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## COGNITIVE EROTICISM: A FEMINIST APPROACH TO KAMALA MARKANDYA'S TWO VIRGINS

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*Girls are socialized to fit specific gender roles based on their biological sex, and are assigned a gender from birth. The term "gender" refers to primary and secondary sex characteristics, physical or physiological differences between men, women and transgenders. On the other hand, "gender" refers to social or cultural differences associated with a certain gender. Being a female writer, Kamla Markanda has a feminine touch. Her writing is enhanced by accurate depictions of women's criticism. His literary work is full of conflicts between men and women, self-independence and social equality. It explains the true position of women in society, as well as the beauty standards that are valued. She is known for her feminine worldview, which she brings in her writing that represents basic truths, untainted by the rigid judgments of a male-dominated society, focus on social and emotional issues affecting women. This paper describes the formation of identity and challenges in the development of two teenagers, Lalitha and Saroja. Kamala Markandya's novel Two Virgins depicts the pain and suffering of female characters to realize their dreams. Lalitha is supposed to be ambitious in this novel. Her dream of becoming a film star came true when a filmmaker cast her in a documentary about village life. Lalitha suddenly became famous, revealed her long-hidden sexuality, and took advantage of her special position. Saroja tries to emulate Lalitha's feminine intrigue, attracted by her reflected beauty, which leads to conflicting beliefs about sexuality and desire. Saroja emerges from the family scandal with a realistic outlook on life. Patriarchy is shown through characters like Mr. Gupta who uses Lalitha. This paper attempts to discuss the central issue of two girls in contemporary India who want to escape from traditional ideologies, codes and practices.*

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Identity Formation, Indian society, adolescent, Patriarchy, Erotica.*

### **Introduction:**

While gender refers to characteristics that are formed during social interaction, race refers to fixed and unchanged biological characteristics shared by people in all nations and cultures. The expectations of each gender in terms of their duties exceed the physiological and biological differences between the sexes, even though gender arises from objective biological differences.

Gender difference is a social concept based on the physical differences of a certain society, as well as how men and women feel their egoistic desires, characteristics, and talents. In contrast to the immutable attributes of gender, historical and comparative social studies recognize gender as a variable that changes over time from one culture to another as society develops and changes. As Kamala Markandya says:

“She hated the city. She didn’t belong to it, she wanted to go away and never come back. She wanted to go home. At home there...No one could ever be lost, not by trying...You always knew where you were, you know who you were. The city took it all away from you. You were one in a hundred, in a thousand, you were no longer you. You have been an amoeba. You drifted, amoeba, like through the baffling streets, wondering where you were, what business you had.” (Markandaya: 187-188)

The development of women's sensibility and artistic expression is part of the modern Indian Renaissance. Kamala Markandaya's writing captures the sensibility of women in contemporary India very well. Kamala Markandaya knows how Indian society has changed since independence. Despite many social, economic and political changes, India today has seen strong cultural continuity. In her book, she focuses more on how human psychology affects female characters. When Lalitha expresses the unaccepted desire and femininity in the village society, the story writer shows the feminine beauty and desire for herself. She is fascinated by the vibrant and modern city life and meets the director Mr. Gupta who promised to help her become an actress. Unfortunately, she succumbed to their vices and became pregnant as a result of their affair. She tried to terminate her pregnancy to become an actress and get rid of her illegitimate child. At a young age, Lalitha tried to seduce men and take advantage of her beauty. Because of her beauty, she has several advantages.

It represents the insight of Shay Welch's book, which has a passionate feminist review of decisions that support women's equality. "Existential eroticism" is defined as the oppression of women, beauty and sexuality. Welch addresses issues of autonomy, agency, adaptive preferences, blame, and forgiveness, while focusing on women's actions and decisions to create existential eroticism, especially sexuality and violent, abusive relationships. In this case, feminist discourse can sometimes downplay women's agency by portraying them as victims or cheaters, or, after closer inspection, shamelessly blame them for the decisions made in everything from continuity to the limits of institutionalized violence. Welch argues that the victim/wrongdoer offers too straightforward a moral understanding of the decisions women make in patriarchal societies. When the reading begins, the readers meet Appa, Emma, their daughters Lalitha and Saroja, as well as Alamelu, Amma's widowed sister. The two "girls" in the story are described by putting the conflict between traditional and modern, westernized ideals front and center. The former chose modernity with freedom and choice and the other chose tradition. Two sisters are complete opposites in

personality and behavior. Both are vibrant young women who love life and respond differently to the temptations and temptations of the brave new world. Both have the same values and attitudes because they are daughters of the same parents, students of the same school and the same teachers and members of the same community. We can still see that they are different by comparing how they are different. Being an active member in India's freedom movement, Saroja's father has some contemporary values and is liberal enough to send one of his daughters to a Christian school. As a result, the two sisters develop a more liberal outlook on their social status. The gap between Saroja's family and the family of Manikam, the milkman, is a result of education with a westernised bias's sense of liberation. While one sister navigates through disobedience and nonconformity, the other sister succeeds through moral and social conformity.

