

## **I. Introducing Justice: Women and Land**

Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* published in 1956 revolves around some of the worst form of sufferings associated with land. Land being the source of life and living for millions; life of those people associated with land has often been a perennial flow of misery, scarcity and sufferings. Land in one hand is our mother and source of life, but on the other it is a domain where farmers and peasants succumb to worse form of pain and sufferings. In fact, farmers whose life has revolved around farm and farming are exposed to worse form of injustice. Based on the idea that land is associated with sufferings and injustice, this research takes in the notion of justice to analyze and interpret if the idea of justice is well associated with land based on the writings of J. S. Mill and Richard Kerridge including others.

The plot of the fiction revolves around the plight of farmers who have been unfairly treated by the society, state and the local landlords. Unfair treatment provided to the farmers has been accurately treated in the form of sufferings of the impoverished farmer Rukmani and her husband Nathan. Then the plot goes on to explain the life-long saga of sufferings, scarcity, struggle and lack of food. Rukmani is a typical Indian lady who struggled in and around the farm land since her birth and growth. The source of income for her family, husband and six of her children was land – a piece of land that gave them food, cereals, and besides a perennial flow of sufferings and woes. When there was rain, there was food and when there was drought food was scarce resulting in hunger, malnutrition and sufferings.

The researcher will explore the plight of Rukmani and her family who has found solace in suicide for the lifelong attachment with the land, for the land would herald them nothing except woes, sufferings and life full of scarcities. Mukul Bhatnagar in *Land and Sufferings* opines on how the cycle of sufferings, in farmers' lives is a

common issue in Indian politics and social life. Life of people – farmers in particular is the subject to growing disappointment from which people in the East rise again to enjoy life. He states:

The cycle of great disappointment leads only to hope; however, from a great tragedy, another great heartbreak takes place. Markandaya presents lifelong sufferings in *Nectar in a Sieve* and the West as trying to energize the East by exhorting its people to rise to the occasion and activate themselves for the struggle for their basic rights. (32)

Land is the only source of living for Indian farmers and this dependence on land leads them to greater sufferings than happiness. The condition of the land and farmers is equally painful Land suffers being exploited by humans, and farmers suffer being depended on farm. Thus, both land and farmers need justice.

The idea in the text is about the declining status of land and women. Thus, the novel investigates how women and land are used metaphorically in certain literary or aesthetic genres and tropes, and what assumptions about nature underlie genres that may not address this topic directly. Our social system is such set up that women are accustomed to remain in hunger, frustration and scarcity.

The coming of industrialization has acutely affected first the production of crops and the poor has been further impoverished. Scarcity of sufficient yielding of food and grains has lead to the killing of several farmers in India. One such farmer, as reported in *The Times of India*, September 2011 narrates the tale of Mandava, lowly farmer in Madhya Pardesh who took his life only to make headlines in leading newspaper of India and soon, everybody forget him. The sad event was associated with perennial problems of the Indian farmers – land being mortgaged to a pawnbroker and worst being land

unable to yield sufficient food and grain to feed the family and self. The worst part of all these are – the females are part of untold and unsung sufferings, tangled and unfolded.

Markandaya is one of the first spokeswomen of the slow and steady notion of injustice associated with land and living. For ages, land has been the source of income; however, its dependence has resulted, often in pain and have been exposed to the hardships of domestic chores and, Rukmani, the lead character in *Nectar in a Sieve* is probably the best fictions to have exposed this reality. This fiction of Markandaya is the first novel to be published although it is actually the third novel she wrote. It became a best-seller around the world and was translated into seventeen languages. In 1955, *Nectar in a Sieve* was named a ‘notable book’ by the American Library Association.

The history of *Nectar in a Sieve*’s academic and popular critical reception culminates in the works of Uma Parameswaran and Rochelle Almeida, both of whom are literary scholars and creative writers. Almeida in *Writing Through the Rustic* opines, “If Kamala Markandaya had practiced this credo, and she would have found no need to spice up her novels with Indian life” (57). Almeida persists in the assertion that Markandaya could have captured what she calls Indianness and injected it into her novels without adding “superficial ethnic and regional peculiarities” (96), never pausing to question the concept of Indianness itself.

Almeida’s assessment of Markandaya’s failing is a strange return to essentialism in which Markandaya’s inability to portray the “real” India is her literary undoing. She does not take issue with the inclusion of Indian women and terrain only because it potentially essentializes the failure to translate these narratives about Indianness and the sufferings of the Indian women. The idea that land and female in India are underprivileged groups is not because there is poverty, but, male rules over them. There are cases where the entire community of male dominates the entire living, life and

mannerism of female, and also dominate the way land should be used cultivated or exploited. Parameswaran, on the other hand, expresses disappointment that her students' readings of Markandaya have become a politicized discourse. She puts her personal experience on the narratives of *Nectar in a Sieve* as:

This brings me to my experience of teaching the novel to my freshman students. They cannot read the words of the text because they start out on the wrong foot. For example, the idea of arranged marriages is so alien, indeed repugnant, to them, so symptomatic of cultural tyranny, that all their reading of most Indo-English fiction is coloured by their preconceptions. Add to this all the postcolonial theoretical constructs they are fed, and what I get is a reading that polarizes at every point, sees only industrialization and imperialism at work and overlooks the affirmation of the indomitability of the human spirit. (64)

Parameswaran regrets that her students approach the novel with greater attention to its social and post-colonial critiques than a more humanistic appreciation of its representations of survival.

Interestingly, discourse and humanistic approaches to literary analysis are invested in versions of the truth; although the former approach politicizes categories of class, gender, race and sexuality, the latter relies on stable, unifying constructions of humanity. While it is somewhat refreshing that Parameswaran makes explicit her humanistic investments in teaching ethnic literatures, a practice that I believe persists in many literature classrooms, albeit in a tacit and often under theorized manner, her negative reaction to students' politicized readings demonstrates a narrow focus on "human bonds" as a foundation for analysis (65).

