CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. (Conrad 17)

Literary creation does not take place in a vacuum. The emergence of a work of art is the coming together of the deeply personal qualities of the writer and the various forces that determine the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of the life of his society. A creative work reflects a specific historical milieu and the history of the literary writer's time. The study of literature is not only an understanding of the culture of a society and its social, economic and political institutions at the social level but also an exploration of varied people, their life and behaviour.

Literature is, hence, the endeavour of a creative writer to respond completely to his milieu. The relation between literature and society is mutual and reciprocal. George Watson says: "If society influences fiction, so does fiction influence society" (184). Of all the literary forms the novel is considered to be the most society-oriented genre, for it depicts human society in its varied forms. In the words of Michel Zarraffe: "The novel is the first art to represent man explicitly as defined historically and socially" (39).
While describing the essential nature of the novel, Mair and Ward point out: "The novel if it be anything, is contemporary history, an exact complete reproduction of the social surroundings of the age we live" (195).

Novels, therefore, are depictions of values and feelings. They serve as "barometers of human responses to social forces" (Raghava 6). As Baker says: "...novels should be no mere reproduction of things or events, so far as words can reproduce, but interpretation" (qtd. in Raghava 6). The novelist is an ardent observer who meticulously records and interprets the events taking place in a particular social and historical milieu. He serves as a meaningful link between the past and the present. As Ralph Fox has pointed out:

The novelist, therefore, has a special responsibility both to present and the past of his country. What he inherits from the past is important, because it shows what are the sections of his country's cultural heritage which have meaning today. What he says of the present is important, because he is assumed to be expressing what is most vital in the spirit of his time. (65)

Great literature always deals with major socio-economic and political problems and it achieves its inner unity when...
truly good writer gains an insight into the basic social and historic tendencies of his times. Novels are thus communicators of human values.

Fiction, being the most characteristic and powerful form of literary expression today, has undoubtedly acquired a significant position in Indian Writing in English. It is generally believed to be a legacy of the British Raj and a result of the exposure of the educated Indians to English literature. The novel in Indian Writing in English did not become a significant literary activity until the thirties of the twentieth century. The reasons for such a delay can be found in the literary, social and historical factors of the time.

In the West the rise of the novel as a literary form was closely associated with the growth of the bourgeois. In India too a new class of intellectuals as a result of British contact and Western education started using social and historical themes in their novels. Their writings which often reflected their awareness of time and place were very much influenced by two important literary activities. The translations of Western masterpieces of fiction were introduced to Indian English writers. There was, moreover, a stream of translations and English renderings of great and eminent books from Indian languages. The literatures of
other regions of India became familiar to Indian English novelists through English translations. These translations, moreover, helped in upgrading the standards of works of art in Indian literature as also in Indian English literature. Most of the translated works are classics. However, very few novelists tried their hand at fiction in English up to the later half of the nineteenth century.

During the later half of the nineteenth century there was a considerable flourish of literary activities in Bengal. Most of the novels of literary merit appeared only in Bengali. The English translations of some of these novels were brought out by the authors themselves. The early Indian English novels hailed from Bengal. Bengali novelists like Romesh Chandra Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore, whose novels were translated into English, exercised great influence on the early Indian English novelists.

Romesh Chandra Dutt wrote six Bengali novels out of which only two were translated into English by him. The Lake of Palms (1902) is the English translation of his Bengali novel, Sansar. It is a social novel dealing with the theme of widow remarriage. The Slave Girl of Agra (1909) is the English rendering of the Bengali novel, Madhvi Kankan. It is a
historical romance dealing with the Moghul rule in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is a much more significant novelist than R.C.Dutt. He is popularly known as the father of Bengali fiction. Although he had started in the earlier days an English novel namely Rajmohan's Wife (1864), he later on turned away from that and began to write historical novels in Bengali. His novels include The Poison Tree (1884), Kapal Kundala (1885), The Two Rings (1887) and Krishna Kanta's Will (1895). He gave a philosophical dimension to fiction with social themes. He was not only a successful writer of historical novels but also an equally outstanding novelist of social life. Commenting on his significant place in the history of Indian English fiction, Prof. Priyaranjan observes: "He awakened the country to the greater world outside, and linked the two together. The East and the West met in him." (qtd. in Mehta 26).

