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Feminist Perspectives in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar In A Sieve* and K. Surangkanang's *Ying Khon Chua*

Aungkanang Pailanon

Research Scholar

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English

Babu Banarasi Das University, Lucknow.

Abstract:

Feminism gives an expression to the suppressed voice of women in male-dominated society, known as patriarchy. Nowadays many women have made up a body of literature worthy of enquiry. Being female, women realized their own inferior status and they are trying to improve their own stature. Women have been oppressed in different countries, in different communities, races, and culture, and how these women reveal their exactly own identities through their voices. My paper will focus on feminist perspectives in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* and K. Surangkanang's *Ying Khon Chua* (*The Prostitute*).

Keywords: Comparative Literature, Feminism, Feminine Sensibility, Woman Status

Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant.

She pervades poetry from cover to cover, she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of the kings and conquerors in fiction, in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could hardly spell, and was the property of husband. (*A Room of One's Own*, 44)

It is assuredly affirmed that 'Comparative Literature' evolves two or even more than two literatures in comparison at the same time, considering the multi-dimensions such as linguistic, cultural, religious, economic, social and historical factors of different societies. Etymologically, the term 'Comparative Literature' denotes any literary works when compared with any other literary works in views of inter-relationship between any two or more than two significant literary works or literatures. Bijay Kumar Das has given this term in simply that:

The simple way to define comparative literature is to say that it is a comparison between the two literatures. Comparative literature analyses the similarities and dissimilarities and parallels between two literatures. It further studies themes, modes, conventions and use of folk tales, myths in two different literatures or even more. (Bijay, 1)

Historically, comparative literature has been a result of a reaction against the narrow nationalism of the nineteenth century scholarship in England. The comparative study of literary works nearly started from the beginning of the Christian era. Romans were the pioneers in the field of comparative study. They worked out the tradition of comparing the

works of great orators and poets of Greek and Roman and found out many similarities among their studies of literary works. Undoubtedly Quintillion was the pioneer in this concern, but Longinus endeavored to set the comparative study in systematized discipline. So comparative literature as a subject of study for analyzing the features of a work must keep a balance between expansion and concentration, make use of new tools and techniques.

Now comparative literature in India has a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi religious country. The critics argue that Indian literature though written in many languages yet it is one. Correspondingly Indian culture has a certain kind of unity in diversity. This unity in cultural, social and religious background of Indian society makes all literatures as. R.K. Gupta and Priyalakshmi quote:

If languages were in fact the decisive factor in determining the unity of a literature, then literatures written in a single language but in different nations would be regarded as one not as many literatures. But we know that this is not to be the case, English is primary vehicle of several national literatures - British, American, Canadian and Australian to name just a few and also a secondary vehicle of literary expressions in many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. If there can be several national literatures written in a single language, there can also be single national literature (including Indian literature) written in several languages. (Gupta and Priyalakshmi, 160)

Accordingly language is a cultural phenomenon conditioned by its locale and socio-historic forces in operation through ages. Every literature has its own specific character of form, style, images, symbols, nuances and associations etc. As mentioned above, Indian writing in English literature can be compared with Thai literature at par with western critical theories. Even if in fact they are written in different languages, all these literatures developed under the influence of different socio- historic environment. There are many similarities and dissimilarities among them. Therefore, in general principle, comparative literature is as the theoretic to move between cultures, languages, literatures, and disciplines, acquiring in-depth grounding in several languages and literatures. Its focus is to study literature in relation to other forms of artistic expression as film, music, the visual art, etc., in relation to other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences as history, sociology, psychology, etc., within the context of culture.

Indian writing in English has contributed to modern English literature. More specially, the history of Indian novels is interlinked with the Indian writers both in regional and English language. Indian writing in English and the novelistic tradition in the English language is a subject matter that had arrived precisely after the British and consequent Indian Independence. In 1930s, the emergence of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao was the most remarkable in the realm of Indian writing in English, known as the 'Big Three' of Indian writer. Initially the male writers have naturally dominated the field of literature with their stereotyped views of women in their works. In fact, Mirza Mohammed Rushra was the first portrayed the true picture of a woman in his work *Umrao Jan Ada*. Nevertheless, there has been little truth relating to the women's lives in these male writers' works. Indian women writers in recent decades have produced a lot literary works. They awaked the individuality of women as well as spiritual human.

