

Spirituality and Cultural Reflections in Kamala Markandaya's Narratives

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ABSTRACT

Postcolonial Studies is an interdisciplinary and transnational approach to examining texts that often shift between the present and the past, reflecting the suppression, defiance, and rejection of a society that was once colonized. Like other forms of Postcolonial literature, Indian writing in English emerged from the intersection of indigenous Indian and British cultures. Colonialism, according to Kamala Markandaya, led to a fall in Indian aesthetic standards and the eradication of Indian cultural values. Her novels *Possession* and *A Silence of Desire* have postcolonial undercurrents, which are the subject of this thesis.

Keywords: *Spiritual Value; Kamala Markandaya; rationalism; tradition and progress*

1. Introduction

Kamala Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire* delves into the social, religious, and spiritual aspects of everyday life in India. Within its pages is the story of a virtuous man. Traditional religious practices in India are embodied by the Swamy. A great story about a man who values sensuality and worldly pleasures more than inner peace. "The quality he longed for above all" (SD, 220) is serenity, and he has forgotten the power of the spirit in battle. Although Dandekar is a Brahmin, he refuses to recognise the importance of the tulsi plant when Sarojini offers to worship God in front of it at the opening of the story. The tulsi plant is a metaphor in the story. As Sarojini put it, "it was necessary that god should have symbols since no man had the power or temerity to visualise him." Thus, the object served as a depiction of the worshipped deity.

Celestial beings with an interest in the afterlife are known as spiritual beings. A backlash against Western consumerism, if you will. Life on a spiritual level and life on a material one are opposites. A person's worldly life is a rootless, unstable, lonely, and fragmented existence in contrast to their spiritual life, which is holy, divine, and full of order and worth. Because materialism drives people to prioritise worldly things like meeting their necessities and climbing the corporate ladder, they lose sight of what really matters in life: their spiritual well-being. A profound spiritual upheaval occurred at the dawn of modernity as a consequence of the industrial revolution and the subsequent rampant materialism. A general rejection of religious principles has resulted from a severe shortage of even the most fundamental financial means. Unfortunately, many people are unhappy, unequal, and poor since progress toward materialistic objectives has been made at the cost of spiritual ones. In their most basic forms, spiritualism and modernism are mutually incompatible. Neither spirituality nor modernity can be excessive for us. The same holds for spirituality and modernity. One needs a current worldview that permits an approach to the spiritual to be a member of modern society. Indo-Anglo author Kamala Markandaya delves into her own spirituality via her works. In her novel *A Silence of Desire*, the protagonist, Swamy, is a practising Hindu whose views on religion may have positive and negative consequences.

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2. Literature Review

Vandana Shrivastav (2019) Modern global conflicts between Eastern and Western values are discussed by renowned Indian writer and journalist Kamala Markandaya. The Indian city of Mysore, in the state of Karnataka, was the site of her birth in 1924. The works of Kamala Markandaya mirror the changing cultural and spiritual mores of modern India. The unique perspective she brings to her works has been significant in shedding focus on the challenges women face and the challenges feminism faces. Furthermore, she demonstrated via her writings that being a woman is difficult in any society. Several of Markandaya's works attempted to depict strong, self-reliant women while yet recognizing the limitations of traditional gender norms. Her fearless exploration of controversial themes and graceful writing made her a member of the revolutionary generation of Indian women authors.

Sarbani Das (2018) The "east-west" dichotomy—a geographical divide that runs parallel to this study's objectives—is defined by inherent racial animosity, a love-hate dynamic, and the collision of civilizations. Kamala Markandaya writes about women who are as resilient and clever as the landscape she depicts. One example of Rukamani's boundless tolerance is the fact that she takes care of her children while still being the principal architect for the family. Kamala Markandaya painted complex depictions of intercultural interactions, women in leadership roles, and the human mind from her unique vantage point as an outsider insider. My research interests lie in delving into the protagonist's search for self-discovery, the Eastern and Western cultural differences, and the works' generally pessimistic portrayal of life.

