

Kamala Markandaya has a lot of respect and faith in Indian values but believes that Western impact is also necessary for rapid development. In Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmini and Nathan represent the East whereas Kenny symbolizes the West. Nathan and Rukmini are victims of natural calamities. They only had a piece of land for sustenance and that is also snatched away from them for setting up a tannery. Dr. Kenny is a social worker and loves the Indian people but is pained at their fatalistic attitude. He has sympathy for the poor and the suffering but does not like their passive attitude and the lack of fighting spirit. Markandaya beautifully delineates the difference between the Eastern and Western philosophies by presenting Rukmini and Dr. Kenny's different attitude towards life. Rukmini said,

“want is our companion from birth to death, familiar as the seasons of earth, varying only in degree. What profit to bewail that, which has always been and cannot change.”³

Dr. Kenny feels sad about the miseries faced by the poor and innocent people. He consoles Rukmini but also scolds her for her passiveness.

“You must cry out if you want help. It is no use whatsoever to suffer in silence. Who will succour the drowning man if he does not clamour for his life? ... There is no grandeur in want or in endurance.”⁴

Dr. Kenny, a symbol of Western culture cannot understand how Rukmini can be content with a little rice and hoping that times will change. Dr. Kenny does not like the Indian philosophy of fasting for the purification of the soul. He has a rational bent of mind and is unable to understand Rukmini's philosophical resigned attitude. He feels disgusted,

“Acquiescent imbeciles, do you think spiritual grace comes from being in want, or from suffering? What thoughts have you when your belly is empty or your body is sick?”⁵

The height of passive endurance is revealed when Ira's husband sends her back to her father's house. Nathan does not blame his son-in-law, “I do not blame him. He is justified, for a man needs children. He has been patient.”⁶

The solution to poverty and disease lies in Western medicine and scientific, rational approach. Rukmini gets her daughter Ira treated by Dr. Kenny. She is cured of her problem but a little late as her husband has already taken another wife. Even in this misery, Rukmini does not blame her son-in-law. Markandaya is well aware of this conflict between the Eastern and the Western attitude to suffering. Rukmini and Kenny stand for different cultures one representing the Eastern and the other, Western. Rukmini stands for blind faith and accepts everything as her fate. Kenny is rational and takes a scientific, modern approach towards solving various problems.

The East-West encounter is also highlighted in Kamala Markandaya's novel *A Silence of Desire*. In this novel, the East-West conflict takes the form of clash between Indian spiritualism and Western modernism. There is no Western character in this novel. The clash is depicted through Indian characters with western education, once again in this novel, an unending conflict between Eastern tradition and Western progress can be perceived. Sarojini and Dandekar have divergent attitudes. Sarojini holds Eastern views and has no excuse for her blind, unreasonable, instinctive fear of death in a hospital. She says,

“But I do not expect you to understand me with your Western notions, your superior talk of ignorance and superstition when all it means is that you don't know what lies beyond reason and you prefer not to find out. To you the tulasi is a plant that grows on earth like the most ordinary