After the Second World War, women novelists in post-independent period of India have flourished along with Indian writing in English. They have responded to the changed psychological realities of Indian tradition in terms of women suffering in male-dominant

society. These women writers like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and Bharti Mukherjee, convey psychological depth of Indian women to their writing. Whenever we talk about women's writing term feminism comes automatically in our mind. Feminism stands for woman's struggle against their continuing existence in the culture of the society under male domination.

In literary theory 'feminism' means challenging the patriarchy canons, deconstructing the phallogocentric creative and critical discourse, decoding gender as an organizing principle of experience and relating forms of feminine articulation to changing external circumstances and associations. (Prasad, 28)

Feminism has its origin in the struggle for women's rights which began late in the eighteenth century with the works of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Woman* (1869), and Olive Schreiner's *Women and Labour* (1911). The suffragette movement at the beginning of the twentieth century carried on the campaign. Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1972), Toril Moi's *Sexual and Textual Politics* (1985), Germaine Greer's *Thinking About Women* (1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of their Own* (1977), Juliet Mitchell's *Women: The Longest Revolution* (1966), and *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), Gayatri C. Spivak's French Feminism in International Frame have presented as well. Especially feminism has transformed the perceptions of life and literature. By creating the portrayal of woman, the various women novelists have presented feminist perspectives through women characters as re-discovered the real women identity as their own status.

By adding 'women' to 'literature,' this allows everyone in society to know exactly what women have been oppressed and suffered in their lives. In the beginning, the male writers have depicted women's emotions, feelings with male perspectives. Then women started describing their bodies and emotions. Hence feminist movement advocates for woman's right. The strong wave in the 1960s and 1970s awake to theorize woman's discourse. In the 1980s feminism concentrated on transforming the intellectual fields, and in the 1990s began playing a major role in directing academic focus on the concerns of 'otherness,' 'difference,' and questions of 'marginality.'

According to *Toward a Feminist Poetics*, Elaine Showalter gives that "The way in which a female reader changes our apprehension of a given text, awakening it to the significance of its sexual codes" and "concerned with the exploitation and manipulation of the female audience, especially in popular culture and film, and with the analysis of woman-as-sign in semiotic systems" (Showalter, 25). Hence the woman is the consumer of male-produced literature. Referring to Elaine Showalter's book *A Literature of their Own*, she has given the evolution of a female tradition and analyzed both American and European novels from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century. Her contention is that during this period women's writing has gone through three stages: the Feminine phase (1840 to 1880), the Feminist phase (1880 to 1920) and the Female phase (1920 to modern times). Hence Kamala Markandaya stands in the Female phase who is a woman as a writer rejects both imitation and protest to the male standard, value and culture. In this phase, these two forms of dependency turn instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature. And, it has also presented a distinct female identity, style and content.

With all of her novels, Kamala Markandaya is the post-independent Indo-Anglian novelist who is one of the prominent mid-century Indians writing in English. She is the distinguished writers in India. Because India is native place and after marriage she migrated to England. She belongs to an aristocratic Brahmin family of South India in 1924. And she married Bertrand Taylor an Englishman and settled in England. Hence her writings revealed the cultural interaction and synthesis of both countries. She is the one of those who has created awareness of Indianness as well as the differences in the East and West. Her works deal with evaluating the religious, cultural, political, and social contexts in which she lived. She has used themes of rural and urban scene, spiritual quest, and modernism

Among Indo-English women novelists, Kamala Markandaya merits mention by virtue of her achievement and feminine sensibility. She portrays the image of Indian women, greatness of motherhood, and the identity of women. That's why she can be called a feminist writer. She shows the woman who is struggling to find out her identity in the male-dominant world in the novels like *Nectar in a Sieve*, *Two Virgins*, *Some Inner Fury*, *A Silence of Desire*, *Possession*. She tries to portray the realistic picture of women through her characters.

