

# Structuralist Study of Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve

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## Abstract

Since French Revolution changed the way people look at the world, it paved way for so many movements. Before this watershed event, literature was primarily taken to be a source of entertainment and education. Afterward, as Saussure believed that language and society are interrelated, people considered literature as a tool to oppress a particular section of the people based on gender, class, caste and other factors. As we have conflicting forces in the universe that keep this world in a constant motion and are dynamic, one thing is replaced or followed by others. Structuralism emerged as a movement against existentialism. Essentially it views the world as a structured entity as well as an entity made up of opposing elements, technically known as binary oppositions (a fundamental idea in structuralism) rather than individual elements. This research paper seeks to probe into the dichotomies (Men vs. Women, Nature vs. Culture, Rural vs. Urban, Innocence vs. Prudence, Orientalism vs. Occidentalism) represented in the novel *Nectar in a Sieve*.

**Keywords:** Structuralism, Binary elements, Women's Oppression

## Introduction

"Hope, and fear. Twin forces that tugged at us first in one direction and then in another, and which was the stronger no one could say" (**Markandaya 110**). The reference to hope and fear as "twin forces" that tug in opposite directions reflects the broader theme of **conflicting forces** that shape societies, ideas, and movements. This duality is present not just in human emotions but also in larger socio-political structures, as shown by the rise of movements like Marxism and Feminism. Since French Revolution changed the way people look at the world, it paved way for so many movements such as Marxism (class oppression), Feminism (gender oppression), Formalism (literature), and others. Before this watershed event, literature was primarily taken to be a source of entertainment and education. Afterward, as Saussure believed that language and society are interrelated (structuralism), people considered literature as a tool to oppress a particular section of the people based on gender, class, caste and other factors. As we have conflicting forces in the universe that keep this world in a constant motion and are dynamic, one thing is replaced or followed by others. These may originate in support of or against the preceding ideas. "Unity and struggle of opposites are the source of movement and the whole being" (**Aimukhambet et al. 15**).

Existentialism as a movement, originated after World War II, focuses on individuality and essence-making rather than essence-taking. On the other hand, Structuralism emerged as a movement against existentialism, based on the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913), a Swiss Linguist and Philosopher. Essentially it views the world as a structured entity as well as an entity made up of

opposing elements, technically known as binary oppositions (a fundamental idea in structuralism) rather than individual elements.

This research paper seeks to probe into the dichotomies represented in the novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, Kamala Markandaya's debut novel published in 1954. Kamala Markandaya is a pioneer writer in Indian Writing in English, as she places herself in the literary canon through an elegant representation of society in all her works. Her identity itself is a binary one, being born in an oriental country (India), settled in England. "The most distinctive lineament of a commonwealth writer is the duality of selves, the native consciousness and the consciousness acquired from western civilization" (Sharma and Jain 149).

Set in early independent India, this novel explores the typical life style of a poor family in both rural and metropolitan regions. The author has infused some of the dichotomical elements, which are the primary sources of all meaning-production (Nayar 18), to keep this novel as a meaningful one. "The initial human outlook is based on the knowledge and understanding of the nature of contradictions" (Aimukhambet et al. 11). As Claude Levi Strauss has stated that a larger structure is the overall network of basic 'dyadic pairs' which has obvious symbolic, thematic, and archetypal resonance (Barry 48). In this novel some of the dyadic pairs echoes these aforementioned concepts.

## 1. Men and Women

In this novel, the author has employed several characters to reflect some human values based on gender, class, caste and more. Generally based on gender, humans are classified into men and women. Siu states that "The opposition, alternation, and interaction of these two forces give rise to all phenomena in the universe" (qtd. in Sherry 68). Butler argues that gender is a performative construct (Butler 33). It is based on some factors like their roles, appearance, emotions and so on. Primarily, Nathan and Rukmani play major roles in this novel, as the entire plot is around their actions.

