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Fictional Works of Kamala Markandaya and Shashi Deshpande

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Abstract

Kamala Markandaya and Shashi Deshpande occupy significant positions in Indian English literature, particularly for their sensitive representation of women, family relationships, social change, and the conflicts between tradition and modernity. Their fictional works explore the complexities of Indian womanhood within changing social and cultural contexts. Markandaya's novels, including *Nectar in a Sieve*, *Some Inner Fury*, and *A Handful of Rice*, portray the struggles of individuals confronted by poverty, displacement, colonial influence, and socioeconomic transformation. Her female characters often negotiate between traditional values and the pressures of a rapidly changing society. Shashi Deshpande, through novels such as *That Long Silence*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Roots and Shadows*, and *Small Remedies*, focuses more closely on women's psychological experiences, marital relationships, domestic expectations, identity, and the search for self-expression. Her protagonists frequently question patriarchal structures and the socially prescribed roles imposed upon women. A comparative study of Markandaya and Deshpande reveals both continuities and differences in their treatment of female identity and social reality. While Markandaya frequently situates women's struggles within broader economic and historical circumstances, Deshpande gives greater emphasis to interiority, memory, silence, and psychological conflict. Their fiction consequently provides valuable insights into the changing position of women in Indian society and contributes significantly to the development of Indian women's writing in English.

Keywords: Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Indian English Fiction, Women's Writing, Female Identity, Patriarchy, Tradition and Modernity, Gender, Social Change.