In her first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*, she has proved that Indian rural women are strong and independent. This novel reflects the awakened feminine sensibility in contemporary India. She proves that the plight of the woman in rural India has a meaningful role in Indian society. At the same time, she has portrayed strong women characters who faced challenges of life. R. S. Singh praises Kamala Markandaya's involvement in India's social life that "Her critical acumen and feminine sensibility all of which contribute to bring her international fame through her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve*" (Singh 136). As the narrator of this novel, Rukmani is a typical Indian rural wife and full with motherhood. She is an idol of Indian woman. Also she has portrayed figure of universal mother. She represented Rukmini as modern women. Distinctly Rukmani is different from the Indian women of her time because she is literate and her husband supports her. She is considered as, enduring, devoted, sacrificing, loving, and forgiving mother figure. Undoubtedly Kamala Markandaya has had to step out of her own personality related to feminine sensibility through her works.

In Thai literature the topic of feminism has been taken by various writers and poets. Issues of gender, women's changing roles, and inequality between men and women had been increasingly debated in the public field and represented in literary works. In fact, the major of male royal novelists initially pioneered their writing such as M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, M.R. Nimitmongkol Navarat, M.L. Buppha Kulchon Nimmanahaeminda. After the Revolution of 1932, the changes took place in Thai society. Several women writers were born after those changes. The Thai modern women novelists such as K. Surangkanang, Botan, Chiranan Pitpreecha, have explored theme of identity. The rapid socio-economic and cultural changes brought an effect on Thai women's status. The images of Thai women changed after revolution they became strong, competent, and independent against patriarchal society. The Thai modern women writers started describing their bodies, emotions and sexual behavior. Hence these women writers established their place in Thai literature.

Name of famous Thai women novelist K. Surangkanang has been derived from a Thai classical verse *kap surangkanang* as her penname. She is a lady who belongs to a well-to-do family and her real name is Kanha Watanaphat. She is conspicuous women novelist who offered the manuscript of her newly completed novels to a number of Bangkok publishers. In all, she wrote over forty novels and almost a hundred short

stories. In 1986 she was honored with the title 'National Artist in Literary Arts (The Novel)'. All of her works have presented realistic picture of society. This brought innovation to Thai literature as the new direction of women writings. Especially her novels reflect social change, the transformation of society from feudal to a democratic one. The changing social values and western influence can be seen in life and behavior of her characters. Moreover, feminine perspective has appeared as the tragic lives of the women in most of her novels as her women characters are more important than male one. She portrays emotional, moral, and spiritual problems of the traditional Thai women. She also depicts the psychological sufferings of Thai women as oppressed by traditional and cultural norms of patriarchal society.

In *Ying Khon Chua (The Prostitute)* a Thai peasant woman has been portrayed in the context of Thai modern society. K. Surangkanang has made her female protagonist prostitute and central character in the novel. *Ying Khon Chua*, her third novel, is translated by David Smyth. 'The Prostitute' was published in 1937 and movie was made in 1955. K. Surangkanang attacks the double standards and social hypocrisies of society as prostitutes were lower than other men and women. Reun the female protagonist recognizes herself: "I'm just a country girl in my manners, and that I'm not much good at anything or hardly anything. But even so, I really believe that I am different from other people in one way, and that is in my sincerity and desire for your well-being" (*The Prostitute*, 21).

The story of a peasant girl, Reun who is tricked into prostitution, suffers and dies rather than compromising her lofty ideals and moral fortitude. This shook the morals of that time and brought the notoriety. Reun has inherited much of young K. Surangkanang's idealism but, at last Reun had to leave idealism and become prostitute. The plot of the novel follows the conventions of the popular romantic fiction of the day, but the style and realistic portrayal of Reun's exploitation at the hands of employer, rent-collectors, money-lenders, and child-minders reflect the serious intention of authors as raising the work above the purely sentimental. Especially *Ying Khon Chua* shows the women's hopelessness, regrets, and daydreams in greatly moral judgment. K. Surangkanang has projected her prostitute heroine with the heart of gold. So the story is narrated in the tragic-comic, black humored, socially sarcastic tone.

