

ISSN 2320-9283, Peer Reviewed International Journal, IJSD, Ranchi, India, Vol. 4(2), 2016.

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Quarterly (English)

**ISSN 2320 - 9283**

Apr. - Jun., 2016

Vol. 4

Issue 2

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## RAJA RAO'S KHANTHAPURA: A REFLECTION OF GANDHIAN POLITICS

Dr. Arun Kumar Singh

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Ever since the publication of Raja Rao's famous novel, *The Serpent and the Rope*, he has come to be increasingly looked upon as a thinker, a philosopher or a sage, and not really only as a novelist. And yet his first novel, *Kanthapura* is a political work and it presents the impact of the beauty of Gandhian politics on a village. There are indeed valid reasons to consider *Kanthapura* as a Gandhian novel and our purpose here should be to examine all these factors which account for its nature or identity as such. This novel was written at a time when both the national and international scenes were politically charged. Towards the end of the 1930's the struggle for independence in India had acquired ostensible speed and momentum. The whole country stood almost as one single entity and carried on the struggle for political independence under the undisputed leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi had his own pronounced political beliefs, and according to him, the end or objective was, in no way, more important than the means to achieve it. He believed in truth and non-violence, co-operation and fellow-feeling, and naturally so his political struggle was fundamentally non-violent and peaceful. Mahatma Gandhi was the one political leader who mixed up politics with religion and inspired absolute confidence in millions and millions of our countrymen. At any rate, the struggle for political freedom was getting more and more vigorous with the passage of time. The British rulers tried and devised every possible method to suppress this natural urge for political liberty. In the international field, the rumblings of World War were very much audible, and the British empire was about to get more and more involved in the panic and turbulence of one of the greatest upheavals ever to take place in the history of human race. The publication of *Kanthapura* in 1938 has its own relevance and significance. No artist, much less Raja Rao, could manage to remain indifferent to the sharp turn of contemporary events. There was, thus a kind of compulsion or inevitability about the writing of such a novel as *Kanthapura*. Moreover, several Indo-Anglian writers had in the past written a score of political novels, and *Kanthapura*, considered from this point of view, may be looked upon as a great link in the tradition of Indo-Anglian political novels.

*Kanthapura* is a great village novel, but it is greater still as a novel depicting the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on the life of a remote and obscure Indian village, and what happens in *Kanthapura* under the impact of the Gandhian non-violent, non-cooperation movement, was happening all over India, in the lakhs and lakhs of Indian villages, during those stirring days from 1919-1930 when Gandhi transformed the entire nation in a single life-time into an army of disciplined and non-violent freedom fighters. There were at least three strands in the Gandhian movement- the political, the religious, and the social (including economic)- and the three have been woven inextricably into the complex story of the regeneration of *Kanthapura* as a result of the freedom struggle. It is not merely a political novel, but a novel concerned as much with the social, religious and economic transformation of the people, as with the struggle for political freedom.

In the first paragraph of the novel, Achakka informs us of the geographical location of *Kanthapura*:

Our village - I don't think you have ever heard about it- *Kanthapura* is its name, and it is in the Province of Kara.

High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar coast is it, up Manglore and Puttur and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugarcane. Roads, narrow, dusty, rut-covered roads, wind through the forest of teak and of jack, of sandal and of sal, and hanging over bellowing gorges and leaping over elephant-haunted valleys, they turn now to the left and now to the right and bring you through the Alambi and Champa and Mena and Kola passes into the great granaries of trade. There, on the blue waters, they say, our carted cardamoms and coffee get into the ships the Red-men bring, and so they say, they to across the seven oceans into the countries where our rulers live.<sup>1</sup>

Literary critics have, in recent years, begun to re-evaluate space as a category for analysis of fiction. While Bakhtin's famous "Chronotope" intrinsically linked time with its indispensable correlate, the burden of emphasis ever since has nevertheless fallen for the most part upon the temporal.<sup>2</sup> Looking closely at the above-mentioned paragraph, in page 1, the most notable aspect is its sense

