
Farkhanda Nazir*, Rabia Zubair*
Khamsa Qasim**

Intersections of Ecofeminism in Kamala Markandaya's Novel *Nectar in a Sieve*

ABSTRACT

Crucial to feminists studies concerning to degradation is the textual analysis of male world's domination over ecology and women on parallel level. Ecofeminism is a multidimensional term that has roots in different feminist practices and philosophies. These different perspectives reflect a variety of feminist approaches and mirror different understandings of nature and solution to burning environmental problems. I trace within Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* that how women have been marginalized and devalued on a large scale since the very birth of colonization. Similarly, the other oppressed non-human body; environment has also been degraded, devalued and mistreated by the local domination of masculine regimes and by the colonizers. This text highlights how poor live under inhuman conditions in these male chauvinistic societies. In these patriarchal societies, particularly in the villages of third world countries women and nature are regarded as equal and same due to their nurturing and reproductive qualities. Gender discrimination and exploitation of these rural families and other evils are also at affinity. The arrival of white missionaries in these agrarian societies creates the problems for innocent village dwellers in the form of alienation and displacement. The study objective includes finding out not only women's relation to nature and society's treatment to nature but finding their place within class and gender discriminated patriarchal and capitalist societies also. It also aims at to trace the gender and class issues in the novel to ascertain a triangular relationship of the theory (ecofeminism, Marxism and post colonialism) by developing an intersectional medium.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Post-colonial Ecofeminism, Marxist Ecofeminism, Alienation, Displacement

* Lecturer in English, Govt. College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

* Lecturer in English, Islamic International University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Introduction

Ecofeminists analyze that patriarchal society is built on four interlocking pillars: sexism, racism, class exploitation and environmental destruction. This analysis projects that not only women but oppressed races and oppressed social classes are also closely tied to nature. Ecofeminists argue about the close relationship between women and nature that comes from their shared history of oppression by male domination. They also argue that conventional and customary male centered approaches are echoed in male centered practices and discourse with respect to the environment. Ecofeminism literary criticism is similarly concerned with the depiction of nature; it emphasized how traditional representations often see the land as innocent, female and ripe for exploitation. Moreover, Ecofeminism (a combination and connection of environment and women) is a value system, a social movement, an interdisciplinary approach and now a practice also, which offers a political investigation, that explores the link between androcentrism (men as centre of power and authority), and environmental mistreatment and exploitation (Birkland, 1993). Ecofeminists also talk about hierarchical dualism, according to which all high, prestigious and subtle traits are bestowed to masculinity rather than femininity. At this logic Ecofeminist ironically think that patriarchy promotes hierarchical dualistic thinking, which continues and justifies the potency and dominancy of women as well as nature (Warren, 1990). Ecofeminists argue that there is need to promote ideology of equality, non-violence and non-hierarchical systems, and there is need to hold nature and all living things, either non-human in the highest regard (Kirk, 1997). They further highlight that humans, rather men should not try to control nature but they should do work along, and must try to apart themselves from power-based acquaintances and dealings. Society is in dire need to change this dominant patriarchal nature in the prevalent system of society by snatching control and power from patriarchy (Gaard, Edi. 1993).

For materialist ecofeminists the deep-seated contradiction of capitalism is not between capital and labour but between production and reproduction. Valued and economically acknowledged male labour is separated off from invisible domestic female service. This is thought to be the deepest contradiction of patriarchal capitalism because women's reproductive labour remains in nature while men's productive labour is removed from nature. This capitalistic system made reproduction subordinate to production and the role of nature was also ignored, While Marx's motto was to "each according to his abilities to each according to his needs" simply to satisfy the needs instead of greed. But in the cruel capitalistic system women of every class and race were exploited and marginalized, except some elites. In this way Marxist ecofeminists framework has potential and power to analyze the link between

gender and environment. Sharma also develops his point in the same stream, that the forms of capitalists mechanical development that are considered dominant have pushed the women towards margin and devalue their indigenous knowledge and skills, that they have got and practiced by developing a connection with nature. Further these rural women have not that familiarity and knowledge mandatory for technologies. With the increasing privatization of land by the capitalists, and due to degradation of natural resources the women made stuff is going to decline. Rukmani's activities as a land lover are a role model. She gets pleasure when she sees growth of her field. It becomes clear when she says, "our freedom to work in the forest and to farm is very important" (Markandaya, 2002, p. 241). It is also important to note that her reproductive labour and her domestic duties are not given any value in this rural chauvinistic society. On the other hand Tannery is also a big issue for those who have deep ties with nature, "It had taken children's place and made bazaar prices too high" (p.41). It had destroyed environment and nature. "Not a month went but somebody's land was swallowed up, another building appeared. Day and night the tanning went on. A never ending line of carts bought the raw material in" (P. 47). In this whole pathetic scenario, villagers tied their hopes with land and within their children.

