

**Focalization of Nationalistic and Individualistic Issues in Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury***

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**Abstract**

Present paper attempts to explore the focalization of nationalistic and individualistic issues in Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury*. Here Markandaya revisits one of the most remarkable events in the history of the anti-colonial national struggle, the Quit India Movement of 1942 and delves in to the issues of nationalism, national and individual aspirations along with portraying intense political consciousness of the period. Markandaya explores the turbulent period of national-colonial struggle and meticulously divulges the political tension and upheavals of nationalistic fervour and patriotism. The novel recounts the story of Mira, the narrator protagonist, whose one brother, Oxford educated Kit, a district magistrate, works to sustain the authority of the British Empire, whereas the other, Govind, who personify militant nationalism, attempts to overthrow it through revolutionary activities and Mira herself is torn between her Indian patriotism and her sincere and ardent love for Richard, an Englishman. In this novel, Markandaya dwells on how the upsurge of nationalistic feelings influences and reshapes the lives and relationships of individuals. She has expounded the way the national identity takes precedence over the personal identity, love and belongingness.

**Key words:** Nationalism, Nation, Identity, Patriotism, Colonial Rule, Individual,

Kamala Markandaya occupies a prominent place among the post colonial Indian English writers. Markandaya's works paint a comprehensive picture of human misery resulting from various socio-economic and cultural conflicts. Markandaya records the awakened sensibilities of changing Indian society, and explores historico-political and national-colonial issues. In her second novel, *Some Inner Fury* (1955), Markandaya revisits one of the most remarkable events in the history of the anti-colonial national struggle, the Quit India Movement of 1942. It brings before the reader, the tumultuous period of pre1947 India, when struggle for freedom had become quite fierce. Here, Markandaya delves in to the issues of nationalism, national and individual aspirations along with portraying intense

political consciousness prevailing in contemporary Indian society. *Some Inner Fury* brings to fore the conflict between personal aspirations and nationalistic considerations and the consequences of nationalistic and personal fury. Third world fiction promulgates nation-centeredness of postcolonial world with its emphasis on the concepts of “nation” and “nationalism”. Nation refers to “a cultural-political community that has become conscious of its autonomy, unity, and particular interests” (Smith, 17) and Nationalism is a political ideology with existing or envisaged nation-state as an object. It is closely associated with the struggle of the colonized against the colonizers and colonial hegemonies. According to Ernst Gellner nationalism is “primarily a political principle, which holds that the political unit and the national unit should be congruent. . . Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment. A nationalist movement is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind” (*Nations and Nationalism*, p. 1) Gellner further opines, “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (*Thought and Change*, 168).

Roots of Indian nationalism and national identity can be traced back to ancient era, but in its contemporary form it emerged during 19<sup>th</sup> century with the anti-colonial movement. The Socio-economic factors and feeling of oppression under colonial rule, led to the emergence of Indian national identity and national consciousness. The dialectic that developed between the politics of the freedom struggle and course of colonial state formation, paved way for the discourse on nation building in India. The cessation of colonial rule was deemed to be indispensable for the creation of an Indian nation-state. In Indian context, nationalist discourse has been an “intellectual process through which the conception of an Indian nation is gradually formed” (Kaviraj, 301).

In *Some Inner Fury*, a semi-autobiographical novel, Markandaya has portrayed the tangled web of nationalism and individual aspirations and has explored how political and nationalistic concerns influence relationships. In the words of Iyengar, it is “a tragedy engineered by politics.”(440). In *Some Inner Fury*, the Nationalistic feelings of the Indians and their attitude towards the colonial rule are revealed through the divergent views of members of an affluent, partially Europeanized family that becomes involved both for and against the struggle for freedom. Termed as ‘feminist history fiction’, this novel recounts the story of Mira, the narrator protagonist, whose one brother, Oxford educated Kit, a district magistrate, a senior member of civil services, works to sustain the authority of the British Raj, whereas the other, Govind, who personify militant nationalism, attempts to overthrow it through revolutionary activities and Mira herself is torn between her Indian patriotism and her sincere and ardent love for Richard, an Englishman.