## Metaphysical Elements in Raja Rao's Kanthapura

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### Abstract

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is out and out a political novel, but as we go through this novel a little critically, we come to realize that there are several metaphysical elements in this novel, and as such, it may as well be considered in depth as a metaphysical novel. Raja Rao is, besides being a mature and competent artist, also a serious and profound thinker. He has been interested as much in the philosophy of the East as in that of the West, and if we examine his writings carefully, we come to the inevitable conclusion that his attitude towards life, his whole orientation towards human problems has been, more or less, philosophical. It is not at all difficult to call Raja Rao a sage in the regular sense of the term among contemporary Indo-Anglian writers. In *Kanthapura* the political problem of India, is given a new twist and a new dimension; the emphasis is on liberation or freedom which necessarily takes us to the liberation or freedom of human soul. Political freedom is insignificant as and when viewed in the perspective of a higher kind of freedom, freedom relating to human soul. *Kanthapura* is full of metaphysical elements, and that is why it is considered as a metaphysical novel. It is a metaphysical novel in the sense that it vindicates the cause of inner freedom, inner liberation, and the liberation of the spirit which forms the fundamental theme of almost all philosophical and religious discourses.

### Introduction

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is out and out a political novel, but as we go through this novel a little critically, we come to realize that there are several metaphysical elements in this novel, and as such, it may as well be considered in depth as a metaphysical novel. There are three important reasons to prompt us to examine the metaphysical elements in *Kanthapura*. In the first place, Raja Rao is, besides being a mature and competent artist, also a serious and profound thinker. He has been interested as much in the philosophy

## A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THAT LONG SILENCE

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### Abstract

Shashi Deshpande is a potential feminist writer. Her novels *Roots and Shadows*(1983), *The Dark Holds No Terrors*(1980) and *That Long Silence*(1988) are the first three major novels and are genuinely concerned with women's issues. Trapped between tradition and modernity, her women protagonists undergo the thick and thin of life and face great mental trauma in their quest for identity before they affirm themselves. *That Long Silence* gives the portrait of a woman named Jaya who is a convent-educated English-speaking lady with a literary taste. In the beginning she is a loyal wife and a caring mother and in her zeal to play out the role of a loyal wife and a caring mother, she suppresses her desires and longings. She not only suppresses her writing career but also her association with her one-time neighbor, Kamal. But after a certain period of time she raises her voice against the straitjacketed role models of wife and mother, and rebels against the suppression of the age-old patriarchal setup. The present paper aims at evaluating *That Long Silence* as a powerful feminist novel.

**Keywords:** feminism, women, quest, identity, straitjacketed role, patriarchy

Shashi Deshpande is a leading woman novelist in Indian writing in English writing novels and short stories in English during 70's and 80's and she wrote seven novels and four collections of short stories. She is a serious writer genuinely concerned with women's issues. In her novels she has painted a realistic picture of the middle-class educated women who are financially independent, self-confident and represent a large part of the contemporary Indian society. Trapped between tradition and modernity, her women protagonists undergo great mental trauma in their quest for identity before they affirm themselves. Her novels deal with the problems of the adjustments and conflicts in the minds of female protagonists who ultimately submit to the traditional rules in the transitional society. Her novels contain much that is feminist. The realistic delineation of women as wife, mother and daughter, their search for identity and sexuality as well give us an impression of the novelist as a feminist writer. But Shashi Deshpande has been against her works being labeled as "feminist", as it has conventionally been considered as an inferior type of literature in the minds of people. She declares that she has not been influenced by the militant feminism of Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer, Betty Friedan and Kate Millet. She concerns herself with the women's issues in the Indian context. In an interview she tells Lakshmi Holmstrom:

It is difficult to apply Kate Millet or Simone de Beauvoir or whoever to the reality of our daily lives in India. And then there are such terrible misconceptions about feminism by people here. They often think it is about burning bras and walking out on your husband, children or about not being married, not having children etc. I always try to make the point now about what feminism is not, and to say that we have to discover what it is in our own lives, our experiences.<sup>1</sup>

