



KAMALA MARKANDAYA AND ZAVERCHAND MEGHANI AS POST-INDEPENDENCE NOVELISTS: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Kamala Markandaya, a skilled observer of society, portrays the intricacies of people's social lives. Markandaya was a conscious writer who was cognizant of the socio-political conditions of the day. She depicts social realism in her literary world with the mellow hues of social sense. Same as Zaverchand Meghani one of the greatest Gujarati writers who is also a poet, novelist, storyteller, critic, researcher and editor of folklore and translator. This study is a humble attempt to analyse both writers as post-independence novelists as we know the independence movement and protest had an eternal impact on literature. This research observes and analyses their literary contribution, theme, style, narration, characters, portrayal and social concern with the post-independence era.

Keywords: Kamala Markandaya, Zaverchand Mrghani, post-independence novels, literary contribution, social realism, portrayal.

Introduction

Kamala Markandaya

Kamala Markandaya is well-known in the Indian English Fiction community. She writes creatively about her life experiences in her novels and is a skilled observer. She was given the name Kamala Purnaiya by her parents in accordance with Hindu custom when she was born in a Hindu Brahmin household in 1924. Before India's independence, her father served as an official in the Indian Railways. Markandaya had the opportunity to travel and visit several locations both in India and overseas as a result of her father's relocation to multiple locations. According to Ruth Montgomery, in *Wilson Library Bulletin* (November 1963), Markandaya could travel the entire South India, England, and Europe because of the pleasant free travelling allowance for the railway department personnel.

She attended Mysore schools till the age of sixteen when she enrolled in Madras University. She was interested in writing and decided to major in history for her graduation and post-graduate. She aspires to have a deep understanding of history and to learn more about people and places. She, however, stopped short of finishing her college degree and began working for the weekly newspaper as a solicitor officer. Later, she accepted a position as a liaison officer in the army. She had spent some time living in an Indian village at the time, which served as the inspiration for *Nectar in a Sieve*. She moved to London in 1948 and began working as a solicitor there. She gave birth to a child after getting married to Englishman Bertrand Taylor. On May 18, 2004, in her house on the outskirts of London, Kamala passed away after living a long and incredibly creative life as an author.

Kamala wrote on a variety of topics and themes in her creative works to illustrate the many facets of life. Her distinctive writing style distinguishes her books. The many novels include the following: *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Coffin Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Pleasure City* (1982), later published as *Shalimar* (1983), and *Bombay Tiger* (posthumously in 2008) are just a few examples. Consequently, a wide range of topics, themes, and people are covered in her writing.

From a geopolitical viewpoint, a sociological perspective, a cultural perspective, and most importantly, a feminist perspective, various researchers have examined Kamal Markandaya's novels. Her expertise in Indo-English provided the researcher with a variety of angles to examine.

The corpus of study that will help you comprehend Indian English literature and many facets of Kamala Markandaya's novel is provided here. Markandaya discussed and addressed important topics relating to human life and interpersonal interactions as a creative writer. In the words of William Walsh:

Her particular strength lies in the delicate analysis of the relationships of persons, especially when they have a more developed consciousness of their problems and are attempting to grope towards some more independent existence. She has been most successful and, at her best, impressive best in dealing with the problems of the educated and middle class, and she has a gift for delineating the self-imposed laceration of the dissatisfied. (116)

Zaverchand Meghani

A young Gujarati guy who had recently graduated immigrated to Kolkata in 1918, in the midst of the Russian Revolution and the beginning of the Gandhian Era and found employment in an aluminium factory. He diligently toiled for three years, immersed in his task. He immersed himself in the raging waters of Bengal's literary renaissance during his free time. He studied Bengali and was directly influenced by organizations like Brahmosamaj as well as famous authors like Tagore and Dwijendra. He was captivated by how folklore affected Bengali intellectuals and became interested in investigating Saurashtra's rich folk literature, which he described as "a peninsula of hoary antiquity on the westernmost shores of India." One morning, unable to control his ardour, he sent the owner of the aluminium business his resignation letters and purchased a ticket to return to Kathiawad, the area that is now known as Saurashtra. This poet who embodied nationalism was Zaverchand Kalidas Meghani (1896–1947), who was honoured with the honorific title of 'Rashtriya Shayaar.'