Khunying Chertchoam used to be a prostitute like you, but she was fortunate and happened to become a khunying, complete with title, money, and servants. Do you think that all these things – wealth, high rank, and three daughters – can keep her on the straight and narrow? Not a chance. Now, as we watch her sitting up straight and looking at us with such contempt, she is a high-class whore with no morals and no sense of loyalty to her husband. Do you see, Reun? You're better than Khunying Chertchoam who deceives her husband behind his back and then puts on a show of affection to his face. (*The Prostitute*, 153)

Comparative study of *Ying Khon Chua* and *Nectar in a Sieve* reflect the themes of new social forces, hunger, and rural peasantry. The plot and the character hold on a realistic portrayal. Kamala Markandaya has presented Rukmani as the central woman protagonist. Rukmani tells her story at reminiscence nearly ten years back as first person narrator by her own direct observations, feelings, and describing other character through her own eyes. Her voice has echoed directly and painfully in women, it is based on the traditional pattern of life in all over India. Rukmani is represented not only as the stereotype of rural Indian woman of peasant Hindu Family in remote South India village of fifties but also she is different from

other Indian women as she can read and write. Similarly, K. Surangkanang also portrays her woman protagonist as a rural girl Reun, who is innocent and pure. Both change according to changing time and situations. After leaving the brothel, she decides that she will not become prostitute. But she cannot do any works in public sphere because she is not educated. And, if somebody would come to know about her past, they will not allow her to live.

In terms of education, Rukmani and Reun are represented as the less educated women. Hence Rukmani's mother is illiterate who thinks that education for women is irrelevant that remarks "What use that a girl should be learned" (*Nectar in a Sieve*, 11). There is also a traditional biasness against education in the novel. This shows that there is no equal opportunity in education between men and women. In the 1960s, when the strong feminism wave started, this awaked a protest movement launched by women of the west for equal social, political, legal, and moral with men. If women had no education, they will not have strong voice.

From Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir to Jane Austen, women have been demanding their rights in male-dominant world. "Men and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in" (Wollstonecraft, 89). As liberal feminist concepts, it refers to the tradition classic expression in John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*. This has continued in various moderate groups like The National Organization for Woman which agitates for legal reform to improve the status of women. The liberation for women views as the freedom to determine their own social role and to complete with men on forms that are as equal as possible. It does this by enforcing 'equality of opportunity.' The liberal does not believe that it is necessary to change the whole social structure in order to effect on woman's liberation. Correspondingly, according to equality feminism, it focus on gaining equality between men and women in all domains such as work, home, education, law, etc. This argues that women should receive all privileges given to men. Although the biological differences between men and women, it do not means to justify inequality.

The significance of *Nectar in a Sieve* lays in the spiritual stamina of Rukmani, rural Indian woman who is against all traditional culture, draconian land lord and the soulless industry. She faced lots of obstacles and problems throughout her life because the condition of her family and her own children. Kamala Markandaya explores the emotional reactions and spiritual response of women and their predicament with sympathetic understanding. Her women characters are in search for real meaning of life. Rukmani is a woman of great fortitude, who is stronger than other characters. Her life is full of hopes and frustrations, pleasures and pains, rise and fall. Likewise, Reun represents a reluctant prostitute with a heart of gold who is a victim of a corrupted urban society. "She puts the pain and suffering out of her mind when she realized she would have to continue of face this life" (*The Prostitute*, 159).

As the conservative view, the differential treatment of women as a group is not unjust. They admit that some individual women do suffer hardships. But this suffering is not a part of the systematic social oppression. They rationalize the difference between women's and men's social roles in that the female role is not inferior to that of the male, and that the women are inherently better adapted than men to the traditional female sex roles. The inequalities between the sexes are both physical and psychological. The alleged psychological differences between the sexes include women's emotional instability, greater tolerance for boring details, incapacity for abstract thought, and proneness to submission. As in *Ying Khon Chua*, it points that "The word 'prostitute' made Reun sigh heavily as she lay

there in silence, her eyes closed and emotionally exhausted. 'Prostitute', 'whore'. The mocking, jeering words echoed in her ears. The happiness that was almost within reach brought with it great torment" (*The Prostitute*, 66).