We find women-centered narratives in her novels and this has prompted many interviewers to ask her as to what extent she considers herself a feminist. Shashi Deshpande says:

I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am a feminist. In my own life, I mean not consciously as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has come to me very slowly, very gradually, and mainly out of my own thinking, and experiences and feelings. I started writing first and only then discovered my feminism. And it was much later that I actually read books about it.<sup>2</sup>

*That Long Silence*(1988) is the third novel of Shashi Deshpande and an expression of the silence of the modern Indian housewife. The novelist won Sahitya Akademi Award for this novel in 1990. In this novel the novelist realistically depicts the inner conflicts of the heroine, Jaya and her quest for self or identity. Jaya raises her voice against the straitjacketed role models of

language, literature political and administrative issues. Though Buchanan do not refer to political history of the land, somehow few curious aspect, which he might have heard from the people are documented.

Surprisingly both are not historians. But both these authors have presented volumes that contain volumes of information. One was a Botanist, another an educationist. Irony is the historians of the past, present and future cannot compose their works without refereeing to these volumes. Comparison between them is quiet an impossible task.

To conclude these two authors have an immortal place among the writings on history of Mysore. Writers on Mysore, Malabara, Coorg and Canara should be grateful to these two authors and their voluminous information. Reference to Francis Buchanan, and Benjamin Lewis Rice is not accidental but an essential part of the study and writings of historians. Their gazetteers has set a standard for future writers, as they have provided more than sufficient material for study and reference

**Notes and references:**

1. Francis Buchanan Journey From Madras, Mysore, Canara and Malabar. Vol-1, London 1807, p-vii-viii
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3. B. Lewis Rice, op citi p-x.
4. Francis Buchanan, op citi p-vii.
5. Francis Buchanan a fellow of the Royal Society of London and the Fellow of the Society Of Antiquities of London, and served in Medical Service of the East India Company.
6. Francis Buchanan, op citi, p- viii.
7. B. Lewis Rice, 'Mysore A Gazatteer, vol-1, op citi, p-x-xi
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10. B. Lewis Rice. voll



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## Relative Value of Violence and Non-violence in Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges

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Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges is one of the most remarkable contributions to the corpus of Indo-English fiction. The very title of the novel is so striking and significant. This novel may be looked upon as an epic in prose inasmuch as it has political, philosophical and symbolical implications. The title, A Bend in the Ganges, takes us to Valmiki's Ramayana in which Lord Rama, after having crossed the Ganges in the course of his journey to forest, asks Lakshman to look back and see the land on the other side of the Ganges which they are leaving for fourteen years. Manohar Malgonkar invites us through his novel to have a look at the land in which we are living and which is plagued with tensions and conflicts. A Bend in the Ganges is a political novel because it tells us about the struggle that our countrymen undertook for the sake of liberty and freedom. It is a philosophical novel for the reason that it strikes us as a debate on the relative value and merits of violence and non-violence. It may as well be interpreted as a symbolical novel because certain vital issues relating to human life have been discussed in it through images and symbols. A Bend in the Ganges is indeed a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted novel.


The novel deals with the anti-colonial struggle between the British and the Indians. The people of India started the Quit India

## TAGORE'S GITANJALI: SONGS OF DIVINITY AND HUMANITY

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## ABSTRACT



It goes without saying that Rabindranath Tagore is perhaps the most outstanding and the most widely-known among Indian poets. As a poet Tagore seems to have been influenced by the ancient Indian texts such as the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Puranas* as also by the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. It is natural that he imbibed a good deal from these sacred and venerated writings, and the kind of cosmic vision, spiritual profundity and a sincere search for truth that we get in them may very well be associated with Tagore's poetry. It is rightly pointed out to us that Tagore was influenced to a great extent by such philosophical poets as Chandidas, Nanak, Kabir and Meera, and there are positive traces of their influence in his poetry. Significant poets like Jaidev, Chandidas, Kabir, Tukaram and Surdas made lots of contribution to the growth and development of Bhakti or devotional poetry and *Gitanjali* is written in this tradition. Tagore is a humanist and his *Gitanjali* is steeped in humanism. No doubt, *Gitanjali* is a religious poem, but the greatness of this religious poem lies in its humanistic appeal.

