

MODERNIST APPROACH ADOPTED BY KAMALA MARKANDAYA IN NARRATIVE STYLE OF HER FICTION

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Abstract

Postmodern literature is characterized by reliance on narrative techniques such as fragmentation, paradox and the unreliable narrator and is often defined as a style or a trend which emerged in the post world war two era. Postmodern works as seen as a response against dogmatic following of enlightenment thinking and modernist approach to literature. It tends to resist definition or classification as a "movement". After Independence a new wave of post modernism was started among Indian English writers. Writers like Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri has given new style to English writing. Among them Kamala Markandaya emerged as a writer with unique and fragmenting tools in narrating her fiction. In character development, modern and post modern literature explore subjectivism, turning from external reality to examine inner states of consciousness, in many cases drawing on modernist examples in the "stream of consciousness", styles of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Cinematic vision and exploring the inner psyche of characters in the form of stream of consciousness has laid the foundation for the new techniques in English literature.

Keywords: *narrative techniques, Kamala Markandaya, stream of consciousness, post modern, cinematic vision*

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After the World war two there came a ripple of modernism in literature. Which hitherto exist paving way for more innovative literature. After Independence, Indian writers fulminated their imaginations, freed themselves from precinct of Britishers. Like them their imagination also get unfettered, dilated in literary scenario. Global literature inspired Indian writers, persuaded to concede modern literary style in their fiction. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayana, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapoor experimented in narrative style, tried to fit in emerging norms of literature. Today we are moulded in range of post-colonial, bringing in all social prejudices, cultural afflictions, patriarchal dominance, racism, casteism, class hegemony in fiction. Indian writers utilized the language of their colonizer to grief out their sufferings. Not only economically, people were also lacking in their demeanor and thought process. Post modern literature is not limited to any movement but has a wider acceptance in social, culture, economic and entrepreneur area. Taking into consideration author, text, readers, post modernism disseminated working reality of running generation. This brought a reliance on fragmentation, magical realism, paradox, unreliable narrator, flashback (reverie), cinematic vision, flexibility in narrative style of writers was armoured. Kamala Markandaya is one of renowned women novelist of post-independence era, known for style of narrative in her fiction. Now writers does not relying on primitive method of narration, new and modern techniques were coming. Writers are taking liberty in expressing their beliefs, no matter how much unorthodox it is. Beside employing consuetude of first person narration, second person narration, third person narration omniscient and non-omniscient, Markandaya utilized some unique narrative skill which make her stand out from her other contemporaries. Narrative style like flashback, cinematic vision, imagery, symbolism gave more depth to her fiction. Post modernism put a halt to the overbuild realism. Writers were finding reality but not on social or exterior basis but exploring interior reality. More concentrated on ensuing inner consciousness of characters and their state of mind. This leads to stratifying social perspective, author perspective, character perspective giving reader a three dimensional outlook for example, stream of consciousness style used by Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. To gulp in to the mind of characters, oozing out every pitfall of their life, going more close to their life. First person narration limits the understanding of fiction whereas using second person narration, third person narration expand the vision, gives perspective of characters who are part of story. Connecting events

and drawing them as picture in front of readers, it is the quality of Kamala Markandaya. Cinematic vision resides in her works as if we are watching a live movie and camera is rolling in front of us. She has infused her fiction with flashback as in *The Golden Honeycomb*, *The Nowhere Man* and *A Handful of Rice*. Flashbacks are used to link the present event with past event, any hidden secret having a direct reference to current situation and tends to change the direction of plot. Some other narrative devices, employed by her is dream sequence, flashback, dialogues, monologues, camera scene, movie scene.[1] Dreams are placed in the fiction to give indication of coming pleasant and unpleasant situations. One of dream we will find in *Nectar in a Sieve*, where Nathan visualise in his dreams. 'A Nightmare', he said sweating, 'I saw the paddy turned to straw, the grain lost. Oh God all was lost' (*Nectar in a Sieve* 84)

This dream sequence shows love and affection between Nathan and Rukmani. Rukmani consoles him and give him positivity. Narrating story through dreams, a new modern technique employed by Markandaya to connote character's personality. Nathan addresses here as a "good wife". There is warmth in their relation, Rukmani emerged as a courageous woman, who stands with her husband in his thick and thin.

