjoyable work of art, but also more important, she projects the national image on many levels of aesthetic awareness. The national consciousness of variety of forms with feminine sensibility of modern woman is fully reflected in her novels.

Markandaya operates within the framework of the traditional novelist. A strong narrative pattern, respect for chronology, distinct story element, sociological background and linear development of plot are the distinguishing elements of her novels. She has used no innovative technique in the construction of her plots. In '*Nectar in a Sieve*, *The Nowhere Man* and *Some Inner Fury*, we observe a traditional pattern of plot. Her first novel, '*Nectar in a Sieve*' is well-structured though the structuring is done on a conventional pattern. Structure of the novel is very definite as Rukmani's retrospection impresses a kind of pattern on it. She recounts her past which, though dead, is still fresh in her troubled memory. The novelist has tried to establish the coherence between the opening and the end of the novel. Rukmani looks at her life after her husband's death. Thus the novel begins with

nostalgic recollection of her husband and then her entire past rolls before her eyes. In other novels the novelist uses organic plot and we notice a causal link between events and characters.

One of the distinguished writers, Nayantara Sahgal has good words of praise for Markandaya's art of portraying characters. She states "Kamala Markandaya develops her characters very well, more so than men writers, I am not saying that because I am a woman but her characters seem to be made of flesh and blood." Though she does produce a variety of characters in her novels, she picks up her characters from every class of society.

In "*Nectar in a Sieve*" Rukmani deals with the peasants' life while *Possession* throws light on the aristocratic ways of rich people. In *A Handful of Rice* she observes the character of a criminal like Damodar, In the *Nowhere Man* she highlights the ideal character of Srinivas who believes in non-violence. Indeed, she does not choose any particular class for her characterization. She sympathizes with the poor on the one hand but she does not ignore the problems of the rich on the other. The *Golden Honeycomb* describes the problems of both the classes. Thus she tries to draw her characters from every class of society. But one thing is quite clear about her characterization. It is that her women characters are more powerful than her male characters. Rukmani, Ira, Mira, Sarojini, Caroline, Jaya, Nalini, and Saroja are some of the immortal women characters in Indo-English fiction. Shashi Iyer points out in this connection, "The women novelists have made a definite contribution in their intuitive and clear perception of woman's role in the present society. Ihabwala gives a penetrating analysis of domestic fiction.

Kamala Markandaya in her *A Silence of Desire* presents a subtle study of the husband-wife relationship. Her most recent novel, *Two Virgins* (1973) sensitive portrayal of a girl's growing awareness of the adult and the irrevocable loss of childhood world. As literature is the mirror of life irony plays a very important role in it. Irony has become a strong medium to create tragic effect. Kamala Markandaya, like the Greek tragedians, puts the responsibility of man's misery on 'fate' that will not allow mortals to exercise free will successfully. Her characters are the victims of the irony of life; of 'fate' what happens to them is quite contrary to their wishes and expectations. Since their happenings are not desired and unexpected they face sorrow and sufferings.

The lives of Rukmani and Nathan become a tale of unexpected problems and undesirable situations. Both of them are good at hearts; yet have to face the irony of fate. They seem to become, plaything in the hands of cruel destiny. Rukmini, whose father was rich man, thinks that she would be married like her three sisters. However she is forced to marry a poor tenant farmer, Nathan. After the marriage, both Rukmani and Nathan lead a peaceful married life though they are poor. Rukmani gives birth to a daughter, Irawady, while Nathan expects a son. After the birth of Ira, Rukmini gives birth to Arjun, Thambi, Murugan Raja, Selvam and Kutti Rukmini faces a number of difficulties in feeding her children.

This shows how nature has pivotal part in peasants' life. Nathan and Rukmani are usually crushed by the natural happenings. Sometimes it is heavy rain that ruins their fate and another time draught becomes the cause of their decline. After the marriage of Ira it rains so hard that everywhere there is water. Both of them lose their peace of mind. Thus heavy rain ruins them completely. Next year farmers have to face draught. Markandaya's observation appears to be realistic and factual while expressing views on Indians and the poverty in which they live.

The draught continues until the farmer's conditions become more pathetic. One day it rains but it is too late to support the farmers. Irrawaddy'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 draught and all the peasants are bound to starve. Ira loves her brother .so much that she sells her body at the hands of tannery workers .in order to feed her younger brothers. Irony of fate reaches its heights when that barren Ira becomes pregnant and gives birth to an albino child. Nathan also becomes the instrument of irony of fate. He and his family face the hard times caused by heavy rains or a severe draught, bony face starvation, live on grass and will plant, sell their goods in order to pay off the dues of the landlords and saves their lands.

They are happy at the prospect of a good crop, the unexpected again happens. Their land is swallowed by the tannery. The landlord sells it to the tannery at a very good price. The undesired constantly happens. Nathan & Rukmani go to the city to seek shelter with their son. However, Murugan has already left the city. Tired and exhausted, they seek shelter in a temple, their money & belonging are stolen during the night .It is with the help of Puli and Birla. They reach the house of Murugan but find that he has deserted his wife and children.

Destiny thus has played a joke on them. Once again they seek shelter in the temple, live on charity like beggars for some time and then Rukamani tries to earn some thing by letter-writing, and then take to stone-breaking. They get good wages, save little from day to day, and continue to live and work in the hope that soon they would be able to go back to their village. Rukmani buys some 'rice- cakes' a delicacy which they had not tasted for long-and a dum-dum cart for Puli and one for her grandson Sacrabani. Again the unexpected and undesired has happened, Nathan dies, and all hopes are shattered. Nathan and Rukmani are the tragic victims of the irony of life. Their life-story illustrates that man is but a plaything in the hands of cruel destiny which takes pleasure in inflicting pain and suffering on him.

The novelist shows how the Zamindar's system of rural India has created a kind of social unrest in the lives of innocent peasant. In rural India the peasant is a sufferer in many ways. He is buffeted by man and nature- Nature victimizes the peasant, through flood one year or draught the next, but the result is famine, starvation and sometimes death." The bitter truth is that the peasants have to face troublesome life full of uncertainty and starvation. Heavy rain or draught can turn them into beggars, and even when they have plenty of fields, they become helpless. "*Nectar in a Sieve*," in many ways follows a conventional pattern in its tragic delineation of the effect of poverty natural disaster and unwelcome modernization upon a peasant's family.

Similarly in *A Handful of Rice* the novelist presents the problem of beggars surviving under the pressure of hunger and poverty. The characters have to leave their native villages in search of food and they meet a tragic end. In *Handful of Rice*, Ravi has to leave his house because he had to live with dire poverty. Novelist also presents a realistic picture of the crowd of unemployed graduates through the eyes of Ravi. *A Handful of rice* is the best example of inner conflict of a young person.

Thus Markandaya deals with the everyday problems of the rural community and presents peasants as the truly human characteristics of self-delusion, pride, self distortion, meanness and mind with optimism, endurance and magnanimity. The tension between tradition and modernity that stands for industrialization is presented in her works. *Nectar in a sieve* presents the drastic assault of Industrialization on the rural society. While, *A Handful of Rice* is a fine portrayal of the problem of conscience, it is a tragic commentary on the conflict.

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