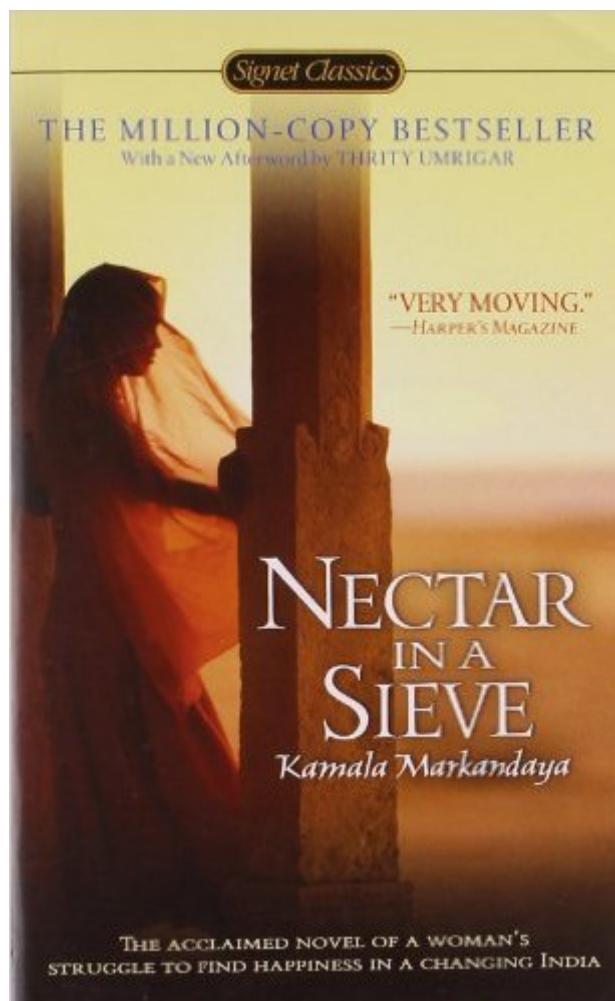


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Nectar In A Sieve (Signet Classics)



Synopsis

This beautiful and eloquent story tells of a simple peasant woman in a primitive village in India whose whole life is a gallant and persistent battle to care for those she loves-an unforgettable novel that "will wring your heart out" (Associated Press).

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (219 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Set in some village in India, Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve is a gripping story of one indefatigable woman's survival of a checkered life, one that had no margin for misfortune. Neither does the book have surprises nor twist, but readers will find a determined, unrelinquished fighter in a woman who bears an unfailing faith and rams through impregnable clamor that invades her life. Rukmani married Nathan, a tenant farmer whom she had never met, as a child bride. Even though Rukmani was ignorant of the simplest of tasks, Nathan never uttered a single cross word and gave an impatient look. He looked at her as if nobody had discovered her beauty. He never asserted his rights to forbid her reading and writing, a talent that placed Rukmani above her illiterate husband. Misfortune seemed to have a tight foothold in Rukmani and Nathan. The monsoon inundated the rice paddies where Rukmani worked side by side with Nathan to wrest a living for a household of eight. No sooner had the monsoon tapered off than a drought ravaged the harvest. Hope and fear acted like twin forces that tugged at them in one direction and another. Poverty-stricken Rukmani saw her daughter Ira become a prostitute, her 4-year-old son Kuti died from hunger, her teenage son Raja caught stealing and beaten to death, her oldest sons

Thambi and Arjun set off to Ceylon to work in a tea plantation. The opening of a tannery, of which Rukmani was only skeptical, had spread like weeds and strangled whatever life grew in its way, changed the village beyond recognition. And yet, Rukmani survived. The interminable poverty and impregnable fate of Rukmani and Nathan must evoke in readers' pity and sympathy.

Read Nectar in a Sieve and understand what life is like at the bottom of the heap, with the "have nots" struggling for a handful of rice to get through another day. Struggling to raise children and grow crops on land they don't own, in a community whose traditions and character are on the brink of extermination by big-business. Read this book and take up the fight for social justice, job creation, and land reform. If anything, read to understand and feel how lesser fortunate people in this world of ours have lived, and continue to live. Though Nectar in a Sieve takes place in India and is about a rural family there, its themes are universally applicable, especially in these modern days of globalization and gentrification. Kamala Markandaya died in May of 2004 and it seems that the American press mostly ignored her passing, which is a shame because she is definitely a pioneer of a burgeoning Indo-European line of authors. Nectar in a Sieve has been on the reading list of many a high-school & college for decades now, and thus highly influential for thousands of American & European students past and present. And that's how I first came upon this little gem, in a college course on Eastern Religions, just before I visited India for myself. Though written/published in the early 1950's, I thought this book well crafted and insightful. I was better prepared for my own experiences of Southern India, feeling just a little wiser about life and the people I met there. Markandaya tells this story of the peasants Rukmani and her husband Nathan in a heart-felt, straight-forward manner with many picturesque passages creating an aura of beauty amidst hardship.

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