

## NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN A HANDFUL OF RICE

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### ABSTRACT

The novelist, Kamala Markanday, was born in Mysore in 1924. She was admitted in Madras University at the age of sixteen. She went to England in 1948, but was unproductive in attainment of a job as a journalist. She was awarded the National Association of Independent Schools Award (USA) in 1967 and the Asian Prize in 1974.

As a matter of fact, the narrative technique in Kamala's novels is exceptionally fine. The authoress describes the illusory world she has created. She tells us everything about her characters. We unmistakably feel their behaviour, thoughts, feelings, psychology etc. She has created a set of characters about whom she is expected to know everything, but the human psychology is so multifaceted that it is unattainable for one person to know everything about an assemblage of characters even though he himself has created them. She competently fulfils this responsibility here.

The describing in this novel is in the third person. The novel has unexpected commencement, even narration, practicality, lyrical gorgeousness etc.

So the research paper would undertake to elucidate the technique of the telling of this novel.

**Keywords:** Illusory, thoughts, lyrical, practicality, multifaceted and competently.

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**FULL PAPER**

Kamala Markandaya, recipient of National Association of Independent Schools Awards (USA) and Asian Prize, was born in a well-heeled family of Mysore in 1924. She was a productive novelist and authored ten novels. *A Handful of Rice* is her fifth novel. This novel describes the premise of urbane economics and stands a comparison with *Nectar in a Sieve* which deals with countryside economics. All the characters in the novel are ably drawn, well developed and vivacious.

Kamala's intermittent utilize of the simple present tense for the present progressive again makes the language sound archaic and biblical, for though the progressive forms occurred in old English and in Middle English. Her manner of narration is as dexterous and resilient as ever, neat phrases dovetailed into one another, sardonic and compassionate by turns, building up a memorable image. She employs means other than transitivity patterns to devitalize the action. Dynamic verbs are nominalised and replaced by satire or relational verbs or other verbs that appear to be, more or less, lexically empty. English in her novels is insulting, arrogant and impatient with Indians, but they are also endowed with sterling qualities and the Indian characters pay tribute to them sometimes reluctantly and sometimes readily.

She communicates everything about the characters in a grown-up way. We can feel straightforwardly and evidently their thoughts, emotions, feelings, behaviour and psychology. She describes the imagined world that she has envisaged. She deems herself God in relation to the world. The characters that she has created are incredibly distinctive and psychologically multifarious that is not viable for one man to know everything about an assembly of characters even though she herself has created them. She adeptly executes the responsibility of narrating the story in a conventional approach. The telling in this novel is in the third person. The story has been narrated in a detached and wishy-washy comportment. But it is not affected from the clumsiness and it runs smoothly.

The novel begins unexpectedly. When it opens, we see that a policeman is chasing somebody.

The policeman was watching him. He let go the railing and walked as steadily as he could to the unlit turning in the road and waited. When he walked on, the policeman

followed; he had big boots on: probably a sergeant.... He ran, heard the man's sharp yelp, and gloated. Big boots was after him. [5]

Later on, it is unambiguous that the policeman was chasing a person named Ravi, who is the protagonist of the novel.

The flow of narration of the novel is even. All the events are dealt methodically. Firstly, we know that Ravi has spent hard days in his village. He is suffering from deficiency, unemployment and other basic facilities in his village. So he has come to city to take up any job. There, he gets a job as an assistant to an old tailor, Apu. He is doing his duty extremely well. Now he becomes a part of the family member. Meanwhile, he falls in love with Apu's beautiful daughter Nalini and eventually, he marries her. He was exceedingly glad on his achievement, but perhaps, for the time being.

Soon financial crisis creeps in because there are only two earning members in the joint family. In the meantime, Apu falls critically ill and lastly leaves this material world for ever.

Now Ravi has accountability to bear the burden of the whole family. So he wants to put up the prices of jacket, but Verma says that the business will fall away. After a long time, Ravi goes to Memsahib's house to give her clothes. She is extremely annoyed due to delay. Ravi tells her about Apu's demise, but she does not soften because she does not understand Indian social system. She even rebukes him for the ill-fitting of a blouse. She thinks that these people with their innumerable uncles, aunts and cousins are quite impracticable inhabiting in an impractical country. He comes back and is appallingly fuming. He quarrels with Nalini and beats her callously. He repents for beating his wife next day. The financial circumstance of the house deteriorates. He is extremely befuddled. He is depressing and mystified. He again tries to seek help from Damodar, a criminal, but fails to get any assist from him. Someway, Ravi has found a work in an infirmary, but remuneration is dreadfully stumpy. So the protagonist's ambitions are never fulfilled. He struggles from cradle to grave to have even a handful of rice.

The novel has introduced the authentic inconvenience of Indian society in a sensible and innate way. Poverty eats the people of Indian villages. In the villages:

They had all lived between bouts of genteel and acute poverty the kind in which the weakest went to the wall, the old ones and the babies, dying of tuberculosis, dysentery, and the 'falling fever', recurrent fever. [12]

Ravi comes to city getting rid of bucolic predicament, but he is disenchanted here seeing that there is no differentiation between a city and a village. He opines pragmatically on the crisis of joblessness:

The city was full of graduates- the college turned them out in their thousands each year- looking for employment. [27]

The difficulty of mounting population and accommodation is dealt realistically. It is palpable when the population grows, there would be redundancy and it will give the commencement of deficiency and it gives birth to hunger and starvation. So was happening in the opening in the novel when he comes to city and he is starving and looking for a handful of rice to douse the fire of hunger. Again after Apu' death, he is in agony and passing through a financial catastrophe and he sells many things from the house to gratify his and his family's hunger. He recalls that his father has a gigantic family, so is his.

He loves children extraordinarily. After marriage, Ravi desires for a child "preferably a son rather than a daughter." [92]

The novel is replete with elegiac magnificence. The language is catchy and impressive. Sometimes, it is embroidered with poetic prettiness.

Her skin, like his son's, was brown and velvety, so firm and fine that even when she smiled her lovely wide smile no lines appeared.... In the sun it was different again, the softest burnished bronze, and her black hair had inky blue lights in it. [155-56]

Occasionally, we come across the portrayal of scenery.

Ravi scuffed moodily at the withered flower- petals that littered the street. There were all sorts... roses, jasmine, chrysanthemums, or the feathery fragrant rosemary... he saw scattered the petals of sunflowers and Zinnia, and even the papery petals of the bougainvillaea creeper. [107]

Ravi sometimes recalls his undersized plot of ground:

... and how pretty that had been in season, golden swelling gourds among the vivid green vines. [107]

Indian jargon has also been used by the novelist. We come to know about bazar [market] girls who are 'two a penny'. Words like fifteen naye paise [paise in Indian currency], jutka [horse and carriage] sarr [headman], punkah [fan], burra sahibs [master of the house] etc. have been used without restraint.

The story has been narrated in wishy-washy comportment to retain the objective throughout the novel. No clarification has been suggested to any crisis. She entrusts the whole thing to the readers.

So the sequence of events technique of this novel is straightforward, captivating and imposing. She has productively employed the 'third person narrative' technique in the novel. She unearths the nuisance that is veiled in Indian culture and left them for way out to the readers. She dexterously weaves the proceedings in apt progression. She portrays every character in an exceptionally touching and traditional technique. The allegory 'rice' for 'poverty' is beyond doubt communicated to the readers. She has vibrantly pictured the Indian society through pragmatism, elegiac attractiveness and imagery.

#### WORKS CITED

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