

**THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL IN KAMALA MARKANDEYA'S
A HANDFUL OF RICE.**

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ABSTRACT

The struggle for survival is the most distressed condition for an individual or a group of people in a society. The life that an individual needs to lead won't be granted easily. The term 'survival' does not simply mean living on this Earth. On the other hand it is totally different from simply leading our life by doing something. It is a kind of way through an individual had fixed their life style how they want to spend their entire life. But it is not possible in all the cases. Not all the plans that we have framed become true. This is usual in many of the Indian poor class people's life. The same thing was portrayed by Kamala Marakndaya's *A Handful of Rice*. The life of Ravi in the novel *A Handful of Rice* is the best example for the struggle how an individual can struggle to the core. The pain and struggle is exposed through the poverty and hunger.

Keywords: Survival, life, individual, Pain, Struggle, Poverty.

The novel *A Handful of Rice* not only depicted the poor life of an individual named Ravi but also showed the painful life behind all the failures that leads to a stressful life which holds no value. The entire novel talks about how survival became a hard thing in this updated world. Anybody can live simply but surviving in this world is quiet a hard task. One cannot sustain over a place which completely seems to be uncomfortable and unacceptable. Ravi experienced the same thing throughout his life. He didn't know how to lead his life happily when he was doing wrong. Life changed its face when Ravi started leaving all his negative attitudes in his life. The price that has given at the end is his life.

The novel *A Handful of Rice* sets in Madras. The lower middle class life style was beautifully portrayed by Kamala in the novel. Not only the character Ravi but also the character Appu is shown as the best example for the underrated life style. The novel opens like a film in which the hero Ravi was chased by Police. Ravi was a son of a peasant, moved from a poor background plagued by poverty and hunger to a modernized place as well as a materialized place where he suffered a lot to SURVIVE.

Ravi acquired the friendship of Kannan, a blacksmith by profession. Ravi is a literate, even though he couldn't find a job easily in the city. His belief on getting a good job in the city became a daydreaming. He didn't think that it's an easiest task to find a job in honestly in Madras. He didn't starve to get a bungalow and settled in a sophisticated life style. He just wants to find a place where he can breathe freely and earn a livelihood. Chasing on hunger and poverty became a routine in the life of Ravi in Madras.

The dire poverty and cruel hunger made him to fall in the hands of a hoodwinker's gang, under the control of Damoday, a third rated criminal whose job is to deceive people. When they were on the process of robbery, the police started chasing this gang in which Ravi is one among the robbers in the robbery group. In order to save his life from the police and the punishment he hides himself in the house of Appu, a good and kind-hearted person and a tailor by profession.

Ravi was caught up the family members and he was wrapped on the pillar by thinking him as a thief who entered into the house to steal the valuables. After knowing that Ravi is from a decent family and he is a literate and searching for a job, Appu asked him to stay along with him and ask Ravi to work after him. Ravi also learnt tailoring and became a helping hand in the business of Appu. For that he was given 5rs as his salary.

Ravi started loving the daughter of Appu and wants to marry her. The elder daughter Thangam was married to an unemployed man named Puttana. Thangam, naturally is a chatterbox who always jealous on her younger sister Nalini. Nalini looks naturally good both physically and mentally than Thangam. In order to save dowry Jeyamma, the mother of Nalini accepted the love of Ravi and Nalini. Meanwhile Damodar gave Ravi a suggestion to get settled in his life soon. He advised Ravi to steal the clothes from the warehouse of Apu. But he ignored the idea by saying it won't be good to do such a shameful activity against his own family.

Ravi leads a happy life as a husband in the house of Appu. Thereby it's a conduct begins to refine little by little. The other members of the family are Jeyamma, wife of Appu, Nalini's sister, Puttana- Thangam's husband Puttana was very lazy who always wants to suck others' perspiration. Nalini again gives birth to a male baby and is named Raju. Burden increases on Ravi's shoulder. He aspires to work hard more. Nalini again gives birth to twins, two females this time. Appu meets with an accident and passes away one day. The sudden demise of his father-in-law leads him to face the socio-economic pressure again as all the responsibilities come to weigh on his shoulders. One day Rabin beats up Nalini in a rage. When he comes back from work, Nalini is missing in the house. Jayamma doesn't answer where Nalini is. He rapes her in anger and goes in search of Nalini.

Nalini is found at Puttan's home. He brings her back home. To add to his pressure, his little son dies one day due to his negligence in calling the doctor on time. Owing to this, his wife begins to reject him silently. It is his wife Ravi has transformed his way of life. But her imminent rejection leads to frustration. This again makes Ravi revert into the evils of underworld. After more hesitations and dilemma, he reverts back to Damodar. But Damodar rejects him. Eventually he tries to loot a granary with the mob, but his conscience hold him back. The novel ends up here with Ravi still searching for a handful of rice which from the beginning remains unreachable.

Throughout the novel, the protagonist struggled to get a proper identity and survival. Unfortunately he didn't get it till the end. The last scene is a very big symbolism even unenviable one that shows the real pain of the character Ravi who is the real reflection of every man in all the family.

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