Kamala Markandaya explores her scene and make it visually active in reader's eye. Her craft in giving readers an inward pleasure to imagine the scene to an extent, as if one is watching a movie, this is the real harnessing of this technique. Now come to Flashbacks or Recollection of memories, this leads to douse into the river of time. These episodes of flashback pave way for the future actions. This creates undergoing suspense in reader's mind holding his interest towards the story. One of flashback excerpts from *Some Inner Fury* is following:

"A whole year lies between us, which had hardly begun when we met and now a thing of the past, a whole struggle whose beginning we did not see, which used us and wrenched us apart and now is best forgotten." (*Some Inner Fury* 7)

Here narration showing the deep love of Mira and Richard. Time has separated them but the flame of affection still burning. Their inner pain of separation and tears of happiness can be seen in the above excerpt. Kamala Markandaya has also utilized stream of consciousness. Her characters board in the floating boat of imagination, waving here and there. One segment of *The Coffer Dam*,

"He had hated the war, who hadn't; but it was especially hateful to him because he was a builder, a man who drew his satisfactions from building what would last, who had brought a grim distaste to the task of destruction set before him like a dish of hemlock." (*The Coffer Dam* 1)

Being a builder Clinton loves buildings, architecture and hated war as they destroy building. Novel itself starts with construction of dam and Clinton is chieftain there. Through his stream of consciousness, readers will get to understand the characters personality. He also mentions about being part of war and how much and why he hated the war. Markandaya employed this technique to give a wider perspective to the reader.[2]

There is use of dialogues in her novels. Conversation went through dialogues give an innate pattern to decode the behaviour and cultural attributes of character. To go through the mind of people by unlayering of their inner consciousness. Through use of dialogues novelist gives her character exposure to speak up their mind. Constituent of statement and choice of words of characters betray their awareness of society. A dialogue between Rukmani and Nathan. 'Do you not think a man must choose his work?' 'Such a man as you is yes,' I replied. 'What then if his wife cannot accompany him?' 'Cannot?' I said 'She must. A woman's place is with her husband.' (*Nectar in a Sieve* 111)

This dialogic conversation between Nathan and Rukmani shows the societal framework, how men's are given choice and freedom in patriarchal hegemony whereas women are taken as subordinate. Men treated women not more than their shadows. All the needs, actions, wishes of women should take into consideration men before coming to the surface. Here Rukmani asking about the choice of work and in return Nathan asks her what if his wife cannot come with him. Rukmani replies that a women's place is beside her husband. The traditional thinking of Rukmani is depicted here. Another dialogic conversation from *The Coffin Dam* is excerpted here, 'What kind of things?' 'Oh ... people- all kind of things' 'Men?' 'Darling, no' He had raised her at last. 'There are no men.' 'The place is crawling,' he said, 'full of men. Altogether too many sods.'

'Then you've nothing to worry about, have you?' (*The Coffin Dam* 9)

This dialogue between Helen and Clinton takes place when they are going to fall asleep and Clinton inquiring what she do when he is not with her. Here we can see hinted mystery in his words. He had an idea that his wife goes with someone else in his absence. She assures him that there is nothing like that, and no need to worry for him, but actually later in the novel growing friendship between Helen and Bashiam, one of Indian technician, becomes a matter of problem.

Novelist has also used monologues and asides. Monologue takes us to the minds of character. It is unspoken voice of any character which he or she conveys through monologue. Each individual of fiction fights with his or her own battle. All intricacies of action runs into the mind of characters. These flow of thoughts novelist gives in detail through monologue and aside.

