

Human Relationship in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya

Abstract

Sex and violence are parts of grim reality of human existence. To deny its existence is the denying of the self. Self-denial is the greatest crime man commits against him. There is another misleading prevailing thought among the intellectuals that sex and violence are imported from the western culture. This study holds the view that literature should be studied without any prejudice and fear. Sex and violence are no more the monopoly of male writers. Age-old prejudice against women should be lifted up and woman is no more a second sex. She is also a human being like a man. Therefore, she deserves those things which a man has. She can be more successful than man in many aspects of life. These two themes of sex and violence are primary and most primitive.

Keywords: Self-Denial, Western Culture, Marriage, Sex And Violence, Racial and Communal Violence, Non-Violence, 'White' and 'Black', Social Injustice, Economic Inequalities

Introduction

Kamala Markandaya is a prominent Indian English novelist who stands with women's sexuality and her right to body. She displays a highly developed consciousness of the gendered nature of morality and social structure. She has been modern in her approach towards love and sex. She holds that sex should not be construed a taboo. It is as old as man. Violence is also a part of creation. Nothing has been created without violence. Creation presupposes the destruction of something. Nothing can be made out of nothing, and creation is the process of rebuilding.

Sex and violence are part of grim reality of human existence. To deny its existence is the denying of the self. Self-denial is the greatest crime man commits against him. There is another misleading prevailing thought among the intellectuals that sex and violence and imported from the western culture. Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra* is much older than any western classic on sex. Violence does not have any geographical demarcation like sex.

Aim of the Study

This study holds the view that literature should be studied without any prejudice and fear.

Sex and violence are no more the monopoly of male writers. Age-old prejudice against women should be lifted up and woman is no more a second sex. She is as vital as her male counterpart in sexual matters. She can be more violent even than man. Indian scriptures are replete with such ideas in symbolical description.

As a novelist Markandaya is frank and realist. She does not hesitate to depict sex or violence in her novels. She appears to grow progressively bolder and more straightforward in her descriptions of sexual intimacy in almost all her novels so that each episode grows more graphic and more detailed. From the first to the last novel, we find a remarkable increase in emphasis on love, courtship, marriage, sex and violence.

The novel *Nectar in a Sieve* is a sensitive study of the human relationships. In the novel violence is not caused due to exertion of force released from the cultural distinction of East and West, but due to the vagaries of nature. Nature in the form of flood, famine and drought cause violence. In this novel Markandaya emphasizes the three forms of sex: procreation, pleasure and power. Procreation of Rukmani is a kind of religious act. Hence sex becomes a religion for her. It is pleasure for Kunthi. Pleasure is, however, defined primarily from a male rather than from a female point of view. Women are portrayed as voluptuous creatures that are fair game for the more predatory male prey upon another.

In *Some Inner Fury*, *The Nowhere Man* and *The Golden Honeycomb*, Markandaya elaborates the sexual relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Happy sexual relationship very often remains unfulfilled

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by political, racial and communal violence. *Some Inner Fury* centers on facts and incidents associated with national movement aroused for India's freedom. Although non-violence is the slogan given by Mahatma Gandhi to achieve freedom, violence is envisaged by a group of leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Subhash Chandra Bose and other extremists at the national level to achieve the goal. "Give me Blood; I will give you freedom" of Subhash Chandra Bose exhibits violence. All foreign goods were banned and set on fire publicly. The power politics, racial prejudice and alienation cause violence. Mira-Richard relationship is torn because of the racial conflicts.

Some *Inner Fury* is about political violence. *The Nowhere Man* is about communal violence arising out of racial discrimination between 'White' and 'Black'. Kamala Markandaya delineate extra-marital sex of Srinivas. After the death of his wife, Srinivas becomes lonely and isolated, feels helpless due to his suffering from leprosy. His extra-marital sex with Mrs. Pickering gives him a source of life. Sex becomes a power for his existence; it is a need. But sex becomes pleasure for Bawajirao III in *The Golden Honeycomb*.

Sex is described in different situations and in different contexts. Social injustice and exploitation make Ravi to become violent. Economic inequalities, unemployment and poverty bring in violence. Ravi rebels against such economic inequalities. He knows that the rich belong to the same class the world over. It is the economic stability that made the rich to use the commanding tone. Frustrated Ravi beats his wife Nalini like R P Jhabvala's *The Householder* (1960), where Prem married Indu and, with increasing responsibility, he becomes frustrated and expresses his anger at Indu.

In *The Coffin Dams*, Markandaya concentrates on sex between Helen and Bashiam. While Clinton-Helen relationship is characterized by mere form and without the least sustaining warmth. Helen's love for Bashiam originates from her sense of pity, of adventures, and his closeness to nature, but at the same time Helen does not love her husband less. Clinton's attention for the Dam makes him neglect not only the "Dream saga of a helpless peasantry" but also Helen who sympathizes with the tribesman. She likes the tribe because she thinks that the tribes are close to nature so they are more human. Their conversation is more natural and therefore they are more attractive than their urbanized counterparts. There is another reason why Helen inclines towards Bashiam: there is much age difference between Helen and Clinton and naturally Helen finds in Bashiam a friend, more agile and more understanding than Clinton. He devotes much more time for Helen than her husband.

There is explicit description of sex in *A Handful of Rice*. Sex is elaborated between married couples. Markandaya describes in delightful subtlety, the customs, traditions that exist in India in matters regarding courtship and romance. A strict watch was kept on the girls. Women had information on girls who came of age and boys looking for brides to get

arranged marriages. The effect of Ravi and Nalini's courtship on the reader is richly appealing. *This novel* does not deal with marital sex but also deals with the sex in old age. Jayamma, the mother-in-law of Ravi, does not grudge or throw Ravi out of house when Ravi has sex with her in the absence of Nalini. Jayamma rather feels contented after having sex with a virile young man after years of being trapped in a dissatisfying marriage with a placid, unexciting husband.

The sexual activities were defined in terms of procreation in the ancient Indian literature. However, the new social and spiritual tensions have changed our attitude towards sex. It no more reminds us of the temples of Khajuraho where Gods and Goddesses ravage each other celebrating the indivisibility of being through conjugation. It rather, establishes their identity only to remind men and women that they are one. *The Golden Honeycomb* speaks of political violence, like *Some Inner Fury*, which also relies on a political context. Ravi desires to face the change instead of submitting like his father. His fulfillment lies in the mission of social upliftment and he begins his irrigation project. He experiences sex with a number of girls like his father but sex is a pleasure for Bawajirao III whereas it works as a power for Ravi. Sex releases his mental tension from the political yoke at that time. Ravi's sexual relations with Jaya inspire him and give him a freedom of mind. It exhilarates him to carry on his mission, which is much different from her father.

Conclusion

Pre-Independence Indian novels rarely depict the pre-marital sex. The novels written after Independence try to depict pre-marital sex in small doses, with much trepidation and less thrill in heart. After the 1960s novelists have come out of their self deluded world to write about the reality they experience directly or indirectly. Markandaya has tried to establish her identity as a women writer and depicted in her novels the sexual experiences of her characters that are mostly female characters. It establishes her authenticity and sincerity. Being a woman she has better access to the emotions of another woman than her counterpart male novelists. Nevertheless, in her novels existing cultural stereotypes are discarded in favour of the woman's desire, instincts and feelings.

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