Similarly, in their essays in *Indian Women Novelists*, Shymala Venketeswaran and Ramesh Srivastava criticize Markandaya for inaccuracies in her descriptions of weddings, dowry exchange, domestic duty and child rearing. Parameswaran, who comes to Markandaya's defense, bases her critique on an expectation of domestic knowledge and realistic description. In one lengthy passage she questions Markandaya's knowledge of what pantry items Rukmani might have really stored, and when she would have begun preparing for her daughter's wedding: Of Rukmani's storing away of "rice and dhal and ghee, jars of oil, betel leaf, areca nuts, chewing tobacco and copra" for Ira's wedding, Venketeswaran says, "would they not have gone bad" (32)? A careful choice of the list, and rued that she had erred in one item, like the description that follows in words of Venketeswaran:

Betel leaf; did she mean betel nut, I wondered, or perhaps the leaves that were often sewed together to form a circular dinner plate? Except for betel leaf, everything in the list can be stored for months, and indeed is; it is not unreasonable to think that one would start on wedding preparations a few months ahead of the wedding; most arranged. (71)

The smoothness of the natural products with the daily activities associated with cultural aspects of Indian life is woven to depict the association of nature and men in the novel. Markandaya argues the way people are attached to the natural way of living, at a root level.

Construction of natural aspects is woven in and around the pattern of life of a woman in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Rukmani represents the way Indian females are leading their life in rural India. However, neither critic looks to the intrusion of the tannery on the outskirts of the village to think through the elements of social realism in the text. Rather they calibrate Markandaya's status as a social realist according to the authenticity

of her language and the ethnographic details she includes. By terming Markandaya as a social realist, the idea of unfair distribution of land and resources are subjected in the core of criticism.

There is a certain level of unconsciously struggle taking place between the White Dr. Kenny and Rukmani. The flow of conscious mentality of the White that sees the Indian as a subject is overwhelmed in the commentary. There is the gendered mechanism of colonialism that takes its toll on the making of the conscious of Rukmani. However, Rukmani struggles to control her body or her labor as a way to unpack Markandaya's feminist perspective. In perpetuating these un-dimensional readings of Markandaya's work, critics evacuate *Nectar in a Sieve* of any political, social and gender commentary.

To some degree, these readings ultimately authorize and obscure the pervasive authenticity imperative in literary fields that purport to present the other to a Western market. Narratives such as *Nectar in as Sieve* are undoubtedly political in content, become narratives of domesticity read for their depictions of marriage, romance, and family bonds. Parameswaran and Almeida on Markandaya's work represent opposite ends of the range of criticism on her writing. While Parameswaran defends Markanadaya's social vision and poetic style, Almeida is a more skeptical reader who feels that Markandaya squanders her literary potential by catering to the Western literary market.

Literary reception in academic criticism and popular review of *Nectar in a Sieve* is of a fraught writing. Neither critic theorizes how reader desires for authentic ethnic representations position the South Asian female writer as environmental spoke-woman. Markandaya was undoubtedly aware that her work, particularly *Nectar in a Sieve*, invited critical attention from both popular and scholarly reviewers, in addition to its popularity

with lay readers at the time of its publication. John Frederick Muehl in *Saturday Review* writes:

I would not call it a well-planned novel. It is a powerful book, but the power is in the content, in the story that it tells of an Indian family from marriage, through child-birth, to poverty and death. You read it because it answers so many real questions: What is the day-to-day life of the villager like? How does a village woman really think of herself? What goes through the minds of people who are starving? Miss Markandaya manages to answer all of these questions, haltingly at times, and lacking some of the graces, but with a respect for her characters and a belief in her story that more than make up for her literary lapses.(7)

While Markandaya invested in the social utility and function of literature, critics who debate the success of her social realism assume that Markandaya can and should attempt to speak the unmediated voice of the Indian peasant woman.

*Nectar in a Sieve* published during the early days of freedom of India from colonization discusses the conflict of social mores, values and customs. One can examine the novel's strong character development and cultural significance in term of rise of industrial culture and fall of value of land. The fiction provides opportunity for vocabulary study, examination of imagery and symbolism, and oral and written response to its themes: the indomitable human spirit, the nature of love, and human responses to suffering. The novel also can be examined as a tragedy or can be compared to novels with similar themes from a variety of cultures.

Justice seeks to understand the role of women in agricultural societies, evolving economies, the effects of poverty and Hinduism. They also can examine the themes of

conflicts between cultures and the benefits and problems of change. The novel poses several problems for young readers that teachers can help them overcome. Although short, it is monotonous in parts. There are gaps in the episodes with some incidents not fully explained by Markandaya. This teacher's guide attempts to fill these gaps by explaining the various cultural practices and providing background information necessary for a full understanding of the story.

One stark example of unfair distribution of resources forced the only daughter, Era into prostitution and caused three sons to leave the village to seek employment. With very little to eat, it was a miracle the family remained alive. In spite of their hardships, the family exhibited love, contentment, and hope that their situation would improve, but this hope never became a reality. As such, there is hardly any justice to the women characters in the novel.

A female, Uma Parameswaran has a critical observation to social narratives woven around the females in the novel. She explains a critical link between generic categories and expectations of authentic distribution of equal share on the woes and happiness of the land; however, the prior excels the latter, as:

The extent of social realism in Markandaya's novels has been the focus of much criticism. Non-Indians generally, assume authenticity because Markandaya's detailed descriptions of everyday life and this is a wrong attitude. *Nectar in a Sieve* especially has come under fire for lack of social realism among Indians-in-India critics, and this too is a wrong attitude.

(66)

Parameswaran has a keen observation on the desires for authenticity and realism that underlie the debate. It is the responsibility of Markandaya, as a social realist writer, to perform a kind of social work or education in her novels.



Two eldest sons of Rukmani and Nathan migrated to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) after losing their jobs at the tannery for instigating a strike; the third son went to the city to take up employment; the fourth was killed when he was found searching for food in the vicinity of the tannery; the fifth became apprenticed to a white doctor; the last died as a child. With very little substance to begin with, the family became dependent on a small tract of land they rented from a heartless, absentee landlord.

On these perspectives, the present research will make an attempt to see the relationship of farm, female and justice. For the same, the first chapter will be “Introduction: Women, Land and Justice in Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve*” to explore the relationship of these elements. In the process, the researcher will bring in the idea of justice and its implication.

Similarly, the second chapter “Justice and Women in Markandaya’s *Nectar in Sieve*” will seek to understand how women have been deprived of justice for the women being a part and partial of land. Finally, the research will conclude with exposition of the condition of female associated with land.

