

Nectar in a Sieve

Kamala Markandaya

DR. R. Princee

Department of English

ST. Xavier's College(Autonomous)

Palayamkottai



Kamala Markandaya

1924 - 2004



Kamala Markandaya

- 1924 – 2004
- was a pseudonym used by **Kamala Purnaiya Taylor**,
- an [Indian novelist](#) and [journalist](#).
- A native of [Mysore](#), India, a Brahmin
- a History graduate of [Madras University](#), and afterwards published several short stories in Indian newspapers. A social activist too.
- Married an Englishman Taylor
- After independence in 1948, Markandaya moved to [Britain](#), though she still labeled herself an Indian [expatriate](#) long afterwards.
- Only woman writer among the Trios – Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan

Important works

1. *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954)
2. *Some Inner Fury* (1955)
3. *A Silence of Desire* (1960)
4. *Possession* (1963)
5. *A Handful of Rice* (1966)
6. *The Nowhere Man* (1972)
7. *Two Virgins* (1973)
8. *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977)
9. *Pleasure City* (1982/1983)
10. *Bombay Tiger* (2008), Posthumous

Nectar in a Sieve (1954)

- Inspired by the great famine of 1943 in Bengal which claimed 3 million lives
- The influence of industrial revolution in India
- The sufferings of Indian Farmers
- The status of women in India



The Bengal Famine



Brief Synopsis of *Nectar*



- ❁ Tells the story of a peasant girl in India (Rukmani) who enters into an arranged marriage at age 12
- ❁ With her husband, Nathan, and later their children, she experiences poverty and societal upheaval
- ❁ The novel is told in the first person from her perspective as an elderly woman looking back on her life experiences

Children

1. **Ira** - First and the only daughter named after river Irawaddy
2. **Arjun**
3. **Thambi**
4. **Murugan**
5. **Raja**
6. **Selvam**
7. **Kuti**

The Title of the Novel

Taken from the 1825 poem [“Work Without Hope”](#), by [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#).

An excerpt from the poem is the epigraph of the novel:

“Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve, And hope without an object cannot live”.

Life becomes meaningless when passed through the sieve of destruction : natural and man-made



Different Perspectives

- ❖ As a **postcolonial novel** – the influences and aftermaths of the British rule in a colony especially in India
- ❖ As a **feministic** /an **eco-feministic novel** – discusses the problems faced by women and nature and the dominance of patriarchy and capitalism over them
- ❖ As a **diaspora novel** - talks about the opportunities and challenges of immigration

The Focus

- Rukmani's relationship with Kenny , the British doctor
- Problems created by the Tannery (Leather Factory)
- Life of Ira who becomes a prostitute and begets an albino
- Lives of the sons
- The pathetic end of Rukmani and Nathan

Albinos



A person with pale skin, light hair, pinkish eyes, and visual abnormalities resulting from a hereditary inability to produce the pigment melanin

Nectar

**“ A novel to retain in
your heart ”**

Milwaukee Journal