



# Exploring Female Identity In Kamala Markandaya's Novels

BY

Munindra Gogoi

Machkhowa Degree College

This thesis consists of six chapters under the conceptualization of identity and feminism. These concepts have been used to bring to the fore woman's quest for identity as reflected in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. Kamala Markandaya's novels can be considered as a manifesto of the predicaments of the females. Her novels reveal her concern for the suppression and marginalization of women. She focuses in her novels the existential predicament and travails of the subdued woman in a male-dominated society governed by rigid traditions and restrictions. Overall, the study has been done to explore how she poignantly voices the miseries and agonies of women and tends to reclaim their position and self-identity in the patriarchal setup.

## **Hypothesis:**

The hypothesis of the present study is foregrounded upon the quest for identity of the female characters in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. And it becomes really interesting to situate Markandaya's feminine sensibility in that direction by exploring the multifaceted nuances of man-woman relationship, treatment of woman as the other in the context of patriarchy and gender hegemony, self-awareness, self-expression and self-exploration of the female characters in the post-colonial Indian socio-political and cultural condition.

## **Methodology:**

The Research is based on textual analysis of eight selected novels of Kamala Markandaya and the analytical method of study and research is followed together with the various theories of identity and feminism. Apart from the analysis of the primary sources, secondary sources including critical books, essays, journals and internet sources have been consulted.

## **Objectives of the study:**

This research work was undertaken with the following objectives in view –

- \*To examine man- woman relationships in Kamala Markandaya's novels.
- \*To highlight the self-awareness and social consciousness of Indian Women.
- \*To examine the East-West cultural clash in her novels.
- \*To situate the stereotypes of traditional women, new women and women oscillating in between two worlds.

\*To lay bare the crisis of identity and exploitation experienced by women in adverse socio-political and cultural circumstances.

\*To bring to the fore Markandaya's perspective on love, sex and marriage and the role played by Indian women in this regard

## Chapter I: Introduction

Identity may be defined as distinctive characteristics possessed by individuals or shared by members of a particular social group. The identity of a person helps him/her to locate himself/herself in a particular social situation. Identity determines the person who he / she is, the way he/she feels about himself/herself, the way he/she is perceived by the world, and the characteristics that characterize him/her.

In chapter I entitled 'Introduction', an attempt has been made to theorize identity by problematizing various concepts and definitions of it to find out how identity is formed, whether it is static or a continuous process, how scholars and thinkers have tried to interpret identity from different viewpoints and how these theories help to explore the quest of the identity of the female characters of Kamala Markandaya. The critical opinions and views of such critics as Stuart Hall, John Locke, Shari Stone, Burke and Stets, E. Mveng, Kim D. Butler, Paul Gilroy, Erik Erikson have been analyzed in detail to enrich the periphery of post-colonial discourse on identity formation.

The 'Essentialists' or the traditionalists like John Locke regard identity as a 'fixed entity' that is procured through birth and retained throughout life. Locke conceptualizes identity in his essay *Of Identity and Diversity* (1702) by stating that an individual's identity is fixed which remains the same as long as he/she is alive. Sociological thinkers like Burke and Stets in the book *The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity* (2000) opine that a person's identity is formed in relation to his/her society and social institutions. For them, identity is integral to social relations. Psychologists like Henri Tajfel view a person's identity as a 'construct' that is developed during his/her upbringing. For them the psychological growth of one's self has a vital role to play in the creation of one's identity. Contrary to the psychologists, anthropologists relate one's identity to his/her ethnic origins and physical structures while a cultural critic considers it in terms of people's ways of living and cultural conducts. The issue of identity assumes considerable significance in postcolonial studies. Many critics and philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century consider identity as the product of several factors such as power, politics, racial and gender discrimination and above all, the bondage of cultural hegemony.

While speaking about identity in a post-colonial situation, Stuart Hall relates identity with culture and points out that identity should not be seen as an already accomplished reality. Instead, it can be seen as a cultural production that is constantly ongoing and which confronts completion (Hall 111). For Hall, culture plays an important role in the formation of one's identity. In his opinion, cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' rather than 'being.' Hall does not support the essentialist's view of identity as 'roots' or 'given' and recognizes that cultural identity is always in flux. Hall opines that cultural identities experience continuous change and are far from being permanently fixed in any 'essentialized past', they are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power. Identity in this case, becomes a 'movable feast'; formed and transformed continuously in relation to ways we are represented and addressed in the cultural systems, which surround us (597).