Zaverchand Meghani is a poet, novelist, storyteller, critic, researcher and editor of folklore and translator. Zaverchand Meghani has significantly influenced Gujarati literature. Over 100 works of poetry, novels, novellas, drama, biographies, histories, travelogues, folklore research and criticism, folk songs, folktales, and several other genres, have been written by him in a very short period of time. If there is one significant creation among all of these, it would be his works that are composed in a patriotic tone of voice. The phrase "Hu pahad nu balak" (I am a mountain's child) rightly explores his personality.

Literature: A Mirror of Society

Indian literature fully captures social life with all its complexities and variety, making it an inexhaustible source of material for novelists with keen eyes and compassionate hearts. The fact that the environment of society, extreme poverty, being untouchable, exploitative behaviour, social movements, and political movements all played a role in Indian writing at this time is especially noteworthy. Iyengar observes:

Some of the best studies of social life are, naturally enough, in the regional languages; and it is not easy to translate the racy idioms of everyday speech into English. This is particularly true of life in the countryside, the seaside, and the hillside where life has, perhaps, changed very little indeed during the last two thousand years. Urban life in India attracts the novelist by its excitements, perversions, sophistication and violent alternations between affluence and poverty, splendour, and squalor; but the interior, the areas of obscurity and inaccessibility have their attractions too and sometimes bring out the best in the creative novelist. (Iyengar, 1995, p.327)

Post-Independence Novels

Despite the fact that the first Indian book in English was published in 1864, the Indo-Anglian novel did not really begin until the 1930s. It has effectively established itself on the Indian soil since the 1930s. In the mainstream of Indian literature, it has also attained a status of significant independence. The novels published between 1930 and 1970 are categorized as part of the second phase of the Indo-Anglian novel. The pre-independence and post-independence periods of Indian social and literary history are both included in this phase.

The Indian novel evolved in the 1930s into a mirror that reflected modern society. The study of Indian English-language novels published between 1930 and 1950 demonstrates that during this time, writers were introduced to a completely new universe of Indo-English literature. They scrutinized the Indian sensibility in great detail and identified the flaws in the Indian way of life. It would be more persuasive to take a thorough look at the social context in which these novels were written since the major goal of the writers of the second phase was the representation of modern society.

The 1930s through the 1950s are referred to as the Indian Renaissance era. The Indian authors were motivated by the concurrent struggles for social and political independence in India. No Indian author of that era could have avoided capturing this social and political uprising in their writing. Compared to regional writers, Indian English writers had the added benefit of a Western liberal education. They came to the realization that instead of amusing their colonial rulers, they should focus on strengthening their own cultural sense via socioeconomic experience.

The works took root deeply in Indian soil throughout the 1930s. Novelists began examining and interpreting the Indian sensibility by selecting modern subjects as a result of the increasing social and cultural awareness. They started to grasp the connection between a person and his environment in a fresh, realistic way. They began presenting the slaving masses and Indian peasants. They moved their attention to the socially, economically, and politically downtrodden and impoverished groups.

As a result, the Indian English authors documented their personal accounts of the crisis and the tensions caused by the class war, societal prejudice, racial friction, and bureaucratic corruption. They turned the regular guy into their hero, forcing him to stand up to their oppressors. Numerous novels have farmers speaking out against zamindars, labourers speaking out against landlords, industrial employees speaking out against factory owners, and a good woman speaking out against a cold-blooded, merciless guy. There has been a planned and conscious transition from urban to rural life. Between metropolitan elegance and refinement on the one hand and rural customs and behaviour on the other, there is an implicit difference.