## **II. Exploration of Justice of Women and Land in *Nectar in a Sieve***

Kamala Markandaya's novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, narrates the woes of a farm woman, Rukmani whose life has been woven around the hardships associated with land. Markandaya centers on the theme of exploitation of women and environment and focuses on particular community and their life controlled by nature. Thus, the idea of ecocriticism takes an approach on justice happen to be for female for both the female and the land in this study tale of life-long struggle of a rural farm woman and her family. People's sufferings in a society dependent on nature are similar to the sufferings on patriarchal society in general. As people dependent on nature need justice women suppressed by males do need justice. Therefore, this work that compares Rukmini's sufferings with people dependent on nature's seasonal changes aptly applies eco-feminist eco-critical concepts to analyze *Nectar in a Sieve*.

Environmental justice is the right to a decent, safe quality of life for people of all races, incomes and cultures in the environments where we live, work, play, learn and pray. Environmental justice emphasizes accountability, democratic practices, equitable treatment and self-determination. Environmental justice principles prioritize public good over profit, cooperation over competition, community and collective action over individualism, and precautionary approaches over unacceptable risks. Environmental Justice provides a framework for communities of color to articulate the political, economic and social assumptions underlying why environmental racism and degradation happens and how it continues to be institutionally reinforced.

Environment Justice movement defines the environment as the place where people live, work, study, play and pray. Low-income rural, people of color, Native American, working class, and ethnic communities are disproportionately victimized by polluting industries. Many call this environmental racism. Many low-income

communities experience economic extortion by accepting the presence of polluting industries in exchange for jobs and income. Workers are subject to economic extortion by accepting health and safety compromises in exchange for jobs and income. Alliances between labor and the Environmental Justice movement are natural, desirable, and crucial because workers and community residents are affected by the same toxic releases.

Issue of environmental justice is permeating the global culture. The environmental crisis today haunts mankind like a nightmare. It is no longer a mere regional problem; it has already acquired global proportions. The planet's support systems – land, water and air seem to have been damaged beyond the possibility of redemption. Eco-criticism studies the relationship between the human and the non-human world in a literary work. This implies that eco-critical theory assumes that there is a world out there that is represented in the form of fairness to nature and natural means.

In this backdrop, Markandaya depicts passion, fear, myth and doom of the Indian farmers struggling to keep the little that remained as their lands. The author tracks down the hardships borne by the men and women whose life has been who ceaselessly fought against the weather and are pushed to the brink of their endurance. The people living in the best place of harmony were driven to snow and suffering when their living space was invaded by gun and power. The paper concentrates on the idea that farm and female are part and partial to social and natural justice. There is hardship to the male peasant, but the silent sufferer is female and land who are the real victim.

Epidemics and famines are not the only thing one can see in the interrelated stories in the novel; in addition gives an idea about the historical actuality of deprivation, dispossession and genocide. This denial of dependency is a major factor in the perpetuation of the non-sustainable modes of using nature which loom as such a threat to the future of western society. Apart from the man-made misfortunes, the family suffers at

the pitiless hands of nature which was never merciful to them. Justice is denied to the poor farmers even by the nature. Drought and flood destroys crops one by one. The whim of nature shifts its form again, but the result is same. Rukmani painfully recalls:

Drought continued until we lost count of time. Day after day the pitiless sun blazed down scorching whatever still struggled to grow and baking the earth hard until it split and great irregular fissures gaped in the land. Plants died and grasses rotted, cattle and sheep crept to the river that was no more and perished there for lack of water. (81)

The tragic picture of hunger is pointed by Markandaya. Rukmani divides rice into twenty four small parts to feed the entire family for an equal number of days.

Such starvation leads to human degradation. Ira, seeing her family starves during the famine turns into a woman of the streets and gives birth to an illegitimate albino child. Hunger makes Ira a prostitute. Hunger leads to the suspected theft of calfskin by Raja and his subsequent death. Starvation forces Kuti's death. The problem of poverty has been realistically depicted by Markandaya. The landless farmer Nathan, in particular, is held in the grasp of constant fear; or the land being snatched away, the failure or excesses of rains and droughts.

The rural women are denied justice for economic crisis and family in a rural village in southern zone of India is still the representative of famine, industrialization and people deprived of social and environment justice. Despite fearless efforts, the family failed to get out from poverty caused by hardships of nature and economics.

This poverty forced the only daughter of her into the dim of prostitution and the three sons to leave the village to look for job. It was a miracle the family remained alive with very little to eat. In spite of their hardships, the family showed love, satisfaction and hope that their situation would improve. *Nectar in a Sieve* runs in the first person

narration told by the protagonist-narrator Rukmani, a peasant woman suffering almost all the time within the duration of narrative. Her family consists of her husband Nathan, a poor tenant farmer, a daughter, Ira, and six sons.

The dominant and ancient traditions connecting men with culture and women with nature are also overlain by some more recent and conflicting ones in which unchangeable male essence is connected to a nature no longer viewed as reproductive and providing but as wild, violent, competitive and sexual, and the female is viewed in contrasting terms as insipid, domestic, asexual and civilizing. Attitude to both women and nature resulting from the traditional identification has not always been a simple one. The connection between providing justice to female and farm has sometimes been used to provide a limited affirmation of both women and nature.

But both the dominant tradition of men as reason and women as nature, and the more recent conflicting one of men as forceful and wild and women as tamed and domestic, have had the effect of confirming masculine power. It is not surprising that many feminists regard with some suspicion the view expressed by a growing number of women who describe themselves as ecofeminists. There may be something to be said in favour of women's connectedness with nature. The very idea of a feminine connection with nature seems to many to be regressive and insulting, summoning up images of women as earth mothers, as passive, reproductive animals, contented cows immersed in the body and in the unreflective experiencing of life. It is both tempting and common therefore for feminists to view the traditional connection between women and nature as no more than an instrument of oppression, a relic of patriarchy which should simply be allowed to wither away now that its roots in an oppressive tradition are exposed.

But there are reasons why this widespread, 'common-sense' approach to the issue is unsatisfactory, why the question of a woman nature connection cannot just be set

aside, but must remain a central issue for feminism. The connection still constitutes the dynamic behind much of the treatment of both women and nature in contemporary society. It is perilous for feminism to ignore the issue because it has an important bearing on the model of humanity into which women will be fitted and within which they will claim equality. It is that women and nature have been thrown into an alliance remains to be analysed. This analysis forms the basis for a critical ecological feminism in which women consciously position themselves with nature. Human qualities and aspects of life associated with necessity, nature and women—of nature-as-body, of nature-as passion or emotion, of nature as the pre-symbolic, of nature-as primitive, of nature-as-animal and of nature as the feminine—continues to operate to the disadvantage of women, nature and the quality of human life. The connection between women and nature and their mutual inferiority is by no means a thing of the past, and continues to drive, for example, the denial of women's activity and indeed of the whole sphere of reproduction.

