

Insight of Ecofeminism in the Post-Colonial Era of India, a Special Reference to Kamala Markandaya's Novel *Nectar in a Sieve*

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to study women's consciousness about the nature around and how their lives devalued with a devaluation of nature in the novel of Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*. The author focussed on the relation between ecological devastation and women subjugation through the articulation of the central characters bringing an insight of ecofeminism into the novel. This paper reflects the life trajectories of the protagonist Rukmini after she lost her farming land and the healthy environment around for the expanding developmental ethics of 'Tannery'.

The present paper introduces the theory of ecofeminism as it shows the attachment of women towards nature and finally, the crisis created by the industrial outbreak in the lives of women.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, identical crisis, patriarchy, post-colonial industrialisation, women and nature.

I. INTRODUCTION

'Ecofeminism' was introduced in a famous text *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974) by the French author Françoise d'Eaubonne. Conveying the theory of environment, feminist studies, socialism; ecofeminism studies the patriarchal ideologies that aims the oppression on women, non-human and also on the nature. Kamala Markandaya being an author of post-colonial India, had chosen to reflect on the ongoing issues of then society. Markandaya has used literature as a platform to establish a real world of experiences, rather than a political and imaginary setup. *Nectar In A Sieve* (1954) has successfully explored the establishment of industries in India and their threatening consequences on the life of the indigenous people. Tannery stood at the centre of the story explaining all the evils created by the capitalist monopoly of the West.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present paper will discover how Kamala Markandaya has given an innovative direction to an Indian English novel in unveiling the ecofeminist discourse. The paper is divided into three different sections. First, the theory of ecofeminism has been discussed with reference to different environmental critics. Second, keeping ecofeminism as base, it is shown how industrialisation has created an identical crisis in the lives of the people of the land in the novel. And finally, women's love and concern for nature to save it, has been briefly discussed.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Markandaya's novel seem to be entirely thoughtful about the awakened female sensitivity in contemporary India. The women characters of her stories are the victims of the satire of lifetime.

According to Anil K. Bhatnagar, "Kamala Markandaya started writing novels, when India was just at the threshold of newly won freedom. Poverty, hunger and starvation, women injustices were everywhere. It goes to Kamala Markandaya's credit that she uses fiction as a vehicle for communicating her feminine vision of life." (Bhatnagar, 1999) Through her novels, she made her readers to explore the unseen and unspoken truth behind the curtain of modernisation, raising questions between development of industries and the violation of human rights.

The situations in *The Nectar in a Sieve* interpret S. T. Coleridge's poem *Work Without Hope* (1825) explaining:

'Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,

And Hope without an object cannot live.' (Coleridge, 1825)

The novelist has exposed that hope in life is tough to hold on in the state of extreme misery and death, like holding nectar in a sieve. Bhatnagar has described that Markandaya's novel shows all her talents, starting from the narrator 'Rukmini' in her tough peasant life, passing through the up and downs periods, the blunder created by the tannery that stood for modern civilisation and above all the identity crisis created due to the forced migration to the town. All these scenes reveal 'how work without hope draws nectar in a sieve'. (Bhatnagar 2002) Markandaya has held the post-colonial developmental projects responsible for creating crisis like hunger, distress and misery in the lives of the people and consequently draining out the 'nectar' from the lives. Rukmini, the heroine of this novel found herself as an outsider on her own land after the introduction of tannery. The indigenous people suffered a lot as they are uprooted from their own land and compulsory to live with poverty searching for their new identities. The novel is related with Vandana Shiva's ideas of ecofeminism

as Shiva termed the colonial project as 'Development as uprooting'. Further she comments:

'Development has meant the ecological and cultural rupture of bonds with nature, and within society, it has meant the transformation of organic communities into groups of uprooted and alienated individuals searching for abstract identities.' (Shiva 1993).

IV. ANALYSIS

Post-colonial era, with its massive development of industries gave rise to numerous crisis like degradation of forests, complex health hazards, mismanagement of natural resources and unequal distributions of capitals, etc. The colonised people are the worst affected as they were overpowered by the people of the West or 'The red-faced white men' (Markandaya 32). The condition of the colonised women is more degradable than men from two reasons, first they belong to the last phase of the social hierarchy and second they are closely associated with the surrounded nature. Being the provider of food, water and wood to the families, women from every nation have realised the consequence of the environmental crisis directly. Primarily ecofeminism started as a political and social drive against the unjust exploitation of ecology and the suffering of women due to the environmental crisis in the post-colonial era. The theory evolved from different interest of feminist analysis and movements, labour movements, health related issues of women and children, movement against environmental hazards due to nuclear weapons and non-human liberation movements.