In a sense of self-discovery, self is a psychological process that implies a sense of identity in both the individual and social dimensions. Relating to women psyche, the concept of self is raised as who am I? and how can I find out? They cannot identify themselves fully with others as men. According to Gardner Murphy, "Self is a center, an anchorage point, a standard of comparison, an ultimate real. Inevitably, it takes its place as a supreme value" (Gardner, 536). Also, Simone de Beauvoir has developed the concept of 'self and 'other' in her book *The Second Sex*. "For him she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (Beauvoir, xxii). In the sense of woman as Other, the category of the Other is as primordial as consciousness itself. This finds the expression of duality- that of Self and the Other.

Nectar in a Sieve describes the narrator Rukmani on the protagonist's stage of self-discovery along with a twelve years old young girl, a married woman, and then a mother. Relating to her identity, there are different relationships as a child bride, a young woman wife, and mother, connecting to her body and spirituality. Kamala Markandaya explores the impact of change in terms of human psychology as Lionel Trilling calls 'an integral selfhood.' She draws serious attention of her readers in which women find themselves in the stir of women-men relationships. Indira Gansion says in *Introduction of Nectar in a Sieve* that "by giving voice to the main character Rukmani, Markandaya gives us a woman who has great affect on us through not only the problems of rural life, but also the problem that she is a woman" (Gansion).

A woman's individual self has recognition and self-effacement is her normal way of life. An Indian woman too as a part of that set up has accepted it and lived with it for ages. The woman's silence is the silence under the calm, composed self is found the strong of pain and suffering. Violence is not her way. All through in the novel, Rukmani feels lost in the city. "I shall be where I was born and bred. The city is no place for me. I am lost in it" (*Nectar in a Sieve*, 177). She feels drawn towards her home in the village. It is the image of security, fulfillment for herself. It is the identification of the self with the old house in Rukmani's case. Just as in *Ying Khon Chua*, K. Surangkanang writes her Reun protagonist in search for 'self' or 'rediscover' her identity. Reun wants liberation from her womanhood because she likes freedom to think and decide for oneself. Her woman self struggles for freedom from the issues and problems after leaving from rural place to the city. Reun makes her lover Wit ponders over that:

On all the beauty and illusion he had encountered. She was a prostitute, it was true, but she had a heart beyond compare. Yet it remained difficult for anyone to see the goodness in her. The world would always condemn her as a prostitute, a brazen woman who sold sex for living. (*The Prostitute*, 221)

The traditional and cultural norms of society become a cage to trap her separately from real identity. They catch up in a conflict in moral between good and bad, and between individual aspiration and social norms.

In Freudian psychoanalysis, especially with the onset of feminist criticism, sexual difference plays a central role in the Freudian model. In the basic concepts of Freudian theory, psychosis is the outcome of a similar disturbance between the ego and the outside world. In Freud, though there are notions that the male/female distinction is based on biological difference, it is generally constructed as a distinction based on socio-cultural forces. Another notion in Freud is the idea of repression which is a storehouse of all unfulfilled desires or traumatic past events and experiences that are forces out of the conscious-preconscious into the realm of the unconscious. As both Kamala Markandaya and K. Surangkanang has projected her women characters as rediscovered, redefined, and asserted her real identity and recognition as person who stands in real status in society as the outside world.

Theme of marriage has been taken in *Nectar in a sieve*. In a sense of human nature, love is the tool which opens the treasures of happiness in the life of an individual. A marriage is a bond of two hearts to make it happy a successful. On the contrary, the marriage without love is suffering and that expresses psychological torture on women. As Rukmani and Irawaddy in *Nectar in a sieve*, both are the married young girls who had arranged marriage because of their parents. In India marriage becomes mental trauma for the family which has a girl child. An Indian mother accepts her responsibility to make her girl child aware of the society. Especially Kamala Markandaya explores the impact of change in terms of human psychology as woman psyche. Her female protagonist is shown mentally strong and qualitative.

However, Rukmani seems to silently bear all hardships and remain devoted to her husband as the mythical figures of Sita and Savitri. *Nectar in a Sieve* exposes the traditional attitude of Indians towards a female child at her birth. With the birth of her first daughter Irawaddy, Rukmani with tears of disappointment exclaims, "A girl's body—what woman wants girl for her first born?" (*Nectar in a Sieve*, 19). She supports her husband's view that a male child is an asset and a girl child is a liability to the family. In Indian society, Indians prefer the boy child because the son is expected to earn and pay back by looking after the parents in old age. Usually the male child grows up and commands a large dowry and continues the name of the family while all the money spent on a girl's education is considered a waste as the girl earns it will go to the husband's family. So giving birth to a girl means that the parents will have to buy a groom for her when the time comes.