Mr.S.Sasintharkumar (2018) Kamala Markandaya is among the most famous Indian writers who have written in English. Fantastic stories are told by her. When she does technical work, she follows established procedures. She has exceptional narrative skills. She stays true to her native English rather than modifying it as many Indian writers of English books do. In her writing, she adheres to the norms of standard English. Attempts to translate Indian proverbs or swear words into English are also something she shies away from. Her sentences have an indisputable poetic quality. A small piece of India appears in each of her novels. Art, she argues, must have a social purpose; her paintings and sculptures depict human lives as they relate to society and destiny. Her work as a writer has made her keenly aware of how millions of Indians are suffering as a result of contemporary socioeconomic realities. She sets the mood in a number of her works by focusing on family relationships. Her portrayal of ordinary Indian life is both realistic and nuanced, setting her apart from her contemporaries.

Krunalsinh Rana et.al (2017) Kamala Markandaya is widely acknowledged as a prominent female writer. During her lifetime, Kamala markandaya had ten novels published. Western influences on Indian identity and culture, maaraiges (caste systems), and the ambivalence of modern Indian life are all themes that appear in her writings. However, Kamala Markandaya's skill as a writer lies in her meticulous depiction of specific individuals and situations that serve as symbols of a larger collective. The majority of female writers have portrayed male-dominated society as an alien place for women. These trailblazing female writers of the contemporary era are quite different from their mothers' generation. Finding out what elements are similar to all of Kamala Markandaya's works is the driving force for this study. This essay will focus on two aspects of the suburbia protagonists in Kamala's books: Searching for Truthfulness and Realism.

MD. SAHIDUL ISLAM (2014) This study focuses on the significance of Nectar in a Sieve (1954) by Kamala Markandaya to the revival of traditional Indian culture after India's independence from British rule. Prior to British colonial authority, this was a common theme in Indian literature; but, authorial confusion with the new system prevented them from exploring the subject more at that period. Many of Kamala Markandaya's colleagues among postcolonial Indian writers have also sought to revive Indian principles, and some have been far more successful than she has been. In addition to discussing modernization's impact on the two civilizations, this article delves into the conflict between them, focusing on the colonial connection between them. The author points out that Western values of awareness, progress, modernism, invention, and improvement are at odds with Eastern traditions.

3. A Silence of Desire: An Analysis of Sprituality and Conflict

Many people who follow spiritualist practices and beliefs think that there is a way to communicate with the hereafter, usually via spiritual guides. The natives of the subcontinent see spiritualism as deeply rooted in their heritage and the subconscious of their personality. Modern spiritualism has its roots in the Vedas, which provide a moral, ethical, and spiritual code of conduct. The Vedas contain the essence of spirituality. Spirituality was fostered and integrated into Indian culture by rishis, gurus, and swamis via the study of Nyaya, Yoga, Vaishashika, Vedanta, etc. Its transfer from one era to another was facilitated by mantras, darshana, the Vedas, and the Upanishads. There is currently a robust spiritual tradition in Indian culture. As soothing as a drink for the spirit. The high, invisible truths of life are laid bare

by it. There is talk on God's character and why the cosmos came to be. It helps one transcend their material problems by bestowing the higher or spirit of knowledge onto them. This is the path that leads to moksha, the liberation from this world. Both yoga and Ayurveda support this. The film teaches its audience the importance of love, compassion, and recognizing and embracing our diversity. Some may consider a spiritualist perspective as completely at odds with a materialist one. Something sacred, enigmatic, and magnificent characterizes a spiritual way of life. In contrast, the pursuit of material goods, high income, and social status are the driving forces behind a materialistic lifestyle. The spread of philistinism outpaced the spread of spirituality as a result of technological advancements. Traditions, beliefs, and values that were formerly held in high regard were now considered frivolous at best. Living in constant fear and isolation due to materialistic advancements has contributed to the development of a confused and disjointed sense of identity. That is why materialism and spiritualism are diametrically opposed. They both want to live forever, but one is driven by the pursuit of wealth and fame, while the other is driven by the conviction that these things are nothing more than illusions.