The influence of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee on the later Indian English novelists is multi-dimensional. His historical novels provide a powerful and romantic presentation of history. These novels, translated into English, formed the basis and model of the historical novel of importance to Indian English fiction. His social novels portray the social life of Bengal from a philosophical viewpoint. He depicted
past traditions and traditional values which was marked by realism in his novels.

Another important writer in Indian English literature is Rabindranath Tagore. He is quite different from R.C.Dutt and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. The Home and the World (1919), The Wreck (1921) and Gora (1923) are his English translations. They are mostly social novels. In his novels Tagore tries to interpret the East for the West.

The first generation of Indian English novelists failed to show any considerable literary excellence. Inspired by English literature and especially the early Victorian models, these writers expressed themselves in English and even went to the extent of imitating them in their own writings.

The turn of the twentieth century saw some sporadic attempts on the part of Indian English novelists. Among the novels which deal with the social problems are: Sorabji's Love and Life behind the Purdah (1901), Between the Twilights (1908) and Sun Babies (1910); S.M.Mitra's Hindupore (1909); S.B.Banerjea's Tales of Bengal (1910); Balakrishna's The Love of Kusuma (1910), A.Madhaviah's Thillai Govindan (1912) and Jogendra Singh's Nasrin (1915). These novels reflect the social life of the period and other
important issues like emancipation of women and religious reform.

The romantic phase of Indian English fiction is marked by the publication of Toru Dutt's *Bianca* or *The Young Spanish Maiden*, Kalikrishna's *Roshinara* (1881) and S.K.Ghosh's *One Thousand and One Nights* (1904).

Very few of the Indian English novels of this period achieved an adequate measure of artistic unity. They did not depict any inner conflict in the protagonists. They only mark the fullyfledged emergence of the historical novel as a distinct genre.

The impact of the first World War could be felt in the novels written after 1920. The war with its gruesome havoc stirred the conscience of the world. Writers in India were also very much affected by the war and its consequences. Owing to the war the national conscience was awakened and people began to attach much importance to the burning issues of liberty and independence. Moreover, the Freedom Movement spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi made the writers look at things from a new angle. Deeply influenced by the epoch-making political, social and ideological uprising caused by the Gandhian movement, the novelists of this period tried to make a realistic presentation of life. As H.M.Williams aptly
points out:

... the emergence of the Indo-Anglian novel of social realism and social revolution after World War I can be seen as both an Indian phenomenon (related to the newly active nationalist movement among the intellectuals and the masses) and as part of the English social realism of the period. (Indo-Anglian Literature (1800-1970): A Survey 36).

The novels of K.S.Venkataramani, chronologically one of the earliest novelists of the period, present the social and political problems of the period. He is essentially an agrarian novelist. In his two novels, Murugan, the Tiller (1927) and Kandan, the Patriot (1934) he focuses his attention on the struggle for independence and the problems found in the rural society.

The fictional works of Krishnaswamy Nagarajan are superior to the novels of K.S.Venkataramani both in respect of literary quality and of technique. His first novel, Athavar House (1937) is a family chronicle dealing with a Vaishnava Brahmin family settled in South India for a number of generations. In Chronicles of Kedaram (1961) the author depicts the social and political life of a coastal town during the nineteen thirties. Gandhi himself appears as a character in this novel.
The most significant event that took place in the literary history of Indian English fiction in the nineteen thirties is the appearance on the scene of the major trio: Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao. They published their first novels between 1935 and 1936.

Mulk Raj Anand began his literary career "in the new wave of realism that swept over Indian literature in the nineteen twenties and nineteen thirties."

