



## THEMES OF ALIENATION, RACISM, DISLOCATION AND NOSTALGIA IN THE NOVEL "THE NOWHERE MAN" BY KAMALA MARKANDAYA

Anupama Singh<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Mukesh Kumar Sharma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, Jiwaji University, Gwalior, M.P., India

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of English, K.R.G. P.G. College, Gwalior (M.P.)

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.12.2.291](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.12.2.291)



Anupama Singh

### Article info

Article Received: 20/05/2024

Article Accepted: 25/06/2024

Published online: 29/06/2024

### Abstract

Kamala Markandaya closely observed human relationships, women's condition, their place in society, the consequences of cultural clash and clash between two different classes. Markandaya is a realistic writer and she showed the issues prevailing in the society through her realistic writing style. The most enduring quality of her novels is her passionate portrayal of Indianness and a profound sympathy. Sense of Alienation, Racism, dislocation and nostalgia are very much interrelated to each other because all these feelings immerge out of same circumstance, which is of being away from our homeland, our country our people and feeling like an alien in another land. Whenever a person migrates to another land, he becomes an outsider there and feels left out and outsider there. Being in a new strange land he struggles a lot between his new identity and feeling of nostalgia. Being accustomed to cultural and social life he desires acceptance from society and assimilation to the new culture but what he really gets is a sense of loss, discrimination, alienation and a feeling of left out and hence suffers from identity crisis and insecurity in another land. Gradually he adapts to the new ways of life. Slowly he starts feeling normal but irony occurs when he returns to his native land and feels alien in his own culture. Thus in between all this he loses his identity and finds himself a nowhere man. Kamala Markandaya through her novels depicts diasporic dilemma arising due to migration and the consequential rootlessness, loneliness and anxiety. Thus, Markandaya shows all these themes in her novels The Nowhere man.

Keywords: Alienation, Cultural Conflict, Racism, Identity Crisis.

### Introduction

Kamala Markandaya has explored the cross- cultural themes in her novels and has carved a permanent place for her novels. The

process of migration and assimilation is reflected in her stories and her characters. The Nowhere man 1972tells the story of Srinivas and an un- accommodated Asian facing a great deal

of hostility and intense loneliness in the country he migrated to. Kamala Markandaya through her novels emphasises the pain of losing their home. Srinivas, the protagonist in "The Nowhere man" feels alien, rootless and dislocated. His alienation results in the estrangement from his native culture and his failure to adopt the westernized manners and modes of living. Through the novel he quests for his identity, and feels lost as if he belongs to 'nowhere' neither to the land he was born in nor to the place he migrated to.

Madhusudan Prasad writes, "The Nowhere man is the most powerful and the maturest of the novels of Markandaya. Although it again depicts the east-west encounter (in a new perspective altogether), It is basically a moving elegy on England's recent racialism which still continues rather unabated" (152)

Markandaya through her novel very well portrays the notion of 'East-West encounter'. How always there has been a gulf between the east and west and on the basis of this racism discrimination and discriminated one's are compelled to feel alienated, dislocated and left out. She shows in her novel, "The Nowhere man" that no matter how much you try hard to get yourself adapted to the new culture and follow their lifestyle, their manners, they will never make you feel alike rather they will leave no chance to humiliate to show them that neither they nor their cultural practices and feelings mean to them at all. Srinivas in 'The Nowhere man's a typical Indian who ventures to England where he tries his luck with his wife Vasantha. He was doing well in his business of import export of spices. He along with his wife adapts themselves to the new environment although leading a typical Indian lifestyle and thought. Both the husband and wife instead of trying hard to get mingled in the culture faced the harsh realities of a new settlement in an alien land. As they were new to the land felt the feeling of not belonging to the land in every aspect. They had two sons who adapted

themselves to the land they were born in. Vasantha, Srinivas wife's persistence made Srinivas buy a new home of their own to feel the sense of security and certainty.

'I am tired "she said", of moving from pillar to post. As if were gypsies. It is time we bought a new house and settled down. There is no nomadic strain in us, that forces us to wander. Although it may well manifest in our children if we continue this vagabond existence. (17) To this Srinivas tries to convince his wife as he felt that owing a house in London may hinder their return to India someday, he knows not when!