One of the most common forms of denial of women and nature is their treatment as providing the background to a dominant, foreground sphere of recognized achievement or causation. This background of women and nature is deeply embedded in the rationality of the economic system and in the structures of contemporary society. Involved in the background of nature are the denials of dependence on bio-spheric processes, and a view of humans as apart, outside of nature, which is treated as a limitless provider without needs of its own. Dominant western culture has systematically discriminated and denied dependency on the whole sphere of reproduction and subsistence.

Although poverty-stricken, they are happy and mutually compromise with the conditions they are put into by fate. But the establishment of the tannery initiates miseries for them. Capriciousness of nature accompanied by cruel dealings of their

landlord brings their apparent peace to disaster. Then there is another aspect that comes to destroy the peaceful existence of the families. The unwelcome entry of industrialization not only “invaded our village with clatter and din, had taken from us the maiden where our children played, and made the bazaar prices too high for us,” but also intruded the complete innate atmosphere and the village economy causing devastating social calamity (31-32).

Rukmani stands in thorough opposition to even a thought of tannery, since according to her, it has been tempting the simple village folk into greed and immoral acts. Her fears come true as not merely the society, but her own family gets dislocated, initially with two of her sons joining the tannery as workers and thus disappointing their father’s much awaited desire of farming. There is a period when the natural ways and farm are being challenged by the entry of industries.

In the never ending cycle of sufferings and pain, there comes temporary period of happiness in the form of separation – perhaps the best period in the lives of Nathan and Rukmani. They get rid of perpetual fear of starvation until both the brothers are dispelled from the tannery and go to Ceylon as labourers, never to return. As the narrator puts, “It was as if nothing had even been but rain.... Nathan and I watched with heavy hearts while waters rose and rose, and the tender green of paddy field sank under and was lost.... There will be little eating done this year” (43-44).

Land is the source of realistic injustice prevalent in the life of poor farmers. The tragedy begins with the fact that the piece of land owned by Rukmani and Nathan is not theirs. The nearby industry is challenging their hard but peaceful existence of life. Then, with the coming of new age, the requirements are growing and the sources of income – the land is losing its fertility. Rukmani narrates: “The calamities of the land belong to it alone, born of wind and rain and weather, immensities not to be tempered by man or his

creations. To those who live by the land there must always come time of hardship, of fear and of hunger” (181). A farmer has no hopes for the future. Hope amidst fear of getting disappointment and living in scarcity is the greatest boon a farmer has.

Rukmani sums up the life of a peasant, when she says: “Hope and fear. Twin forces that hugged us first in one direction and then in another, and which one was stronger no one could say... Fear, constant companion of the peasant ... fear, fear of the dark future; fear of the blackness of death” (110). Markandaya clearly disapproves of superstitious practices of the rural people. On the failure of rains, Rukmani threw herself on the earth, prayed, offered a pumpkin and a few grains of rice to the goddess, but no rains came.

*Nectar in a Sieve* dramatizes the tragedy and trauma of hardship borne the villagers; however, they are habitual to live with it. The traditional notion of life in village of a peasant’s family depends on rain, rice and land. The title alone reflects the theme of the novel. Nectar is a lovely liquid that eventually drain away when put into a sieve. The prevalent injustice is a beautiful way to talk about the certain draining of life in the face of suffering and death. The title shed the beauty and the misery of life next to each other and raises the question of which has the upper hand, the nectar of life or the sieve of destruction.

Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve* has drawn attention to the fact that in the present world the more important problem is exploitation of land rather than the exploitation of race and class. The problems of social ecology have their roots in the problem of ecology. There are interconnections between nature, gender, race and class. There is no denying that social injustice to the peasants and those associated to farm cannot be ignored.



Rukmani, the main character, and her daughter Ira display suffering throughout the novel. Rukmani works hard and is devoted to her gentle husband. She endures blow after blow from life: poverty, famine, the divorce of her barren daughter, the deaths of her sons, her daughter's prostitution, and finally her husband's death. When she finds the emotional center of her life, her relationship with her husband, threatened by the discovery that he fathered another woman's sons, she neither strikes out at him nor crumbles:

Disbelief first; disillusionment; anger, reproach, pain. To find out, after so many years, in such a cruel way. ... He had known her not once but twice; he had gone back to give her a second son. And between, how many times, I thought, bleak of spirit, while her husband in his impotence and I in my innocence did nothing. At last I made an effort and roused myself. "It is as you say a long time ago," I said wearily. That she is evil and powerful I know myself. Let it rest. (83)

She accepts the blow and moves on in life. In addition, when her son Raja is murdered, even her thoughts do not express rebellion. She moves from numbness to grief, thinking, "For this I have given you birth, my son, that you should lie at the end at my feet with ashes in your face and coldness in your limbs and yourself departed without trace. Then she begins to wash the corpse and prepare it for burial. When two officials from the tannery, where Raja was killed, come three days later to try to bully her into saying they have no responsibility, she tells them what they want to hear, thinking that compensation is there for death. Rukmani views, "When the officials turn to leave," she realizes that one of the men feels "shame and misery" and tries to make him feel better: "You should not care,' I said very softly to him alone. "It does not matter" (63). Her goodness and inner strength prevent her from becoming hard and bitter.

Despite the famine, scarcity and the difficulties, Rukmani survives, in parallel structure of the land that survives all the odds. However, no pain or injustice invoked to her can aware her to ask for justice. In fact, Markandaya subverts Rukmani's only violent reaction: when she finally physically attacks a shadowy figure in her home, thinking it a woman who has previously robbed her family of precious rice during a famine, the woman turns out to be her daughter Ira. Yet although Rukmani's general submissiveness may appear a weakness to Western readers, from another point of view she has incredible strength.

These two views, which represent conflicting views of distribution of justice of the Eastern and Western values, explicitly appear in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Rukmani confronts the Western doctor, Kenny, who urges:

You must cry out if you want help. It is no use whatsoever to suffer in silence. Who will succour the drowning man if he does not clamour for his life? In response, Rukmani thinks, "Want is our companion from birth to death, familiar as the seasons or the earth, varying only in degree. What profit to bewail that which has always been and cannot change?" But Kenny, the Westerner, believes that, "there is no grandeur in want -- or endurance" (93)

In contrast, Rukmani, the Indian woman, sees suffering as good for the spirit and endurance as a necessity, because she cannot change her situation. Looking at Rukmani only from the Western point of view leads one to misunderstand her character and the values that sustain her.