Some of the authors turned their attention from examining outward societal concerns to examining the inner world of the individual. The post-independent writers started looking for their own sense of identity. The writers began to examine the male and female mind. In the third phase of Indian English novels, the tradition of elaborating on a character's inner world—which had begun in the latter half of the second phase—began to take shape. It is impossible to ignore the multilingual, multicultural, and socio-historical mashup from which Indian literature emerged. As a result, studying different literary genres elsewhere in the globe and studying different regional literary genres in India side by side are not nearly the same.

Gujarati Novels

Gujarati novels written in regional languages tend to be more personal and focused than similar works of poetry or drama. And of course, this has been made easier by how easily a novel can be translated from one language to another. An author with an attentive eye and a compassionate heart would find the material laid out before him to be genuinely exhaustible after reading these books since the social life of a nation the size of India is so full of whims and variety. Naturally, regional languages have some of the strongest social life studies. It might be challenging to adapt racy slang from regular conversation into English, but the feelings can be translated and understood.

Gujarati, a regional language of India, is one of the country's ancient spoken languages. Gujarati literature may also be divided into two major categories: poetry and prose, with the former having a lengthy history stretching back to the sixth century. Historians and experts in Gujarati literature largely accept the conventional wisdom that Jain authors created the earliest works in this extremely old language. Due to colonial presence and rule, Gujarati, like other regional Indian languages, began to experience significant Western influence around the middle of the 19th century. In terms of modern Gujarati literature, Dalpatram (1820–1898) and Narmada Shankar (1833–1886) are regarded as its innovators.

After independence, Gujarati literature has a more elevated level of subjectivity and investigates novel ideas, lines of reasoning, and imagery. They are more arbitrary, tossing out outdated imagery, and some even

swap them out for fresh concepts. Gujarati literature has advanced by compounding enormously in less than 200 years, providing significant evidence that demonstrates the Gujarati people's dedication to contemporary beliefs in both expression and thought.

Kamala Markandaya's Literary Contribution: An Analysis

In the annals of Indian English fiction, Kamala Markandaya holds a respectable position as an author. She is an author with a strong sense of self, artistic talent, and a sharp eye for spotting the many facets of human personality. Her extensive body of work includes a number of remarkable books that touch on issues related to women's sensibility, east-west contact, and the social, political, cultural, and modern aspects of human life. When evaluating her participation, Krishna Rao observes, "Markandaya's contribution to the Indo–Anglian fiction lies essentially in her capacity to explore vital, formative areas of individual consciousness that project the images of cultural change, and in her uncanny gift of inhabiting the shifting landscapes of an outer reality with human beings whose sensibility becomes a sensitive measure of the inner reality as it responds to the stimulus of change" (89).

In order to paint an accurate picture of society, Markandaya demonstrates her exceptional talent as an author by carefully choosing themes, storylines, realistic characters, and cross-cultural issues. Her books appear to be significant social chronicles with a serious intent to portray the hardships of rural farmers, middle-class city inhabitants, cultural struggle, and the status of women. She utilizes her novels as conscious art to share her perspective on truth and life. Her novels' depiction of rural and urban India, where people can see how Indian society is changing, is one of its key elements. In the majority of her novels, the topics of life hunger, poverty, and the conflict between traditional and modern culture continue to be recurring themes. M. K. Naik describes her as:

Markandaya's fiction evinces a much broader range and offers a greater variety of setting, character and effect, though her quintessential themes are equally few – viz., the East-West encounter takes two forms – first, a direct relationship between Indian and British characters; and secondly, the impact of the modern urban culture brought in by the British rule on traditional Indian life. (247)

Nectar in a Sieve (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Coffer Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), *Pleasure City* (1982), and *Bombay Tiger* (2008) are just a few of the novels that Markandaya has penned over the course of her fifty-year literary career. All of these books address issues including East-West contact, rootlessness, interpersonal connections, poverty, starvation, and exploitation as well as the tension between traditional and modern principles. In order to comprehend Markandaya's creativity and craft as a novelist, these novels are briefly explained.