E. Mveng also views that identities are not constant or fixed entities, but they are always subject to negotiation, renegotiation and new 'experiences and aspirations' (68). Bernardo M. Ferdman in his *Literacy and Cultural Identity* (1990) aptly observes that cultural identity is shaped under the influence of education that one receives in society (181). Cultural identity is co-related with a diasporic identity where migration plays an important role. The diasporic self is built by looking for identity in a state of dislocation from the original homeland and the cultural interactions it brings to a foreign land. The diasporic individual is eventually reborn through the experience of trauma, remembrance, culture shock

and nostalgic longing for the homeland. Theorists like Kim D. Butler and Paul Gilroy speak on diasporic identity. Gilroy in his *Diaspora* (1994) points out that, in diasporic consciousness, identity depends less on shared territory and more on memory. As a result, the diasporic person experiences a "rift" between the location of residence and the location of original belonging (Gilroy 207). Kim Butler in his *Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse* (2001) holds that emotional attachment with a homeland is one of the prerequisites for the development of a diasporic identity (192). Based on these discussions, identity can be classified under various heads such as social, personal, cultural, colonial, diasporic and national.

Identity research inevitably deals with the question of identity crisis. It is a personal problem or situation that immobilizes people, which prevents them from actively managing their lives. It can also be described as a state of disorganization in which people face particular dissatisfaction with important life goals. Theorist Eric Erikson in his *Identity and Life Cycle* (1959) coined the word 'identity crisis' and claimed that it is one of the most significant conflicts people experience in life. The identity crisis, for Erikson, is a period of intense study and discovery of various ways of looking at oneself (23). Crisis of identity arises out of different clashes relating to caste, class, culture and patriarchy and gender hegemony. Various phenomena like globalization, liberalization of the economy and migration also play a significant role in this context.

Quest for female identity is a highly discussed topic in postcolonial discourse. In spite of the fact that women constitute half of the world, they are thought to be inferior to men. The female sex has been neglected since hoary past. At every step, they have to face the contempt of the social system. Women are made subservient by the patriarchal social system. In postcolonial feminist discourse, a serious endeavor has been made to formulate issues concerning the subordinate position of women in an endocentric world. Feminist critics like Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet have advocated various theories to vindicate the rights and freedom of women against the bondage of patriarchy, exploitation and the ritual of torture exercised by gender hegemony.

The next crisis of female identity has been studied in this context, and the western waves of feminism and feminism in India have been conceptualized in detail. The struggle for survival and search for the identity of women have been raised by many writers in Indian writing in English. So, a brief survey on Indian English novels has been made where identity is placed as a theme. A review of some relevant books is also placed while problematizing the notion of identity in Kamala Markandaya's novels. For instance Rochelle Almeida in *Originality and Imitation: Indianness in the novels of Kamala Markandaya* (2016) discusses the culture clash between Indian urban and rural societies and has successfully dealt with the theme. Uma Pparameswaram in *Kamala Markandaya* (2013) speaks about her as a pioneer writer of Indian writers in English producing entire cannon of ten novels in three decades, which portrays her positive females as ideal sufferers and nurturers in male domination. Jyotsna Sahoo in the book *Sex and Violence in the novels of Kamala Markandaya* (2006) underlines how sex and violence become an integral part of Markandaya's fiction. The writer shows how being a woman the novelist is able to explore the psyche of female characters especially when they undergo emotional turbulence suffering sexual violence. Dr. Arun Pattanaik in his book *Kamala Markandaya: A Critical Study* (2011) explores various themes like religion in Markandaya's novels, the value of Suffering, the feminist voices of Markandaya, depiction of rural India, vision of life and tragedy and trauma in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Anita Myles in her book titled *Feminism and post-modern Indian Women Novelists in English* (2006) has shown the rise as well as the creative release of feminine sensibility in the literature of modern Indian Renaissance. She discusses how women novelists such as Kamala Markandaya mirror a new awareness of the fulfillment of female identity without losing individuality. In Markandaya's *Two Virgins*, for example, Lalitha-the protagonist is a woman who has survived the hardships of life and discovered her own identity by both following and rejecting societal norms.

After analysis and review of various critics and authors on Kamala Markandaya, it is observed that various aspects of Markandaya's fiction have been attempted in detail in many works. Many critics have also touched on the theme of exploration of female identity in their works. However, their study is limited to few novels only. And it is found that the theme of female identity pervades in all her novels. Therefore, this present study *Exploring Female Identity in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya* is proposed to analyze her eight novels in the perspective of female identity.