**Keywords:** *Spiritual, Soul, Quest, Divinity, Vision, Humanity.*

## Citation:

- APA Singh, A.K. (2016) Tagore's *Gitanjali*: Songs of Divinity and Humanity. *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL*, 3(4), 16-20.
- MLA Singh, Arun Kumar. "Tagore's *Gitanjali*: Songs of Divinity and Humanity." *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL* 3.4(2016):16-20.

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## QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS*

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Dr. ARUN KUMAR SINGH

### ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande is a leading woman novelist of the 70s and 80s. She has written seven novels and four collections of short stories. As we go through her novels a little critically, we come to realize that her novels contain much that is feminist and that she has genuine concern for women and that she gives a pen-portrait of a realistic society of the contemporary middle-class, educated, urban Indian women. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is the second novel of Shashi Deshpande and the novelist portrays the protagonist Sarita and her frustrations, her awareness of the problems, her recognition of the crisis in her life and her efforts at resolution. Sarita or Saru is an educated, financially independent, middle-class wife. She is made conscious of her gender as a child. She has loveless relationship with her parents and she is deprived of parental care and affection and she lives a pale, loveless life. Her mother loves her brother Dhruwa, but hates her. Saru has strained relations with her husband Manu. She is terrified by her husband's beastly behavior at night when he intentionally humiliates and hurts her and his casual manner in daytime as if nothing has happened. All these events in her life impel her to go in the quest of her identity and the present study aims at evaluating Saru's quest for her identity amidst adverse circumstances in her life.

**Keywords:** conflict, tradition, feminism, quest, identity, individuality.

I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am a feminist. In my own life, I mean. But not consciously, as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has come to me very slowly, very gradually, and mainly out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings. I started writing first and only then discovered my feminism. And it was much later that I actually read books about it.<sup>1</sup>

Shashi Deshpande, a leading woman novelist of the 70s and 80s, herself confesses in an interview that she is a feminist. As we go through her novels a little critically, we come to realize that her novels contain much that is feminist and that she has genuine concern for women and that she gives a pen-portrait of a realistic society of the contemporary middle-class, educated, urban Indian women. In her novels

she has expressed the disappointments and frustrations of women, their quest for identity, their extra-marital affair, their great mental trauma, and finally their tactful assertion of identity within marriage. Her novels portray the problems of the adjustments and conflicts in the minds of female protagonists who finally give in before the traditional rules in the transitional society. In an interview Shashi Deshpande reveals that all her characters are concerned with their selves and they learn to be honest to themselves. The women in *Roots and Shadows* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* project themselves as women who are strongly interested in the quest for their identity and who do not bother for the restrictions imposed by society,

## LOVE ETHIC OF D.H. LAWRENCE IN SONS AND LOVERS

Dr. Arun Kumar Singh

Asst. Professor of English,  
Govt. College Bhaisma, Distt. Korba (C.G.)**Abstract**

D. H. Lawrence has been the most controversial figure in English literature in the twentieth century. But, since the end of the Second World War, there has emerged a growing consensus of opinion that he is the most significant writer of his time. He is usually known as the prophet of a particular kind of philosophy in respect of love. His classic novel, *Sons and Lovers* is interpreted as an expression of his love ethic and the present paper aims at analyzing the love ethic of Lawrence in this novel. *Sons and Lovers* is an autobiographical novel because the hero of the novel, Paul Morel and Lawrence believe in the same philosophy of love. Love is neither all spirit nor all flesh; according to Lawrence, as according to Paul Morel, it should have the warmth and dynamism of body and the sincerity and selflessness of spirit. Paul Morel's case is highly representative; his Oedipal love is repelling, his love-relationship with Miriam is frigid, and his association with Clara has its own angularities. He moves on and on towards life and light in search of a love that would satisfy not only his body but also the hunger of his soul. In other words, Paul is in search of the baptism of passion that would invest his whole being with a new consciousness. It is this awakened consciousness of the fullness of being that forms the nexus of Lawrence's love ethic.