The Western viewpoint judges the ideal life of a devoted wife as discrimination. Women will emerge as uninhibited, multifaceted individuals in literature, perhaps regards the Sita-Savitri image from too Western a standpoint. She sees the role as a

purely weak one forced upon women, when in fact Hindu culture conceives of self-sacrifice as a form of power.

Ira's sacrifice for others makes her prostitution therefore compatible with the virtuous ideal. As a result of her motivations, she remains a sympathetic character although she violates traditional mores. Markandaya means for our sympathy to hinge on her self-sacrifice becomes even more obvious when one compares her and another prostitute in the story, the evil Kunthi. Initially, this beautiful, fiery woman has a bad reputation for sleeping with other men besides her husband. She appears an unlikable person who rejects Rukmami.

As the plot progresses into famine, she becomes a hateful, destructive figure. Not only does Rukmani find out that her husband Nathan fathered Kunthi's two sons, but Kunthi uses this knowledge of Nathan's secret, and of a secret of Rukmani's, to coerce them separately into giving her the family's hidden rice. Kunthi's independence -- she refuses to ask her married sons for food, and her husband has abandoned her -- causes her to hurt others. She steals food from Rukmani's family so that she can regain some of her beauty for prostitution. Her illicit sexuality, unlike Ira's, always comes from self-motivated desire -- first lust then greed; she represents a negative ideal of woman, using cruelty, trickery and other people to satisfy her needs and desires. She even appears as a carrion-eater who benefits from the collapse of others, in her most hateful scene with the saintly Rukmani. After agonizing over whether to give Kunthi the rice Rukmani looks up and sees her: "there was Kunthi waiting by my side with the patience of one who knows what power she wields, patient, like a vulture." Feeding off the weaknesses of others, Kunthi contradicts the ideal image of woman as a nurturant, generative force.

Rukmani and Ira appear in *Nectar in a Sieve* as opposites of Kunthi. Their goodness originates in their acceptance of suffering, whereas Kunthi's evil originates in her refusal to sacrifice herself for others. As ideal images, Markandaya's heroines correlate with Shirwadkar's conception of how early Indo-Anglian novels portray women as Sita-like characters. By fulfilling cultural values, however, Rukmani and Ira find in their way of life not only suffering but also a sureness and inner peace. Shirwadkar claims that women in later novels lose even the satisfaction of this fulfillment, because they find themselves trapped between the traditional and modern requirements for women. Earlier images of calm, enduring women change to new ones, of frustrated women caught between the Sita-Savitri figure and the modern, Westernized woman.

The family's home was a mud walled structure with thatched roof and earthen floor. They planted rice and vegetables, crops were destroyed by drought and monsoon, they were forced to sell most of their possessions and live extremely frugally. For brief periods, they enjoyed some degree of prosperity. When the family was small, the crop good, and the boys worked in the tannery the family ate well, had crops to sell, and were able to store some of their rice. Kenny, the white doctor, whose ambition was to build a hospital with the foreign aid he collected, became a close family friend and helped them with money, food, and medicine. Rice cultivation, being very labor-intensive, took a toll on Nathan's health, especially since sons disappointedly but understandably did not help much.

The construction of the tannery in the village provided employment for some but increased the price of consumer goods and succeeded in squeezing many of the peasants off the land. When Nathan's land was sold to the tannery, he and Rukmani went to the city in search of their third son with whom they had never corresponded. There they

found an equally cruel environment. Their few belongings and money were stolen as they sought refuge in the temple, and they were forced to survive mainly on handouts of food given as offerings to the gods and goddesses.

In addition, they failed to find their son who had left his wife and male child. Nathan and Rukmani yearned for the land from which they had been evicted. When they finally saved enough money to return to their village from the back-breaking work they acquired at a stone quarry with the help of Puli, a destitute but cunning street boy, Nathan died. Ruku, however, returned to the village with Puli, who she introduced as her adopted son and for whom she expected medical attention from Kenny to rid him of the disease which had eaten away his fingers.

The mode of conceiving ourselves and human life, as civilisation goes on, is felt to be more and more natural. Every step in political improvement renders it more so, by removing the sources of opposition of interest, and levelling those inequalities of legal privilege between individuals or classes, owing to which there are large portions of mankind whose happiness it is still practicable to disregard. In an improving state of the human mind, the influences are constantly on the increase, which tend to generate in each individual a feeling of unity with all the rest; which, if perfect, would make him never think of, or desire, any beneficial condition for himself, in the benefits of which they are not included.

If we now suppose, this to be social justice, there is hardly anything fair and trust worthy in our society. The unfair distribution of social and economic rights is ruining several of individuals and family to suffer a painful life. And, then there is this feeling of unity to be taught as a religion, and the whole force of education, of institutions, and of opinion, directed, as it once was in the case of religion, to make every person grow up from infancy surrounded on all sides both by the profession and the practice of it.

Apparently, the land continues to become the source of suffering for the family who now had no land. Reliance on the Dr. Kenny is yet another form of injustice prevalent to the humble farm folks. Their dependence on White doctor and their apprenticed son Selvam for support of the family is witness to the fact that there is no food and substance for living. Rukmani, a hard-working is devoted wife of Nathan is willing to accept challenges in order to achieve her aims. Like her husband, she hopes their situation will improve. She seems to have an aversion to change.

There is a form of direct intervention on the peaceful existence of land, and so is the life of women, Richard Kerridge outlines the development of eco-criticism in the following manner.

Of the radical movements that came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, environmentalism has been the slowest to develop a school of criticism in the academic humanities. The first use of the term 'ecocriticism' seems to have been by US critic William Rueckert in 1978. A few works of literary criticism maybe said to have been ecocriticism before the term was invented, including in Britain Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* (1973) and in the USA Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land* (1975), a feminist study of the literary metaphor of landscape as female. These were informed by environmentalist ideas and asked some of the questions that were to become important in ecocriticism, but it was not until the beginning of the 1990s that ecocriticism became a recognized movement. (530)

The emergence of ecocriticism in the main stream literature, since the 1990s, is an awareness to refresh scholars and students of the encompassing problem on environment destruction and damage. Since, the Victorian era, the British society, and then the

European, plunged into the industrial epoch. Slowly it moved far and wide to each and every corner of the world. However, its consequences are felt the worst, during the destruction of life and property invited by the First and Second World Wars, and now in the form of massive rise of global warming, since the 1990s.