Cheney named ecofeminism as a 'sensibility' and an 'intimation' which run parallel with the 'feminist concern' or can be stated that a theory came up with the concern for the nature which has been tolerated the identical 'abuse' and 'ambivalent behaviour' just as women. (Cheney 1987) Ecofeminism explains women's spiritual attachment with nature make

them conscious in saving it from the industrial degradation. Vandana Shiva named ecofeminism 'a new term' that stood for the 'ancient wisdom' which arose from numerous social movements, like peace movements, feminist movements and ecological movements popped up in late 70s and early 80s. (Shiva 1993) Perhaps the women led environmental movements labelled as 'A fight for life' (Shiva 1993), are the resolutions in saving the Earth from the near destruction.

Ecofeminism theory took a shape from the famous ecological movements led by the women leaders, as for example the Chipko Movement of India in 1970, Save the Narmada movement known as 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' in 1985 in India and the Green Belt Movement of Kenya in 1977 etc. The invisible power of women in Chipko Movement in the Himalayan region was hidden inside their love for the nature around and guided them to gain an extraordinary strength. The mining was in a process of killing the forests and streams, the very source of the lives of the women. In an interview with Vandana Shiva, women from Chipko movement stated that they have three important things to survive, such as their 'freedom', 'forest' and 'food'. Without these things they are 'nothing' and 'impoverished'. They named themselves as 'prosperous' as they can produce their own 'food'. The women were least interested in any 'jobs' offered by the 'businessmen' or 'government', as they believe in making their own 'livelihood' and love to live amongst the farm and forests. (Shiva, Mies: The Chipko Women's Concept of Freedom, Ecofeminism) Women from the forest and rural areas prefer to lead a healthy life style amidst nature than earning money through the capitalist plans. This is not the individual story of women from India, rather the understanding is same across the world where women stood against the unjustified system of masculine led projects which aimed at worsening the lives of women by killing the nature around. Primarily ecofeminism started as a political and social drive against the unjust exploitation of

ecology and the suffering of women due to the environmental crisis in the post-colonial era. The theory evolved from different interest of feminist analysis and movements, labour movements, health related issues of women and children, movement against environmental hazards due to nuclear weapons and non-human liberation movements.

Kamala Markandaya has uncovered the ecofeminist thoughts by reflecting the difference in attitudes of man and woman towards industrial invasion as man tries to search profit out of it where woman tries to save nature. In the novel, Nathan presented the patriarchal voice by saying Rukmini how she was able to earn maximum benefit from the presence of 'The White People' by selling the bananas and pumpkins at a 'better price' than the previous time. (Markandaya 2002:32) Rukmini was a 'foolish woman' for Nathan as she disliked the White Men's industry on her land. On this context she was compared with the 'grass' and advised to 'bend' as she denied to 'break'. (Markandaya 2002 :32) Woman and nature are devalued by patriarchy, the duo can be twisted, turned and broke for the sake of an unending hunger of the capitalism. Ecofeminists named the expansion of industries 'a post-colonial mission' (Shiva, 1993) which made the colonised to accept a specific model of development of the colonial mindset. The acceptance of a new life style devalued the indigenous culture and created a gap between the traditional and the modern live styles. Kunthi (Rukmini's neighbour) was quite happy with the establishment of tannery as it turned the village into a 'growing town'. The industrial growth changed the village scene and created inflation in economy. Markandaya states "...our money buys less and less." (Markandaya 2002:50) Markandaya has picturised the ugly truth of colonialism which only aims at a continuous essential state for commercial growth. Previously the soil and land that used to draw the common substances for the survival of locals, now that same soil and land are turned into the 'private property' of the colonisers which only can be 'bought and sold and conquered'.

(Shiva, 1993) The constant capital gathering directed the economy to earn profit. It involved in creating wealth for the outsiders but on the other side it created shortage and disposition in the lives of common people.