Taking the various types of identity, concepts of identity formation and theories of feminism as the base, the feminine sensibility of Kamala Markandaya has been studied in the next chapters through an in-depth analysis of the female characters and their quest for identity within a specific methodology. An attempt is also taken to bring to the fore Markandaya's perspective on love, sex and marriage and the role-played by Indian women in this regard.

## Chapter II

### Feminine Sensibility of Kamala Markandaya

This chapter deals with how women play a very significant role in Markandaya's novels and how she displays her engaging feminine interest and her approach to the feminine world. It is seen in her account the emotions of a woman in confronting males in Indian society. Her concern about the lives of contemporary women is worth noting and in her novels; one can apply the concept of feminism in its broadest sense. However, as her novels are not an outright indictment of a repressive male-dominated culture requiring full restoration of male-female roles, she cannot be considered a radical feminist. The attitude of Kamala Markandaya to feminism is analytically exploratory rather than public, political or polemical. Her sensibility is focused on the affection of the real world of women. And she has dealt more with her feminine sensibility than other novelists in aptly articulating the true world of women. All the selected eight novels of Markandaya such as *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) *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) have been analyzed in this chapter.

## Chapter III

### Male-female relationship in Markandaya's novels

The chapter covers five novels of Markandaya. Those novels are *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) *Some Inner Fury* (1955) *A Silence of Desire* (1960) *Possession* (1963) and *The Nowhere Man* (1972). The chapter explores how male-female bond forms an integral part of Markandaya's novels. In her works, the chemistry of the male-female relationship has been discussed very realistically. The different stages of a male-female relationship, such as marital, pre-marital and extra-marital affairs, are seen in all her novels. And the novelist attempts to examine the identity dilemma of the female characters in the family in depicting such relationships. At the same time, through the female characters, she discusses the values and potentials of women with emphasis on their psychological dilemmas and how they effort to deal with the difficulties and tend to achieve a harmonious relationship with themselves and their environment. Mostly patriarchal, traditional Indian society retains double standards, one set of rules for men and another set of rules for women. And they are enforcing unconstitutional and inhumane laws for women. In the novels of Kamala Markandaya, this male activity finds a grave expression. Being an educated woman with so many cross-cultural perspectives, Markandaya has projected the relationships to reveal some social evils. From three sides, she tackles the issue of male-female ties. We have relationships between husband and wife, lover and beloved and between man and woman in society.

## Chapter IV Crisis of Identity and Exploration of Self

In this chapter, an exploration has been done to find out a woman's crisis of identity, her quest for identity and formation of identity in the novels of Markandaya. She has presented a repertoire of female characters in her novels and explored their crisis, quest and formation of identity in various cultural and social shades. Her female characters belong from peasant to princes, but whatever class they belong to, they suffer from a crisis in different situations of life. Some of them embrace their fate and continue to satisfy their urges and desire by remaining in the cage. Some others revolt against their status and make their destiny in their way. The female characters portrayed in the novels can be divided into two groups, those are traditional and modern. And most of them face a crisis in their lives in different circumstances to achieve their independent identity. While talking about the identity of a woman, the novelist speaks about their personal identity, social identity, national and cultural identity and diasporic identity. It is found that whatever identity they possess, their identities are not static; their identities have been changed under different socio-cultural modes.

Markandaya has captured the contemporary socio-cultural ethos in her novels. India was in transition after independence when she starts writing. A gradual change has occurred in the attitudes, ideas, and beliefs of the people generated by the urbanization, science and technology advancement in India. Social change was low in the rural areas due to the orthodox and conservative nature of the people. Because of it, a conflict between tradition and culture has also affected them. These are the things the novelist had in her mind when she delineated the theme of identity in her novels.

### Chapter V

#### East-West dichotomy; woman as the victim

In this chapter four novels- *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *The Coffin Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), and *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) have been studied in the light of East-West dichotomy. The exploration has been made to see the relationship between the East and the West, and the effect on the characters especially on the female characters. Markandaya has discussed the relationship from an early post-colonial viewpoint of conflict and co-existence. If some novels depict the west as a character, in some others it is represented by a set of values or a particular attitude. She treats the tensions between people belonging to two races and two visions of life from different points of view by bringing them together in different relationships and circumstances. The east-west encounter is manifested through the conflict between tradition and modernity, foreign culture and native culture, upper-middle classes and lower classes of people in Indian life.