Similarly, the radioactive leakage at the Chernobyl' nuclear power plant in the Ukrainian republic of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) is one of the worst kinds of industrial accidents in human civilization. The accidental leakage of the radioactive produced a plume of debris that drifted over parts of the western USSR, Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia. The accident, which occurred "on April 26, 1986, was the worst nuclear power accident in history" (source: Black's Law Dictionary).

Critics have speculated about the autobiographical elements in Markandaya's novels, but she does not encourage such investigation of her work. Her novels, though embedded in her Diasporic consciousness, cover a broad spectrum of human experience and deal ultimately with the dilemmas of the human condition. The popular Indian leader, Mahatma Gandhi believed that the whole structure of Urban, industrialized society was violent and repressive, crushing human souls and destroying the beauty of nature. *Nectar in a Sieve* captures the effects of such social upheaval on its characters.

Then, there are issues of unfair social customs that are derived from the Hindu traditions. For, Rukmani, the main character in *Nectar in a Sieve*, worships the Mother Goddess, the earth incarnate, who embodies creative energy, passion, and power. Echoes of the epic *Ramayana*, one of the best-loved Indian stories are echoed in this fiction. *Ramayana* recounts the adventures of prince Rama and his ideal Hindu wife, Sita, who must prove her faithfulness to her husband after her abduction. Years later, gossips question her fidelity. In despair, Sita cries out to her mother, the Earth Goddess, who

opens the earth to take Sita home. Critics of Markandaya's work compare Rukmani to the legendary Sita.

A recurring theme of the book is the significance of land and notion of justice the characters are deprived of. There is hardly any happiness light moment, if any, that is the significance of upcoming tragic event to occur. Rukmani, whose only source of solace, is the land on which her husband built a home for her with his own hands. But the house was home to scarcity, uncertainty, sufferings and woes. She often reminisced the very home to which Nathan had brought her with pride. The Land became her life: "I looked about me at the land and it was life to my starving spirit. I felt the earth beneath my feet and wept for happiness" (188). The popular and critical reception of *Nectar in a Sieve* over time make Markandaya's work a rich case study through which to examine the changing discursive and highly gendered representation of India in the West.

The problem in the text is about the declining status of land and women, at the same time. Thus, the novel investigates how nature is used metaphorically in certain literary or aesthetic genres and tropes, and what assumptions about nature underlie genres that may not address this topic directly. This allows eco-feminism to assess how certain historically conditioned concepts of nature and the natural, and particularly literary and artistic construction of it, have come to shape current perceptions of the environment. In addition, justice to farmers has been intellectually scarce aspect for there is a direct intervention through current social political and economic debates surrounding environmental pollution and preservation.

Besides, justice for females is a controversial issue. For, it is supposed that if the male of the family has justice, it is to the female, as well. Whereas, female is the source of livelihood, for food, water and essential commodities; and so similar is an inborn of



mother earth. However, both of them are hardly free from exploitation and domination. On top of all, they are frequently being used by male, the exploiter, at his will.

The text is about the declining status of land and women, and the notion of justice that is not within the reach of the females. When we deal on justice, as J. S. Mill says in *Utilitarianism* “maximum happiness of the largest number of people” (65) is about the general welfare. However, this is hardly the case. For we yield from the land, but in return land is deprived of natural fairness and natural order. Humans have been exploiting the land until the level that can no more be fruitful to live in. And, female is no exception. This allows eco-feminism to assess how certain historically conditioned concepts of nature and the natural, and particularly literary and artistic construction of it, have come to shape current perceptions of the environment. Markandayays’ *Nectar in a Sieve* being one of the earliest texts to depict this.

In addition, eco-feminism understands their intellectual work as direct intervention in current social political and economic debates surrounding environmental pollution and preservation. The worst is not the air pollution, but the soil erosion and intoxication of soil in the farm land is yet a challenge for the poor farmers like Nathan and Rukmani. English Rochelle Almeida, for example, one of the most vitriolic critics of Markandaya’s work, criticizes her lack of control in “Writing through the Rustic Terrain” as:

When one reads Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* one never gets the feeling that the writer is airing his knowledge [...] to impress the overseas reader or that he degenerates into the role of a local tourist guide by punctuating his story with snatches of local folklore. It is this basic control over form, grasped so well by Raja Rao, that makes the ‘Indianness’ in his writing integrate naturally with narration...If Raja Rao can do this so

successfully, one wonders why writers like Markandaya could not do so as well. (79)

Almeida's critique evokes gendered clichés about masculinist control and feminine disorder reinforced through her comparison of Raja Rao and Markandaya. But, the idea has been adversely depicted by Parameswaran who is of the idea that Markandaya's aesthetic sensitivity has been thus presented:

Markandaya's prose style is well synchronized with each protagonist's sensibility. It is interesting to note the evolution of her prose style. Her earlier novels are written in simple and effective language. Unlike Mulk Raj Anand's which courses down tempestuously, or Raja Rao's which meanders tortuously as it punctuates the anguish of the soul, Markandaya's language flows, even and beautiful, like Ganga in the plains. (36)

Parameswaran contrasts the "flow" of Markandaya's language with the harshness of Anand's and Rao's. Both the critique and the acclaim are gendered.

In the former, Markandaya cannot control her aesthetic enterprise as well as one of the great male writers in the same tradition. And in the latter, her prose is valued for its "flow" and sensitivity. In both instances, Markandaya's use of Western literary idiom becomes a question of authentic narration—either it is not Indian enough or it has achieved the essence of Indian representation. Both Almeida's and Parameswaran's critiques intersect in their valuations of a particularly gendered and ethnic authenticity.

Both Venketeswaran's and Parameswaran's responses call into question Markandaya's knowledge of the domestic, female sphere. While their detailed attention to these domestic elements again illustrates the highly-guarded stakes of representation, critical fixation on Markandaya's authentic narration initiates a conflation that persists

in South Asian diasporic literature between author and text. In their attempts to correct the literary representation of the rural peasant woman, these critics instantiate a parallel authenticating discourse whereby the Indian female writer is expected to present her readership with unmediated, authentic, and verifiable details on the life of the native other.