Born of the village headman and married to a tenant farmer below her family status, but she speaks to her husband as "who was poor in everything but in love and care for me" (*Nectar in a Sieve*, 8). She feels proud of him as he is efficient in farming, in maintaining the household single and is a loving husband. Rukmani stands by Nathan in times of both happiness and suffering as the loss of their beloved sons, land, home, humiliations in the town, the grievance of their daughter and separate at last. Rukmani exhibits her tremendous power of tolerance and patience as she speaks her last words when she was dying to Nathan, "If I grievance, I said, it is not for you, who are my love and my life?" (*Nectar in a Sieve*, 187). On the contrary, K. Surangkanang has presented the love without marriage in Reun's character. Because of prostitution, Reun becomes the victim of traditional and cultural norms. She cannot raise her voice for her place and her identity. As her friend Samorn says that "He's never going to accept that you're the mother of his child. We're prostitutes, remember, Reun. We have to know our place" (*The Prostitute*, 72).

Literary works with a focus on prostitute and prostitution were not initially represented in Thai literature in public domain until the early decades of the twentieth century. There were a widespread availability and popularity that broke away from the court patronage and religious function. Literary representations of prostitution and female promiscuity arose with the context of modernity. Prostitution has since become publicly one of the social issues represented in literature and particularly 'Literature of Life'. Undoubtedly *Ying Khon Chua*, the first novel in book form dealt with the issues of prostitution. K. Surangkanang took a progressive step in her choice of subject matter and utilized literature as a medium to address a social problem into the lives of prostitutes. This novel has presented the problem of prostitution in relation to polygamy, patriarchy, and women's unequal right.

K. Surangkanang shows how these women descended into prostitution and raised their voice to show the real society. This novel shows the preconceived, condemning attitudes of general public towards prostitutes. More importantly, it shows the characters negotiate their identity as women in high of socio-economic and cultural changes of modern, urban Bangkok and against the social branding of them as 'bad women'.

Here we are, a couple of prostitutes, and everyone looks down on us, including this couple, who've many times said disparaging things about us and who don't want to have anything to do with us. Yet it's strange, you, know, they don't feel the slightest bit of shame at cheating us over the money for the baby's milk, which we earns from our sins, from doing something bad and disgusting in order to make a living. Hun! Sin it is that has to support virtue.

(*The Prostitute*, 143)

This poverty forced Rukmani's daughter Irawaddy into prostitution. Irawaddy sells her body to men and feeds Kuti her youngest brother with money earned through prostitution. Irawaddy shows quietness and forbearance while Rukmani is pained. At the same time Nathan becomes wild with anger but Rukmani as a mother to accept her daughter's decision. "There was no option but to accept the change..." (*Nectar in a Sieve*, 99). And, the commercialization of sex in prostitution episode is a typical urban phenomenon has seen in the character of Khuthi's and Irawaddy's life who is a rural victim of urban civilization. This novel has overtones of sadness, pathos, and tragedy. And, at the same time, this novel presents exhibited love, contentment and hopes, although her hopes never become reality as titled *Nectar in a Sieve*.

Prostitution, cultural and traditional norms forces Reun to be inferior more than ordinary women. She crosses the morality line which is unacceptable. She becomes tainted and ruined. Although Reun has been presented as a prostitute but she retains the image of motherhood holding on strict morals and values. Reun suffered a lot and she is afraid that her child will become like her. In Thai cultural norms there is Thai proverb "You can always tell an ox by its tail, and when it comes to a woman, you only have to look as far as her mother... My darling little girls, I'll do everything to prevent this little bundle of flesh from becoming tarnished like its mother" (*The Prostitute*, 115).