While, in the last Rukmani and her husband did not find what they hoped for both from their sons and land. Their desires dashed to the ground from both sides; there is only Irawaddy in the last to help Rukmani by earning from her illicit profession, which she considers sacred by challenging the conventional moralities. Here Rukmani due to continuous prey of grieves is called mother of sorrows. She dislikes changes that are at the climax in her surroundings. On the other hand Doctor Kenny (a British doctor) represents "progressive enlightenment" (p. 103) and likes constructive programs for rural development and reforms during the postcolonial era and promotes social services. Here in the company of English doctor Kenny, Rukmani refutes the claim that she as a third world country's peasant woman is made for land, and sees problem in her relation with nature. The point of resolution of her identity crises (complex cultural identity) is considered through her dealings with Kenny. In this way *Nectar in a Sieve* is replete with the dominant issues of urbanization, when these villagers are evicted/ displaced from rented land, women's oppression and exploitation in male dominated society, women's connection with nature and environment's degradation, poor's alienation from their natural work, class and gender issues.

Indira Gansion writes that [b]y giving voice to the main character Rukmani, Markandaya gives us a woman who has great effect on us through not only the problems of rural life, but also the problem that she is a woman (Gansion, 1982). There is exploitation, poverty, early marriages, over

population, and patriarchal feudal systems as Misra also points out, that *Nectar in a Sieve* is a clear picture of hungry rural peasantry, whose life is afflicted by the existing social institutions and rituals such as child marriages, widowhood, negligence of female child, slavery, casteism and illiteracy (Misra, 2001).

Literature Review

Ecofeminism is not a monolithic discourse but it takes many disciplines under it. Critics from different origins have delved deep into it to expose the hidden connotations and approaches to this theory.

Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* represented an important moment in the unfolding of Ecofeminists study in a response, to include considerations of racism and colonialism. She argued, development was a project of western patriarchy. She relied heavily on earliest Ecofeminists analysis of dualism and difference but at the same time added a significant analysis or development as one of the logics of patriarchy unaddressed by earlier ecofeminists. Shiva, the third world, Indian activist and environmentalist maintained that not only could the oppressions of women and nature be linked to oppressive dualistic constructions of the other, but so too could racism and colonialism. The development was in fact "mal (e) development", the domination of feminine principle by the masculine. All problems of oppression, including the physical demolition of the earth apparent in most development projects, could be traced to capitalist embedded dualism, women, as the sustainers of life- mostly in countries of the south- needed to be empowered to give value to feminine principle against the overvalued patriarchal consciousness of the technological development and economic growth (Sandiland, 1999).

Patriarchal rule and colonizer's control over the land with their own intention of development are actually mal development for the villagers. There is nothing beneficial for them, but only hunger and degradation. Similarly, women and nature are marginalized beings in every culture and society (Shiva, 1989).

As the present study deals with one novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*, the literature review also comprises the reviews of contemporary criticism on the said writing.

Highlighting the natural and realistic way of rural lives' depiction in Markandaya's novel, M.K Bhatnagar focuses on the tragic predicament and dilemma of Indian peasants. It focuses effectively on the problems of hunger, social problems such as poverty, lack of family planning, crime, beggary, unemployment, prostitution, the zamindari system, demoralization and undermining, industrialization, caste and class conflict, superstitions, dowry system, low status of women, evil of the marriage system etc. These issues

are eloquently portrayed by Kamala Markandaya. Further he mentions that writer gives a graphic picture of the rural life and its hardships. The sufferings described in the novel have typical rural touch; whether it is social, economic or religious level, the novel focuses on the Indian villager's life and its manifestations, as, S.Z.H Abidi also remarks that Markandaya's social realism is very close to the observed condition of life" (2002, p. 43).

One facet of this novel's reading depicts it a novel of peasant family of rural India living under hardships like poverty, famine and disloyalty. Seaman (2007) also depicts this as a story of a peasant family in rural India and of the acceptance and creativity with which they met economic changes and natural disasters. Dignity of character, self-confidence, and unselfish love are portrayed with a skill and charm that alleviate the baser human attributes and the solemn succession of tragedies that industrialization brought to their village. She also gives value to this work by saying a novel to read and perhaps reread for full appreciation; and further elaborates her deep affection for Markandaya's eye-catching ability into the endless labor of the rural poor and the tyranny and oppression of women (P. 67).

Bhatt (2011) also views this novel as work that deals with the life and travails of a peasant woman, protagonist of this novel, Rukmani, who faces great odds like famine, death, disloyalty and prostitution amidst a background of upsetting poverty, but shows rays of hope and success through her constant battle. She appreciates Rukmani's revelation of such a world as the literate people are seldom find to examine and values her description of Rukmani's starvation as powerful and timeless (P.15).