Through the life of the protagonist Mira, Kamala Markandaya elaborates how the upsurge of nationalistic feelings influences and reshapes the lives and relationships of people. She has expounded the way the national identity which is the sense of belonging of an individual to a nation and a feeling one shares with the society, takes precedence over the

personal identity, love and belongingness. Mira and Richard had to part owing to their different national identities and obligations pertaining to these identities. The dream of Mira to get married to Richards, whom she loves genuinely, is shattered by her own nationalistic feeling of belongingness with the folks fighting for achieving freedom from the colonial rule. Their love, "...a deep and maturing experience for both young people is shipwrecked on the rocks of Indian nationalism."(Williams, 85)

In this novel Markandaya has portrayed three distinct nationalistic attitudes through four sets of characters. The first is the fundamentalist attitude of those who "stuck blindly to old Indian traditions and values and were averse to British ways of life and deeply hostile to British rule in India"(Raizada, 41) They are in fact staunch nationalist in their thought and actions. Govind is one such character. Devoted to the cause of nation, he is fully immersed in freedom struggle. Second attitude is of those, "who had been completely swept off their feet by the English education and who found nothing valuable in their ancient culture and way of life. They were completely anglicized" (Raizada, 41).They have adopted western ways in their life and have got estranged from their roots. They are devoid of patriotic and nationalistic feeling for their nation. Kitsamy belongs to this category. And the third category includes those who have sought inspiration from the liberal and democratic values of the British people and have developed a broader outlook of life. They are rooted in their soil and are deeply concerned about the freedom of their country. Mira and Roshan belong to this category. Their idea of nationalism is not narrow or parochial.

Govind, the adopted brother of Mira, is anti-West and displays vehement abhorrence towards foreign rulers. He harbours a great hatred even for the English missionaries apparent in his attitude to Hicky. In his opinion these missionaries are those, " who not only set their alien and unwanted institutions in the land but who for the preservation of these sided with those white man who ruled the country"(166).Govind's is militant nationalism. Mira describes Govind's attitude towards the West' "Govind was not and had never been a part of it. To him it was the produce of a culture which was not his own- the culture of an aloof alien race twisted in the process of transplantation from its homeland [...] for those who participated in it he had a savage harsh contempt"(121). Out of his extreme patriotic fervour, Govind takes to violence. He resorts to conspiracy and bloodshed in order to free his country from the colonial rule. In this novel, Markandaya has given the glimpses of violent phase of freedom struggle. Hatred of nationalistic people like Govind towards British and their establishments leads them to violent agitations and setting the missionary school on fire killing Premala. Hatred, wrath and vengeance bring an abrupt end to Kit's life as well. Govind is falsely accused of murder, which further intensify the nationalistic patriotic surge in already volatile environment. The crowd of nationalists throngs the court and bails Govind out.

Markandaya has presented a contrast in the characters of Kit and Govind who inspite of belonging to same family are the opposites. Govind is absolute nationalist and Kit is

completely westernized and has become a part of British bureaucracy owing to the education he received at Oxford University. He has imbibed in him western manners and habits, and western culture has entered deep into his blood. As Mira says, “But Kit did not merely participate in it; his feelings for west was no cheap flirtation, to be enjoyed so long, no longer to be put aside, there after and forgotten, or at best remembered with a faint nostalgia. It went deeper; it was understanding and love.”(121) He becomes alien in his own country because of his western ways of life. For him, living in India is like ‘living in the wilds.’(14) He has become so much westernized that he is unable to understand and appreciate the aspirations not only of his countryman but also of his wife who has been bred on the oriental values of love and humanity. He is “more English than the English”(Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 4). Kit belongs to the group of those anglicised Indians who lived in a world distant from their own countrymen. Contrary to Govind he doesn’t have any nationalistic feelings.

The third category of nationalists include Roshan Merchant, an Oxford educated, westernised Parsi divorcee, running a nationalist paper, working for the upliftment of the poor Indians, ready to go to jail for her principals, who exemplifies the liberated women of resurgent India. “Born in one world, educated in another, she entered both and moved in both with ease and nonchalance” (121). Being a staunch absolute nationalist she supports freedom fighters and actively participates in struggle for independence sacrificing a comfortable and luxurious life. As Harish Raizada opines, “Though she has sympathy for the West and is on the intimate terms individual westerners, she is truly Indian at heart and takes active part in political struggle against Britain”(43) Markandaya has drawn a contrast between the nationalistic ideals of Gobind and Roshan. Gobind despises everything western while Roshan alongwith being associated with Govind in many anti-government activities retains her English friends also. Roshan believes in Gandhian creed and prefers attaining freedom by the non-violent means instead of violent like Govind. As she says “There is no power in violence... only destruction ... I am not really interested in destruction.” (126). Though Gandhi ji is not physically present yet impact of his ideas and movements is felt in the novel through the boycott of English goods and glimpses of Swadeshi movement.