In the beginning of the novel, when Rukmani was searching for vegetables, she accidentally touched a cobra. And then, she yelled, and a cold shiver ran across her body. Upon hearing her scream, Nathan arrived and he simply cut the snake into pieces. Patriarchy is defined as "a set of cultural rules and values that specify how men and women should be and act. It is based on a belief that men have an inherent right to dominate and that women should be subservient, selfless caregivers" (Snider) and those need not to be only practiced by men against women; it can also manifest in the opposite direction. In the same way men also can be the victims of patriarchy as they are expected to display only masculine qualities such as boldness, strength, muscular physique, while women are expected to be submissive, meek, soft and beautiful. While Nathan was bold against this feeble creature, Rukmani feared in sight of it. In Indian context, women were not allowed to call their male partners with their names regardless of their religion or caste. In this novel, Rukmani refuses to call her husband with his name, as she said, "...it is not meet for a woman to address her husband except as 'husband'" (Markandaya 13). "That's because in traditional Indian society, the husband is equated with god and a woman is taught from a young age that she must respect him" (Pandey).

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, sexual abuse against women has increased, making us to think that most of the men are still alike. According to the Data from World Health Organization (WHO) given in 2024, from 2000 to 2018 across 161 countries and regions, nearly 1 in 3, or 30%, of women have been experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partners and, or, non-intimate partners (WHO). Kamala Markandaya reflects this idea through the voice of Kali, who said, "Men are all the same" (Markandaya

15). This is a famous phrase spoken by Marilyn Monroe, an American actress and who was a famous sex symbol in 1950s in western countries. “And in her time, her physical characteristics came to suggest ‘sexual, emotional, and intellectual openness’ and indicate ‘vulnerability and subordination’” (qtd. in Vuletic 6) Markandaya alludes to her to shed light on the sexuality of men. And the same thing is reiterated by Ira whose fate forced her into prostitution: “Men do not seek my face” (Markandaya 138). Similarly, Rukmani recalls Kali’s words: “‘She has fire in her body, men burn before and after.’ My husband was of those men” (120).

“A man is indeed fortunate if he does not marry above him, for if he does he gets a wife who is no help to him whatsoever, only an ornament” (18). When India became an independent nation, the legal age for marriage for men was 18 and for women 15. It ensured that women should typically marry someone who is elder than themselves. But the evolution of marriageable age in India has a clear impact in women empowerment, while education plays major role in achieving social justice and eradicating inequality, which can be illustrated by the table given below:

**Table 1**

Year	Age	
	Male	Female
1929	18	14
1949	18	15
1954	21	18
2021	21	21

**Source: Kandade, Ankita. *The Evolution of Marriageable Age for Women in India: A Historical Perspective***

An individual’s occupation plays a major role in their life defining their gender. “Butler (1993) viewed performance as the reiteration of a set of normative expectations that enables the formation of a subject rather than simply being performed by a subject” (qtd. in Nusbaumer 2). Women were traditionally expected to perform only household chores, while men were given opportunities to participate in social events. In traditional farming, works such as plowing, watering and manuring were assigned to men, while tasks like seeding, planting and weeding were assigned to women. As plowing, typically considered as men’s task, requires body strength to control the oxen, (Alesina et al. 1) it makes a perpetual assumption that men should have muscular body. “Also reinforcing this gender-bias in ability is the fact that when the plough is used, there is less need for weeding, a task typically undertaken by women and children” (qtd. in Alesina et al. 1). Rukmani reflecting this states: “My husband ploughed it, steadying the plough behind the two bullocks while I came behind, strewing the seed to either side and sprinkling the earth over from the basket at my hip” (Markandaya 28). From the difference in these roles it can be understood that men’s roles tend to require more interaction with other people and society. For example, when one needs to manure, they must go to nearby shop to purchase it, which makes them more socially interactive with other people. In contrast, women’s tasks are confined to the fields and home and thus, they are very close to nature. Even mostly men are driving tractors to transport the harvest to market. “Tractors become the most significant piece of masculinized technology and a symbol of rural masculine identity (Nusbaumer 5). As the novel is set an early independent India,

majority of the Indian farmers used ploughs instead of tractors. Even in this digital world men are still the primary advertisers for farming vehicles.

Kamala Markandaya also expresses a mother's love for her children and dowry saving for the marriage of Irawaddy. "Now I brought out the stores I had put by month after month – rice and dhal and ghee, jars of oil, betel leaf, areca nuts, chewing tobacco and copra" (**Markandaya 53**). Both Rukmani and Ira are epitome of self-effacement. When the family was in poverty, Ira ate only half a meal to ensure her brothers ate stomach full. "I cried, who eats half what I give her so that you boys can have the more" (**73**). She entered into prostitution to feed her family, especially for Kutti, but unfortunately, he passed away.