(H.M.Williams 36) His early novels seem to be deliberate attempts to present the distress of the lower castes and communities of India. His novels depict the pathetic conditions of the poor, innocent and good people who are destroyed by the inhuman and heartless socio-economic system. Such merciless systems existed due to the traditional caste system or the fast emerging imperialistic capitalism. No doubt, Anand derives his ardent socialist faith and his great vision of a modern egalitarian society mainly from the European tradition and its social ideologies.

Anand's first three novels -- Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936) and Two Leaves and a Bud (1937) -- form a trio. All the three novels have the victim-hero of the oppressed and ill-fated outcast-proletarian whose fate and hopelessness appear to be symbolic of India enslaved by the British Raj.
A Punjabi peasant is the protagonist of the author's ambitious trilogy -- The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1914), The Sword and the Sickle (1942) and The Big Heart (1945).

Mulk Raj Anand's first literary attempt after Independence was Seven Summers (1951). His other works include The Private Life of an Indian Prince (1953), The Old Woman and the Cow (1960), The Road (1963), The Death of the Hero, Morning Face (1970) and Confessions of a Lover (1976).

The fictional world of R.K. Narayan is certainly different from that of Mulk Raj Anand. "Narayan's delicate blend of gentle irony and sympathy, quiet realism and fantasy stands poles apart from Anand's militant humanism with its sledge-hammer blows and his robust earthiness" (Naik 160). In his novels R.K. Narayan portrays the ebbs and flows of middle class life and the action takes place always in a small imaginary town namely Malgudi. Though Malgudi, like Hardy's Wessex, cannot be found on any map it has almost become a real place somewhere in South India. His literary output before Independence includes Swami and Friends (1935), his first novel, The Bachelor of Arts (1937), The Dark Room (1938) and The English Teacher (1946). The novels which R.K. Narayan wrote after Independence are

Raja Rao is not a prolific writer. He is in many ways different from Mulk Raj Anand. While Anand sticks to social realism and focuses more on endless struggle for economic and political power by the underprivileged, Raja Rao deals with the national struggle for independence and its revolutionary implications in terms of Hindu mythology, culture and spirituality in his novels. He has so far published five novels: Kanthapura (1938), The Serpent and the Rope (1960), The Cat and Shakespeare (1965), Comrade Kirillov (1976) and The Chessmaster and His Moves (1988).

Kanthapura, Rao's only novel before Independence, describes the civil disobedience struggle put up by the men and women of a small South Indian village called Kanthapura. The Serpent and the Rope, perhaps the greatest novel of Rao, presents spiritual conflicts and theological metaphysics. The Cat and Shakespeare, a humorous and metaphysical comedy, is a comic story of a cat and two clerks -- one, Ramakrishna Pai and the other, Govindan Nair. Comrade Kirillov is set in the backdrop of London in the nineteen
thirties and forties. The novel essentially focuses on the opinion of Kirillov regarding communism, the British, the War and the Indian freedom struggle. Raja Rao's fifth novel *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1988) depicts Sivaram Sastri's metaphysical quest for truth.

Other important novels written during this period include C.S.Rau's *The Confessions of a Bogus Patriot* (1923), J.Chinnadurai's *Sugirtha* (1929), Ram Narain's *Tigress of the Harem* (1930), V.V.Chintamani's *Vedantam or The Clash of Traditions* (1938), Shankar Ram's *The Love of Dust* (1938), D.F.Karaka's *Just Flesh* (1941), *There Lay the City* (1942) and *We Never Die* (1944); and C.N.Zutshi's *Motherland* (1944).

Indian English fiction started acquiring a reputable status and remarkable impetus after Independence. The great trio continued to write and the emergence of new and young writers brought a new thrust to Indian English novel. Among the novelists who made their appearance in the nineteen fifties and sixties, the most important are Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Sudhir Ghose, G.V.Desani and B.Rajan. A memorable development which took place in this period is the conspicuous emergence of women writers of whom the most important are Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande.
Bhabani Bhattacharya, one of the early writers of the period, seems to be strongly influenced by Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi and Mulk Raj Anand. He firmly believes that "art must teach, but only unobtrusively, by its vivid interpretation of life. Art must preach, but only by virtue of its being a vehicle of truth. If that is propaganda, there is no need to eschew the word" (Bhattacharya 395). His novels may not present the metaphysical genius of Raja Rao or the comic imagination of Narayan, but they indicate his genuine desire to bring out a change in the existing structure of the society for the benefit of the entire humanity itself.

