

LOVE AND SENSUALITY IN A HANDFUL OF RICE

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ABSTRACT

Kamala Markandaya, the renowned novelist of Indian Diaspora, was born in a blue-blooded family in Mysore in 1924. She is an exceedingly productive author.

In the novel, she deals with the theme of love, femininity and sensuality. It is replete with the scenes and metaphors of love-making. Most of the descriptions are inventive, but sometimes they reflect impropriety.

Sensuality means connected with the physical feelings giving gratification to the physical senses, especially sexual pleasure. So the sensuality in the novel is crystal clear.

Ravi, the hero, falls in love with Nalini at the first sight. Jayamma, Ravi's mother-in-law, is infatuated with Ravi. Her infatuation towards Ravi noticeably depicts vulgarity because it is not feasible in Indian society.

So the research paper would try to describe the panorama of love and sensuality. It would deal with decency which is concerned with the realities of life.

Keywords: Sensuality, Diaspora, decency, vulgarity, infatuation and metaphors

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FULL PAPER

Kamala Markandaya, recipient of the National Association of Independent Schools Award (USA) in 1967 and the Asian Prize in 1974, was born in Mysore in 1924. Her father was a transport officer. She toured far and wide and mastered much depth in Western civilization. So the descriptions of different cultures are noticed in her novels. She was married to John Taylor. To see Kamala's advancement of mastermind, art and technique, we must have a bird's eye-view of her novels. The main premise of her novels is- love, sex, hunger and poverty. Her novels seem to be very reflective of the awakened feminine sensibility in modern India as she attempts to project the reflection of the varying traditional society. She merits a special mention as representative of a major trend in the annals of the Indo-Anglian novel. In her novels, she not only flaunts a flair for virtuosity that orders and patterns her feelings and ideas, resulting in the production of a justly enjoyable work of art, but also, more vital, she projects the national image on many levels of aesthetic awareness. Indeed, her novels seem to be uniquely reflective of the national consciousness in its manifold forms with the characteristic sensibility of the modern, educated Indian woman. She has stalwartly demonstrated love and sex in this novel. She depicts love in a broad-spectrum way in the commencement of the novel, but after some time, it is transformed into lust. The presentation of love turns vulgar that is not tolerable in our society. The novel is full of the prospects and descriptions of love-making. It deals with the love between father and daughter, husband and wife, mother and daughter and at last lover and beloved. Mostly these descriptions are imaginative, but sometimes they reflect vulgarity.

Ravi, the protagonist, is in love with Nalini from the initial sight. After the first peek, he steals momentary look at her when she is drawing her sari over the lower part of her face. He thinks that if any man gets such a beautiful girl, half of his problems are over. He daydreams about her dazzling eyes and chunky sleek hair. He wants to glimpse her. Whenever Ravi is in Apu's home, he is fervent to have a fleeting look on Nalini. One day he gets a golden chance to take a shufti of Nalini when someone has forgotten to shut the door that led to the courtyard beyond, and he gawks her sitting on an undersized wooden plank near the tap in the centre. He sighs:

...soft and flushed from her bath, dressed in a pink mull sari with her hair loose about her shoulders. It was like a curtain, her hair: a shining silk curtain that rippled and shimmered as the ivory comb worked down from root to tip. He hardly dared to breathe,

he was so taken by the beauty of it, her grace, the lovely movement of head and rounded arm that curved and lifted her uncovered breast. [34]

Ravi loves Nalini from the core of his heart. His love is chaste and devotional.

Nalini, his girl... the girl for whom he was ready to repudiate all in his life that was unworthy.... For her, he resolved everything would be different, he would be different. No act of his sully the wholesome quality he discerned in her, a kind of vulnerable purity that he wanted to enclose and guard. [33-34]

Ravi sighed, deeply, secretly with a profound sense of sacrifice. Ah, Nalini, he thought, Nalini. She was worth it, worth anything, even worth giving up the sweet life for. [40]

Consequently, Ravi's reverie comes true and he is married to Nalini. They have pragmatic and superfluous scarceness of decency. He was now exceptionally blissful to get Nalini. He was feeling thrust for her flesh that he is going to experience after his marriage.

He pressed her back on the bed and began caressing her... it was everything he wanted, warm, soft, long, fine, supple legs, a belly that arched under his hand, and a skin like satin- he heard himself cry out as he covered her, spreading her thighs to receive him.... In the morning he – looked for it – there was blood on the bed. [64]

He crushed her hands between his. Sometimes he thought he would burst, so great was his love for her... but now she was beginning to respond to him, making love as he, encouraged by her willingness, taught her to, learning to abandon herself, to give her body without shame to him to do with as he willed, so that now instead of a passive submission they came together joyously. [66]

Ravi and Damodar also know the prostitutes who are roaming in the town. They have a gag and amusement with them. The prostitutes scarcely hassle to draw the clothe of their saris over their breasts; and they are seen riding on a rickshaw at night on the Marina between Mylapore and the Fort, hidden behind grimy white drapes in perverted semblance of the habit of a nun. Ravi had physical relation with numerous women.

He (Ravi) had had women before – a dozen, a score procured for him at first by Damodar, later on his own initiative. [63]

The novel has also the account of incest. Once he turned feral and we are dumbstruck to see that he rapes his mother-in-law.

But her face was luminous in the moonlight, her eyes wide and brilliant, the whites showing, closing, and he was lost, in soft enveloping flesh that tossed away past and future, wiping out pain and unhappiness, and all his waking and sleeping terrors. [221]

Jayamma, Ravi's mother-in-law, is also infatuated with Ravi.

She knew that what really troubled her was the lust that had risen in her like a tide, the surging exultation that glugged her as she felt her blows falling on his flesh. [55]

Sometimes, Ravi beats Nalini, Jayamma is first fretful for her daughter, but as soon as she realizes that there are no existent injuries, she holds peace.

She shivered a little thinking of Ravi's masculinity, and there was even the seed of a thought in her mind, though she would not let it grow, that in her daughter's place she would have welcomed her wounds. [188]

Ravi has also an immense astonish on the room sharing of Puttana and Thangam with their parents.

He (Ravi) wonders how could they manage to impregnate Thangam for the second time in such a crowded house...while Puttana who could scarcely support the child he already had, who seldom had any privacy in the quarters he shared away and asleep with Apu and Jayamma, had somehow succeeded under cover of shawls and coverlets in impregnating his wife. [91]

So it is crystal lucid to us that the novel candidly deals with the theme of love and sex. The descriptions of love between Ravi and Nalini are appreciating and pleasant, but sometimes they encroach upon decorousness. Sex and sensuality are the realities of life. Sometimes the descriptions of love between Ravi and Jayamma show vulgarity that is never acceptable and

reasonable in Indian society. The novelist is also apprehensive with the realities of this facet which cannot be destabilized.

WORKS CITED

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