As per the data given from various websites more than 90% of Indian women participated in unpaid domestic work at home in 2019 compared to 27% of men (**Singaravelu**). As suggested by Marx, an individual's lifestyle is shaped by their economic contributions. Since men have an active role in economical contribution, women are passive, unnoticed and unrecognized contributors to the economy. This passive role and non-recognition, make them to be dependent upon their parents (before marriage) and then on their husbands (after marriage). Rukmani, who is dependent on Nathan, expresses this view to Kenny: "She must. A woman's place is with her husband" (**Markandaya 148**). As Tiwari and Wani stated that Rukman is presented in this novel as a savior and nurturer of nature, living in harmony with the natural world and valuing sustainability over short-term gain. In contrast, the masculine characters are depicted as destructive and exploitative, seeing the land and animals as resources that may be misused for personal gain. (**Tiwari and Wani**)

The different ways of a man reacting, when a female or male child is born, are clearly depicted in this novel. When Ira was born, Nathan was not happy till she reached 10 months old. Because, in typical Indian society, it was expected that a man must have a male heir of his own. To address this, Rukmani sought the help of a European doctor. When Arjun was born, Nathan celebrated it with much happiness. Likewise, Irawaddy also faces the same problem as her mother faced that she was unable to conceive and bear sons. As previously mentioned, the victims of patriarchy is not only women but men as well. If a man is incapable of having a child, this society mocks at him as impotent. And in his turn, he shows his frustration to his wife either in the form of violence or divorce. Markandaya brings it out through the voice of Ira's husband: "I have brought her back to you. She is a barren woman" (**71**).

When Ira gave birth to a male child with albinism, she compared herself with a bird: "she was as happy as a bird with her son" (**159**). As Friedrich Nietzsche once stated, men have traditionally viewed women as creatures that have descended from lofty realms—something more delicate, fragile, wild, mysterious, and enchanting. However, they have treated them as beings that must be confined, to prevent them from escaping. (**Nietzsche 73b**). This analogy captures how women have been viewed in patriarchal societies, where they are often regarded as fragile creatures and in need of control. Likewise, Chetan Bhagat, a famous Indian novelist in his novel *One Indian Girl* (2016), reflects on this, through the voice of Radhika who speaks of women as birds (symbol of freedom) while criticizing the patriarchal construct and argues for having control on their employment opportunities and motherhood. "We want to fly and we also want a beautiful nest" (**Bhagat**). However, education about gender equality has brought some changes in people's mindsets. This shift can be understood from the population data in the tables below, which show the gender differences in terms of percentages. The way Nathan views the births of Ira and Arjun highlights the impact of the patriarchal structure on his perception of children.

**Table 2**

Year	Male (%)	Female (%)
1951	51.3	48.60
1952	51.42	48.57
1953	51.44	48.55
1954	51.46	48.53
1955	51.49	48.50
1956	51.51	48.48
1957	51.52	48.47
1958	51.54	48.45
1959	51.56	48.43
1960	51.58	48.41

**Source: Population of India -Database**

**Table 3**

Year	Male	Female
2020	51.63	48.36
2021	51.61	48.38
2022	51.60	48.39
2023	51.58	48.41
2024	51.57	48.42

**Source: Population of India –Database**

**Table 2** shows the slight increase in the male birth rate compared to the decreasing female birth rate from 1951 to 1960.

**Table 3** illustrates the more balanced gender ratio in recent years, with male and female birth rates showing a smaller difference. The steady increase in female birth rates, shown here, correlates with a reduction in gender inequality over time.

## 2. Nature vs Culture

Then after the heat had endured for days and days, and our hopes had shriveled with the paddy – too late to do any good – then we saw the storm clouds gathering, and before long the rain came lashing down, making up in fury for the drought and giving the grateful land as much as it could suck and more. (Markandaya 109)

The duality of nature is implied in these lines partly because of the influence of culture and partly due to its innate characteristics. The beauty of nature is described in the words of Rukmani as she was travelling in a bullock cart to her newly married husband's house: "the air was full of the sound of bells, and of birds, sparrows and bulbuls mainly, and sometimes the cry of an eagle, but when we passed a grove, green and leafy, I could hear mynahs and parrots" (12). The author expresses that the life accompanied with nature uplifts the spirit, providing rich satisfaction to the soul.

