

TRACING THE ELEMENTS OF INDIAN DIASPORA IN KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S NOVEL *NECTAR IN A SIEVE*

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Abstract

The aspect associated with dispersal and migration might be referred to as the diaspora. It is also possible to interpret this as warning those who reside outside of their country of origin. It contains the idea of expansion and is all about scattering from the nucleus. Also, this can include a variety of national and ethnic-religious identities. Diaspora becomes significant in the cultural setting, and it emphasises identity primarily. It appears in these scattering circumstances and typically results in trauma (Kafle). Discrimination, cultural difference, issues with adaptation and integration, displacement, identity crises, migration, homesickness, paradoxes, etc. are a few examples of elements of the diaspora. Dispute and migration are the major factors to consider while examining the diasporic elements. Culture is a vast notion, and resolving cultural issues is challenging. To lessen cultural tensions, conflict theory and social theory are employed. The objective of this paper is to pinpoint the diasporic trends that have shaped the background of the author Kamala Markandaya's novels through discussions of cultural identity, the difficulties presented by generational gaps, the workings of modern international influences, and their impact on the daily lives of those who live in the diaspora.

Paper Identification



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Introduction

The Indian diaspora spans 110 different nations, making it a geographically diverse diaspora. The evolution of the Indian Diaspora is characterised by the cultural diversity that exists within the group. The fact that the Indian emigrant groups are all labour migrants who have built their families over many years is what binds them together. Countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada attracted highly trained labour and joined the Indian Diaspora. Some of the important facts have come into focus in recent years as a result of the growth of significant Diasporas. First off, there are a significant number of competent immigrants from emerging countries living in industrialised nations. Second, communities living abroad can be a valuable resource for the growth of nations of origin. There are numerous new chances for development created by the migration of highly and low skilled employees between less and more developed nations. One must have a limited perspective if they just see the Diaspora through the prism of remittances and money flows. Instead, it ought to be done by addressing concerns of cultural identity, difficulties brought on by generational gaps, the workings of existing global influences, and their impact on diaspora populations' everyday life.

Women authors have had a significant impact on diasporic literature. Diasporic influences frequently have a variety of effects on human lives. Individuals who move away from their country of origin to some other foreign countries are likely to encounter prejudice, inequality, and discrimination where these things trigger feelings of longing. Due to this estrangement, people are constantly searching for their identity, and diasporic literature frequently addresses such cultural substitutions. Individuals in such diaspora experience a sense of rootlessness and find it challenging to form relationships with the host country. Where people are unable to assimilate into a new society, the values of their nation must be distinct and separate (Nair 1-5).

In the decade following India's independence, Kamala Markandaya became a renowned novelist. She has written roughly ten novels, focusing on multicultural and post-colonial Indian life situations. One of them, *Nectar in a Sieve*, is set against the backdrop of the independence era. The name of the work was derived by the author from some poetic description of another work.

'Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve

And Hope without an object cannot live'(Coleridge 2)

The eminent poet Coleridge is credited with writing these lines. The lines and theme served as inspiration for Kamala, who included them in the novel as well.

The very brief novel provides an introduction to rural Indian life and the changes brought about by British colonialism. The book is poetic and touching, and it has many possible interpretations. It is based on a fundamental diaspora scenario and tells the tale of a happy yet planned marriage and remote peasant life. On some other level, it is a story of the human spirit's ability to triumph against adversity, including extreme poverty. Lastly, it is a story about the contradictions between an emerging industrial capitalist society and traditional rural culture. The impact of economic development, the significance of ancient cultural traditions, and people's resistance to change are only a few of the significant social phenomena that the book deals with (Hoosain 4).

Nectar in a Sieve illuminates the adjustments made to rural India during British colonial rule. The work might prompt the reader to consider significant ideas, such as arranged but happy marriage and rural peasant life. How people manage to escape the calamity of hunger and poverty, on the other hand. This book also highlights the cultural clashes between traditional agricultural culture and a capitalist industrial civilization. The impact of industrialism, people's resistance to change, and the traditional cultural traditions followed by rural Indians are the key three topics on which this novel focuses.