The colonial project transformed simple and traditional village to crowded and noisy town. The village described in the novel turned into a town and carries the new life styles with experiencing frustration, destruction and never-ending poverty. Markandaya describes the town as away from the nature, where everywhere is 'crowd' and 'filth' and people have no time 'to look at sun or the stars' .(Markandaya 2002:117)Ecofeminist exposes the nature of colonisation that shifted value to non-value, labour to non-labour and production into destruction. The skilled farmers in Nectar in a Sieve were transformed into unskilled labourers. Tannery grabbed the farming lands and forced the farmers to become the slaves to its master. Tannery was responsible for putrefying of the soil of the farming land, ending its productivity as well as of farmers. Development is the obvious output of colonisation, but it is not meant for the people of the land. Vandana Shiva said this development as 'Mal-development' or the 'inequality' which is a polarising process in economy, where some get rich to richer as they make others poor to poorer.

V. DISCUSSION

Markandaya has carved the novel through the viewpoints of ecofeminists who consider women the real saviour, lover and nurturer of the mother nature. The central protagonist of the play can be viewed from two angles. First, the way she nurtured every form of nature and second the way she protested the tannery (symbol of industrial establishment) which soaked the lives out of living things. Shiva has always said that women are the 'intimate part of nature', together, in 'imagination' and in 'practice'. (Shiva, 1989) The novel started with Rukmini's recalling of her memory when she came as a child bride to her husband's village. Rukmini reflected the

sense of aliveness in the living nature around her and it made the readers to realise the attachment of woman with the nature. Rukmini enchanted: 'The air was full of the sound of bells, and of birds, sparrows and bulbuls mainly, and sometimes the cry of an eagle, but when we passed a grove, green and leafy, I could hear mynahs and parrots.' (Markandaya 2002:9)

Markandaya has projected the beauty of nature which imbedded inside the woman makes her to continue the life within. Rukmini is presented as a peasant woman who was happy with her husband in producing grains, ghee, milk, vegetables and dal. She utters the sense of satisfaction when she sees the beautiful sun shine on the vast green field just like Nathan sees the beauty in her. Again, she wonders what else a woman needs more when there is good sum of grains stored for the 'hard times' and a 'roof over' head. (Markandaya 2002:12). Markandaya has brought Rukmini closure to the Earth, where she was gratified with the essentials of life, felt a sense of being alive. Ecofeminism exposes the spiritual connection of women with nature. The author associated Rukmini's body with the nature, both having the power of recreation. Rukmini nurtured her land as if it was her own child and, in this way, she tried to discover life in the lap of nature, in birds, in trees, in fruits, in vegetables etc. She had explored the 'very secret of life itself' (Markandaya 2002:17) by experiencing the growth of the pumpkin vines and chillies under her hand. Rukmini knew how to preserve crops; she also had the mastery of preserving seeds. Markandaya has exposed that the regenerative power of seeds can only be felt by a woman, as She is within Nature and Nature within her. Rukmini could sense every growth of nature inside her, starting from the 'seed spilt' to 'the first green shoots broke through'. Again, she could feel the sense of progress inside her when sees the formation of 'young buds and fruit'. Rukmini celebrates the 'very secret of life' with the seeds covered 'under leaf after protective leaf for safekeeping'. (Markandaya 2002:17)

Markandayahas presented the picture of women, the way she embedded in nature and also the way of creating life with nature. Rukmini felt delighted in working on her field, it was not a mere work for her rather an act of loving the Earth. Markandaya precisely related woman with the mother Earth, as the spirituality of love and affection has been carved deep inside woman's heart. According to Markandaya woman celebrates the life; she is built to recreate. Markandaya has shown the conflict between human and nature in Nectar in a Sieve through the examples of drought, starvation, but the way Rukmini accepted the cruelty of nature is quite commendable. Rukmini elaborates nature a 'wild animal' (Markandaya 2002:43) which "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 heed- less or forgetful, and it has you by the throat." (Markandaya 2002:43)

Rukmini was not only compassionate with the earth and soil; she was equal empathetic to the animals and other subordinate beings. When Rukmini and Nathan started their journey from village to town on a bullock cart, Rukmini felt pity for the bullocks who had raw patches on their skin making the blood rolling down. The unfortunate animal had been struggling the complete journey, but continued dragging of the cart. Rukmini connected the animal's struggle with of her own and realised an interconnected sense of domination which revealed both women and non-human as inferior. When Rukmini informed the bullock's suffering to the driver of the cart, he behaved indifferent as if nothing had happened. The difference in the emotional responses of a man and a woman towards animals depicts the theory of ecofeminism. After they reached the town, Rukmini could realise the hunger of the poor goats who desperately gazed at her while she was having her meal. She was satisfied in satisfying the hungry goats by giving them the plantain leaves which she used as plates. Rukmini's sympathetic tune to the animals shows

the ecofeminist ideas of women's concern with non-human species. Markandaya has explained how women are more caring and sympathetic to any form of nature around than men.