However, after the construction of the tannery, this scene was entirely changed. The air was heavy with the smell of animal hides which was unbearable and despicable. Over a period of time, the community



accustomed to it. In this novel the author has portrayed both the prosperous and destructive sides of nature. In the early years of the couple's married life, they enjoyed prosperity as they were able to produce enough food from their land. On the destructive side, nature wreaks havoc through storm, drought, flood, lightening and more. Drought is caused because of the influence of culture upon nature. As Soman states that the prolonged drought was caused by the tannery's large amount of consumption of water (270), which led to decrease in ground level water consecutively affecting ecological chain system. The influence of culture on human relationships can be clearly understood from this novel with the introduction of tannery, a part of colonialism. "With the introduction of the tannery, the tradition-bound agrarian society's love and friendship which existed among the members of the community disappears" (Soman 269). The destructive side of nature, which drove the family into poverty, made Raja to choose the destructive side of culture which caused to lose his life in the tannery, while its positive side made Biswas and other people like Kunthi to lead a prosperous life through increase of the prices of groceries. It also provided employment opportunities to a considerable number of people.

In ecofeminism, men and women are compared with culture and nature respectively. As nature is parallel with women, who make sure that their families are fed by means of kitchen gardens and sometimes by remittances of food from rural farms. In third world countries, like India, Women are the primary food providers of the world (BBC - Reith lectures). Rukmani expresses this when she says, "I spent most of my time tending my small garden" (Markandaya 23).

### 3. Rural vs Urban

The first part of this novel deals with the ecocentric life of Nathan and Rukmani in a pastoral region, while the second part of this novel focuses on their struggling life in the city to which they went with much anticipation. Poverty serves as a central connecting force throughout the narrative. "The urban growth occurs due to the natural growth of population, expansion of city boundaries, net rural to urban migration, and reclassification of rural areas into urban" (Tripathi and Kaur). Nathan's sons Arjun and Thambi were initially employed in the tannery but later they moved to Ceylon to work in tea plantations. The third son, Murugan, left for city in search of better living conditions. It is clear all these events are interconnected. Nathan decision to have more children pushed the family into poverty due to lack of food, which led the sons to search jobs in city. The extreme form of poverty became apparent when Rukmani, in a moment of desperation, mistakenly tried to kill her daughter, thinking she was Kunti.

The establishment of tannery, a symbol of urbanization, led to climatic changes. Structuralism looks at the relationships between various elements within the self-contained, well-organized structure of a text in order to understand the ways (the grammar or rules) by which the text produces meaning. As literature is the reflection of the world, it is evident that all the events in this novel are interconnected. From the data mentioned in a research paper by Tripathi and Kaur, it is noted that the primary reason for migration from village to cities was work and employment (5). This is reflected in this novel as three of Nathan and Rukmani's sons migrated to different places in search of work. When both Nathan and Rukmani were living in village, their food was – boiled rice, dhal, vegetables and curds. But when they moved to city the food there was pilau, mounds of saffron rice on buttered plantain leaves, glistening with ghee and garnished with red chillies and culling strips of fried onion. Kamala also highlights the benefits of literacy in both the village and the city. When Rukmani was in the village, she was eager to learn to read and write, but her mother believed that there is no use of a girl's education when she has

lusty sons and a husband to look after (**Markandaya 22**). However, Rukmani's father who was similar to the father character in the short story *Mallukattu* by Ambai, taught her to read and write. As the headman of his village, he understood the importance of education.

When Rukmani found herself in trouble, she moved to the city. There, she was able to earn at least 2 annas per day by writing letters. Her father was a progressive thinker, who supported her daughter to learn to read and write. This highlights how exposure plays a crucial role in an individual's growth. On her first day in the city, when she was calling after the passersby to write letters for them, the city people mocked at her, considering her a typical country woman. Through this, the author critiques the stereotypical assumptions that city dwellers have about village folk.

#### 4. Innocence vs Prudence

In his work, *The Waste Land* published in 1922, Eliot suggests that the modern prudent age can never be retracted (**47**). This theme can be traced in *Nectar in a Sieve* through some of the characters such as Puli, Kunthi and Biswas. Puli, a boy who has no fingers but only stumps, considers himself a king, gives a reason for his name. Even though he is a physically challenged person, he is the embodiment of stoicism. Despite both Nathan and Rukmani were able to work hard in the field, they are unable to face the dangers of the outside world. When Selvam asked both of them to be with him, their fear of survival drove them to move to the city to be dependent on Murugan. There they met Puli who showed them the right way to reach their son's home.