### Chapter VI

#### Conclusion

The problem of identity has become a common phenomenon in the present day world. Various phenomena like globalization, liberalizations of economy and transnational movements have played a significant role in the process of identity formation. That's why, any study of identity –its formation, distortion and crisis inevitably involves the contemporary socio-political and economic issues that have been dealt with by the postcolonial writers and critics of cultural studies from time to time. The present study of identity in terms of different characteristics and many-sided nuances reveals that identities can be classified under various heads such as social, personal, cultural, colonial, diasporic and national.

Search for identity is an important theme in the novels of Indian writing in English. Kamala Markandaya, a female doyen of Indian fiction has dealt with the theme of identity in her novels. After a thorough study of her novels, it is found that the quest for female identity forms an important part of her

novels. All the forms of identity like individual identity, social identity, cultural and diasporic identity have come into surface while the characters have been analyzed in the familial and social contexts. Being a woman, she presents the women in her novels very realistically and the realistic study of a woman is reflected in the village life, cities, husband-wife relations, gender differences and conflict.

Markandaya's women characters exhibit a positive and optimistic outlook on life and emerge much stronger than their male counterparts. Each one of them responds in her unique way to her dreams for a better and meaningful life. By exercising their own free will, exhibiting their own self, they get fulfillment and recognition in life. All the female characters are in a constant search for identity and though they are able to achieve that but they do not gain it in a smooth sailing way rather face a lot of crisis on their desired path. Their crisis can be categorized as social, political, familial and moral.

It is also clear from the study that the novelist has portrayed the characters with their traditional identities. She portrays such women characters who likes to be an efficient mother, a devoted wife and as a whole the custodians of a tradition. Kamala Markandaya is a feminist writer but she is not a radical feminist who wants a total reconstruction of male female roles. But as a feminist writer she wants that every woman must live their lives as a person and not as a possession. A woman in Indian society has to perform so many familial roles in her journey from her very birth to death. Society restricts their freedom and they face trouble but the spirit within them helps them to raise their vigor and vitality. They become the epitome of life affirming qualities. She projects the characters in giving them those life-affirming qualities. It becomes apparent that she mostly favors traditional identity of a woman. The traditional identity consists of performing the gender roles in accordance with norms and values of society. The traditional pattern of a good Indian wife is in total subjection to her husband and master. Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve* is traditional in her behaviors. She is the most comprehensive picture of a traditional woman. In her *Handful of Rice*, she explores the overpowering effect of a traditional wife on a troubled man. She is Nalini: "she was constant, a rock to which...mad dance" (118). Premala in *Some Inner Fury* is a sacrificial character who moulds herself according to the whims and caprices of her modern husband. These characters are the exemplary traditional bricks that build the traditional image of women. Those characters wants to be happy with their traditional identity as a wife and mother .

Though the novelist mostly portrays the female characters in the traditional frame of life, yet they are not utterly traditional, as they have been presented in such a way that they can't be regarded as completely traditional and they have modern traits in their characters. They are modern in their outlook. Rukmani is the child of transition as she embraces modernity to the best of her caliber. She allows her children to choose their path of life. Being framed in the traditional orbit of life, she never loses her courage. Her own treatment of her barrenness and of her daughter proves her courage; she takes life as a challenge and never bows down before it. She makes the best use of her education in the dire need of time.

Though she does not succeed in that attempt, yet that shows courage and determination. Like Rukmani Ira, Mira, Roshan, Nalini all are the new women projected by the novelist in her novels. Being a woman, Kamala Markandaya has well understood the condition of Indian women and there is realism in her projection of the female characters. She asserts the identity of the females as a person and not as a possession. By providing them such a strong spirit, the novelist wants to show the potentiality of a woman whether traditional or modern they are. Mira forsakes her lover Richard for her Country. Roshan who symbolizes the resurgence of Indian women in the wake of the national movement is also modern in her outlook. Nalini with her effort takes out her husband from the amoral world. Helen believes in humanity based on love and fellow-feeling. Mrs. Pickering is a matured woman who overcomes the entire holocaust in the name of race, religion and nationalism. Vasantha is a devoted Indian woman who assists her husband throughout her life. Manjula, Mohini and Usha are also courageous women who fought for

their Country. Thus Kamala Markandaya lets her women have the traditional role, but makes them face the modern predicament as well.