Rukmini, the narrator, and Nathan, her poor farmer husband, are the main protagonists of the novel. The couple was fortunate to have a daughter named Irrawaddy. Six boys, Murugan, Thambi, Selvam, Arjun, Kuti, and Raja, were later born to the couple. Ammu was Murugan's wife, and Dr. Kenny was the village doctor. Puli a homeless child, was adopted in the city.

This book mostly focuses on Rukmani's life. According to the novel, she is an elderly widow who looks back on her former life and considers the experiences and lessons she has gained. In the South Indian village, Rukmani was born to the headman. Three of her older sisters had already been married and had sizable dowries. As Rukmani reached age of marriage, her father had already become ill. As a result, the family lacked the means to pay for a decent dowry. She wed Nathan, a poor tenant farmer, in order to do this. Rukmani was first very unhappy with the mud cabin that Nathan had constructed, which made her feel very inferior in their marriage.

'This is our home, my husband said. Come I will show you. I got out of the cart, staff and with a cramp in one leg. We went in: two rooms, one sort of storehouse for grain, the other for everything else. A third had been begun but was unfinished; the mud walls were

not more than half a foot high. It will be better when it is finished, he said. I nodded; I wanted to cry. This mud hut nothing but mud and thatch was my home (Markandaya 5).” Eventually, she felt joyful and at ease thanks to her husband's love and care. She soon had a daughter as a blessing. They later had the blessing of six boys. Rukmani and Nathan have experienced a number of catastrophes at home. They had a trouble-free first six years of marriage. Unfortunately, the depth of their poverty had grown after the birth of each kid.

According to Rukmani's statement in the book, "We no longer had milk in the house except for the youngest child; curds and butter were beyond our means of except on rare occasions". They were only partially fed after the birth of the sixth child, yet they weren't completely starving.

The book portrays the continual poverty and hopelessness experienced by the impoverished in both rural and urban India. Raja was slain after he was caught stealing, and Kuti had perished from terrible malnutrition. The way of life in the village demonstrates how well-adapted the people are to nature and how well-equipped they are to withstand both rain and sun. As a result, Rukmani and Nathan had little trouble handling both happy and terrible times. The couple in rural India did not protest the deaths of Kuti and Raja. After all the tragedies in their family, the couple did not become overly sentimental. The optimistic nature of the villagers is the primary cause of the catastrophes. For instance, Nathan had a lot of hope. He lacked the courage to deal with the devastation, diminution, and humiliation he was experiencing. On the other hand, rural Indian women were strong-willed, content, and joyful all the time. Rukmani never complained and was always content despite the difficulties she encountered. Rukmani had some hope, though. She says of her meagre supply of rice during the hard times, "It will last until the times are better" (Markandaya 47), and even when Nathan has a nightmare, she assures him, "Never Fear. All will be well" (Markandaya 84). It is obvious that people in India's villages were very upbeat and had come to terms with life as it was.

Rukmani is plunged into poverty as a result of the Indian dowry system that was in place in her hometown. On the other side, she had to accept fate because of the Indian value system. Nathan is a stereotypical character who is a passive suffering. In India's villages, the rural value system and ethos are strongly emphasised. Obviously, this framework shows that Nathan had to push himself to adhere to every part of these systems. The novel also highlights a number of urban legends associated with the author's hometown, including those about superstition, the evils of the marriage system, the low status of women, the dowry system, Zamindari, the

absence of familial planning, sex trafficking, lack of education, casteism, deprivation, and the neglect of female children.

Furthermore, Dr. Kennington balances the picture with altruism and medical services. The tannery was built in the village and this had employed most of the people in Village. However, tannery had disturbed the quiet and calm life of the Village. Various complications such as social evils like whoring, drinking, and gambling. Keimy strived to keep the villagers out of ignorance, superstitions, fatalism, and apathy.

