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## **Feminism in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya with special reference to *Nectar in a Sieve***

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Kamala Markandaya stands outstanding and aloof from all women writers. She is a distinguished woman novelist who ranks with eminent Indian English Novelists like Anita Desai, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao etc. Markandaya's novels depict women as the centre of concern. She painted her novels with sufferings and hardships faced by women folk. Being a woman novelist, her debut novel *Nectar in a Sieve* and highlight the problems faced by Indian rural women. The major concern in her works is the identity crisis of women. Her novels are dominant with feminine voices and throw a massive light on the struggle of rural Indian wives.

**Key Words:** women writers, concern, problems, identity crisis, feminine, struggle.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

*Nectar in a Sieve* is a tale of a grief-hit Hindu family in a rural village in southern zone of India. Despite immense efforts, the family is destined to survive in hardships of nature. The worse circumstances of poverty forced the only daughter (Ira) to sell her body to meet the burning needs and the three sons to quit the birth place for betterment of family. Rukmani, the pivot of the novel is a peasant woman is seen suffering day in and day out. Cruelty and callousness of nature accompanied by cruel dealings of their landlord snatches their apparent peace. This untimely entry of industrialization not only

“invaded our village with clatter and din, had taken from us the maiden where our children played, and made the bazaar prices too high for us,” (*Nectar in a Sieve* p 31-32).

The novel deals with unrest, uneasiness, turmoil and tragic ups and downs caused by socio-economic factors in the life of Rukmani. Markandaya exposes the crisis of women through the mouthpiece of Rukmani and her daughter Ira. The birth of baby girl is considered curse and a bad omen for the family. This reflects the force of tradition in rural Indian society. It is the male child who keeps the father's lineage alive.

Despite the fact a woman gives more sacrifices than a man. She has to obey being a wife, has no freedom of speech being a daughter and as a mother has to obey her sons for sustenance. In all the cases a female is sacrificing. On top of that she is taken as a slave by her own husband. Thus she not only loses her honour and respect but also is shattered to pieces. And on certain occasions a woman is being sold by her husband for mere an alcohol drink. Thus no identity is to a woman in such type of male dominated societies. This social issue Markandaya tries to expose through the character of Rukmani.....Ira, the daughter of Rukmani was neglected and suppressed by her husband, this paved the way for worsening the condition of her life but the society supported the husband, even her father Nathan, justified.

Hemangi and Ghosal (2016) stated:

“Gender inequality is a deep rooted malice practiced in India in many forms from many years. Addressing the malice of gender discrimination, women empowerment in India is a long drawn battle against the powerful structural forces of the society which are against women's growth and development, while analysing the Anita Desai's novel '*Cry the Peacock*'.”

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In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Markandaya has depicted the Rukmini's daughter named Irrawaddy as a barren and fallen Women. The novelist has very positively described the pathetic condition of such women in a society. In the novel when Irrawaddy's husband follows the traditions of the society and says to her parents,

“I intend no discourtesy but this is an ordinary visit. You gave me your daughter in marriage. I have brought her back to you (Nathan and Rukmani).She is a barren woman”.(*Nectar in a Sieve*)

Irrawaddy is been depicted in the story as the victim of hunger, starvation and human degradation.The novel deals with unrest ,uneasiness, turmoil and tragic ups and downs caused by socio-economic factors in the life of Rukmani.

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