His first novel, So Many Hungers (1947) deals with the exploitation and the oppression of the people by political, economic and social factors. Music for Mohini (1952) shows how a city-bred woman adjusts to her new way of life in a traditional village. He Who Rides a Tiger (1952) tells the story of a poor blacksmith who takes revenge upon the society for its unscrupulous attitude. Goddess Named Gold (1960) is about a fake magician and it shows how his great expectations are finally frustrated. Shadow from Ladak (1966) seems to be his artistic failure. Set against the backdrop of the Chinese invasion of 1962, the novel brings out the difference between two ideologies: the Gandhism of Satyajit Sen of Gandhigram and the scientism of the Chief
Engineer of Steeltown, Mr. Bashkar. Bhattacharya treats the theme of East-West encounter in A Dream in Hawaii (1978).

Unlike Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar strongly believes that art has no purpose except to offer pure and delightful entertainment to the readers. He is basically a historical novelist. As William Walsh observes: "Malgonkar, who writes in a strikingly British idiom, like other writers of this kind, admires military virtues, coherent characters performing orthodox roles, narrative gusto, and neat plots, often with a historical background" (Indian Literature in English 101). His first novel Distant Drum (1960) tells the story of the army life of a young officer. The action takes place in the pre-Independence India and the novel abounds with several interesting army details. Combat of Shadows (1962), centres round the life of an egoistic young British Manager of an Assam Tea Garden, Henry Winton. The Princes (1963) offers a remarkable picture of the hard times consequent upon the merger of the princely States into the Indian Union with a specific reference to the State of Begwad. A Bend in the Ganges (1964) depicts the period of Partition as realistically as possible. The Devil's Wind (1972) deals with the great revolt of 1857.

Khushwant Singh, though not prolific, has no doubt made a significant contribution to the Indian English fiction.
While his first novel, *A Train to Pakistan* (1956) portrays the great impact of Partition on a small village which lies in the Indo-Pakistan border, the second novel, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), depicts the picture of a Sikh joint family and their various reactions to the freedom movement in the forties. His latest novel, *Delhi* (1989), deals with the past and the present glory of Delhi.

Balachandra Rajan began his literary career with his first novel *The Dark Dancer* (1959) which shows that his realism is less social and philosophical than psychological. The novelist deftly presents the theme of East-West encounter in this novel. He pursues this theme in his second novel, *Too Long in the West* (1961), too.

Sudhindranath Ghose, whose novels had been neglected until recently, has successfully expressed the Indian ethos in the native traditional story-telling method. His four novels: *And Gazelles Leaping* (1949), *Cradle of the Clouds* (1951), *The Vermilion Boat* (1953) and *The Flame of the Forest* (1955) form a well-knit tetralogy which depicts the life and career of the protagonist.

G.V. Desani's *All about H. Hatterr* (1948, revised edition 1972) is extremely complex in theme and artistic techniques. It narrates the story of an eccentric Eurasian and his
solemn quest for understanding the meanings of life.

Among the novelists who appeared on the scene in the late sixties and seventies the most important are Arun Joshi and Chaman Nahal. Arun Joshi, who seems to be seriously interested in existential dilemmas and astutely aware of the problems arising out of modern Indian society and the East-West confrontation, treats the theme of alienation repeatedly in his novels. He is not a novelist in the tradition of Jane Austen, Dickens, Mulk Raj Anand, Narayan and Kamala Markandaya. He is a novelist in the tradition of Camus, Sartre, Kafka, Saul Bellow and Malamud. Nevertheless, Arun Joshi's description of the human predicament differs from that of the Western existential writers. It should be noted that Joshi never accepts the sense of alienation and meaninglessness as the final predicament. His heroes, in spite of their self-centred tendencies, are genuine seekers of a purpose in life. Although they often seem to be prone to self-pity and escapism they always move towards self-fulfilment. His three novels -- The Foreigner (1968), The Strange Case of Billy Biswas (1971) and The Apprentice (1974) -- attempt to delineate the theme of alienation in three facets -- "alienation in relation to self, the society around and humanity at large ..." (Naik 229-230). In his latest political novel, The City and the River (1990) Joshi presents the malpractices in which people wielding
political power indulge and the way in which the common people respond to them.