The sufferings in South Indian rural areas were mentioned by Markandaya, who had lived in one of the villages there. One of the terrible elements that was prevalent in South India was landlordism. They were victims of landlords, Nathan and Rukmani. They were required to pay the landlord's land rent despite the farm suffering losses as a result of both copious rain and a severe drought. The landlord threatened to take the mud house and land away from Nathan since they hadn't paid the rent. For about 30 years, Nathan farmed that area using his own land. Nathan's fear doubles as he asks "Where would we go? How would we live." (Markandaya 77). Ira, Rukmani's daughter, was also rejected by her husband and in-laws since she had never gotten pregnant. She later became a prostitute to prevent famine for herself and her little brother. As Ira decides to pursue this career in order to lift herself and her younger brother out of poverty, Nathan expresses his paternal rage towards her. Ira said, "Tonight, tomorrow, and every night. I will not have you parading every night." Nathan is completely shocked by the statement "so long as there is a need, I will not hunger anymore" (Markandaya 99).

Rukmani had determined that the family's financial problems were primarily due to the tannery. At this point, Murugan had gone for the city since the tannery had caused their sons to lose their jobs. Two more kids fled to Ceylon in order to survive. In addition, Selvam ignored the land and began working with Dr. Kenny. The parents' worries that they would lose all of their children grew as a result, which elevated their anxiety levels. The tannery's owners had begun to buy the land in the interim and had also threatened Nathan. The land was not useful because it produced nothing. That was a glimmer of optimism for Nathan and his family, though. Subsequently, the owners of the tannery bought it, leaving the farmer in dire straits. He says 'full of husks of despair, dry, lifeless (Markandaya 36).

For the couple, the property and the house were now lost. They chose to approach his older son Murugan, who had left for the city, as a result. With the exception of farming and the land, Nathan lacked any talent or knowledge. He had assumed that Murugan could assess his predicament and would welcome him with open arms. Afterwards, Rukmani and Nathan planned

to move towards the city and left the village. But, they were frightened by city life. The couple lost the cash and clothing they had brought with them to help them survive in the city. Rukmani yearned to send her son a letter because it was difficult to get in touch with him in the city. They were left stranded in the city after failing to locate Murugan. "Better to starve where we were born than live here", the anguished souls pleaded (Markandaya 168). Afterwards, they join the stone quarry and develop the courage to go back home. Nathan expressed his assurance by saying, "We shall soon be home" (Markandaya 176). Afterwards, Nathan experienced rheumatism and a fever. The couple was compelled to remain in the shrine and grovel for food.

At that point, Puli, an orphan youngster, helps the couple get to Murugan's home. They were astounded to see Murugan had passed away. His son and wife were unable to house and feed the couple. She sternly orders them to leave the area. Nathan's fever soon reached an elevated level, which led to the farmer's demise. Rukmani was all by herself. She had been rescued by Puli. She received his emotional support. Afterwards, Rukmani took Puli in as a son. Rukmani and her kid started returning to their village later. Extreme disaster had been brought on for both Nathan and Rukmani by the development of the city and the growth of the companies in the village.

Rukmani and her son were warmly welcomed by Ira and Selvam, who earlier had made the decision to remain in their hometown. Selvam gave his mother excellent attention. Rukmani had struggled at her house with destitution, suffering, and pain up until a certain point. Her agony began to subside after some time. She was successful in regaining equilibrium and spiritual harmony. And she remembers her earlier life. Her feminine identity was fortified by the scars from her previous existence. By the time Rukmani was in the middle of the fourth grade and working through her pain in the hamlet, Dr. Kenny, the English doctor, had already opened a clinic there. Rukmani afterwards joined Kenny in helping the less fortunate. Rukmani was just looking forward to living a happy old age despite all of the hardships. Rukmani had dedicated the remainder of her life to helping the sick and the less fortunate.

Rukmani no longer had to fight to provide for her husband's requirements in order to keep him away from Kunthi. She no more had to put out the cooking fires that frequently broke out. She was no longer required to be consumed with raising a boy to tend to the farm. She had the chance to live out her own identity and choose her own course. Rukmani's true happiness had its origins in the assistance she had provided to the poor and ill. According to the narrative, she had to take a difficult route to accomplish her goals and fulfil her life's ambitions.

Unlike Rukmani, Kenny had made an effort to illuminate sanity and reality. Kenny always made an effort to curb their strong faith in any given aspect and urged the people to consider the actual situation. Rukmani was nevertheless required to follow the customs that were common in rural Southern India. Many times, Kenny tried to emphasise the good things about the circumstance by stating that 'Times will not be better for many months. Meanwhile, you will suffer and die, you meek suffering fools' (Markandaya 47). He wished to encourage the couple to embrace life's positive aspects.