When Nathan and Rukmani were collecting their wages for stone-breaking in the quarry, Puli went around begging others. He changed the tone of his voice into weak and queary. Rukmani, who is a submissive character in this novel, calls herself an innocent women: "While her husband in his impotence and I in my innocence did nothing" (**Markandaya 120**). Rukmani who got married at the age of twelve was unable to freely converse with her husband due to various factors which are interconnected. One of these factors is that she married in an earlier age and an elderly person (Nathan). It prevented her to share innermost feelings, which made her to be passive and vulnerable to society. "Women who marry early are likely to be unassertive, naive, socially isolated, experience severe psychological depression and have lesser bargaining power within marriage" (**qtd. in Dhamija and Roychowdhury 2**). It is reiterated that the girls who marry older husbands are unable to negotiate or lead a smooth life with their partners due to their felling of being lower in age. (**qtd. in Global A. 11**)

Another character in this novel, Kunthi who is also a village woman becomes a prostitute to earn livelihood and after some time she blackmails both Nathan and Rukmani to get food from them. She knows how to manipulate and lure others into her web. Biswas, who is a money lender, knows very well the tactics of selling and buying goods. He knows how to utilize others' inability to raise himself. When there is a bad situation for one, it becomes good for others. When the village people were in extreme poverty because of low yield which is called as negative economy by Vandana Shiva (**Reith Lectures**), it had a positive impact on his business. When Rukmani was in dept, she tried to sell her clothes to Biswas. But he was infested with greediness. Another character Sivaji supported the couple during their difficult times, but lastly, he sold the property to the tannery for personal profits.

#### 5. Orientalism vs Occidentalism

"In the context of a common-wealth country, cultural dualism is a contingent condition." (**Sharma and Jain 149**). As Soman says, "Rukmani and Kenny stand for different cultures of the East and the West"

(270), in this novel both of them stands for Orientalism and Occidentalism respectively. “For analysing the properties of language, it is important to represent the concern of writer with the revelation of inner mental facts and the inner properties of human psyche” (Sharma 303). Being a British Indian novelist, Kamala Markandaya is able to represent the mindset of people from both the worlds through her personae. Rukmani, who was unable to conceive seek help of Kenny, a British doctor who is staying in India to help poor people. She believed that white people have more capability to cure diseases, “I will ask Kenny to help you. White men have power.” (Markandaya 74). Kenny is portrayed as a supporter for the poor people which is quite different from the assumptions what people had made.

Kenny is quite similar to the character Sir Daniel Hamilton who is one of the important characters in Amitav Ghosh’s Novel *Hungry Tide*, published in 2004. Hamilton wanted to make a new city where all the people will be treated equally. Likewise Kenny built a hospital to provide treatment for the poor people at cost-free. For this, he collected money from the people of his own country. Thus, Kamala tries to reflect not only the impact of colonialism in the form of tannery building but also the other side (positive) of colonialism through Kenny.

The husband and wife relationship in both eastern and western world is reflected here. Rukmani who is always fond of her husband accompanies him leaving her father’s house. She even refuses to call her husband by his name. Contradictorily, Kenny was simply desolated by his wife because of his job. According to the data given on websites India has the lowest divorce rate 00.1% per 1000 people. While England has 1.7 % divorce rate per 1000 people. (Divorce.com). It can be understood from Kenny’s relationship with his wife who refused to go along with him. While Rukmani was hesitating to reveal the truth of having sought help of Kenny to beget children to his husband, Kenny says, ‘A child conceive in an encounter fares no worse than a child born in wedlock’ (Markandaya 157). The author clearly portrays a different way of approaching. Selvam who was working as an assistant to Kenny and who was influenced by him, looks at Sacrabani, Ira’s child with albinism, as blessed, while the village people looked eccentric.

## Conclusion

In this analysis of *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya, various binary oppositions are explored to reveal the complex socio-cultural, emotional, and existential dynamics that shape human experience and societal structure. These oppositions mirror the dualities inherent in the human condition and reflect the larger conflicts within society, especially in post-colonial India. The duality of hope and fear, as mentioned in the opening quote, illustrates the tension between two conflicting forces, drawing parallels with major socio-political movements like Marxism, Feminism, and the philosophies of Existentialism and Structuralism.