Through Mira, the protagonist, Markandaya has shown the clash of nationalistic feelings and personal aspirations. The daughter of a sophisticated anglicized family proud of being a part of British social circle, Mira is torn between the love and the patriotism. She falls in love with Richard, his brother, Kit’s English friend. Their love is sincere, ardent and ingenuous but it results in to a cursed relationship as besides being lovers they are “also representatives of two nations- the ruler and the ruled. Consequently they inevitably have to face that crucial moment when they had to choose between personal and national loyalties” (Singh, 138). Being sympathetic, considerate and unconventional, Richard is portrayed as different from other Englishmen living in India. Mira is filled with extreme pleasure and pride when he sees him sitting cross legged on the floor of a Brahmin restaurant in shirt, dhoti

and chappals borrowed from one of his servants. “There is no one like Richard, no one at all like my love.”(137). Initially neither Richard nor Mira had any strong political inclination. Unlike her friend Roshan, Mira had never been involved in or was a part of any pro freedom activities. But she couldn’t stay aloof for a long time. Unwittingly Mira and Richard got caught in the web of political turmoil. As the agitation mounts up against the British, Richards becomes the target of violent nationalism of Indians and narrowly escapes the attack of acid bomb. Anti British slogans and attack make him feel miserable, “It is a terrible thing to feel unwanted. To be hated.”(169) He is perturbed with the turn of events and isn’t satisfied with Mira’s assurances that this feeling is not for the people like him for he was aware that during such tumultuous time when people were being divided along racial and national lines, and the division being native versus outsider and Indians versus foreigners, it was impossible to make individual differentiation. None was much concerned with Richard’s feelings for India and Indians, but the fact that mattered was his being the member of a race that ruled, an outsider and a foreigner and it was “there in your face, the colour of your skin, the accent of your speech, in the clothes on your back.” (169). He questions Mira, “Do you really think people can be singled out like that? One by one, each as an individual? At a time like this?... (169). In spite of her self-assurance and spirit, in her heart of hearts Mira knew this to be true. She could comprehend the enormity of situation and her helplessness at the turn of events. She affirms; “There is a time in one’s life, they say, when one opens the door and lets the future in: I had the feeling I had done so, but had neither the power nor the courage to recognize the shape of things to come; and therefore I could not speak” (169).

Separation of Mira and Richard gets initiated with the escalation of tension between the Indians and British as Quit India Moment enters in violent phase and the hatred of Indians for British intensifies. The conflagration of the national movement thwarts their plan of tying the nuptial knot. They do not have the power to change the direction of the political maelstrom. Mira has to make a choice between her ardent love for Richard and her loyalty to her country. “You belong to one side – if you don’t, you belong to the other. It is as simple as that; even the children understand it. And in between? There is no in between...” (169). Govind is accused of stabbing Kit to death by Hickey, arrested and put on trial in spite of Mira’s assertion and testimony about his innocence. In the trial scene the Indian–British divide deepens and both stand pitched against each other with Mira and Richard belonging to opposite camps though Richard had no involvement of in this case. Before the issue could be decided, the court is mobbed by slogan shouting crowd that takes Govind away.

Mira couldn’t shut her eyes to political reality and was unable to ignore the call of her people and country. Nationalism puts allegiance to the nation above the individual allegiances. Mira’s nationalistic feelings win over her love. “Country becomes more important than her love and she sacrifices it for the sake of performing her duty”(Arora, 44). In spite of suffering from the pangs of misery and agony of separation which is evident in her words, she moves away along with the procession that ‘liberates’ Govind while Richard stays

on with his companions, equally English by birth and race. Mira mused “Go? Leave the men I loved to go with these people? ...I knew I would follow these people even as I knew Richard must stay. For us there was no other way, the forces that pulled us apart were too strong” (192). Nationalistic feelings of Mira to be with her people, fighting for freedom of their motherland makes her move with the crowd of her people leaving Richard behind. “Nationalism implies that loyalty to the nation should be the first virtue of a citizen [...] loyalty to the national community should, transcend loyalty to more particular identifications...” (O’Leary, 220) Mira as a true nationalist, rises above the individualism and forsakes her love. Plunging into the great redeeming fire of the national movement, she reconciles her lot with the crowd realizing that, “...It was simply the time for parting...” (222)

To conclude, in *Some Inner Fury* Markandaya explores the turbulent period of national-colonial struggle and meticulously divulges the political tension and upheavals of nationalistic fervour and patriotism with their impact on personal relationships. Mira’s fate epitomizes how domineering forces of nationalism impede individual aspirations. In the words of Margret P. Joseph, “Just as in Walter Scott’s novels individual lives are moulded by political and personal struggle for power, in *Some Inner Fury* characters meet and are separated or killed because of national events”( Joseph, 32)

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