Study makes clear that it is only hope that makes Rukmani able to survive. She gets this hope from her continuous work in the company of nature as; Rosemary (2011) argues that Nectar symbolizes the life of female protagonist Rukmani, whose whole life, mapped in this story, appealed the audiences internationally. She also notes this novel as a contrast between East and West. Further she develops a similar tributary of peasant woman projection in Mahboob Khan's worldwide circulated block buster feature film Mother India, Pearl S. Buck's The Good Earth and *Nectar in a Sieve*. In all these texts the pliability and dignity of the peasant woman is especially celebrated.

Quest for shelter, peace and serenity is the hallmark of this novel and only nature enables Rukmani to get all these facilities due to Rukmani's strong ties with her. As Asha and Shasha Bansal (2011) argue that *Nectar in a Sieve* tells the story of one woman's search for something that is her quest for peace, happiness and shelter amidst hardships, oppression and sufferings. They also argue that the novel narrates the rise and fall of Rukmani's family as India grows and changes around her. These writers argue that this gloomy scenario of Indian village is due to economic, political and social changes that can be

overcome by mutual understandings and by creating harmony among human beings and social classes (P. 44).

Through this review of literature researcher comes to the fact that researches in this particular facet, which I have chosen are a few. Moreover, Ecofeminism theoretical framework as an interdisciplinary approach has not been used widely. If someone from Indian origin has touched this issue, then postcolonial dimension is the point, which has been debated with great interest. While other dominant themes like east-west conflict; another way of exploring post colonialism, the said novel as a poverty and hunger novel, or the novel as the novel of rural India are the issues that has been projected by a large number of writers. Particularly women are the sufferers in those villages, they have to bear great pains and hardships for their own and family's survival. In this way the detailed features of their works and their ties with nature and land has not been remained the significant and decisive issue among the writers. Hence, I found the study of land and environment missing in these previous researches while land is being degenerated by a variety of processes despite the fact that importance of ecology and land cannot be denied for better survival on this planet. So, to highlight this grave and momentous issue is the part of this research.

Research Methodology

This qualitative research uses the theoretical framework of Ecofeminism. This as an interdisciplinary approach, and an umbrella term sets this theoretical frame as triangular: Ecofeminism, Marxism and Post colonialism. Ecofeminists critic Karen J. Warren also describes this connection in many respects as contemporary environmental ethics reflect the range of positions in contemporary philosophical ethics. The latter (contemporary philosophical ethics) include challenges to them by non-traditional (for example, some Feminist, Existentialists, Marxists, Afro-centric, Western and Non-Western) approaches, and make connection along with any of these dimensions.

At present, Researcher is interested to explore ecofeminism within the disciplines of post colonialism and Marxism, as it is need of the time to save nature for our better survival without any discrimination of culture, place or religion, in the same way it is needed to explore its marginalization from colonial and class perspective. Present theoretical framework justifies research title in all dimensions covering its intersectional matrix. Moreover, conceptual frame for this research has been taken up from the concepts of theorists like Vandana Shiva, Val Plumwood, Robert Session and Dorceta Tailor. Their point of views shall assist to accomplish this textual analysis.

Analysis

Intersections of Ecofeminism in *Nectar in a Sieve*

This study explores theoretical relationship by analyzing *Nectar in A Sieve* on the level of ecofeminism, Marxism, and post colonialism.

Ecofeminism and other Disciplines in *Nectar in a Sieve*: In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Kamala Markandaya establishes Rukmani as an active agent, a keen spectator, a radiant raconteur and admirer of nature. Villagers have true blood for their land as they do not want to move towards cities from their rural houses, but they prefer to live in their poor cottages made of mud and straws. These villagers love to have animals and to use them to augment the production of land. Rukmani the pivotal character of the novel has grown a garden which is a symbol of spirituality and her deep love for nature. Rukmani's unremitting work in the company of nature and her humanistic stance in favor of poor boy Puli depicts Markandaya's construction of Rukmani as a land, animal and community lover. Sometimes she shows her ambivalent behaviour towards nature as she says, "Nature is like a wild animal that you have trained to work for you. So long as you are vigilant and walk warily with thought and care, so long will it give you its aid; but look away for an instant, be heedless or forgetful, and it has you by the throat. (Markandaya, 2010, p.35) But eventually she finds remedy, only in the company of nature. She uses natural products to celebrate her religious ceremonies. Further, Rukmani's continuous preference of village life in the company of nature and rejection of city's charitable life puts *Nectar in a Sieve* vividly in an Ecofeminist stream. In the city their labor at quarry, an inorganic form of work, becomes hazardous for them and causes many respiratory and skin diseases. Moreover, this stone work, a complete destruction of nature as Rukmani describes, "the air was full of flying dust and stone particles, part of trouble lay in keeping one's eyes open while striking" (p.171) is another proof that she loves organic form of land and living. Rukmani's efforts to give worth not only to women, nature but also to other community, particularly the poor community and non-human animals and taking shelter in a building made of mud and straw establish this novel as an Ecofeminist text.