Ecofeminism states that rural women's assignment is habitually centred on handling resources from nature, ecosystems and biodiversity for their survival. So, they became helpless as the near biodiversity is destroyed. Again, the colonial project of industrialisation made women abandoned by grabbing their lands. Hence, in both the cases women became economic dependent on other to live and to survive. Displacement from the land not only hinders the right of the farming land, but also creates identical crisis making the people of the land to 'wander like jackals.' (Markandaya 2002:78) Markandaya has shown how the economic independence of women is crushed by the privatisation of agricultural land on which women tend to work traditionally. It shows the marginalisation of women and the devastation of ecology go hand in hand. Rukmini not only grew crops and vegetables on the land, but also, she kept her cows to sell milk and ghee for to generate income. When Shivaji (the land-lord's representative) asked them to vacate the land, Rukmini with her family were scattered. The 'land', primarily used for growing crops, was ready to be drained or tightened by the tannery. Ecofeminists termed this concept as 'Death of the Soil' (Shiva,1988), as this is a way of knowing the importance soil in the ecosystem that human uses for growing food. Vandana Shiva named this particular act of 'productive work' by the patriarchal system as a 'highly destructive production'. (Shiva, 1988)

Markandaya has revealed ecofeminists' views on the continuous and tremendous contribution of women towards the food making system that reshaped them as the unique food producers of the world. The age-old knowledge of women in agriculture towards food production, seed conservation and maintaining

nature's renewable resources was hugely hampered by the western scientific knowledge. Markandaya has focused on women's sustainable idea and the eco-friendly agricultural knowledge in cultivation. Rukmini advised Nathan to use cow dung on the field as a fertilizer and as a germicide at home. Shiva states: "In most cultures women have been the custodians of biodiversity. The produce, reproduce, consume and conserve biodiversity in agriculture." (Shiva,1993). Again, in the essay 'Women in the Food Chain', Shiva explains that women framed the model of agriculture through a 'participation with nature', making it 'self-producing and 'sustainable'.(Shiva.1988)

Markandaya's Rukmini was well equipped with the knowledge of food preservation and food conservation. Rukmini's calculative usage of food grains made it possible for her family to live on the first few days of starvation. Again, at the time of Ira's marriage, Rukmini made it possible to serve the guests with a complete stomach filled feast. Nathan surprised with Rukmini saying, "I didn't know you had so much!" (Markandaya 2002: 41) Not only Rukmini saved grains, dal, ghee for her family, but also seeds for the next crop rotation. Seed is considered as the first connection in the food conservation. The seed and food storage by women prove a major step in food conservation. On the context of food, seed and biodiversity conservation, Shiva named women as the 'custodian of the common generic heritage' as they have achieved the mastery on both the storage and preservation of the 'grain'. Female feels selecting seeds in agriculture as their primary 'responsibility' (Vandana Shiva, Women in the Food Chain, Staying Alive). Women's contribution is not only in producing and reproducing new lives, rather they extended largely in providing nourishment through the given social roles. Rukmini has shown her disagreement in selling the preserved seeds for few rupees knowing those seeds as the hope for the next cycle of production. However, the displacement of women from the food production system destroyed women's

farming skill, knowledge, creativity and productivity. Rukmini migrated to the town as she had to do nothing in the village. The land on which she used to produce grains and vegetables is now 'drained' by the tannery.

Markandaya has brought different ecofeminist thoughts through the symbolic representation of tannery. The first issue is the process of swallowing the 'land' of the indigenous people. In Nectar in a Sieve, tannery stood as a patriarchal project of 'The White people' and it disturbed the lives of the indigenous people of the village. Kamala Markandaya has shown the evil consequences of tannery in terms of displacement, hunger, death, migration, ecological devastation, moral degradation, identity crisis etc. The novelist has shown how before the establishment of the tannery, the villagers were living peacefully amidst nature having agriculture as their sole livelihood. But, after the tannery spread in the village, most of the villagers lost their land and rest of them hesitated to farm as tannery promised to provide new jobs. Rukmini and Nathan's land were swallowed up by the tannery. Being landless is the greatest tragedy of one's life, and it is the worst in case of farmers. Rukmini blamed tannery for every misfortune occurred as it turned the villagers from 'tilling to batter'

