



Interracial and Intercultural dominance in The Coffe Dams by Kamala Markandaya

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Abstract

This paper tries to bring out human sensation and ethics which dwells among Indians, it portrays interracial and intercultural dominance which prevailed in the social during the period. The novel "The Coffe Dams" also brings out the repetitive theme of Kamala Markandaya that is the divergence between East and West. The author has taken up the theme which touches tribal world. The tribal people in the novel are an important fragment of Indian social set-up. The story revolves around the construction of dam with the collaborated technicians from Indians as well as British. They start to test their skills with nature. Each and every one working for the dam works diligently and they fight with their full capacity.

Kamala Markandaya was born in Mysore in the year 1924 and died during 2004. 'Markandaya' is the name occupied from her ancestors who belong to a Tamil Brahmin family. Her father worked in railways whose transfer had helped her to gain vast knowledge in new magnitude. "The Coffe Dams" written by Kamala Markandaya brings out the interracial and intercultural aspects with the help her characters.

Key words: Human Sensation, Dominance and Inequality

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portrays interracial and intercultural dominance which prevailed in the society during the period. The novel "The Coffe Dams" also brings out the repetitive theme of Kamala Markandaya that is divergence between East and West. The author has taken up the theme which touches tribal world. The tribal people in the novel are an important fragment of Indian social set-up. The story revolves around the construction of dam with the collaborated technicians from Indians as well as British. They start to test their skills with nature. Each and every one working for the dam works diligently and they fight with their full capacity.

Indian English literature refers to the works written in English by the Indian writers. It is also known as Indo-Anglian literature. It is only one and a half centuries old which comes under post colonial literature. "Travels of Dan Mahomet" is the first book written in English by an Indian named Sake Den Mahomet. It was published in the year 1793 in England which is influenced by western art form. New dimension was given to Indian English novels by the appearance of women writers. One among the women writers is Kamala Markandaya who is known for her quality and chronology.

Kamala Markandaya was born in Mysore in the year 1924 and died during 2004. 'Markandaya' is the name occupied from her ancestors who



belong to a Tamil Brahmin family. Her father worked in railways whose transfer had helped her to gain vast knowledge in new magnitude. She studied in Mysore till the age of sixteen later she joined the Madras University in 1940 where she studied History. She left studying history before she could complete it because of her interest towards writing and journalism.

She lived in South Indian villages where she learned minutely about the life of villagers. Kamala enjoyed the treasured moments of freedom and witnessed the separation of country into two- India and Pakistan. She respected the tradition of India and its culture most.

Kamala Markandaya got name and fame soon after publishing her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* in 1954. The novel became Book-of-the Month Club Main Selection and best seller in the United States. In 1955, the American Library Association called it a "Notable Book". She was awarded Asian Prize for her novel *Two Virgins* in the year 1974. Markandaya has written ten novels for her recognition.

Indians and British both are connected to a single project but there is no confrontation between them. Clinton is the contractor who enters into India with the idea of building a dam. He brings in many technicians with him and also calls many other technicians from India. Clinton's only motive was his dam and he never cared about any human being around him. The camp had both Indian and British. There is no human sentiment between the Britishers. Everyone had their own ideas and honor to maintain. The character of Clinton stands as a symbol of Interracial dominance.

Every time Indian contractors were disrespected. Subramaniam, one of the contractors from India built bungalows for the British. He was teased for his work and he was treated inferior. He was replaced by Krishnan from the tribal community. He had a good knowledge about monsoon and climate but his ideas were rejected and Clinton believed his material for the completion of dam will be enough. Bashiam also came from tribal background but he stays away from his people. He had good technical skills but he is mocked as jungly wallah because of his background.

All the Indian contractors work in the equal position to British contractors but the attitude of superiority was dwelling among the British. It goes on like a war between the rulers and slaves. Helen, Clinton's wife and Mackendrick, British contractor are the two souls who throughout the novel try to understand the stance of the tribal people. The narrator says, "The country was shaping her, working in all of them like an unnamed, diffused drug" (151). One of the contractors looks at Mackendrick and says, "I'm saying how it gets under your skin, this country...right under, I mean, into the bloodstream" (155). These lines show the way that Helen and Mackendrick were attached to the natives and the land. They both show their concern for the tribesmen whenever they are in trouble. Their human conscience pricks them every time whenever the authority is shown on Indians. The growth of modernity on one part of India is like tug and pulls between Indians and British.

Helen felt for the lost huts and she came to know at the mid of the novel that their



bungalows were built by destroying tribal people huts. She witnesses the broken mud pottery left under the soil and feels the memories that are buried deep under. She looks at Clinton's inhuman behavior and argues with him for justice and says,

"But they lived here, didn't they? They didn't ask to move."

"No. we persuaded them."

"Why?"

"Why?" Clinton repeated irritably. "Because they occupied a site we needed." (23)

These lines show Helen's responsibility as human being. Her humanity is shown through her words. The conversation shows the difference in the way Clinton and Helen looks at the tribes. After this incident Helen gets well acquainted with tribal people as days pass by.

The dam is constructed for the welfare of people. It is rising by blocking the river and valley. The tribal people were dependent on the river and now they depend on the dam and its water. All the Indian contractors work by knowing the nature where as the British believe in material. Tribal people believe it is for their welfare and sacrifices their land. This attitude shows the incorruptibility of tribal people.

The dam is about to be complete and the danger starts to threaten everyone in the camp. Nature shows its true color to the ones who try to control it. The rocks start to roll down the hills and it takes the life of few laborers who

were working in the site. The British government pays the final rites for the dead ones of their country but they fail to give the same equality for Indians to carry out their rites. Clinton thinks it's a waste of time to bring out the dead bodies and plans to incorporate the dead along with the structure. This inhuman behavior shocks the readers as well few characters in the novel. Few tribes who work in the site protest against Clinton and says, "No work, until the bodies of our dead are returned to us. So that the rites may be correctly performed, and their souls depart in peace" (182).

Dam takes up the life of so many innocent workers and all the Indian contractors have given their hard work up to their capacity. Now fear takes up its root among the Indian contractors that whether the dam will bear the name of an alien. They do not like Clinton's name being incorporated for the dam. They look at the Britishers like a guest and the sense of self makes Indians to think this way. They do not want to be dominated even after post independence.

Rain falls heavy and the water level rises. Clinton decides to break the coffer without any single thought about the tribal down the hill. Tribes face the circumstances whether to stay or to leave their native. The village headman decides not to leave his native because to save his self-respect as well his self-identity in his mother land. At the end of the novel monsoon stops and saves the tribal people. The non acceptance of the tribal people of a new culture which has invaded their land is clearly brought out through the character of the village headman.



This paper tries to bring out the domination faced by Indians even after post independence. The modern culture does not ruin any of the people who belonged to tribalmen. Throughout the novel they strive hard to keep up their culture and tradition. Each and every one tried to keep up their self identity which is dominated by the British. They accept modernity as a process as development. The characters in the novel struggle hard to save their self identity as well the culture of their country. "The Coffe Dams" can be considered as a novel which portrays human emotions with the help of post independence incidents.

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