

Modernity Syndrome in the Females Protagonists of Kamala Markandaya

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Abstract

Kamala Markandaya occupies an important position in Indian English literature, particularly for her sensitive portrayal of women negotiating the tensions between tradition and modernity. This study examines the concept of “modernity syndrome” in the female protagonists of Markandaya’s novels, focusing on the psychological, social, cultural, and emotional conflicts experienced by women confronted with changing values. Her female characters frequently exist between traditional expectations and modern aspirations, negotiating questions of identity, independence, relationships, sexuality, economic security, and social responsibility. The study explores how modernization influences women’s consciousness and creates both opportunities for self-development and new forms of alienation and conflict. Characters such as Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve*, Mira in *Some Inner Fury*, Premala in *The Nowhere Man*, and other significant female figures reveal different responses to social transformation, colonial influence, changing family structures, and evolving notions of womanhood. The analysis emphasizes that Markandaya does not present modernity as an entirely liberating or destructive force; rather, she portrays it as a complex experience shaped by class, culture, gender, education, and social circumstances. Her protagonists demonstrate resilience while attempting to reconcile individual desires with familial and cultural expectations. The study concludes that Markandaya’s representation of female experience provides valuable insight into the changing position of Indian women during periods of social and cultural transition. Her fiction therefore offers a nuanced literary exploration of female identity, modernity, tradition, and the search for individual agency.

Keywords: Kamala Markandaya, Modernity, Female Protagonists, Indian English Literature, Women’s Identity, Tradition, Modernization, Gender, Female Agency, Cultural Conflict, Social Change, Feminist Perspective.