Markandaya reflected the helplessness of the village peasants whose livelihood was not bothered by any one, neither by the 'Zamindars'(Landlord) nor by the tannery owners. The farmers gave their sweat and blood to the land to produce harvests and receive a tiny portion of crops as they spend everything in paying dues to the 'Zamindars'. Markandaya has also hovered on this zamindari system which stand first at exploiting the farmers in India during the post-colonial phase. Still, the poor peasants feel fortunate as they have the land. But tannery ruined every bit of hope by tempting the 'Zamindars' to sell that land in better prices. Besides Zamindars and the factory owners, there exist

another category of people who take tannery as a medium to earn maximum profit. Characters like Hunuman and Biswas, the money-lenders exploited the villagers as they were convinced to get the double price for anything they sell to the 'tanners' (Markandaya 2002: 47) Markandaya has brought the concern that tannery not only changed the social context, but also it changed the moral values of people around. Again, tannery made the 'Bazaar' (market) price high that made the common villagers tough to afford the daily requirements. Rukmini says: "They had invaded our village with clatter and din, had taken from us the maidan where our children played, and made the bazaar prices too high for us..." (Markandaya 2002: 31-32) Markandaya made the tannery responsible for the death of the small business men/women as bigger shops bulged in the market. The death of granny, the oldest lady vegetable seller of the village exposed how tannery affected the economic freedom of women. Shiva pointed 'economic deprivation' in her essay 'Women in the Food Chain'. Shiva explained how the trick of industrial motives of production for 'profits' in the place of 'need' have dismissed countless no. of women and farmers from the process of producing food. Actually, in this way patriarchy has drained out the real happiness of the people of the land under the shield of so called 'progress' that stood on 'sales' and 'profits' (Shiva, 1988)

Secondly, Markandaya exposed how tannery polluted the environment with its dirt and fume. Rukmini was fragmented when she found the degradation of nature around due to the establishment of tannery. She felt not only the nature was dying, but life was also fading. Rukmini was not delighted when she found her children were forced to live in an un-healthy place, where the noisy crowd loves to live amidst 'disturbances'. (Markandaya 2002: 33). Markandaya's ecofeminist ideas linked with Susan Griffin conveying the interconnectedness of women with nature: "He says that woman speaks with nature. That she hears

voices from under the earth. That wind blows in her ears and trees whisper to her. That the dead sing through her mouth and the cries of infants are clear to her." (Susan Griffin 1978) Through Rukmini, Markandaya broadcasted the domination policy of modernisation that ended with the degradation of the nature putting its direct impact on the lives of women. Tannery changed the village scene by spreading like wild weed. Rukmini has sensed the destroying attitude of the foreign people on her land, when she saw the 'noisy dusty men' have 'coloured' their village with the dust and dirt all around. She could imagine how the new comers are going to distort the peaceful land into a disturbing one. (Markandaya 2002: 135) As ecology is manipulated by the western industrial projects, there arose shortage of water, fuel, fodder and food in the non-western countries. Ecofeminism explains that women became the worst sufferer of the 'poverty crisis' because firstly they come at the bottom level of the poor and secondly, they are now dis-associated with nature due to the industrial policies. (Shiva 1988)

Thirdly, Markandaya has shown the effect of tannery on the mindsets of the village people. Most of the villagers were depending on their traditional occupation before the introduction of tannery. The establishment of tannery made them landless and left with no other options beside accepting the minimum opportunities tannery provided. Gradually these people accepted the colonial mindsets of growth as the best option to live and sustain. Mostly the young kids had eagerness to work in tannery which was an easy source of earning money, rather than continuing their ancestral occupation. Three of Rukmini's sons Arjun, Thambi, Raja were not interested to join hands with Nathan in his agricultural work and preferred to work in tannery. But Rukmini was unhappy with such decisions of her children and persuaded them not to be a part of tannery. It shows the theory of ecofeminism which brings the difference of attitudes that man and woman possesses towards tannery. Woman tries to

save the agricultural culture so that ecology can be saved from the pangs of modernity, while man prefers an easy way to earn bread at any cost. Markandaya has brought the idea of ecofeminism which exposes the motives of modernity by tempting the people of the land to accept the way of living they create. Two of Rukmini's sons Raja and Thambi started working in Tannery, while another son Murugan migrated to town searching for a better opportunity. However, Raja lost his life in the tannery and Rukmini's last child Kuti died out of starvation. Rukmini blamed tannery for the worst mis-happenings occurred in her life which wiped away all the nectar from her life.