**Keywords:** Oedipus complex, love, mother, spiritual, physical, maturity.

The point of central importance in any discussion of D.H. Lawrence as an artist is the nature and level of his love ethic. A number of critics and scholars have devoted a good deal of their attention to this particular aspect of his fictional writing. Lawrence has been much maligned on this score; his case has been misconstrued and misinterpreted, and it is really both unfortunate and misleading that he has been portrayed as a novelist obsessed with dark passion, uninhibited and wild, who is supposed to believe in a perverse freedom of sex. The crux of the whole matter, however, lies in the fact that unless we understand Lawrence's love ethic properly, it would not be possible to understand and appreciate him as an artist in an adequate manner. He is a kind of writer who derives directly from life. "His voice", says Cecil Day Lewis, "seems to come out of the blue, reminding us of nothing we have heard before."<sup>1</sup>

We have to start with the basic assumption that Lawrence is essentially a religious artist and that all his work is governed by religious ends. It is true that he believes in life-force or what is otherwise known as vitalism, and that, according to him, the goal of life is or should be the achievement of organic wholeness or full, spontaneous being. This is the core of his message, and, interestingly enough, this is also the cause of his commitment to the novel. Lawrence is of the view that man has to undergo a passionate struggle in order to be able to achieve organic wholeness, and organic wholeness or full spontaneous being, in its own turn, implies an emergence from some partial or mechanical state of being. Lawrence distinguishes genuine love from counterfeit love, and says that while true love involves the nourishing, sacred flow of life between man and woman, counterfeit love is always destructive and exhausting. The novelist believes that love



## Portrait of a Hill-Waif in Mulk Raj Anand's Coolie

Dr. Arun Kumar Singh  
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### Abstract

Mulk Raj Anand has been championing the cause of the oppressed and the down-trodden with great vigour and conviction. *Coolie* is his second novel and in this novel he gives us a pen-portrait of a hill-waif named Munoo. This novel is Munoo's odyssey from innocence to experience, from adolescence to adulthood, from the village to the city, and from life to death. The novelist raises the hill-waif to the status of a hero and invests him with dignity also. Munoo is a boy from a village in the Kangra hills; he is an orphan; he loses his parents at a very early age, and his ancestral property has been grabbed by the village landlord. He is being looked after by his uncle and aunt. His uncle brings him to Sham Nagar to work there as a domestic servant in the house of Baboo Nathoo Ram where he experiences hunger in the belly and emptiness in his soul. At Daulatur he receives love and comfort in ample measure from Seth Prabha Dayal, but happiness is an occasional episode in the general drama of pain. In Bombay, the great metropolitan city of wealth and glamour he works as a mill-labourer, is rebuked almost as a leper and is overpowered by the forces of communalism. At Simla he is employed as a domestic servant in the house of an Anglo-Indian lady named Mrs. Mainwaring. Moreover, he works as a rickshaw-puller. It is because of overwork that slowly but surely the

flame of life passes out of his body. Munoo dies at the age of sixteen, at an age when a boy is supposed to have the radiance of youth and the glow of spirit on his face. Munoo is essentially a tragic character who inspires pity but no horror. Through the portrait of a hill-waif the novelist lays stress on humanism, on the sanctity of spirit, on the dignity of the individual and on the healing quality of love and affection.

