

Creative Flight

An International Half-Yearly Open Access Peer-Reviewed E-Journal in English

*** A Non-Profitable E-Journal from Cooch Behar, West Bengal, India ***

ISSN 2582-6158

~ ACADEMIC SECTION ~

Volume II, Issue I (April, 2021)



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Humanistic Concerns in Kamala Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice*

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Abstract:

This paper examines Kamala Markandaya's perception that life is to be lived within the bounds of moral values and societal fabric. The paper is about the struggle to survive, a struggle that usually overpowers the poverty stricken masses of India. The protagonist Ravi, a rural peasant moves to the city to escape the vicious cycle of starvation in his village. His tryst with conscience echoes his roots still delved in Indian values and the final choice made by him to choose not to rob is the expression of humanism at his best. The main character walks a tightrope between individual rebellion and acceptance of social expectations . In the modern era of individualism and rationality, one is always pitted against the traditional ethical ethos. There is always a struggle going on in the mind of the individual between just and unjust or between moral and immoral. The character in the novel struggles, suffers, grows and matures to own his responsibility and in the end chooses values affirming faith in life .The final triumph of moral and social responsibility over the selfish interests is the real focus of the paper.

Key words: Humanism, Rationalism, Responsibility, Morality, Values