In this book, Kenny and Rukmani highlight the cultural distinctions between the two. Each relationship is governed by the standards of its respective culture. It is clear from the book that Easterners tolerate poverty and misery more readily than Westerners do. Kenny and Rukmani were at odds because they held disparate views on relationships and morals. Rukmani asks "Have I not so much sense to see that you are not one of us? You live and work here... but this is not your country"(Markandaya 46). Discussions between Kenny and Rukmani also reveal that easterners exhibit greater respect whereas westerners do not accept equality. Rukmani stoops to kiss Keimy's feet as Keimy startlingly declares, "I'm not your benefactor"(Markandaya 33) by pulling back his feet. Kenny has never thought of himself as superior to Rukmani. Every area of life is seen differently by Keimy and Rukmani.

The theory on culture (Avruch 226-240) and theory on migrants (Kurekova 1-37) can both be applied to the book *Nectar in a Sieve*. According to (Avruch), it is challenging to minimise the cultural disparity. In this book, it turns out to be accurate. It is clear that Keimy and Rukmani have quite different cultural backgrounds. Rukmani respects Kenny, but she makes very clear that he is not a citizen of hers. Kenny is also not pleased with the locals' staunch adherence to old traditions. This demonstrates how eastern and western cultures vary. People in eastern cultures don't question traditions, and they are taught to do as the elders say and adhere to customary behaviours. Westerners, on the other hand, contest the customs and traditions. They believe that they do not have to follow elders' advice blindly. As the narrative illustrates, it is indeed challenging to bridge such cultural gaps.

It is also important to take into account the neoclassical theory of migration. Nathan and Rukmani make the decision to move to the city in order to make a living since they believe they can make enough money there to support themselves, which is not possible in their home village. According to the argument, the main driver of their relocation is the disparity in pay across the regions. Villagers have the idea that they can make more money in the city than they can in the countryside. Particularly in Indian villages, this is quite clear. Many people leave the villages for

adjacent or distant cities due to the apparent pay disparity. Another problem is that they have to modify their lives in the city. They must also swiftly adjust to city living if they don't want to fall behind in the fast-paced city life. Some migrants are successful because they are able to overcome these obstacles. Because of the poverty they experience in their hamlet, Nathan and Rukmani move to the city in this book. But even in the metropolis, their tragedy persists. Rukmani discovers the tragic news that his kid Murugan had passed away, and she subsequently also loses her husband. She visits her native village with her adopted son.

The contrast between the industrial capitalist society and traditional agriculture was highlighted in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Individuals were extremely resistant to change. Considering the aforementioned details, it is obvious that Nathan and Rukmani's financial situation deteriorated when an industrialist wanted to buy the land that offered hope for their existence. Rukmani and Nathan had moved into the city. The overwhelming culture of urban India was too much for them to handle. Rukmani was forced into the impossible circumstance of wanting to write a letter to his son. In contrast to the village, it was quite difficult for her to find her son in the metropolis. Poverty and starvation have resulted the robbery. Nate was slain by this. Rukmani, a widow, and her son had to return to their hometown. That might have something to do with people's physical presence on earth and their eventual return. Rukmani and Nathan had stood in for the strict traditions of rural India as well as the casualties of industrialization and the metropolitan Indian way of life. Due to socioeconomic factors, social ills like superstition and the rigid marriage system, which includes the dowry system, have developed. One of the key causes of the disasters Nathan and Rukmani experienced was these horrors in rural India. It was clear from Markandaya's work that commitment and culture had led to a cycle of ongoing deprived and hopeless living. Due to these factors, India's urban and rural areas were both impacted.

Conclusion

In this way, the author describes the precise condition that existed in India following independence. The innocent and uneducated villagers were impacted by urbanisation and modernity. *Nectar in a Sieve* highlights several diasporic aspects including migration and cultural diversity. Due to industrialization's impact on poverty and malnutrition, Rukmani and Nathan relocate from rural to urban areas. The couple had grown uneasy about urban modernity and societal issues like robbery. Also, Kenny wanted the people to be realistic while Rukmani had reflected the customs of rural India.

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