One of the central binary oppositions in the novel is the relationship between men and women. Markandaya uses gender roles to demonstrate the societal expectations imposed on both men and women. Rukmani’s fear of the cobra, contrasted with Nathan’s bravery, exemplifies traditional gender roles where men are expected to be bold and women submissive. This binary is further explored in the dynamics of marriage, where the cultural practice of women addressing their husbands as “husband” reflects the patriarchal societal structure. Additionally, the novel touches upon the harsh realities of gender inequality, including sexual violence and the commodification of women, as shown through the character of Ira and the experiences of women in Indian society.

Nature vs. culture is another key opposition explored in the novel. The introduction of the tannery repre-



sents the destructive influence of industrialization (culture) on the natural world. The once fertile, vibrant land that provided for the community is now marred by the tannery, leading to ecological and social upheaval. This dichotomy mirrors the broader tension between traditional agrarian life and the encroachment of industrialization, highlighting the negative consequences of prioritizing progress and economic gain over environmental and communal well-being.

The contrast between rural life and metropolitan life is also explored, with the novel illustrating the struggles of Nathan and Rukmani as they move from a rural setting to a city. Their migration is driven by poverty, which reflects the socio-economic pressures that force individuals and families to leave their homes in search of work. The city, while offering opportunities, also exposes them to a different set of challenges, revealing the complexities of urbanization and the shifting roles of people within these new environments.

Innocence vs. prudence is another important dichotomy. The characters of Puli, Kunthi, and Biswas highlight the various ways people respond to hardship and survival. Puli represents stoicism and resilience despite his physical challenges, while Kunthi embodies prudence and manipulation, using her sexuality to survive. The characters' different approaches to survival and morality underscore the varied responses to adversity and the human capacity for adaptation.

Finally, Orientalism vs. Occidentalism is explored through the relationship between Rukmani and Kenny, symbolizing the tension between Eastern and Western cultures. Rukmani, rooted in the traditions and values of India, contrasts with Kenny, a Western doctor who views the world through a different cultural lens. This cultural dualism reflects the broader colonial experience and the complexities of identity, particularly for individuals who are caught between two worlds.

All these dichotomical representations are tending to break some assumptions. Like Kenny being an Englishman tries to help the poor people. And earth which is considered as a woman and ascribed the quality of being fertile and submissive, sometimes it does not give yield and also its destructive side is conspicuous. As we need neutrons to keep an atom in a stable position, there is a need for an unseen force in between the binary oppositions that functions as a connective force. Ensuring this, Aimukhambet et al. says that these binary oppositions cannot function without interaction among themselves (15). Like mutual understanding between men and women, had Nathan and Rukmani shared their secrets with each other, there would not be a loss of grains for Kunti. It is understood from the character of Puli and Selvam that being passive will lead to suffering. While Nathan and Rukmani sought help from other or were dependent on land, other characters sought ways to overcome it. In order to overcome the hurdles of life, one need to face it as spoken by Kenny, 'who will succor the drowning man if he does not clamour for his life?' (**Markandaya 154**). Passivity is a form self destruction. The author reiterates that both male and female should fight against patriarchy which is a parasite for both of them. Humans must consider that they are not a separate entity from nature, but a part of nature along with other alive and non-alive things. Kenny and his relationship with other Indian people is made through love and kindness.

Selvam who was made an assistant to Kenny had different perspective a way of looking at the world. For, he better understood his sister even though she had an illegitimate child. This kind of exposure is needed to achieve equality between men and women. This can be achieved when it is given along with value-based education and exposure.

As structuralism believes that the meaning of one word is dependent on other. Each and every thing is dependent upon or connected with others by an unseen force. This realization is the ultimate aim of life

which helps for the upliftment of our world.

Overall, Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* uses these dualities to convey the dynamic and often contradictory forces that shape individuals and societies. The interplay of hope and fear, gender roles, nature and culture, rural and urban life, innocence and prudence, and the clash between Eastern and Western values highlights the ongoing struggles for identity, survival, and meaning in a rapidly changing world. Through these dichotomies, Markandaya offers a profound commentary on the human condition, particularly in the context of post-colonial India.

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