According to these critics, Markandaya's work is a failed social realist project not because it breaks with the conventions of the genre, but rather because she does not properly perform her role as social worker—a convention that the genre is held to in its gendered, feminized incarnations. Parameswaran in "The Mask that Does Not Hide: A Perspective on *Nectar in a Sieve*" (1984) he contrasts Markandaya's work to Emile Zola, Stephen Crane, and Theodore Dreiser, concluding that her attempts at social realism fall far short of these writers' attempts (66). He argues that in making Rukmani the narrator and main protagonist, Markandaya's book cannot be anything but unrealistic:

Reality in *Nectar* springs solely from Rukmani's intelligence and sensibility. But her set of givens constantly negate the intelligence she radiates in the novel. The perception of reality and the responses to it in this novel are without doubt misplaced in the protagonist-narrator, Rukmani... Kamala Markandaya has imposed severe limitations on herself by making a peasant woman the narrator of the *Nectar*. (92)

In assessment, *Nectar* is a failed realist project because it is implausible that Rukmani, a peasant woman from an Indian village, would have the kind of sensibility, as he says "the reflexes of an intellectual," that she does (66).

Chauvinism aside, what is truly problematic about this statement, and his brief article as a whole, is that it blithely ignores analysis of the elements of the text in the vein

of social realism and focuses instead on discrediting the reliability of the impoverished, female narrator.

If Rukmani is a realist protagonist, then she should be believable, authoritative, “authentic,” which for him apparently means illiterate, simpleminded, and with an unsophisticated inner life. That is, Shiv Kumar has pre-existing notions of what the inner life would be of a character such as Rukmani into which Markandaya’s rendering does not fit. *Nectar* is the story of a peasant woman’s experience. But in creating what Shiv Kumar deems to be an unbelievable voice for Rukmani, Markandaya undermines her own social realism and instead presents the voice of a middle class, urban female intellectual.

Thus, this kind of critical stance implies that Markandaya’s status as an Indian female authorizes and endows her with unmediated access to the experiences of a rural peasant woman.

Contemporary and recent reaction to Markandaya’s work that center on the veracity of its social realism resonate with the problematic politics of global feminism that, as Chandra Mohanty argues:

Discursively colonizes the material and historical heterogeneity of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/re-presenting a composite, singular ‘third world woman’—an image which appears arbitrarily constructed, but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse. (Under the Western Eyes, 53)

The devaluation of Markandaya’s work because of its non-conformity with the conventions of realism demonstrates the historically constructed expectation that the third world female subject’s lived experience can be represented as “authentic” only if it already fits within the preconceived notions of what that experience would be.

Markandaya's disregard for social realist convention, exemplified through the agency with which she endows Rukmani, as well as her use of the first person voice throughout the novel,<sup>35</sup> disrupt the "signature of Western humanist discourse" by refusing the fiction of unmediated access to the reading public.

The repeated imagery of pastoral, idyllic village life full of sufferings and hardship is explicitly prevalent in the fiction. It seems life is a perennial of sufferings and unexpected turn of events just to end in scarcity and some more miseries. The imagery of hope and justice; however runs in the vein of Rukmani. As she plants her garden, she speaks:

With each tender seedling that unfurled its small green leaf to my eager gave, my excitement would rise and mount: winged, wondrous — suggests nineteenth-century English romanticism rather than an authentically Indian literary tradition that has unfurled for ages, such as the epic to be the inspiration behind the narrative style. (13)

Markandaya's turn to English romanticism can also be interpreted as a move of colonial resistance both in the form of Western literary idiom and mode to convey indigenous reality, succeeds, as do our other writers in using a foreign, colonial mode as a liberating strategy for herself and her people in fiction.

*Nectar is a Sieve* describes the effect that modernization and industrialization had on the farming families of India. During this time many traditional values had to be overturned by the people in order to keep up with the changing times. Many farmers lost their land and many people died of starvation due to bad harvests and inflating prices on goods. This novel specifically describes the life of a woman, Rukmani, and how her family was affected and the activities she and her family had to perform in order to

survive. This work is very good in describing the life of a woman at this time and it will make you realize the hardships that these people had.

There are several traditional values that are handed down to an Indian couple that are expected to be followed and continued. First of all the biggest tradition is that the parents choose whom their children will marry. Upon discussion with another child's parents they choose who is going to get married to one another. In the novel, Rukmani's and Nathan's parents decided they were good for each other so they set them up to get married.

After marriage, more of these values are expected to be carried on is the way the family decisions are made and the ways things are done. The male is known as the authority figure in the family. An Indian woman has to abide by what the men say and basically allow him to run the show. This does not say that he has no responsibilities, because that is wrong by all means. He has a responsibility to support the family and show the children how to work the fields and support the family.

It is essential for a woman to have male children to continue these traditions. The males are needed to work on the farms to help support the family and even more importantly, to maintain and keep the farms up and running. In Rukmani and Nathan's case, Rukmani had a baby girl named Ira. This did not meet the standards of a typical Indian family so she continued to try and have another baby but failed. For the next few years she was unable to have a child. When she realized nothing was working, she secretly went and visited a doctor by the name of Kenny. Kenny did what he had to, to allow Rukmani to have more children. When Ira was seven, Rukmani's first male child was born, Arjun. She continued to have children, all males, until she had a total of six. Nathan now had males to help him farm the land and continue these family traditions and values.

With all of these men in the family it looked like it was going to lead to a very successful family until modernization and industrialization came into town. At this time a Tannery came to the village. This was thought as a good idea for some people in the town but Rukmani and Nathan saw it as a bad thing. Their two oldest sons left the farm to go and work in the Tannery. This caused problems and concerns for the family because they thought that they would be looked down upon by the people in the town for not keeping the typical Indian family traditions up. Rukmani and Nathan did not totally agree with this decision of their children leaving the family farm to go work for a business in town, but it was going to give them the much-needed money that they were not receiving on the farm. All of this occurred during a time of trouble for this family. The farm was not producing enough crop for all of the family to survive so when the two oldest decided they no longer wanted to live like this it really was not argued.

While these two men went to work in the Tannery others were getting jobs elsewhere as well. One of them went to work in a hospital and another went and lived in another household and worked for them as a servant. The youngest male of them all died in the midst of all of this of starvation. The family was in such trouble at this point that trying to continue the traditional values would of lead to complete destruction and death of the family. Instead they realized that they had to do what they had to do to survive and forget about the traditional values. Ira was unable to have any kids so she could not marry. She became a prostitute in order to earn some money to help her survive. This could was considered a disgrace to the family but she saw it as a way of making the needed cash.