Dowry is the heightened issue of this rural society. Rukmani the daughter of village headman was married to a poor tenant farmer due to not having rich dowry and everyone said about them, "a poor match". Rukmani speaks it in this way, "That was why they could not find me a rich husband and married me to a tenant farmer who was poor in everything but in love and care (p.01)". Rukmani gets married to a poor farmer because "four dowries are too much for a man to bear (Markandaya, 2010)". Sinha observes this situation as,

Rukmani and her village are caught between the residual power of the ancient world and newly acquired world (problem of dowry for Rukmani and now for her daughter Ira) which has yet to achieve full shape (in this newly

acquired world this issue can be more grim) (quoted in Jackson, 2010, P.115). Absence of dowry becomes a source of exploitation for these poor women. They are treated as inferior beings, as Rukmani herself feels when she was taking to her husband's house in a slow moving bullock cart, "Such a disgrace for me. How shall I ever live it down (p.05)". It is a time when she is continuously yelling and crying, during the whole six hours of her journey, as Jackson argues that Markandaya's covert social critique of child marriage and the dowry system can be viewed through a critical lens intending to show how tradition combined with poverty, oppress women more than men (Jackson, 2010).

Birth of a female child is another suffering for Rukmani. Despite her being a learned woman, she is not free from prejudices against her girl child. Her first reaction at the sight of her daughter is, I turned away and despite myself the tear came, tears of weakness and disappointment; for what woman wants a girl for her first born? (P.15)".

Such a reaction is described by Ramesh Chadha by contextualizing it with traditional Hindu society and religion:

The birth of a daughter in India is not considered an occasion for rejoicing. A son could have continued Nathan's vocation whereas the daughter would take dowry and leave only a memory behind (Nathan also thinks the same). This attitude arises partly out of the rigours of the dowry system and partly due to the traditional view that a son is his father's prop. This view is also supported by religion: A son is the savior of ancestors as he alone has the right to offer oblations (quoted in Jackson 2010).

Rukmani complains, because she knew the bitter fact that Nathan wanted a male child. While she (Ira) has given birth to such a humble creature as sits merrily, playing by herself without differentiating between shade and sun. It is pitiful that Nathan neither gives value and care to land, nor Ira, both are inferior objects for him just like the colonizer, as Susan describes, when master/ slave and self/ other dualism is applied to colonizer, the other in this dualism is inferior. Nathan, though a tenant farmer yet observes the same standards as privileged people of his society have. Her first born female child is not valuable for him because he does not want a pulling infant who would take all the things in the form of dowry and leave nothing behind except painful memories (Markandaya, 2010). Nathan's approach about female child is not rational but in this gender dualistic approach, categories of colonizer, culture and men are considered reasoned, humane and rational, while nature, women and colonized receive the qualities of primitivism, emotional and uncivilized (animal). Moreover, these rural men consider women only life producing entities. Rukmani has become a pathetic figure on the birth of a female child; she had not fulfilled the wish of her husband, so she is not happy. She seeks the help of western doctor Kenny whom she met for the first time

to get help for her ailing mother. She has developed a kind of intellectual romance with Kenny within a short span of time; a kind of love which she is unable to develop with Nathan (who does not know anything beyond his village life). She enjoys dialogue and conversations with Kenny inspite of his rough tone. That's why she starts and fluently goes on speaking, "I have no sons, only one child, a girl (p.20)".

She was unable to stop herself as she is full of complains and objections. "What have we done that we must be punished? Am I not cleaned and healthy? Have I not borne a girl so fair, people turn to gaze when she passes?" (p.20). Hence, these are the conditions that make people helpless and force them to speak against such cruel societies and norms which show no values for women and take them downtrodden too. This approach also shows a linear relationship of Ecofeminism and Marxism, where both highlights subjugation of women by patriarchal societies.

However, there is another poignant issue of gender differences within this poverty. Women, especially from working classes encounter many problems. Ira after few years of her marriage is divorced due to her barrenness, as Kaur mentions that woman who fails to conceive early in her marriage may be renounced by her husband (2012), meanwhile the men of patriarchal society need sons as their first child. Ira's husband left her, while it was his responsibility to get medical treatment for his/her deficiencies. It is totally on man's discretion to take a woman or to leave her whenever and wherever he wants. It does happen with Ira also. The general claim that women are closer to nature rests on the fact of women's bringing forth of life from their bodies, undergoing the pains and pleasures of child bearing, child birth and nursing.

Cultural Ecofeminists also celebrate the relationship between women and nature in a same way; by reviving ancient pre-patriarchal rituals centered on goddess worship, the moon and linking this to the female reproductive system (quoted in Kaur, 2012).

S.C. Dubey significantly analysis the same dimension, "the infertility of a woman was considered as a curse, in patrilineal groups she is expected to produce a son to continue the line. In matrilineal societies this was not considered necessary, though it was desirable (Arora, 2006)".

It is also vital to note that how alienation of the tenants by the capitalists is affecting these poor farmers. In those hard days when no one was able to buy or grow something, there was frantic and desperate competition among people who have (industrialists) and who have not (tenants). This competition had put an end of humanity. There is only one figure, Rukmani, though poor but rich in humanistic stance. In those tough days, those who have not, were compelled to eat grass, because there was not enough to fulfill the need. They bore severe pain and stomach cramps in those hard days.