Kamala Markandaya was well-connected in the western materialist and practical communities as well as the eastern spiritual ones. Novels like "A quiet of longing" (1960) and "Possession" (1963) reflect her deep spiritual convictions. Markandaya portrays the underlying divide between spirituality and materialism, as well as the East and the West, via the figure of Swamy. He writes tales that attempt to bridge this divide. Additionally, she demonstrates how the two worldviews are at odds with one another. She takes a neutral stance when comparing the two civilizations.

Between the ancient and the modern lies the axis of a longing calm. The plot revolves on the conflict that arises between the husband's scientific temperament and logical attitude and the wife's spiritual beliefs and conventional mind set. Their distinct perspective on life has greatly impacted and molded their everyday encounters, as seen by here. Thanks to his loving wife, Dandekar is able to live comfortably in his job as a senior clerk. He is a dedicated dad who would rather walk than drive to work. He is a cultural hybrid, born from the union of two different peoples' customs and beliefs. Traditional Indian culture is more esoteric while traditional Western culture is more modern and materialistic. He has no ties to either world and is an outsider to both. In contrast, Sarojini has strong roots in her community's traditions and practices. Observing all the regular ceremonies, she is a devoted believer.

The narrative effectively contrasts the materialistic and spiritual ways of life. The Swamy serves as both a husband and a wife in the novel, helping them with their problems. Tulasi worship makes the spiritualist ethos very apparent. Chapter 1 immediately introduces this concept. Dandekar still refrained from praying over the plant, however. However, he also perceives the planta as a symbol of the divine. However, he points out, "it was a symbol of God, whom one worshiped, and it was necessary that God should have symbols, since no man had the power to temerity to visualize him." In times of marital strife, the couple may seek solace in the spiritual world of the Swamy. The significance of Dandekar assuming individual accountability for the welfare of others is imparted to him by the Swamy. Across the room, his statement that "compulsion is the beginning of corruption" resounded with truth. Furthermore, he states unequivocally that compulsive behavior "...is an eating away of the spirit of whoever does it and whoever has done to him." The realization that certain things are just beyond the reach of the rational intellect is brought to Dandekar's attention by him. He has enough common sense to realize that not even his own wife can be coerced. Things he had previously taken for granted became more meaningful as he became aware of his responsibilities. He had the ability to see the merit of both modern and ancient viewpoints. Sarojini did, however, learn the value of acceptance. She heard the spiritual teacher say that everything will be OK after surgery, so she has chosen to go ahead and have it done. Keeping her emotional distance was also something she came to terms with. The spiritual dimension acts as a conduit for the pair's deep understanding, which is reached at the end of the story.

The loss of cultural and artistic values brought about by colonization is something that Kamala Markandaya has personally seen. Both of her novels, "A Silence of Desire" and "Possession," probe these topics extensively. She paints a disturbing picture of what happens when Western materialism and ancient asceticism collide. In two connected topics, she explores the conflict between the spiritual traditions of India and the individualism, scientism, and egotism shown by the colonial powers. The Western value system that permeates our culture and society is something she finds objectionable as well.

A Silence of Desire makes it quite apparent that the Western view of technology and science as the final solutions to all of humanity's problems and the Indian concept of unfaltering trust in spiritual energies are diametrically opposed. The narrative revolves on three main characters: Dandekar, Sarojini, and Swami. Dandekar stands for the Indian aristocracy that the British subtly educated into adopting Western values once they seized power in the country. Sarojini embodies the archetypal Indian woman—a believer in God's power who refuses to waver. Swami exemplifies the Indian attribute of spirituality. As presented, Swami is attempting to appease his followers, while Dandekar is psychologically attempting to win back his wife from Swami. This sets up an intriguing ideological conflict between