Markandaya as a Novelist

The work of Kamala Markandaya, a skilled observer of society, portrays the intricate intricacies of people's social lives. Markandaya was a conscious writer who was cognizant of the socio-political conditions of the day. Her books are diverse and offer a wide-ranging view of life. Her books feature actual persons who

are the victims of social injustices and are based on east-west tensions and feminist themes. Markandaya reveals the truths and secrets of life in great detail, much like a master storyteller. Describing art and craft of her, Dr 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 as she attempts to project the image of the changing traditional society. As such, Kamala Markandaya merits special mention both by virtue of the variety and complexity of her achievement and as representative of a major trend in the history of the Indo-Anglian novel. (71)

Art of Story Telling

Kamala Markandaya is a talented author who has established herself as one of the greatest storytellers of our time. Many commentators praise her storytelling abilities. In the story's made-up universe, Markandaya artistically captures people's issues, social structures, and everyday realities. Her fashion is uncomplicated and free of embellishments. She tells the story in the novel step-by-step, making it simple for readers to read and comprehend. Her main goal as a writer is to entertain the readers while teaching them valuable lessons. She primarily uses first-person narration, although, in *A Silence of Desire*, she also uses a third-person omniscient narrator.

Her Mastery of Characters

Markandaya expertly captures a variety of characters—many of them are vivid and real—in her stories. She picks characters from different spheres of society, including farmers, beggars, prostitutes, swamis, and others. Her works showcase a variety of English characters. Markandaya creates her characters from people in the usual socioeconomic strata, who serve as a microcosm of a group of people living in the Indian social context. The majority of the main characters have strong ties to Indian customs and culture.

Protagonist

Her feminist concern is the book's most striking aspect. Rukmani, Mira, Sarojini, Nalini Vasantha, Lolitha, and Sarjona are just a few of the amazing female characters she has created. These characters are brave, clever, passionate, and sensitive. She offered Indian women a new identity and voice by featuring female characters in her books. Her women are given the lead in the narrative and are depicted in a variety of roles, from traditional Indian women to contemporary Indian women, in an effort to rebel against the societal context. In contrast to the docile women characters of her era, one can observe traditional women, progressive women, and deviant women who build their individual personalities.

Being a woman, Markandaya has spoken up about the emotions and experiences she has had to help her evolve as a woman. After India gained its independence, Markandaya undertook a challenge to raise Indian women's awareness of and resistance to cultural norms. She masterfully portrays a woman's thoughts, and her female heroines are always looking for purpose and worth in life. In her works, Kamala Markandaya uses her enviable ability to read women's minds to explore the psyche of women. Through her work, Markandaya seeks to create a portrait of the rural Indian lady and demonstrates her enormous power while presenting a variety of characters. She has also detailed all the challenges that rural women faced in traditional Indian society. In order

to achieve equality, her ladies fight against injustice, degrading social norms, and other societal evils. For women who are showing signs of spiritual growth, self-realization, and empowerment, it is a form of awakening.

In order to portray human life, relationships, and their issues with a genuine touch, Kamala Markandaya has addressed a wide range of topics. Her books mostly address issues related to interpersonal relationships, starvation, exploitation of women, the clash between rural and urban cultures, and love and sex. H. M. Williams comments on her theme and writes, "She treats the themes of tragic waste, despair of unfulfilled or ruined love, the agony of artistic ambition, the quest for self-realization and truth by the young, all themes popular with European and American novelists of recent decades, (Camus, Saul Bellow, Updike)" (Khan 54).

Additionally, Markandaya seeks to impart some of the fundamental skills needed to live and adjust in life in his tales, which have a worldwide appeal. The way Markandaya uses words in her work is equally impressive. Through the medium of her fiction, she has used the English language as a tool to diminish social injustice and inequity in Indian culture and society. Her proficiency in multiple languages enabled her to translate specific geographic areas or regional terminology to provide a deeper understanding of culture and communities. As a result, she frequently speaks in her home tongue and local dialect to provide a real touch. Her writing is clear and uncomplicated, and she employs a number of linguistic techniques to create a poetic impact. In reality, she has created a distinctive voice for contemporary Indian English prose.