Markandaya provides a gloomy and bleak detail of their efforts done to make both ends meet. They have to eat food, which even animals reject. Rukmani narrates,

“We fed on whatever we would find: a sweet potato or two, blackened and half rotten, thrown away by some more prosperous hands; my sons return with a few bamboo shoots, a stick of sugarcane left in some deserted field, for every edible there was a desperate struggle (Markandaya, 2010)”. She has given deplorable picture of poverty in three stages,

- When the pain was increasingly sharp and gnawing,
- Perpetually dull and sickening one,
- When vast emptiness pervaded and the pain ceased to be painful.....
Like a fast (Markandaya, 2010).

These capitalists are not only alienating the workers from land but are also making their living, off the land more difficult by offering meager wages. Rukmani’s son Raja is killed by the tannery men and, in this way text illustrates that Markandaya’s critique is not only about gender issues but class and caste vulnerabilities are also points of discussion for her. These tannery workers killed Rukmani’s son, Raja in a false suit of robbery. This alienation of the poor class points towards Susan Griffin and Val Plumwood’s arguments that men in authority or power decide, what is to be alienated and from what? and these elite class’s men are only identified on the basis of separation, separation from nature, from poor class and even from women. Plumwood’s point of view that complex cultural identity is based on the context of class, race, species and gender discrimination, is the hallmark of this alienation. That’s why; Rukmani and her family are identified as poor tenant farmers or as beggars when they are in the city.

However, within this alienation there is exploitation of these workers also, when tannery man states to Rukmani, “You may think of it later, and try to get compensation. I warn you it will not work (p.90)”. She, the poor lady, is unable to understand, if death has some compensation! They, tannery men, continue to argue that they have no fault in killing him, but they are absolutely exempted from this killing, and you can’t file lawsuit against us (Markandaya, 2010, emphasis in original). Further, Rukmani’s activities also reflect grim and dismal picture of poverty. All the day she is active in doing hectic work in garden and at the field; in the early morning she does not sit free rather goes to collect cow dung. It makes patent that life for the villagers is tough to manage. It is also dismal to know about Rukmani’s son undernourishment due to untimely weaning. She can provide her milk only from her goat which she sold due to not having proper resources for her family’s survival.

There is bleak picture of poverty again when Rukmani mentions the destruction due to storm, which blew away all the mud houses of the poor

villagers, only tannery's strong buildings were eminent there. All the huts, including Rukmani's were demolished. There was merciless and pitiless destruction with all of their belongings. Nature has become destructive only for these poor dwellers of the village. There are calamities for time and time again. People are without eating resources and shopkeepers have nothing to sell. There is no worth of two rupees in those days. There is height of exploitation even by the villagers themselves.

As Biswas says that

“Two ollocks I will let you have and that is charity (Markandaya, 2003, p.43)”.

It is the time for shopkeepers to earn more and to exploit poor by asking high prices, “Take it or leave it. I can get double of this sum from the tanners (p.43)”.

There is a glance of poverty when Rukmani narrates her feelings about her youngest son Arjun that her little teaching has improved him very much, otherwise we were not in a position to buy books or to send him school. Rukmani was glad to see his efforts that he has started to teach others, and took no interest in land, at which Nathan, a traditional farmer was shunned and terrified; he was unhappy with his son's decision. Arjun understood that rented land was not constructive for them, and decided to join tannery. Rukmani showing offence on the name of tannery mentions, “You are not of the caste of tanners, what will our relations say (p.51)”. Hence, high prices, illiteracy and change in relations are the bleak effects of this poverty.

Capitalists and landlords both have same subject- villagers, for their exploitation and making them alienate from their natural work. Rukmani's son Arjun's words illustrate the impact of capitalism, exploitation of the poor and alienation of the workers, when he describes to Rukmani that he does not want to do work in the field as there is more exploitation of the workers than that of working in the tannery.

“If it were your land or mine, I would work with you gladly. But what profit to labour for another and get so little in return? Far better to turn away from such injustice (p.52)”

Here *Nectar in a Sieve* seems similar to the Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, a tale of South Indian village by means of same narrative mode, and the conflict caused by the changing social processes; exploitation of the villagers by the British colonizers.

There is unremitting exploitation of farmers by the landlords. When landlords ask for annual revenue they also say that if they get fail to pay, the land will be given to another. It is panic, when poor tenants mention, “It is hard time for us (p.73)”. In these hard times no one is able to buy anything. Tenants are not ready to get alienate from their work in which they consider

themselves master. They have got such skills (to work on land) as make them feel free and independent. Hence, the troubles start when Rukmani's two son Arjun and Thambi, who are alert about various possibilities of economic betterment and are conscious about their rights, go to tannery to do work against the wishes of their parents. Here, their exploitation starts when they ask for high wages. They resist this exploitation. Their discourse on labour, rights and power is anomalous to Rukmani. She being the worker of land is unable to separate the workers from that work which she does. She is unable to understand that her own sons would take a contradictory stand towards her own work.