Chaman Nahal's literary pieces are also significant contributions to Indian English fiction. His first novel, *My True Faces* (1973), presents the ill-fated domestic life of Kamala Kant. *Azadi* (1975) presents the migration of Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant, and his family to India at the time of Partition. Nahal takes up the theme of East-West encounter in his third novel *Into Another Dawn* (1977). The English Queens (1979), Nahal's fourth novel, tells the love story of Rekha and a poor musician.

Fiction by women writers undoubtedly constitutes a major segment of contemporary Indian English literature. Through their novels these women writers present modern life with all its complexities. The picture of the world that they depict is obviously different from that of male writers. In their writings one vividly sees a different perception and a new insight into the intricacies of life and its multifaceted problems. Most of these writers focus their attention on women's issues and the sensibility of women. Just like the women poets of the post-Independence period, the women novelists too form a significant school. Prominent among these writers are Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande.
Ruth Prawer Jhabvala occupies an important position in Indian English fiction. Born of Polish parents in Germany and educated in Britain, Jhabvala married an Indian and has lived in India for twenty-five years. Her novels portray the social life of India though her literary canvas is confined to Delhi and its surroundings.

In a clear demarcation one can easily see that the novels of Jhabvala can be divided into two distinct groups. The first group of novels which comprises To Whom She Will (1955), The Nature of Passion (1956), The Householder (1960) and Get Ready for Battle (1962), depicts the urban middle class Indian life in a comical manner. The second group viz., Esmond in India (1958), A Backward Place (1965), A New Dominion (1973) and Heat and Dust (1975) deals with the theme of East-West encounter. Her recent contribution to Indian English fiction includes In Search of Love and Beauty (1983) and Three Continents (1987).

The fictional works of Nayantara Sahgal seem to be preoccupied with two important aspects of Indian society -- politics and the modern Indian woman's search for sexual freedom and self-realization. Though her command over English and her perception of Indian society appear to be good, her handling of these themes shows less of her artistic ability. A Time to be Happy (1958) presents a chronicle of

Anita Desai has added a new dimension and perspective to the overall achievement of Indian women writers in Indian English fiction. Unlike Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal, Desai's forte lies in her exploration of "modern Indian sensibility" (Iyengar 464). She seems to be more interested in the interior aspect of the human than in the outward social, political and economic realities. "Since her preoccupation is with the inner world of sensibility rather than the outer world of action, she has tried to forge a style supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fretfulness of the stream of consciousness of her principal characters" (Iyengar 464). Her literary works include *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voice in the City* (1965), *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) and *Clear Light of the Day* (1980).
Shashi Deshpande is a recent author in Indian English fiction. The author of the 70s and the 80s, she reflects a realistic picture of the contemporary middle-class woman. The predominant issues and themes in her novels emerge from the situations that focus on women caught in the crisis of a tradition-ridden society where the shift is taking place from the conventional to the unconventional. She traces the tensions experienced by the modern Indian woman and other related problems which arise out of such a transitional world. Her first novel, *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980) is the story of Sarita who represents the middle-class working woman in modern India. It deals with her convulsions and conflicts. *Roots and Shadows* (1983) explores the inner struggles of Indu. It deals with the problems of love, sex, marriage, settlement and individuality. *That Long Silence* (1988) is once again about various problems faced by the modern woman in India. In this novel Deshpande presents a woman who does not revolt openly against certain social norms in the beginning and later on reconciles herself to the situation, but a kind of woman who wants to revolt, but ultimately does not. Though her latest novel *The Binding Vine* (1992) once again deals with the life of a young married woman, it explores the redemptive powers of love amidst loss and despair.