Zaverchand Meghani as a Novelist and His Literary Contribution: An Analysis

His first two and a half decades of life went by without him producing any notable literary works. Along with his contributions to folk literature, he also wrote fourteen novels, one of which was left unfinished, nine poetry collections, twelve short story collections, four plays, ten biographies, and sixteen works on themes from history. On March 9, 1947, he passed away. He was 51 years old.

His literary contributions were very prolific over the second part of the 25 years. His writing career spanned the years 1922 through 1947. During the twenty-five years of devotion and tenacity, a lifetime of research, compiling, and invention, about one hundred volumes were contributed. From an early age, Zaverchand Meghani received extensive exposure to Gujarati Sahitya, as well as Bengali Sahitya during his time in Calcutta. He began publishing his writing in the Ranpur-based newspaper "Saurashtra" at this time. He also began writing seriously, producing compositions like *Kurbani Ni Kathao*, which was published as a book for the first time, and *Saurashtra Ni Rasdhara*. Additionally, he began translating works of Bengali literature.

He published his first book of poetry, *Veni Naa Phool*, a collection of children's rhymes, in 1926. For his significant effort on Lok Sahitya, he received the coveted Ranjitram Suvarnachandrak award in 1928. He delivered six speeches for Gyan Prakashak Mandal in 1929. He was given a two-year prison term in 1930 for penning the book *Sindhudo*, which comprised War Songs intended to motivate Indian youth. He was given the honorific title "Rashtriya Shayar" by Gandhiji. During this time, he also began to independently and for the journal Phulchaab wrote short stories.

He made his publication debut in 1942 with his book *Marela Naa Rudhir*. After leaving Phulchaab in 1945, he focused solely on writing more and more literature. The 'Maheeda Award' was given to his work, *Mansai Naa Deeva*, in 1946. He was chosen to lead the Sahitya Section of the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad in the

same year. In the Saurashtra region, Meghani's tales and songs of bravery and chivalry, nobility and generosity of the heroes and heroines, getting identity in their social and religious ceremonies, rituals, festivals, and songs, bring to your eyes the wonderful experience of sitting in the lap of mountains and on the bank of beautiful rivers. The lifeblood of the people has always been these stories and melodies.

Without mentioning Zaverchand Meghani, the Folklore of the Kathiyawad tale would be inadequate. He can depict the majestic and euphoric colour that permeates nature and is present in human existence, thoughts, relationships, and the development of the genuine human spirit. Whether or not the critics have reached a firm judgment, it is undeniably true that Meghani's songs, stories, and critiques fall under the lofty category of literature since they all have the same important quality: permanency.

Meghani explores the endless and eternal flow, the pure, magnificent, and ecstatic colour distributed across nature, in human existence spreading deeply in the Universe, through the poem "Lagyo Kasumbee no rang." He alludes to the honourable and high expression of the pure human soul, drenched in this nectar-like flow and engulfed in the profusion of the deep red colour signified by the word "Kasumbee." This emblem actually serves as a reminder of Meghani's assiduous, tenacious, and dedicated life and extraordinary efforts, particularly those that are connected to folklore.

Regarding folklore as the universal language, he says:

The rays emanating from this earthen lamp entered every home, made every heart glow and illuminated the path for the generations that followed; it's the voice of the desert, of the sea, and of the mountain. (Meghani, 2003, p.27)

That is possibly the reason why the famous saying "What a villager tells and a citizen hears is folklore" is frequently used in reference to folk literature. Of course, Meghani considered it to be "Dharati-nun Dhvan" (Feeding from Mother Earth).