Further, even tannery's place is not free of exploitation. It happens at tannery that Rukmani's sons' eating times are taken back from them, and they go on strike with a stubbornness that they will not go without increment, by establishing a reason that they are not asking for charity. It is significant to mention that Rukmani's sons were at the forefront in this discourse of increasing wages. As Bhatnagar observes the same, that

The foundations of an industrial society are based on the principles of exploitation of labor. Tannery began not only to rear its ugly head devouring green open spaces polluting the clean wholesome atmosphere, but it also brought simple gullible peasants into greed, ambition and immorality and the exploitation of the workers in the form of meager wages (Bhatnagar, 2002).

When poverty and starvation are continuously there with this poor family, it is Ira's turn to do work for the survival of the family. Kuti, her youngest brother was about to die of starving, which she could not see and made instantaneous resolution to do work. She chooses the institution of prostitution and her decision stems from the changes happening under the impact of industrialization and modernization of the village society, where she thinks the preservation of life more sacred than the moral values which were unable to provide food to her family.

Nathan shows resentment over her work, while she is not ready to accept any morality. Her only intention behind choosing this institute and skillful handling of this profession is to fulfill the hunger. She adds that she will do work each and every time as much as there is need, and that she cannot bear hunger anymore (P.99). Nathan's bitter attitude at Ira's stubbornness is childish, he says, "No man will look at you, defaced as you are (p.98)".

According to M.K Bhatnagar, Ira's decision to take up prostitution is, in a way, "a bold rejection of the innate institution of marriage" (Bhatnagar, 1995) in a society where there is no life for a poor woman. Ira's motivation to do so is contrasted against Kunthi's whose motivation to take up this profession is based on selfish interests, thus highlighting the inculcation of individualism that comes along with the erosion of "the time honored peasant- code... with no substitute" (Shiva, 1989). When Ira starts earning money from prostitution

and Kuti's health shows some improvement, Rukmani starts realizing that it was Ira's earnings responsible for the improvement in Kuti's health, "not I, not my prayers" (Markandaya, 2010).

Markandaya has portrayed Nathan, a self-centered man, doing wrong deeds, even in his downtrodden life and doing nothing constructive for the better existence of his family. While on the other hand Ira with her work is able to buy household things and milk for the younger child. She is an audacious girl who hides her tears inspite of a series of sorrows and predicaments. She has fought her battles alone (p.114). Compensation of Ira's life tragedy lies in carrying this approach by negating the moralities that patriarchal society and her own family, especially her father has set for her. She decides to assert her own agency over her body, and also sets a way of undermining patriarchal society's perception about Indian peasants as subjugated beings.

Tannery, with a plethora of drawbacks is also the continuous source of pollution and dirt. Though people working over here earn much more than the field workers and they are able to buy more articles of daily use, yet its flaws cannot be ignored. Shopkeepers have made their prices high with these tannery workers, and they showed regression when these workers were going, while Rukmani favours their going and grumbles by describing tannery's drawbacks. Robert Session, a socialist ecofeminist shows her stance by giving a valuable suggestion that human beings should pay attention to environmental values such as biodiversity, ecosystem health, homeostasis or the inherent merit of natural beings instead of only thinking about economic values.

She further made clear through tireless research of justice movement that pollution affects the health of women and children inexplicably. The movement broke new ground when Dorceta Taylor with session argued that the capitalist manipulation resources were connected to the degradation of nature and women. Robert Session and Dorceta Taylor's emphasis on the degradation of nature and women echoes about Markandaya's central issue in her work *Nectar in a Sieve* when her protagonist raises her voice in favour of tannery workers' going back, and grumbles over the drawbacks of tannery, "Tannery has been built on maiden, an open field shared by all. They have invaded our village with clatter and din, had taken from us the maiden where our children played, and had made bazaar prices too high for us" (p.27).

Hence, Rukmani is full of objections and does not like the mechanization of tannery. She recollects the past when there was no tannery, when children played in the fields, when there was no noise of machines but peace in the presence of greenery and nature, when the prices of the things were not much high. That's why she says when the tannery builders go, "she is not sorry to see them go" (p. 116). High prices are a problem for all villagers because most of

the village community is poor, labours, or tenants. Rukmani also mourns at high prices, and elaborates the fact that arrival of the tannery has made all the things beyond their approach. They have not tasted dhaal (pulses), ghee, sugar since their arrival. Human beings have become selfish and corrupt in this so called modernity. But men of this society are ready to accept their arrival realizing and accepting the fact that they (white men) will not go back, Rukmani is the only character, who doesn't agree to accept their presence, because those people have crushed nature and the habitats of animals as well as of human beings. These are the reasons when Nathan speaks in an uncultured way to knee down before them by using the simile of grass.