The younger sister Saroja, who observes, bears, sees, thinks, comments on, and attempts to judge everything that occurs in the book, is the one who wrote it. The central idea of the book is her impression. The growing issues of two teens are the novel's primary subject. The other develops outside of its confines and away from its limitations while the first grows up to embrace the social norms of conduct. Lalitha is her father's favourite daughter and agrees with the majority of his cutting-edge viewpoints. Lalitha, like Saroja, develops in a socially constricting environment and is enrolled in Miss Mendoza's "Three Kings School," where she studies dance and singing. Her father is pleased with her abilities and has high regard for her refined preferences and viewpoints. She displays her skills at celebrations and maypole dance. On occasion, the family is also invited to school events. Lalitha receives a lot of indulgence from Miss Mendoza, a teacher at the school, and it is because of her effusive praise and favours that Lalitha is somewhat to blame for her foolishness and departure from conventional society. Lalitha identifies with the city, the people, and the way of life there. Unhappiness and frustration are fostered by the city, but Lalitha repeatedly chooses the city of her own choosing, the second time permanently. Gupta believes she was coerced into the city the first time, but it was her choice.

Neerja Garg supports the idea that "The author" in her book Kamala Markandaya's Vision aims to demonstrate that social interaction may be a source of only when societal norms are upheld can there be peace and goodwill are observed with due consideration for the nature of traditions that have been popular for a long time. Lalitha is just one of many young people who urban people that respect Mr. Gupta do so because they accept wholeheartedly adopted modernism. These have degraded morally. Teenagers believe village life to be barbarous. that poor mindset results in unacceptable circumstances, and they, particularly poor village ladies like Lalitha must endure suffering from an unplanned circumstance. Her miscarriage was as a result of this since she has propelled herself outside the sphere of her neighbourhood. Modernism produced enormous damage to societal traditions and values cultures resemble aunt Alamelu's gushing vessels who once sobs

resentfully herself:

“I know what is going on these days, these days young people think they know best, they have no respect for their elders, they have no respect for anything except their own willful ways.” In whole the novel it is aunt Alamelu who laments on the puncturing of social values. She complains against the disappearing joint family system also. Appa, her brother-in-law favours to eradicate joint family system but she, the eldest member of this family supports: “you have given your children their rights, Brother, and what is the result? On Deepavali night we three old goats are left to prance round like kids for want of anything better we, supposedly a joint family, a joint Hindu family, but where are the children and the children’s children? Missing, brother, because we have flouted the teachings of our ancient scriptures and are now made to feel the pinch.”(p.93).

"Women are born to suffer," she said. Society prepares women by "interpellation". Louis Althusser, who lived from 1918 to 1990, coined the term "interpellation" to describe the process by which thoughts enter our minds and influence our lives, and we begin to think of them as our own. Interpellation is how we come into contact with and master our cultural ideals. According to Althusser, when the process of interpellation is invisible, when people take cultural norms as obvious or natural, for example, a man doing an act seems normal. Interpellation works best when people don't think about translation in the first place. Althusser argued that assimilation occurs in two ways: through coercive measures and through ideological measures to put people in their place in society. One arises from force and the other from thought. According to Althusser, the state (or governing body) has a number of different apparatuses that guarantee interpellation. Ultimately, ideology is important in shaping our identity and defining our special place in society. If someone has been successfully persuaded to commit to a particular cause or set of ideals, they are said to be fully interdependent. This idea of femininity was criticized by the existentialist philosopher Simone De Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex*. This refers to the stereotypical idea of women as a result of society and physiological training. Therefore, instead of being born, femininity is something that women acquire.

However, before moving forward, it is important to understand the difference between development and understanding (as used in the term). While the former may lead to the self-transformation of the Telos, the latter is the definitive form of the essence of existence. The word "woman" in Simone De Beauvoir's famous quote, “ One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” refers to the idealized representation of society; therefore "public woman". Women in India are more susceptible to conditioners and their effects. She is informed about what men like and how they behave around her. She was ordered to follow certain rules and her movements were severely restricted. She is instructed to follow a variety of regulations and her movement is severely constrained. In order to "protect" their ladies, some socio-economic levels prevent females from

attending public schools where boys go. After this incident, the atmosphere in which the women function changes, and she starts to be conditioned differently. The reader should pay attention to the feminine sex's lack of agency. While her passivity in the affair is a "Legitimate Expectation" of society, things are done to and for her. In India, social conditioning of women is much more overt. It is achieved by women adhering to societal standards, even those that are foreign to them. When the societal role of "wife" is examined, this is easily understood. Young girls are encouraged to view their social status in reference to their fathers or husbands. She learns about her responsibilities to her spouse through observing her mother, movies, or any other external source that shows this relationship. She makes progress in her life by identifying with successful men and having them in it. These idealised representations are in stark contrast to the minority of women who reject these ideas and carve out a path for themselves. They infrequently come across accepting spouses who respect them as unique persons, and they frequently encounter subtle social outrage for falling short of these idealised images of Wife. Our "alief" (habitual belief-like attitude), despite the fact that we as a nation accept liberal principles and pledge equality under the constitution, is nevertheless outdated. Neerja Garg in her work Kamala Markandaya's Vision favours that "The novelist wants to convey that social life could be a source of harmony and cordiality only if the norms of society are followed in due regard to the nature of traditions that have been in vogue for ages." (p.55).

The book *Two Virgins* by Kamala Markandaya explores the issue of East and West meeting. There is an East by the straightforward way of life in the villages, whereas the West is symbolised by the flash and glamour of city life. There are obvious signs of feminine sensitivities in the book. The novel's female characters depict the genuine status of women in society, where they are oppressed, mistreated, and constrained by societal norms. The tale prominently emphasises patriarchy to depict how males behave in an inhumane way towards women. The writings of Kamala Markandeya are influenced by the harsh realities of life. The sarcastic title of the book raises issues with morality and virginity. It is a representation of conformity towards western and eastern values and womens' struggle to fit into the society's culture. This novel is a record of the torment of rural individuals and asserted that the challenges and complexities of life can be negotiated in society.

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