the two men. Possession, Markandaya's second piece, similarly depicts a struggle between two ideologies: one, the Western goal of material advancement and hedonism, and the other, the Indian ideal of non-possessive spirituality and the importance of art and life. For Indians and Britons alike, this book signifies the long-awaited first meeting on equal footing. In a little hamlet in southern India, Lady Caroline Bell—a British divorcee—and her Indian friend, Anusuya, visit a child prodigy and decide to adopt her after Lady Bell pays \$5,000 to the girl's parents. However, while Valmiki was away from his usual obedience, his creativity flourished. Lady Caroline, who has been descanted, shows her true colours by presenting fake letters from Valmiki's master Swami, which inspire him to write again. Regardless of his mother's age, she wants to own him sexually. In her pursuit of this goal, she goes so far as to attempt to derail his love life. Returning to Swami after experiencing nothing but sadness and disappointment, he finds solace in the spiritual and austere teachings of India and rediscovers the purpose of art and life.

These books delve into the Indo-British encounter and the East-West conflict, which is the root cause of the current generation's identity crisis, which has led to a loss of connection with traditional values and a search for one's own roots. Contrarily, Markandaya's writings tackle the subject directly, advocating a return to historic aesthetic ideals among the contemporary middle class as an alternative to imported Western standards.

The East-West conflicts are present in both of her novels, but the colonial mindset is most overt and fully developed in Possession. Lady Caroline Bell adamantly maintains that "being British is best" and deftly tries to highlight Britain's enduring significance in India. Particularly noticeable in contrast to Valmiki's focus on artistic qualities is her examination of the possible financial advantages of his work. At this very moment, he must accompany us. Given the circumstances, he is not very helpful (Possession: 9). "There was not even a pause to consider whether he would like to or not; not any recognition of him as a human being" (Possession: 10), certainly. Caroline believes Valmiki is hers, and to some extent, that's true, according to narrator Anusuya, who described Caroline's approach to Valmiki. She will not release her grip. Most individuals will fight against the urge to give up something they value as a property. It's safe to say that her advocacy for the arts has been influenced by Western materialist ideology. As a result, she may have confused Valmiki's feelings—those of a native Indian artist who has always been honest with himself and society—for ownership, and thus missed out on fully appreciating his work. In A Silence of Desire, Dandekar's exposure to Western philosophy causes him to fail to understand his wife and his spiritual convictions. That chasm is too wide for even Dandekar's newly learned logic to bridge. The gulf between their perspectives is symbolized by the Tulsi plant. By calling Sarojini "a plant; one did not worship plants," Dandekar is expressing his disapproval of her views and the way she worshipped Tulsi. The question of whether Swami's spiritual abilities can cure is put to Sarojini, who replies, "Yes, you can call it healing by faith, or healing by the grace of God if you understand what that means." This quote perfectly captures Sarojini's stance against Western philosophy. Your haughty claims of ignorance and superstition, which amount to nothing more than a lack of knowledge of the world beyond reason and a desire to remain ignorant, are not going to help you understand me, especially given your Western perspective. You may not give Tulsi much thought beyond its potential as a common houseplant. My illness is curable; if you had treated me, I wouldn't be here now; I would have passed away at the hospital.

4. Conclusion

Contemporary consciousness has its origins in the here and now, from the way it has manifested in India. The complexity and constraints of so-called modern life make simple attitudes and rapid value judgments inadequate. This is how identity crisis and scepticism of one's own conventional views could get in the way. Every one of the characters in Kamala Markandaya's works reveals their aggressive side. Spirituality triumphs over consumerism in A Silence of Desire. We can learn a lot about the changes happening in society by the chaos it creates. According to the Indian, his culture has a spiritual component that sets it apart from the materialistic West. This culture's art was considered more authentic as it communicated deeper spiritual principles, in contrast to the Western-praised art of ancient Greece that concentrated on outward beauty.

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