“Foolish woman, Nathan said. There is no going back. Bend like the grass, that you do not break (p.28)”. She again cries that her son Murugan has gone to city, because “tannery frowned on him” and these ruthless tannery men have taken the life of my other son; many other people have also been affected by its arrival.

It seems that reading of the text *Nectar in a Sieve* provides factual explanations about Rukmani; it elucidates her class, family and resources for her family's survival. Vegetables which Rukmani grows in her garden are not approachable as a whole due to a large number of families and due to their poverty. They have to sell from those vegetables, and it is pitiful to know that best vegetables are sold and stale or spoiled vegetables are left to eat at home. Such a pathetic picture leads us towards Marxism, where there is literature about the exploitation of working class; where there is double suppression of these poor tenant farmers; one by the land owners (can be regarded as capitalist) who receive high revenue without taking into view the arrival of any calamity and its effect on production and cultivation, second, tannery(arrival of the white men with a superficial purpose of providing employment to the villagers but with a hidden motive of establishing market or capitalism) that has created problems for these poor workers and also has given them a sense of alienation(a Marxist term) and displacement (a post-colonial term). Their connection with nature has got weakened due to these interferences (my emphasis).

Poverty, as Social scientist S.C. Dube in Misra's book also elaborates that *circumstances* make Nathan unable to provide sustenance to his family and these issues compel Arjun and Thambi to announce their final decision to deport from India. Arjun explains to her mother that there is nothing for us here, for we have neither the means to buy land nor to pay rent of it, would you have us wasting our youth, chafing against the things we cannot change? (P.72). In this way displacement exists when the forceful events compel them to leave their natural habitats, where there is exploitation, alienation and suffering for them, where the rich and greedy zamindari thrive by their ruthless agents like Sivaji, where there are cunning merchants in the form of

Hanuman, and moneylenders in the shape of Biswas. In the presence of these cruel figures these poor villagers cannot prosper, that's why they decide to displace for their harmonious survival.

Kenny (a western doctor) has been portrayed as a positive character, a non-exploiter, throughout the novel as K.R Chanrashekharan illustrates that the novelist has projected good missionary and philanthropic spin doing his best for a backward country without vanity or ostentation. He is also a natural observer of Indian villager's lives (quoted in Misra, 2001). His high ambitions for the survival of poor people are complimentary. Kenny (British doctor) was back to England for a long time, he gets back again to India to help downtrodden villagers. He struggles hard to make people aware of the negligences of the government, their exploitation by upper class, and permanent source of their sufferings. Rukmani narrates about Kenny's return as another change in their lives, as he is ready to build a hospital and Selvam (Rukmani's son) will find a job there. He calls again and again, "you must cry if you want help (p.111)". It shows his approach, that is totally different from villagers (patriarchal and peasants), and he is ready to ask for help and to collect charity to construct a hospital. He gathers charity from western community to serve humanity of under developed, South-Asian countries. There is dire need of this hospital in the poor and poorly managed villages and countries, where poverty can be estimated by not having schools for education and hospitals for treatment, where poor die in the streets inspite of the fact of having patriarchal control over their villages. Plumwood's point of view about anthropocentrism is used to justify European process of colonialism, where European process of colonialism sees indigenous cultures (for example, culture of India by Western capitalists) as less rational, closer to animals and nature. When Kenny wanted to establish hospital, his approach was without exploitation. These subtle characteristics establish Kenny as a positive western figure. It also makes clear that western's intruding for positive purposes to serve humanity is acceptable by these villagers as a thoughtful response to modern urbanization in contrast to destructive modernity, in the form of tannery.

Rukmani is an optimist figure inspite of hard treatment like alienation and displacement. She is optimist about her old home and leased land that deserted her. By doing this she comes to overturn the fate of those migrants who travel from rural areas to city. She proves that she is not ready to accept the harsh and raucous city space as her fate. She gets back and thinks the land "the life to my starving spirit (p.186)". Their small home, where Selvam and Ira are living welcomes her and provides shelter to Rukmani and Puli (the small boy) in which she showed her optimism that he drew out all the arrow of sorrows one by one and she is no more alone. It shows her preferences which are land, field and rural area. She wants to bring positive development in her

own village instead of displacing herself towards city and she gets successful in doing the same with the help of Western doctor Kenny. She highlights her responsibilities and plays her role towards land and community by considering them worthy and distinguished entities on this planet.

Findings

Study has shown worsened socioeconomic conditions responsible for a number of social evils that has been explained and discussed in this paper. Hunger, poverty, exploitation and feudal systems can lead towards problems like disintegration of family, illegal institution of prostitution, and a mad migration towards cities. These socioeconomic conditions lead people towards illiteracy, and illiteracy is a big cause of exploitation and sufferings. It is right that to be poor is a crime in this world, and people suffer and are punished for being poor. As long as there is poverty, social evils and malpractices also continue and humanity gets finished out of human beings. Study also has proven Rukmani's deep concern and affection for land, environment and for the community. Rukmani, the axis of this superb tale sacrifices her whole life in a gallant way in a persistent battle for the sake of those whom she does care and give value. She has inextricable bondage with human community and for all other characters, though non-human.