In K. Surangkanang's introduction of the first edition, she struggles to publishers and friends who questioned her choice of subject-matter but she argues that "The Prostitute was written both 'out of a feeling of sympathy and compassion' and as a challenge to conventional beliefs that such women would not be totally bad. High-class women may have

base minds just as low-class women may be noble-minded.” In Thai cultural context, the division of women into good women and bad women as whore has been defined in terms of their sexual behavior and relationship to the family institution. Harrison contends that:

To be a “good” woman means to remain loyal to that institution—to be a dutiful daughter, a faithful wife, and a faultless, all-giving mother. [...] However, when women become sexually available outside the conjugal relationship, whether voluntarily or a result of force, the predominant Thai response is one of contempt. (Harrison, 168)

Moreover, K. Surangkanang represents Reun and Samorn as the exception to the community of ‘bad’ women but Reun’s redeeming quality is within the domain of motherhood as her selflessness to her child while Samorn’s is also her selflessness towards her friend and her surrogate daughter.

The “progressive” nature of K. Surangkanang’s text lies in its insistence that... Reun and her friend Samorn embody the highest moral values of their time... Reun’s conscientiousness as a mother, render her a “good” woman, whilst it is only the way in which she earns her living that makes her a “bad” woman. (Harrison, 172)

Likewise Kamala Markandaya upholds the virtues of motherhood and love. Rukmani becomes the mother of six sons and one daughter, Irawaddy. When Irawaddy was born, her husband regretted over the birth of a female child. Despite all her obstacles, Rukmani never lose her hope that the situation will become better than it is, but this hope never became a reality. She faced all problems by her inner instinct to fight for her children. As one scene, Rukmani as mother, who addresses her dead son in the silent language of the soul, suffer beyond words that “For this I have given you birth, my son, that you should lie in the end at my feet with ashes in your face and coldness in your limbs and yourself departed without trace, leaving this huddle of bones and flesh without meaning” (*Nectar in a Sieve*, 89). In a male-dominated society, woman is supposed to be an ideal wife, a mother as an excellent home maker with various roles to play in the family.

There are various similarity and dissimilarity in Kamala Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve* and K. Surangkanang’s *Ying Khon Chua*. Belonging to different nations, regions, languages, cultures and social milieus as in India and Thailand, in world of literature, women novelists have similarly portrayed women’s representation through their women characters in feminist perspectives. Absolutely *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Ying Khon Chua* explores the women who realized their own inferior status and identity, and then trying to improve their own stature. Both women novelists realize their women characters and situations in which sensitive woman lives struggled with their problems and sufferings from the powerful tradition and patriarchal society. In Elaine Showalter’s essay *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness in The New Feminist Criticism, Essays on Women, Literature and Theory* (1985), she says that:

A cultural theory acknowledges that there are important differences between women as writers: class, race, nationality, and history are literary determinants as significant as gender. Nonetheless, women’s culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space. (Showalter, 260)

Looking from the gendered view-point, women's representations are made through language which reveals the woman attitude in patriarchal society towards by eye on women writers. They expose the oppressive representation of patriarchal society, particularly in *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Ying Khon Chua*. So, women writers have projected their feeling and emotions through their writings. They point out women's feelings of powerlessness and oppression in their works.

Kamala Markandaya and K. Surangkanang followed gynocritics. "Gynocritics is more self-contained and experimental, with connections to other modes of new feminist research" (Showalter, 129). Referring to *Toward a Feminist Poetics*, Elaine Showalter divides feminist criticism into two sections: The woman as reader or feminist critique and the woman as writer or gynocritics, called in French term *la gynocritique*. Gynocritics begins at the point when women free themselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history. Correspondingly Kamala Markandaya and K. Surangkanang stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible. It is to see woman as producer of textual meaning, with the history themes, genres, and structures of literature by women as a fundamental aspect of female reality.

In both India and Thailand, women have always been considered inferior and incapable of any ways, irrespective of culture religion, country, and race along with the period in which they live. More or less the same perception and gender-stereotyping has been seen in language and literature as well. The world of women novelists has presented their own women voices in their writing. Nowadays certainly the novels written by women raise women's status from their own inferior to improve their own stature. They attempts to portray the real women's identity and individuality against the context of social order as patriarchal norms as cultural system. Though there are the similarities and dissimilarities between both novels, all of them have shined the feminine voices as well as real women status and identity to echo spreading full of praise in the real world.

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