**Keywords:** poverty, exploitation, hunger, humiliation, death.

Mulk Raj Anand was an Indo-Anglian novelist of great merit and distinction. He was a prolific writer; he wrote nearly two dozen novels and more than eighty short stories. *Coolie* is his second novel; truly speaking, his first novel, *Untouchable*, his second novel, *Coolie* and his third novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud* constitute almost a fictional trilogy. The main burden of Anand's fiction may be identified as the exploitation of man by man, and though in this connection he does also consider such related issues as casteism, communalism, feudalism, industrialism and other varieties of hypocrisy and social injustice, the main theme of his creative writings, in various ways and forms, is the conflict between obscurantism and progressive outlook. It is this very theme of socio-economic and political inequity and discrimination that Anand renders in the form of engaging stories, and it is this very theme of man's exploitation by man that does also run through his novel, *Coolie*.

"Anand's attacks, on political as well as social and economic institutions, are carried out mainly on behalf of India's poor, in the effort to destroy forces inimical to their development, and to build a world of freedom and equality where human potential can flourish."<sup>1</sup>

Anand's first novel, *Untouchable*, deals with the age-old ghastly evils of untouchability which has deep roots in the Hindu hierarchy, and his second novel, *Coolie*, is based upon the aspects of class struggle, social injustice and psychological

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flame of life passes out of his body. Munoo dies at the age of sixteen, at an age when a boy is supposed to have the radiance of youth and the glow of spirit on his face. Munoo is essentially a tragic character who inspires pity but no horror. Through the portrait of a hill-waif the novelist lays stress on humanism, on the sanctity of spirit, on the dignity of the individual and on the healing quality of love and affection.

**Keywords:** poverty, exploitation, hunger, humiliation, death.

Mulk Raj Anand was an Indo-Anglian novelist of great merit and distinction. He was a prolific writer; he wrote nearly two dozen novels and more than eighty short stories. *Coolie* is his second novel; truly speaking, his first novel, *Untouchable*, his second novel, *Coolie* and his third novel, *Two Leaves and a Bud* constitute almost a fictional trilogy. The main burden of Anand's fiction may be identified as the exploitation of man by man, and though in this connection he does also consider such related issues as casteism, communalism, feudalism, industrialism and other varieties of hypocrisy and social injustice, the main theme of his creative writings, in various ways and forms, is the conflict between obscurantism and progressive outlook. It is this very theme of socio-economic and political inequity and discrimination that Anand renders in the form of engaging stories, and it is this very theme of man's exploitation by man that does also run through his novel, *Coolie*.

"Anand's attacks, on political as well as social and economic institutions, are carried out mainly on behalf of India's poor, in the effort to destroy forces inimical to their development, and to build a world of freedom and equality where human potential can flourish."<sup>1</sup>

Anand's first novel, *Untouchable*, deals with the age-old ghastly evils of untouchability which has deep roots in the Hindu hierarchy, and his second novel, *Coolie*, is based upon the aspects of class struggle, social injustice and psychological

## The Theme of Hunger in Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve

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### Abstract

Hunger is a widespread phenomenon in India. It is the theme of several short stories and novels written by Indians in English and in regional languages. Hunger is the predominant theme in the first novel of Kamala Markandaya, *Nectar in a Sieve* and the present paper attempts to analyse the theme of hunger and the concomitant theme of human degradation in this novel. Struggle for survival of the poor in a society riven by marked inequalities seems to be an important motif in Kamala Markandaya's novels. In her first novel, the main protagonists, Rukmani and Nathan wage a losing battle with extreme poverty and hunger in a bid to survive somehow. They live in a society which is hell-bent on crushing the poor and the helpless. Hunted out of the village, where they have scraped their livelihood somehow as landless labourers, they are cheated and deprived of their meager resources in the city. Ruined though they are in their struggle against the hostile forces, they do not give up the positive values and remain unflinching in their allegiance to the moral values. In *Rukmani*, Kamala Markandaya creates a woman who possesses strength of character, vigour of mind and sensitivity. She is endowed with fine feelings. As the narrative progresses, the novelist shows Rukmani buffeted by the vagaries of fortunes. But she

cope. As the wife of a poor peasant, she accepts her fall from fortune with grace and dignity and reveals stoic acceptance of the inevitable. In her relationship with Nathan she learns the values of love, mutual respect and understanding.