Conclusion

This minute examination of the text makes clear that human beings' deep ties with nature runs through the writing of Kamala Markandaya. She relates her characters to the complex environment, ironically making clear that environment, though complex has been created by same human beings. She uses her writing as a vehicle to speak about this grim issue of ecosystem and its safety making it clear that it is not only responsibility of one particular class, community that is agrarian who cannot afford to establish industries, or gender that is female but environment/ ecosystem belongs to all of us and it is sheer responsibility of every individual to save nature for better survival. Similarly, Markandaya highlights her responsibilities and plays her role towards land and community by considering them worthy and distinguished entities on this planet. Hence, it is concluded that novel is an excellent attempt of the writer to show Ecofeminism with the disciplines of Marxism, and Post colonialism vividly. Moreover, the in-depth study of this novel touches the heart of the reader deeply and inspires a rehabilitated and improved faith in the dignity, stateliness and majesty of mankind and safety of environment on parallel levels.

References:

- Agarwal, B. (Spring 1992). *The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India*, in "Feminist Studies". 18 (1). Pp.119-158.
- Arora, K.S. (2006). *A Study of Kamala Markandaya's Women*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.
- Bansal, S., Rani, A. (2011, December 12). Quest for Feminine Autonomy: A Brief Survey of Kamala Markandaya's Novels. *Language in India*, Vol.11. P.101-103.
- Birkland, J. (1993). Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice, in Gaard, G. Edi. *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals and Nature*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bhatt, N. (2011, March 3). A Comparative Study of New Woman through the Female Protagonists of Kamala Markandaya & Shashi Deshpande. *Language in India*, Vol. 11. P.46, 56, 57.
- Bhatnagar, K.M. (Edi.). (2002). *Feminist English Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, accessed by <http://www>. Google Books.
- Bhatnagar, K.M. (Edi.). (2002). *Kamala Markandaya: A Critical Spectrum*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, accessed by <http://www>. Google Books. Pp. 3-14.
- Gaard, G. Edi. (1993). *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals and Nature*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Ganesan, I. (1982). *Introduction to Nectar in a Sieve by Kamala Markandaya*. New York: Signet Classic. Print.
- George, M.R. (2009). Where in the World Did Kamala Markandaya Go? *Novel: A forum on Fiction*.42:3, P.400-407.
- Iyer, S.N. (2004) Orchestration of Themes in Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve. In Kundu, R. & Ray, K.M (Edi.). *Studies in Women Writers in English*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors.
- Jackson, E. (2010). *Feminism and Contemporary Indian Women's Writing*. London and New York: Palgrave McMillan.
- Kirk, G. (1997). *Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice: Bridges Across*

Gender, Race and Class. *A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2. University of Nebraska Press. [URL://www.jstore.org/stable/3346962](http://www.jstore.org/stable/3346962).

Kaur, G. (2012). Postcolonial Ecofeminism in Indian Novels in English. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*. Advance online publication. Doi: 10.7763/IJSSH.2012.v2.131.

Kaur, G. (2012). *Women and Environment: Postcolonial Ecofeminism, Activism and Women Writing Indian Fiction in English*. United Kingdom: University of Warwick.

Kirk, G. (1997). Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice: Bridges Across Gender, Race and Class. *A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2. University of Nebraska Press. [URL://www.jstore.org/stable/3346962](http://www.jstore.org/stable/3346962).

Legler, T. G. (1997). Ecofeminist Literary Criticism. In Warren, J.K (Edi.). *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. United States of America: Indiana University Press. Accessed by <http://www.googlebooks>.

Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren & John Clark (Edi.) (1993). *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*. Englewood Cliffs: NJ: Prentice Hall.

Markandaya, K. (1954). *Nectar in a Sieve*. New York: Day.

Misra, p. (2001). *Class Consciousness in the novels of Kamala Markandaya*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors accessed by Google books. Pp. 2, 7, 67.

Merchant, C. (1980). *The Death of Nature, Women, Ecology and Scientific Revolution*. London: HarperCollins.

Sandilands, C. (1999). *The Good-Natured Feminist Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy*. United State of America: University of Minnesota Press.

Seaman, D. (2007, November 15). Another Look at: Kamala Markandaya's First Novel *Nectar in a Sieve*. *Booklist*. P.32.

Shiva, V. (1989). *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*. New Delhi: Indraprastha Press.

Warren, J.K. Introduction in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*. (1993). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall. P. 253-256.

Wagner, L.B. (March 4, 2008). *Ecofeminist action in the 21st century*. Accessed

from Canadian Dimension Magazine. [http://www.
Canadiandimension.com/article/1758](http://www.Canadiandimension.com/article/1758).