

PATRIARCHY AND WOMEN IN KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S *TWO VIRGINS*

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ABSTRACT

Kamala Markandaya's story of Two Virgins originates from a small village of South with a family of mother, father and a widow Aunt who is the father's sister and their two daughters Lalita and Saroja. Saroja who is the younger daughter is the main character mentioned in the story. She is portrayed as a person of self-respect and awareness in the society. The author demonstrates her physical beauty and feminine desirability as important features in Lalita's life as she must abort her illegitimate child to fulfill her desire to become an actress. She is attracted towards the modern life of the metros and the tinsel town. She is aware of her beauty and thinks she can make her mark as an actress. In fulfilling her dream as an actress she loses her virginity to Mr. Gupta who manipulates her and uses her physical beauty for his own gain. He exploits her physically and leaves her when he comes to know she is pregnant. She loses her self-respect to adopt modern ways of life.

Keywords : feminine, patriarchy, village, freedom.

Introduction

Kamla Markandaya being a female novelist has feminine sensibilities. This quality enriches her works with the true portrayal of feminine critique. Her literary creations are full of man- women confrontations, freedom of self-will and freedom for equality in society. She portrays the actual status of women in society and the parameters of beauty with which they are judged. She is famous for feminine approach in her novels and illustrates the core realities which are not tinged with outright judgments of harsh male dominated society. She explores the emotional and social issues that bind a woman.

In the novel *Two Virgins* Lalitha is portrayed as a headstrong girl who tries her best and goes through a lot of troubles to fulfill her dreams. She is cheated by Mr. Gupta who hires her to become an

actress and then takes advantage of her by using her and keeping her as his mistress. At first we think that Lalitha is a selfish natured personality running after her dreams not realizing the agony of her parents but later in the novel when she is cheated and ruined we feel pity for her. She is an innocent girl from the village lured by a wicked man Mr. Gupta. The readers feel sympathy for the family and for the beautiful, innocent Lalitha who is cheated and exploited. Her obdurate nature takes her to her downfall. She realizes her folly and leaves her family to fend for herself as she doesn't want to go back to her village.

Quest for Freedom and Self-Gratification

The writer portrays the characters of both the sisters with dissimilarities as both are poles apart in nature as both have similarities and differences in nature and attitude. Lalitha learns a lot of westernized attitude through Mrs Mendoza and learns dancing whereas Saroja studies in the traditional school of the village. Their Aunt Alamelu is on the opposite pole as she depicts the picture of a traditional orthodox Indian lady who is narrow minded, superstitious and believes in the traditional ways of the villagers as it is considered a taboo for a women to become pregnant before marriage and when it is revealed that Lalitha is pregnant she forcefully opposes it and considers it as immoral in village community. The impact of modern life shown to Lalitha by Miss Mendoza is clear when Lalitha learns dancing to impress the documentary maker Mr. Gupta.

Saroja also gets fascinated by the city life and is also lured by Mr. Gupta's assistant Devraj who tries to take advantage of her and at a time Saroja also tries to be with him but her conscience stops her of doing things her sister did as she hates Devraj for his advances towards her for sex. She has great control over her emotions and doesn't fall prey to Devraj's intensions. Lalitha's fall is due to her lack of intelligence and also because of no control over her emotions. As she is head strong she is easily driven towards free lifestyle and party atmosphere of the metros leaving her culture and tradition to modernity.

Amma the mother of two children is also a dynamic character. She is feminine and is also attracted towards people who admire her and likes to be praised by them. She likes the male admiration and company but because of her upbringing with tradition and culture she sticks to her ground by keeping her marriage intact.

Issues of Morality and Chastity

The writer in the story portrays the female beauty and the desirability for herself that is shown in Lalitha's character as she exhibits her desires and femininity which is not permissible in the village society. She is dazzled by the colourful and modern life in the city and gets involved with Mr Gupta the filmmaker who promises how to make her an actress where she falls prey to his vices and gets pregnant through him. She tries to terminate her pregnancy to become an actress and get rid of her illegitimate child. Lalitha recognizes her beauty and tries to encash it by enticing men at a very young age she gets many privileges due to her beauty whereas her plain looking sister Saroja does not have that ability. Lalitha knows how to make her father and aunt do what she wants by using her beauty. Saroja on the other hand rises in prestige and gains reverence. Saroja is generous to her parents and even her sister who looked down upon her. She is also kind to Mr Gupta. She observes people emotionally and understands her parents' situations whereas her sister flaunts her beauty and shows off her femininity and desirability and flirts with men. She is very selfish and has her ways as she wants to work on the path she has chosen for herself. She rejects the traditions and moral values in favour of her will. Both the sisters were misled by the shiny visions of the city life and fall in the trap of prostitution. Many village girls are lured and put into prostitution due to their innocence and illiteracy. The writer does not concentrate much on Saroja as she is the secondary character of the play and does not relate her to the issues of morality and chastity.

Patriarchy as the Prominent Aspect in the Novel

When Mr Gupta comes to the village to make a documentary on the village life and not the shiny modern life style of the city. Lalitha is disappointed and does not like the idea and performs a simple dance and not the English dance taught to her by Mrs Mendoza after completing the film Mr Gupta returns back making great promises to Lalitha of making her a famous actor in the City by launching her in one of the modern and westernized films. He also assures Lalitha of assigning her a big role in one of his big motion films. Lalitha waits for Mr Gupta's call but he never contacts her so she leaves her village and goes to city to meet Mr Gupta. The partiality of Lalitha's father of giving more importance to her beautiful daughter is also described as he takes her side and ignores his other daughter Saroja who is not so beautiful as Lalitha.

The male dominated society is well represented in the novel when Mr. Gupta exploits her and leaves her. He doesn't feel any guilt for his wrong doings. Instead he accuses Lalitha in front of her father. It

reflects the mindset of male dominating nature in the modern society as well. Mr. Gupta's insistence to abort the child shows the emotionless heart of the male who does not have any love for his own child.

Conclusion

Kamala Markandaya's novel *Two Virgins* exhibit the theme of East and West encounter. East is represented by the simple life of the villagers whereas West is represented by the glitz and glamour of the Town life. Traces of feminine sensibilities are clear in the novel. The female characters of the novel portray the factual position of women in society as they are subjugated, ill-treated and confined to traditionally accepted norms. The novel highlights patriarchy in a very prominent manner to showcase the inhuman behaviour of men towards women. Kamala Markandeya has been a writer whose works are rooted in the extreme realities of life. The novel with an ironic title questions the aspects of morality and virginity.

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