**Keywords:** rural, poverty, hunger, degradation, flood, drought, industrialization.

Kamala Markandaya is a significant Indian-English woman novelist. She is a prolific writer. She has written ten novels and several short stories. Her novels are the dramatization of ideas and of a philosophy dear to her. She is a serious novelist with a deep sense of commitment to her art. This leads her to present her ideas in the best possible way so as to get her message clearly across to her readers. She tells herself that she is a painstaking writer:

I do write and rewrite and polish endlessly..... I could not tell you how I know, when to stop, having achieved the effect I wanted. I simply know that that is just right; and then I stop being haunted.

She has depicted several aspects of society in her novels. *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) is her first novel and this novel has been called her 'magnum opus' and it deals with the village and its poverty. In this novel the novelist projects a realistic picture of rural India in all its shades and details—famine, drought, excessive rain, struggle for survival, eviction, superstition, hunger and starvation. The village was supposed to be a place of idyllic existence and placid rhythm of life for the novelists before Kamala Markandaya. Venkataramani's *Murugan*, the Tiller projects the harsh realities of rural India, but it paints the idyllic life of rural India also. Mulk Raj Anand also deals with rural society in his novels, but he gives his novels a socialist bias and a humanistic orientation.

The real power of *Nectar in a Sieve* lies in its realistic portrayal of a village which is symbolic of rural India. The sub-title of the novel, "A Novel of Rural India", provides a clue to the novelist's predominant occupation in the novel

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## Hunger & Violence in Kamala Markandaya's A Handful of Rice

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Like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao who together form an important trio in the history of Indo-English fiction, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth P. Jhabvala and Anita Desai do constitute a trio among Indo-English female novelists. Kamala Markandaya occupies an exceptionally central position in the recent history of Indo-English novel, because even though she has lived in England for a long time, she writes only about India and Indian characters and situations in her novels. We may say that the first important aspect of the theme in her novels is the condition of rural India, while the other aspects of that theme may be identified as the Indian urban situation, the place of women in modern Indian society and the East-West encounter or the encounter between tradition and modernity. Her novels have nothing very experimental about them; she writes, more or less, in a conventional manner, and yet there is so much in them that we might be inclined to call them interesting and stimulating at one and the same time. Iyengar, appreciating her as an artist, writes, she can "evoke the scenes, the feeling, the action or the psychological state" with confidence and has not turned "her fiction into a formula."<sup>1</sup>

In the novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya we notice some sort of social purpose, and similarly Kamala Markandaya believes in social purpose of the novel. Though her commitment is not overt like

## Pursuit of Art in Anita Desai's In Custody

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### Abstract

Anita Desai is a remarkable female novelist writing in English. Her early six novels are characterized by a quality of introversion for she has been interested in capturing the atmosphere of the mind and she writes about the inner world of thoughts and emotions of her characters rather than their external world. Her novels have primarily described what goes on in the minds of her protagonists. The general tone in all these novels is that of despair. Her seventh novel, *In Custody*, came out in 1984. The tone of despair continues in this novel also. But *In Custody* is also a continuation of Anita Desai's earlier attempt to define the objectives of artistic creation and appreciation. *In Custody* reiterates the motif of the artist's commitment as well as the critic's. It postulates that the artistic sensibility should be deeply rooted in life, in the particular social context of which the artist is an integral part and that criticism should also approach art from this perspective. The novel gives us the message that pursuit of art may be painful and burdensome, but that it is also a great distinction and honour. Those who can, should keep it. In this novel Anita Desai expresses her views about art and the relation that exists between art and life. She is of the view that for the artist his personality is one thing, and his art another and that his art is not connected with his personality. His art may be

of the highest quality, but his life or his personality may be equally uncut and repulsive. Also, art is inseparable from life.