While taking eight novels of Markandaya as the base for the study of exploring female identity in Markandaya's novels many points have cleared out from the analysis. The study reveals how the identity of the female characters are interlinked with the cultural quintessence of which they are the product, the ways through which they try to obtain their identity and the conflicts they face in the process of locating their identity. And it is obvious that while dealing with the theme of female identity in her novels, the novelist aims to unveil women as an individual. It becomes clear that women have been searching out their own ways to get identities in life and they have been facing many troubles in their desired path of life. They are the victims of caste, culture and religion. Kamala Markandaya can be called a keen observer of female behavior; she has minutely studied the female, from every angle and presents their problems and prospects. She also tries to find a solution to their lives. She draws a complete picture of womanhood in her novels. It is also true that she has not only presented the virtues but also explored their vices. She has presented women who are lustful, possessive, egoistic, selfish, and gossipy and proud. Kunthy in *Nectar in a Sieve* is a lustful woman. Caroline is a selfish woman. In her works, Indian women are depicted as docile, submissive, sacrificing, enduring, forgiving and accepting their fate without any complaint though there are some references to wicked, adulterous and dominating ones as well. After a deep study of her selected novels, many facts come to the fore concerning her exposition of female identity. Her novels directly relate to the awakening of woman's consciousness and her confrontation with traditional-oriented society. She also reveals that women's sufferings are due to the implicit variation in the social order. The basic ideology responsible for the position of women is the patriarchal system, the rule of the father. It is male-centered and male-controlled in such a way to subordinate women to men in all cultural spheres as familial, social, religious, political, economic, legal, and so on. Women were taught to accept men's power over them. Gender practices in patriarchal society cause marginalization of women. Gender practice affects women greatly who cannot give birth to a son. They always suffer from the social norms where a male baby is always preferable to a female. This social practice is seen in *Nectar in a Sieve*. She has depicted this social custom in Indian society. Rukmani's first child female is Irawaddy. After that, she could not conceive for seven years. Her husband wants a son and then, she goes to meet Dr. Kenny for treatment. Then, she becomes the mother of six sons: Arjun, Thambi, Murugan, Raja, Selvam, and Kuti. The novel exposes the traditional attitude of Indians on the birth of a female child. A child is the gift of God, but Indians prefer a boy to a girl. They believe that a son looks after the parents in the future while a girl child is married to a man at one point in time. In Indian society, women have been considered a liability. The parents of a female child must pay a dowry to a man who marries her and this practice of dowry is very old. And, the bride is thus reduced to a purchasable commodity, an object of negative commercial value. She highlights the mental agony and psychological trauma of stereotyped women in married life. As one of the women's roles, the role of a wife is very important in her life after marriage. A majority of Indians have their traditional marriages, arranged by their parents or other family members. Child marriages being are common in India in *Nectar in a Sieve*, the first novel of Kamala Markandaya, one gets the picture of early marriage through female characters such as Rukmani, Irawaddy, Khuthi, Kali, and Janaki. As a female protagonist, Rukmani gets married at the age of twelve. Rukmani is the youngest of the four daughters of a village headman. She married Nathan by an arrangement of her family. This novel depicts the rural life of South India and the real conditions of peasant women and farmers in the backdrop of contemporary India. Marriage becomes a misery for the family, which has a girl child. In *Nectar in a Sieve*, not the husband of Irawaddy deserts her but Khuthi also is abandoned by her husband and Murugan leaves Ammu. The novelist has displayed education as an important thing in obtaining a female identity. Women suffer disadvantages in the educational system. Women have got less chance for