"There was a time-why, less than week ago, he said to himself queerly-when his life had stretched before him even and serene, and he could say with assurance that at this time in the morning he could be in the office that at such time he would wake with Sarojini by his side.." (*A Silence of Desire* 49)

This monologue is from *A Silence of Desire*, here Dandekar is talking to himself. His inner self is awoken, he can now perceive change in his life due to absence of his wife. To show the emotional turmoil of characters, monologues are employed and complexities of his disturbed mind is drawn. In asides, character does not talk to himself but novelist peeps into the mind of character how he or she will reacts in future, under any given circumstance. This is an indirect way of making character speak for themselves. Another quality of fiction of Kamala Markandaya is her photographic quality and cinematic vision to

make scene drawn in front of eye's of readers. About this Uma Pareswaran writes "I have repeated several times that Markandaya' s descriptions are photographically visual. The camera picks up exactly the right angle, zoom into the focus in sharpest detail the center of action." Her ability in portraying the image of scene or drawing live scene happening in front of reader is quite good and rare in Indian women novelist. One of paragraph from *The Coffer Dam*,

"With the sudden, peremptory plunge in to the darkness the arc lights grew strident again. The harsh explosive glare, like flaring naphtha, cut out and lit the whole scene sharply, giving it the blue-sheen edge of steel. Rocks and ravines assumed dual roles, their plane surfaces bathed in bluish light, the folds and pleats of the granite structure jet black by contrast, impenetrable and unknown. The river glittered, reflecting the agglomeration of lights in the valley except where the cliffs closed in over cascading waters in the narrow gorge." (*The Coffer Dam* 105)

Scene drawn here is of valley filled with darkness still lighted by effloresce here and there. River is in it's flow, shining by light falling on it. Here novelist has tried to touch our senses. Visual imagery and sound imagery both are illustrated. She has drawn the picture in detail with perfection using intensity of any shade of lights. Sounds of flow of river gives a sense of clattering of river. She scoop out the picture with her camera quality skills. Readers can actually visualise the image with effect of originality. There is depiction of cinema in her fiction. Nowadays movies are very popular in entertainment industry. Movies has always been a source of entertainment for people. Although reading of books will always remain and have it's charm living. It's not easy for any author or writer to make his or her work stand out from the rest of the works. Kamala Markandaya has special appeal in narrating her stories. She is a genius when it comes to utilising narrative techniques, her craft hits straight to the mind of readers and hold on his or her interest to the story. To make the people engrossed in reading of the novel, it is her skill in narration that readers get involved in the story. He or she uses his imagination while reading, to draw the picture of text, written with originality. Her core techniques is first person narration, second person narration, while other small devices used by her such as stream of consciousness, dream sequence, imagery, symbols, monologue, dialogue, aside, photographic quality, all these uplifts her narration. This gives an enjoyable ride to the readers while reading the novels. The following excerpt is from *Nectar in a Sieve*:

"It rained so hard, so long and so incessantly that the thought of a period of no rain provoked a mild wonder. It was as if nothing had ever been but rain, and the water pitilessly found every hole in the thatched roof to come in, dripping onto the already damp floor. If we had not built on high ground the very walls would have melted in that moisture. I brought out as many pots and pans as I had and we laid them about to catch the drips, but soon there more leak than we had vessels ..' (*Nectar in a Sieve* 41)

Here Markandaya has employed first person narration, Rukmani is the narrator of the story, tells us about her sour experience of heavy rain, which made their life unliving.

They have to be ready to get out of this heavy rain, as water is entering their huts from every nook and corner of their ramshackle hut. They were so drenched in water that their every utensils was filled with water in order to avoid water filling in hut. Here scene of rain drenching of hut can be conceived through our fancy. [3]

Kamala Markandaya has utilised her narrative skill to voice out the opinion of her female protagonist in this male dominated society or we can say it is through her female characters, author is speaking her heart out. She overcomes the limitation of bringing in inner consciousness of women of village background by exploring and divulging in their mind through the stream of consciousness, aside and monologue techniques. There is no doubt that her craft lies in creating live characters before readers and dramatise the events with effective and realistic narrative.

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