**Keywords:** art, artist, life, disillusionment, custody.

Anita Desai is one of the most outstanding female novelists writing in English. Although her name is generally associated with the names of Kamala Markanday and Ruth Praver Jhabvala, there is a fundamental kind of difference between Anita Desai on the one hand and these two novelists on the other. Kamala Markandaya is by and large interested in the rural and political aspects of India, and that is why she writes about the anxiety and poverty and helplessness of a large mass of the Indians. Ruth P. Jhabvala deals with the paradoxes and contradictions, the tensions and absurdities of middle-class Indian urban life, and she sees the Indian scene, more or less, in the context of East-West encounter. Anita Desai is interested neither in rural India nor in the political aspect of Indian life; her domain, her point of consideration is different.

Anita Desai is interested in the interior landscape of human mind. Writing, for her, is an attempt at discovery. In unmistakable terms she asserted her mission as a writer in an early interview with Yashodhara Dalmia:

One's preoccupation can only be a perpetual search—for meaning, for value, for—dare I say it—truth. I think of the world as an iceberg—the one-tenth visible above the surface of the water is what we call reality; but the nine-tenths that are submerged make up the truth, and that is what one is trying to explore. Writing is an effort to discover and then to underline, and finally to convey the true significance of things.<sup>1</sup>

Her characters, whether young or old, prefer aloneness to anything else; they are introverts, and they think that aloneness is a natural human condition. We may say that her novels deal with the emotional or spiritual experiences or traumas of her main characters.



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print); 2321-3108 (online)

## CONFLICT AND IDENTITY IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *ROOTS AND SHADOWS*

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### ABSTRACT

*Roots and Shadows* is one of the important novels of Shashi Deshpande and it was awarded the Thirumathi Rangammal Prize for the best English novel published in India during 1982-83. This novel explores the inner conflicts of its female protagonist Indu who is an educated, modern young woman. She aspires to become independent and complete, she tries her best to create her own identity or to assert her own individuality, but finds so many hurdles coming in her way. She finds dominant Akka and her family to be a great hindrance to achieving her goal of attaining independence and completeness. So she leaves the house and gets married to Jayant who is her own choice. She leaves one house and enters another to be independent and complete, but ironically enough, soon she realizes the futility of her decisions. She feels that she has achieved completeness with Jayant, but she does not want this sort of completeness because she feels that she has lost her identity after marriage. She has to continue the frustrating job of writing for the magazine just to keep her husband happy and satisfied. She faces intense conflicts in her mind and lays bare her soul as well as her body before Naren, her cousin. She indulges in sexual act with Naren with much wild abandon and cherishes it later without any guilt consciousness. She gains self-confidence after a series of conflicts or confrontations and it is with total understanding that she takes a decision to go back to Jayant. After a series of conflicts her quest for identity is complete and she hopes that she would do what she thinks right and not be dishonest to her inner self.

**Keywords:** conflict, tradition, exploitation, quest, completeness, identity

Shashi Deshpande is a leading woman novelist in Indian writing in English. She has written seven novels and four collections of short stories. In her novels she gives us a realistic portrait of middle-class educated Indian women who are self-confident, self-reliant and financially self-dependent. Such women are the protagonists of her novels, they get trapped between tradition and modernity, they undergo great mental trauma, they face the problems of adjustments and conflicts and then they go in self-quest or a quest for their identity. When they start their journey for self-

quest, they face sundry outer and inner conflicts, but they do not bother for the restrictions imposed by society, culture and nature and they get rid of their own fear and guilt. *Roots and Shadows* is the first novel of Shashi Deshpande and this novel depicts the tribulations and suffocation experienced by Indu, the female protagonist in a male-dominated and tradition-bound society. Indu faces confrontation or conflict with the family, with the male world and the society in general and amidst these adverse circumstances she goes in the quest of her identity and tries her best to assert her