He tells her, "Hundreds of families live in flats. In Bombay and Madras, not to say London". What Bombayites and Madrasis do is their concern. As for the other can you really imagine I am a Londoner? "(P17) when Srinivas and Vasantha bought a house of their own Vasantha claims, "At last we have achieved something. A place of our own, where we can live according to our lights although in alien surroundings and our children after us and after them theirs" (20)

Racism is another theme which is seen in the novel where Srinivas and his wife Vasantha try to adapt to the new and alien culture but are not treated in a good way. They felt racial discrimination as they were occidentals and were considered inferior s also ignored them. His elder son Laxman became an engineer in the army and Seshu the second son joins as a trainee in navigation with the Royal Air Force. Laxman marries an English girl Pat and settled in Play Mouth. He lived with his in-laws and even at the birth of his child, at the time of informing Srinivas and Vasantha he asks them not to come to meet them as he felt embarrassed. Laxman their own son who was an Indian considers himself a British as he was born there. Laxman himself was feeling disappointed with his own parents who gave him birth. He was ashamed and took it to racism. He had complaint against his mother that why after living for so many

years in England she could not change herself. Laxman who considers himself to be a British could not digest the fact that he was an Indian by parentage. So, in spite of the harsh comments made by the Britishers sometimes he ascertained himself saying, "Whatever anyone might say or think or do he know he belonged and where he belonged. To the country in which he was born and lived and laboured" (P259)

The feeling of dislocation is shown in the novel 'The Nowhere man' when after trying so hard to get adapted to the new and strange culture both Srinivas and vasantha could not feel located to the British culture. When both their sons left them both Srinivas and Vasantha felt loneliness and after hearing the news of the death of their younger son in the war, the mother for whom he was the apple of her eyes, never recovers from the great tragedy. She dies and when Srinivas was immersing her ashes into the river an English Police Officer says badly to Srinivas to not flow rubbish into the river. Hearing this Srinivas felt bad and said it is not rubbish, it was his wife. This all made them feel dislocated. "You are not allowed to tip your household rubbish", said Srinivas and found to his dismay that his throat was working painfully. It was my wife." (39)

Theme of identity crisis came to notice when Vasantha's condition was deteriorating and having nothing to cling to in the alien land, vasantha puts forth her wish to her husband Srinivas to "return to our country". There is no reason, now that India is free, why we should not. Now "she said painfully", is there anything really to keep us here anymore" (36). Now the question for Srinivas was that neither they were seen to belong to the land where they were living, leaving their country nor is there any place for Srinivas in his native land as things have changed a lot. So, now there was no place for Srinivas to which he could say as his own. Thus, this situation arises the problem of Identity Crisis. They themselves were in doubt about what identity they belong to. Markandaya

very well depicts this issue of Identity Crisis through her novels.

Other important theme that dominates the novel "The Nowhere man" by Kamala Markandaya is the feeling of nostalgia. Whenever the protagonist characters Srinivas and Vasantha felt left out and alien in the British land they felt nostalgic. They longed for all that they lived through and enjoyed in their home land. Feeling of nostalgia is very powerful feeling that makes one pine for the thing.

Kamala Markandaya as herself was an Indian by birth and got settled in England in 1948 after getting married to an Englishman and became Kamala Taylor. She herself felt all these emotions and thus got command portraying such emotions and characters in her novels. Her protagonists were none other than her mouthpiece.

### Methodology

This article analyses the different experiences that an immigrant faces when he leaves his country and gets settled in a new land which is an alien land which is an alien land for him where he never gets equal treatment no matter how hard he tries, and this better experience is very well shown by Markandaya in her novels as she herself had experienced the life of a person who leaves his own country and settles in another land.

### Result

In the post-colonial era, we see that after being colonized and getting freedom the situation for the colonized became more complex. As now they are no longer in their own self and culture and neither they are fully in colours of new English Culture and this complex situation leaves them in a state of identity crisis from which the characters of Kamala Markandaya are shown from suffering in her novels. Also, she shows the pain of dislocation, racism and alienation in her novels.

### Conclusion

Kamala Markandaya is committed to reveal evil inherent in the contemporary society. She has very skilfully depicted in her novels the pathetic condition of the unaccepted sections of the society which were facing discrimination at all levels. Kamala Markandaya has put forward the evils of society like class and cultural discrimination, identity crisis, inhuman behaviour that were deep-rooted in the society. Markandaya has captured the psychological and philosophical experiences of being different from prevailing culture, class and race. Dr. K.R.S. Iyenger on Kamala Markandaya says "Women are natural story tellers and Kamala Markandaya is nothing if not a brilliant story teller. Her stories are gripping and extremely readable v, reader feel spellbound. Kamala Markandaya is a realistic writer and she showed the issues prevailing in the society through her realistic writing style.

### References

- Iyenger, Shrinivas "KK Indian Writing in English, New Delhi," (2004) Markandaya Kamala, *The Nowhereman*. Penguin UK, 2012.
- Prasad Hari Mohan, "The Theme of Exile in indo-English Novel." *Alien Voice, perspective on Commonwealth Literature* (1981):210-16 Arora Kumar, "A Study of Kamala Markandaya's Women"
- Sin ha A.A. *The Novels of Kamala Markandaya and Arun Joshi Jalandhar* :A.B.S.publications, 1998.
- Rao, A.V. Krishna and K.Madhuri, *Kamala Markanadaya A Critical study of her Novels, 1954-1982*. Delhi:B.R.Publishing House, 1998.