Fourthly, Tannery made the village unsafe for girls and women as there were crowd everywhere. Rukmini felt unsafe in permitting Ira (Rukmini's daughter) to go out alone as the crowded roads are full of 'hooligans', making it unsafe for her. Markandaya has not only blamed the tannery as it created an unsafe place for women to roam around, but also for propelling women to compromise with their chastity for filling their hungry belly. Hunger, destruction of traditional way of sustaining, made many women to opt prostitution as a mode of survival. Ecofeminist pointed it a sexual domination of patriarchy on women. Rukmini's neighbour Kunthi found prostitution as the only way to fight with hunger. At the same time Ira's husband abandoned her saying 'barren' and it created a hopeless future for Ira. In the darkness of uncertainty, Ira attached with her malnourished infant brother Kuti and tried to save his life at any possible cost. Rukmini's obedient and shy daughter, Ira decided to exploit her sexuality to console the hungry mouth saying 'For Rukmini and Nathan though "The truth was unpalatable"' (Markandaya 2002:102), still their acceptance to it created a sense of absolute abstract situation which neither be denied nor accepted. Markandaya's insight of ecofeminism discusses the real cause behind women's sexual exploitation. Ynestra King has rightly quoted: 'It is the same masculinist mentality which would deny us our right

to our own bodies and our own sexuality, and which depends on multiple systems of dominance and state power to have its way.' (King Ynestra 1987)

Finally, Markandaya has shown how the unfriendly outcome of Tannery turned the skilled peasants to unskilled industrial labours creating a chaos in the lives of peasants. Tannery grabbed Rukmini's land and led them to flee to the town. Praising Nathan as a skilful farmer, Rukmini always wanted her sons to learn the art of sowing, reaping and all other process of farming from him. But all her dreams melted as they move to the town. Tannery was responsible for winding up the existing knowledge of farmer, converting them into unskilled labours and finally choked in the nails of hunger, starvation and death. "Development has meant the ecological and cultural rupture of bonds with nature, and within society, it has meant the transformation of organic communities into groups of uprooted and alienated individuals searching for abstract identities." (Shiva,1993).

VI. RESULT

Kamala Markandaya named the colonisers as 'The White People'(Markandaya 2002), and has shown how they were in the process of owning the lands of the 'people of the land' in the novel. 'The White People' first possessed Rukmini's land and later disturbed the slow pace life of the family. Through Rukmini, Markandaya has made her readers to realise how modernisation has drained out the peaceful lives and hopes of the people of the Third World making them landless and forcing to migrate to a new place. When Rukmini and Nathan migrated to the town, they were bound to live the lives of beggars and then to daily labours. All their aspirations and contentment faded out with the worsening of the circumstances. The novelist has explained that hope in life is tough to hold on in the state of extreme misery and death, just like trying to hold the nectar in a sieve.

VII. CONCLUSION

Markandaya's ecofeminist lenses has made the readers to realise the drastic effects of industrialisation on the lives of the people of the land as it has gobbled up the very means of their survival. *Nectar in a Sieve* is a perfect way to communicate the pathetic condition of Indian farmers in the post-colonial era of India. Through Rukmini's catastrophic courses of life, Markandaya has shown that for peasant 'land' is not meant for cultivation only, rather it associated with them emotionally and culturally. Rukmini's love for her garden, plants, children, nature around, and also for the non-human species brings herself close with the nature. She proved women and nature are inseparable. The sequences of novel like introduction of tannery on the village, Rukmini's grief on losing her land, the inconsolable anguish of Rukmini's family in hunger and starvation, identity crisis of the characters, Rukmini's protest against Tannery for all the misfortunes it formed and above all development at the cost of killing nature bring the glimpse of the theory of ecofeminism.

Thus, Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* tries to expose the ecological degradation which directly linked with the degradation of women and other underprivileged species of the society. Tannery symbolised as the masculine domination on both nature and women, at the other end Rukmini's never-ending remonstrations towards it brings the insight of ecofeminism explaining Vandana Shiva's thoughts: "We are either going to have a future where women lead the way to make peace with the Earth or we are not going to have a human future at all." Thus, Markandaya's novel makes the reader to understand the concept related to feminism and environmentalism. The paper gives a scope to learn the importance of nature from a feminist concern and to realise the root cause behind the ecological devastation.

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