As the children departed and went their separate ways Nathan had no one else to work on the farm. As drought came upon the land the family suffered greatly. There was not enough rice production to support the family's needs and to pay the landlord. Nathan

eventually lost the farm because he couldn't pay the rent. Nathan became very sick and died. He left Rukmani by herself. Rukmani's daughter and a son came back to her to help her survive and live.

*Nectar in a Sieve* is a novel that describes a woman's struggle to find happiness in a changing India. Social life today is now very different than the traditional life of yesterday. In India the society has tried to adapt to westernization and it has actually hurt their culture. The lives of many farmers were destroyed in this developing time due to inflation, bad weather, and modernization. Many people died or lost their homes.

As such, we can draw that women who work on farm are as exploited by men as the farms and the landlords. This is dualistic pattern of exploitation of female; by the male and the land, as well. The predicament of women and land is similar; hence they need immediate justice and attention to bring in a positive change. This can be done through the descriptive nature of social life and justice introduced to the social life and into the resources of society. The idea that Rukmani expresses as “it is not needed for a woman to address her husband except as husband” lay bare the mentality on how the level of exploitation has become the way of life to the Indian women (10).

This encounter is thus a turning point, not only in their relationship but in Rukmani's ability to speak up for herself. When she is cast adrift in the city, she relies on these newly developed skills to set herself up, first as a letter-writer and then, with the help of a street-wise boy, as a stonebreaker in a quarry. This ability to “make-do” sets her apart from other characters, like her neighbour Kunthi. Although at first Rukmani envies her neighbour's ability to “[throw] away the past with both hands that they might be the readier to grasp the present” (29), it becomes clear through the novel that blindly changing with the times is not necessarily the best



response. Kunthi, for example, ends up working in the sex trade to service the town men that the new tannery brings to their village—this is not the path Rukmani would have wanted to choose.

In India, it has the greatest significance for tradesmen and businessmen where the role of female is more than a wife and housekeeper. While their detailed attention to these domestic elements again illustrates the highly-guarded stakes of representation, critical fixation on Markandaya's authentic narration initiates a conflation that persists in South Asian literature. In their attempts to correct the literary representation of the rural peasant woman, these critics instantiate a parallel authenticating discourse whereby the Indian female writer is expected to present her readership with unmediated, authentic, and verifiable details on the life of the native other.

By the end of the novel Rukmani has lost nearly everything. After being evicted from their land, she and Nathan head to the city in hopes of living with one of their sons who had left the farm in search of work years ago; they never do find him. Immersed in the chaos of the city, they feel alienated. They are suddenly without a home, a community, or means. Rukmani then makes two significant responses to this downturn in her life. The longing for the rustic life draws their attention and their soul wants to unite with the farm and the village. People find solace in the remembrance of the sad old days, hence, there is this saying – happiness is temporary, sufferings permanent.

Rukmani's decision to return to the land can best be understood in the framework of her mental level of struggle she has been opting for years. For, she wants to rest on the very place she spend her life – the sweetest moments are of the hardships of life. The second, her decision to adopt a homeless boy, takes us back to eco-feminism through her commitment to an expanded notion of community. By rejecting the aimlessness and anonymity of the city in favour of the hard life on the land, Rukmani gives voice to one

of the greatest trends – back to nature to be coming in the twenty first century. There is no denying that this century will draw people to eco justice and females are going to lead this movement.

In the face of the existing social injustice being borne by women, *Nectar in a Sieve* awaits corrective measures to explore social and environment justice can be restored to females and land. Without ensuring that females and land are treated with dignity and in line with natural balance, the whole cycle of nature will be at stake.

### III. Exposition of Injustice to Women and Land

By revisiting lack of justice to nature and female, certain notions are reestablished. First, as the Nepali adage says, *chori ko janma, phute ko karma* (female's birth is of cursed life). Rukmani, the lead female character, may initially appear to embody a simplistic life in tune with nature; but, has had lifelong days of scarcity and sufferings. There is no end to her sufferings and woes for the challenge laid in her simple pastoral life seems to have no end, like the Nepali saying 'female's birth is of cursed life.

Secondly, land the lifelong friend of peasants has often been the source of uncertain life, and with the growing urbanization, the yields farm brings is hardly enough to serve the basic needs of a family. To humble tenant occupancy Nathan and Rukmani, land is the gyre of their life; but, only to be bring in them a life-long series of woes and sufferings. The striking facet of the novel is female and land both are the primary victims of injustice and discrimination imposed on them.

However, there is no guarantee that her life will be facilitated after all those years of futile struggle for decent food and residence. It is contrary to the fact that tenant farmer, in these days prefer to end their life, rather than struggling in line with Rukmani. If we understand urbanization and industrialization as strategies—that is, ways of organizing people and resources and space that therefore produce power—then turning her back on property, paid labour, and the city becomes a way of embracing her own absence of power.

*Nectar in a Sieve*, the heroine, Rukmani, is forced onto the threshold of a rapidly changing India marked by the centralization of power, increased economic activity, and urbanization. Unlike her neighbours, who threw the past away with both hands that they might be the readier to grasp the present, Rukmani stood by in pain, envying such easy reconciliation. *Nectar in a Sieve* chronicles Rukmani's attempt to retrieve and recuperate

those elements of her rural life that she feels most deeply about, namely her sense of community and connection with the land. Her struggle to maintain dignity and control over her life reflects some of the complex ways in which rural women of India negotiate with their social, economic and physical desires. By emphasizing Rukmani's movement towards becoming an active agent in these negotiations, picture of a stereotypically passive peasant woman of India is drawn. Rukmani is still the face of those millions Indian peasants whose life starts and ends in and around the farm.

There is a stark relationship of hardship, difficulties and struggle of life based on farm and its vicinity. Rukmani in discussions with Kenny, the White man sharpens her social critique and develops her own perspective on India's future. Most importantly, relationship between rural women of India and the environment are at stake, for they are heavily misused and exploited. Rukmani and her husband are rice farmers and her relationship with nature, like his, is thus mediated through their labour, but then they are deprived of the fair part for their life-long labour on the field. In true words, the social and environmental justice is denied to female and land.

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