PREFACE

Fiction manifests the true history of mankind, or it proves to be nothing. It transmutes the various facets of life and reality into things of beauty. A work of art evinces an explicit historical milieu and the history and ethos of the people living in the writer's time. Great literature seldom fails to depict the predominant social, political, cultural and economic factors, which reveal the literary writer's insight into the fundamental social and historical aspects of his times.

Kamala Markandaya's art is basically the art of perceiving and articulating history in the making. What takes place at present acquires the distinction of history a short time afterwards. In conformity with the modern perception of history, Markandaya depicts history through a delineation of her characters. Great historical processes like industrialization and modernization are apprehended and experienced by her characters in their life. It is, therefore, the life of sensation and excitement rather than of thought and introspection that Markandaya reveals through her men and women in her fictional world.

The thesis, "'History without Footnotes': An In-depth Study of the Novels of Kamala Markandaya," attempts a
close study of the novels of Markandaya from the historical perspective. A study of the criticism of Markandaya makes it clear that her novels have not so far been viewed from a historical perspective. The present attempt is thus significant in the sense that Markandaya is treated for the first time as a historical novelist and her novels as history without footnotes. The thesis also makes a critical study of all the ten novels of Markandaya from a thematic perspective.

As a sensitive writer, Markandaya portrays with an exceptional historical consciousness and sensibility an authentic picture of contemporary Indian society and ethos. Her fictional corpus exposes the changing tenor of post-Independence India. Her sincere and accurate delineation of the social, economic and political changes with her specific focus on the indomitable nature of the Indian psyche and of the human spirit reveals her wonderful sense of history. Her observation of life is quite comprehensive and thus she in her novels recreates history. In fact, Markandaya makes a creative use of history and her historical presentation of time, place and persons has an organic unity. What is true of a time and place is also true of human destiny of all times.

Markandaya, an artistically self-conscious writer, has so
far published ten novels. As a sincere student of history, she has been able to depict the social and cultural reality of contemporary India and the East-West interaction quite objectively as she herself happens to be a product of intercultural forces. Though she was born in India, she now lives in England as an expatriate. No doubt, the personal, social, cultural and religious sides of her personality are greatly influenced by her expatriate status. Her deep sense of involvement in the social, political and cultural life of India, her meticulous observation combined with profound judiciousness and feminine perception set her apart from other writers.

The novels of Markandaya are quite exceptional in the sense that they are concerned with the major contemporary problems like the tensions and conflicts arising out of an encounter between tradition and modernity, faith and reason, alienation and rootlessness of man in modern society, racism and the dichotomous relationship between the East and the West.

Markandaya is certainly not a formal historian. She in her novels depicts history without footnotes. She pays little attention to acknowledged historical facts and circumstances relating to great men and great deeds. On the other hand, she captures the essential historical spirit and
forces which shape and influence the lives of men and women. She deals with several historically important factors in her novels not as a historian does but as an artist with historical insight and consciousness. The historical reality which one finds in the novels and which constitutes their centrality, acquires wider dimensions of universality and timelessness.

Like John Keats who depicts human sensibility and human history through a description of the Grecian Urn that ultimately becomes a sylvan historian, Markandaya presents contemporary history through her novels. The phrase "Histor without Footnotes" in the title of the thesis is borrowed from the critical essay of Cleanth Brooks entitled "Keats' Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes" on John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" for effective communication of ideas and themes. The title affords ample scope for the better presentation of the historical insight and perception of Markandaya.

Chapter One, "Introduction," traces the growth of India English fiction with special emphasis on the different remarkable stages in its development as a literary genre in Indian English fiction. The chapter attempts to establish that Markandaya is essentially a writer with sociological and historical vision. A brief outline of the life an
career of the novelist and the formative influences on her artistic development are given. Apart from explicating her staunch commitment to art and society, a brief and concise survey of her novels and of the extant critical works is furnished. The thesis statement is introduced, fully explained and its relevance to society is also made clear.

Chapter Two, "Tensions and Conflicts," analyses how Markandaya with her sensitive perception of the history of contemporary society depicts the tensions and conflicts arising out of the confrontation between tradition and modernity. The novelist points out how the traditional rural communities of India disintegrate due to the onrush of industrialization and urbanization. Markandaya has a dig at the very process of modernization which is devoid of human values. The chapter also clearly shows that Markandaya is certainly not in favour of the obsolete and outmoded rigidities of primitive rural life. As a writer who is able to comprehend the perceptible forces of history and the complex nature of contemporary society, she is fully aware of the inevitable demands of urbanization and modernization. Therefore, in some of her novels the novelist attempts to bring about a meaningful co-existence of tradition and modernity.
Chapter Three, "Alienation and Rootlessness," attempts to establish the fact that Kamala Markandaya is basically a writer with a sociological vision. It examines how the novelist focuses on alienation of characters in society. A definite pattern found in some of her novels is that if one's roots are lost one loses one's identity and thus plunges into alienation and rootlessness. The first part of this chapter analyses how people from rural India become alienated from the new and strange surroundings of city life after being uprooted from their village communities. The second part of the chapter analyses how people feel alienated and suffer from a sense of isolation and rootlessness when they migrate from India.

Chapter Four, "Confrontation and Reconciliation," studies the novelist's great thematic concern of confrontations arising out of the interaction between the East and the West. Her marvellous sense of history is revealed in her objective portrayal of the conflicting relationship between people who belong to two diverse civilizations. Her comprehensive perception and thorough knowledge of the different ways of the life of the East and the West enable Markandaya to view their divergent social, political, and cultural values from various perspectives. Her treatment of this theme in great seriousness in most of her
novels reveals her genuine concern for the contemporary world civilization.

Chapter Five, "Summation," attempts to establish Markandaya as a conscientious writer committed to values. The important assertions analysed in the previous chapters are restated and emphasized to prove the artistic genius and dexterity of the novelist. The various stylistic devices adopted by the writer to communicate the ideas effectively and powerfully are highlighted in this chapter. The chapter concludes on the note that the novels of Markandaya are universal and timeless though historical and contemporary.

With regard to the format of the thesis, the researcher has adhered to the mechanics of writing outlined in MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers 3rd ed. 1989.

Markandaya's perceptive delineation of contemporary society and the emergence of universal stance and human appeal in her novels has won critical acclaim both at the national and at the international levels. Her genuine concern for human values and her enduring spirit of humanity in the modern complex society has made her novels remarkable literary pieces. Her strong commitment to art and society makes Markandaya one of the greatest creative artists of the age.