The researcher has chosen the work that is truly representative of Meghani as the explorer, editor, and author of folk literature of Kathiyawad (now Saurashtra) for the study of thematic and stylistic concerns, ethical and ethnic aspects, folk elements, traditions, and cultures of men and women belonging to various regions, religions, and ages. Actually, it was the sublime quality of his songs and stories that had a profound impact on the upbringing of a whole Gujarati generation throughout the Gandhian era and gave it a truly human spirit and global ideals. Because of this, Meghani's books have become essential parts of both household and library collections, contradicting his own claim that man cannot reach the pinnacle of dignity. Manubhāi Pancholi, 'Darshak', a great writer of Gujarat and an acknowledged authority on Zaverchand Meghani says, "Every age needs its bard. The great bard of our age is Meghāni. He does not dab with the era bygone. In his one hand he holds the present and in the other the future. Meghāni is the voice of the era." (Meghani, 2005, p.336)

His Novels

The decision to give away one novel was made in 1932 on the occasion of the newspaper "The Fulchaab" being published. Meghani was inspired by this resolution to contribute novels. 13 books were contributed by Meghani. In terms of themes, Meghani's books can be divided into four groups. Characteristics that are problem-oriented, socially oriented, and action-oriented. The first book, *Satya nee Sodhma-1932 (In search of Truth)*, was based on Samuel the Sikker, a book by Epten Sinkler. The story follows the transformation of Shyamal, a

young man from a rural area, into a community leader. *Niranjana* (1936), *Aapradhi* (1938), and *Bidela Dwaar* (1939) are more novels. The first social fiction by Meghani, *Vasundhara na Vhala Dawla* (1937), shows *The Laughing Man* by Victor Hugo as an influence. In this book, the main character, a conjurer by trade, loves animals and prefers to develop a bond with them, waifs, and stray children over cold-hearted people.

Sorath Tara Vehetaan Paannee (*Echoes from the Geers*), which Vinod Meghani translated in 2005, was released in 1937. Both this book and its author, Meghani, are important works of Gujarati literature. In the sociological novel *Vevishal* from 1939, a girl from a wealthy family marries a man from a poor family, and a confusing scenario develops. The family of a professor named Veer Suut following his second marriage is the subject of the 1940 book *Tulsi Kyaro*. In *Ra Gangajaliyo* (1939), the tale of Junagadh's 15th-century Ra, Mandlik is remembered.

It concerns the decline of the Junagadh king from Ra Mandlik to Gangajaliyo. It tells the story of Mandlik's decline as a result of his conversion to Islam after giving up his former faith. The final book produced during the 13th year of the *Vikram Samvaant* (*the Vikram era*, which had started in 56 B.C.) was *Gujarat No Jay Vols. 1-2* (1939, 42). It speaks of Gujarat's 25th effort at renewal and restoration. The social novel *Prabhu Padhariya*, published in 1943, discusses Burmese social life. The completed novel by Meghani, *Kaal Chakra* (1947), was an effort to address the difficult social issues of the 1940s and 1950s. When Meghani passed away on March 9, 1947, he had not finished his goal of writing a novel. He was fifty years old.

Conclusion

As a novelist, Kamala Markandaya has a wonderful ability to tell a tale within the confines of a novel. Her style and methods as a novelist gradually improved throughout the course of the many novels she authored. She is the most important novelist of her era due to her realistic characters, simple narration, feminist concern, and social and cultural subjects to convey an accurate picture of society. She was a true novelist of her era and is recognized for her clear writing, use of common symbols and images, and evolving female heroine. The objective of Markandaya's writings was clear; they were not just social stories. She has crafted a fictional world with an important social message to draw attention to the issues with people. Through her novels, she addressed important topics in life and used fiction to reflect reality.

Zhaverchand Meghani was a really prolific author who contributed works in prose, verse, and nearly every other genre of literature, including both formal and popular literature. From whatever source he could find, he rescued songs, tales, ballads, odes, fables, legends, elegies, fairy tales, etc. from the jaws of time. He examined and edited the vast heritage after gathering a variety of sources and doing comparative investigations. His work is extraordinary because it captures every significant facet of the human spirit and culture of the post-independence era in many ways.

So it is noted that both writers have the prolific impact of post-independence circumstances and social influence in their writings. It is observed that the societal conflict, industrial influence, women's condition in the orthodox society, social injustice, social inequality, regional setup and human psyche of the time have been explored by them in their writings.

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