education than men. This is also the main cause of the lower status of women and an indirect cause of their not having any identity. In terms of woman's education, Rukmani is represented as the less literate, In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Nathan, Janaki, Kali, and other rural characters, are not educated. Rukmani is different from the traditional Indian women of her time because she is literate and her husband supports her. Although Nathan is an uneducated man, he does not oppose Rukmani's education for her sons. If women had no education, they will not have a strong voice. The inferior education women receive is directly responsible for their subordinate status. Education is an agent that helps them to enforce patriarchy. And, when Rukmani goes to the city, she can work as a letter-writer to earn a little money for rearing her family. However, Rukmani's education cannot help her to earn enough for her family. In the context of disporting the identity of a woman, Kamala Markandaya clearly describes that her female characters are a mere reflection of the social environment, which is created by the male in society. She has reflected the impact of social change on women's identity in her works. Kamala Markandaya has written her novels with the changing Indian mindset. Her novels have been used as a medium to reveal different facets of the image of women. Mostly Indian women believe in Indian culture and tradition. Their identity is culture and tradition-oriented. She has drawn the image of her women in various contexts in a male-dominant country. She has portrayed them in many shades of life by showing the real existence of women as struggled between tradition and modernism. Her female characters like Rukmani and Irawaddy in *Nectar in a Sieve*, Anasuya and Lady Caroline in *Possession*; Sarojini in *The Silence of Desire*, Mirabai, Premala, Roshan in *Some Inner Fury*, Saroja and Lalitha in *Two Virgins* are nobler, wiser, stranger and better than their male counterparts in different contexts. Although her women are regarded as inferior in social practices, Kamala Markandaya has always kept her female characters with the strength of adaptation and makes them worth living as well. In her novels, Markandaya talks about alienation as a factor that drives women to the crisis of identity. In *Some Inner Fury*, Premala feels increasingly alienated from her husband Kitsamy. She hides her feelings of loneliness and frustration. She tries to suit Kitsamy's modern taste but he never understands her sentiments. Alienation refers to the different ways in which those who are distanced or distances/herself from society. The women's alienation originates in social conventions, which do not allow a happy existence for women, for they are objects in the eyes of males in the patriarchal society. The feeling of alienation also has been shown in *Possession*. As one female character Ellie, is a Jewish maidservant of British woman Caroline. Ellie is a crippled girl of twenty years. She had gone from concentration camp to liberation center to resettlement camp. She is one of the victims of human cruelty perpetrated by the Nazi army. She had no parents, no state, no passport, no papers-none of those hallows stacking blocks on which the acceptable social being is built. Ellie feels culturally and socially alienated when she positioned herself for searching for her real identity. And, Annabel is related to Caroline as a rebel. She is a girl who had turned down her family's traditional plans in the marriage market. So, Ellie and Annabel have been portrayed as women who lost their identities. She has highlighted how economic and social problems influence women more adversely than men and how these have a deep impact on their identity. Kamala Markandaya does not profess any special affinity for feminist theories nor does she reveal a strong, anti-male stance anywhere. The novelist is indeed concerned with the disturbing question of the existence of women, but they were not misogynists seeking a world without men. The novelist deals with women belonging to both rural and urban, poor and upper classes of the society. Markandaya derives her material primarily from her inward and outward experiences of life. Her themes have a great socio-cultural and psychological significance. She has succeeded in arresting the transitional phases of the rapidly changing roles of contemporary women in India. Markandaya's women have a deep understanding of life, love and concern towards family members, self-sacrificing nature and possess practical wisdom of life. They get adjusted to the circumstances and feel that they have been happy and will remain happy in the future. This suffuses in them a sense of fulfillment and tranquility. Passive

acceptance, calm resignation is repeatedly shown so that one may bend and not break. This typical Indian response to the human predicament is brought out in almost all women characters. However, this spirit of passive acceptance may seem to be a sign of weakness to Western eyes – but in reality, it is a sign of their strength. She gives utmost importance to Indian values of life. Markandaya believes that Indian women should confidently pursue her path holding fast to her traditional values and using methods appropriate to her culture. She should also try to assimilate the best in Western culture. Hence, she presents typical Indian women characters who are sticking strictly to the Indian value system. Her practical women characters appear happier than Desai's women. The majority of Kamala's characters are preoccupied with the theme of physical survival. They have some purpose in their life. Sarojini in *A Silence of Desire* is busy bringing up her little son and looking after her two daughters. Rukmani and Nalini are busy fighting against destroying the forces of hunger and deprivation. In a way, Kamala Markandaya's novels provide a platform for propaganda against the evils of society. She gives insights into the inconclusive change in women and men and human nature. She is convinced that emancipation is closely linked to the eradication of poverty and this is the reason why she deliberately wrote against hunger, want and depravity that surely lead to spiritual hunger and indifference. Through Rukmani and Nalini, the author exposes the fearful experiences of the poor and urges the readers to find solutions. They do not have enough to assure an ordinary mode of living; otherwise, they can tract out all the problems. They are largely concerned with the present and have no time to brood over the past and future. Her practical vision of life makes her a realist. Their experiences of life teach them to adjust themselves to the situations that occur in their life. Markandaya opines that a woman needs a vision of herself with power, enough to assert herself in life, to motivate her and others around her towards the welfare of the human race.