Santha Rama Rau has written two novels -- .

Among the novels written by women novelists during the fifties and the sixties, the significant ones are Lotika Ghose's White Dawns of Awakening (1950), Mrinalini Sarabhai's This Alone is True (1952), Bani Ray's Srilata and Sampa (1953), Sally Athogia's Gold in the Dust (1966), Tapati Mookerjee's Murder Needs a Staircase (1962) and Six Faces of Eve (1963); Padmini Sen Gupta's Red Hibiscus (1962), Muriel Wasi's Too High for Rivalry (1967), Hilda Raj's The House of Ramiah(1967), Sita Ratnammal's Beyond the Jungle (1968), Meenakshi Puri's Pay on the First (1968) and Vimla Raina's Ambapali (1962).

Notable among the novels by women published during the seventies are Bharati Mukherjee's Tiger's Daughter (1973) and Wife (1976); Veena Nagpal's Karmayogi (1974) and Compulsion (1975); Jai Nimbkar's Temporary Answers (1974); Shanta Rameshwar Rao's Children of God (1976), Kamala Das's Alphabet of Lust (1976), Rama Mehta's Inside the Haveli (1977), Shouri Daniel's The Salt Doll (1977), Jyoti Jafa's
Nurjahan (1978) and Anita Kumar's *The Night of the Seven Dawns* (1979).

Foremost among the post-Independence women novelists is Kamala Markandaya. Endowed with illustrious talents and creative genius, Markandaya is indubitably an acclaimed artist on the contemporary Commonwealth literary scene. As a highly prolific writer, she can be easily ranked with the major trio -- Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Her literary output has been quite steady and substantial and although she has published a few short stories and articles, her artistic genius fully expresses itself only through the medium of the novel. Her fictional corpus has received a wide critical acclaim in India and abroad. Unlike many other women writers of Indian English fiction, Markandaya has not found her creative and artistic genius sapped after her very first attempt but she has published ten novels over a period of twenty-nine years.

As a woman fiction writer, Kamala Markandaya represents "the creative release of the feminine sensibility" (Goyal 140) in India. Described by William Walsh as "the most gifted" (Walsh, *Commonwealth Literature* 19) of the women novelists, she does not certainly seem to be a "female R.K. Narayan or an Indian Jane Austen using the modes of comedy and irony with the assurance of a highly skilled
artist" (Goyal 140). She is certainly an outstanding creative artist in her own stamp of merit for the vivid presentation in her novels of "a rich sensibility characterised by an intellectual suppleness, an imaginative freedom and a philosophical-cultural attitude that invests them with a subdued spiritual glow" (Goyal 140).

The novels of Markandaya unmistakably belong to the literature of concern or socio-literature. Depicting a faithful picture of contemporary Indian reality with exceptional historical consciousness, her novels seem to reflect the changing traditional Indian society in the post-Independence India. Shiv.K.Kumar underscores the uniqueness of Kamala Markandaya:

Of all the contemporary Indian novelists writing in English, Kamala Markandaya is the most accomplished, both in respect of her sensitive handling of a foreign medium and her authentic portrayal of the Indian scene. What distinguishes her most incisively from other Indian novelists is her acute awareness of gradual shift in values that has been taking place in this subcontinent during the past two decades or so.(85)

The most striking feature of Markandaya's fiction is that it reflects the changing ethos of the post-Independence
India. Her accurate and meticulous delineation of the social, economic and political changes with her special focus on the concept of cultural continuity reveal her extraordinary sense of historicity. The emphasis in her fiction is evidently on the pulsating drama of life rather than on the precept or doctrines and ideological speculations. Unlike Mulk Raj Anand, Markandaya does not show any interest in dogmas and propagation of ideas in her novels. It is quite evident that ideological commitment is certainly absent from her fictional corpus and that is how her art is completely free from propaganda and polemics. As an artist with an acute sense of history, she depicts "the changing image of man and society... imparting in the process to various vignettes of life a sense of the dynamics of change" (Walsh, Commonwealth Literature 19). Writing about her artistic ability in portraying modern Indian society, William Walsh remarks:

Her particular strength lies in the delicate analysis of the relationships of persons, especially when they have a more developed consciousness of their problems and are attempting to grope towards some more independent existence... she has been most successful and at her best, an impressive best, in dealing with the problems of the educated and middle class, and she has a gift for
delineating the self-imposed laceration of the dissatisfied. (Commonwealth Literature 19)

While the obsessive concern of the novelists of post-Independence India has been the cultural and political confrontation of the East and the West, Markandaya seems not only to have studied this confrontation deeply with historical perception but also to have "traced its origin to the very beginning of the process of modernization" (R.S. Singh 144) and its aftermath. As a careful artist she has sincerely attempted to estimate the direction that Indian society has taken ever since Independence without in any way misrepresenting the Eastern or the Western cultural and social life.

The clash between the East and the West forms a major thematic concern in her novels as Markandaya herself is a product of inter-cultural forces. India is the country of her birth and upbringing while England happens to be that of her adoption. Undoubtedly her personal, social, cultural and religious traditions seem to be touched and toned by her status of being an expatriate. Her life history itself sufficiently proves this point.

Born (1924) and brought up in South India, Kamala Markandaya comes of a well-to-do Brahmin family. Her father was a transport officer in the Railways. Since her father's
profession involved frequent transfers she could not get her education undisturbed. Moreover, her travels along with her father in India and Europe often interrupted her schooling in Mysore. But the experiences which she gained during such travels obviously are the best formative influences on her writing career:

I think the role of observer which every traveller assumes is good training for any writer....It makes a good starting point and I believe it was my starting point. (qtd. in Kalinnikova 149)

Kamala Markandaya entered Madras University after her vagrant school education in Mysore. But she failed to get a degree in History in the University because of her strong interest in writing. On leaving the University she started working as a journalist for a weekly newspaper in Madras. She also did liaison and staff work for the Army in India during the War, but returned to journalism soon after it was over. Since she had a desire to know more of rural India she lived for sometime in a South Indian village. The experiences she got while staying in the village account for the authenticity of her treatment of Indian rural life in her novels.

In 1948, she migrated to London where she supported herself by working in a solicitor's office. She also
continued her career as a journalist there. She married John Taylor, an Englishman and is now settled in London as an expatriate. She has a daughter. She continues to write under her maiden name, though after marriage she is Purnai Kamala Taylor. Before marriage she was Kamala Purnaiya, and she started using the pen-name "Markandaya" when she took to writing.

Kamala Markandaya's perceptive sense of involvement in the social, political and cultural life of India, her sensitive observation combined with critical judiciousness and the womanly sensibility brought her international reputation with her very first novel, Nectar in a Sieve. She was awarded the National Association of Independent Schools Award (U.S.A) in 1967, and the Asian Prize in 1974. As a calm and quiet woman by temperament she does not like to talk much about herself. Her confessions in this regard are worth noting:

As for myself I have lived a quite ordinary and uneventful life. I was born, brought up and educated in South India... Later I studied at college. I have worked as journalist both in India and England. I am married and have a daughter... I do not like to go into more detail. After all I am not a film star! I am a writer, and I think it is best for a writer to
keep her life private. (Letter to P.Geetha)

However, one can learn much about her from her novels.

Kamala Markandaya made her literary debut with Nectar in a Sieve (1954). It presents the age-old rural, agrarian cycle of life, badly disrupted and mangled by the intrusive and greedy industrialization of modern India. Nathan the peasant and Rukmani his wife are archetypal figures of endurance, defeat and resurgence. What strikes one in a character like Rukmani is the eternal flexibility and resilience of a humble peasant. Like the old man of Hemingway who returns to the sea when he is shattered, and R.S.Thomas's Iago Prytherch who endures like a tree under the curious stars, Rukmani goes back into life taking on herself new responsibilities though life has done its worst to defeat and dishearten her. In her sufferings and in her endurance she is the primordial mother figure.

In Some Inner Fury (1955) the novelist for the first time presents the East-West conflict which is manifested in different forms in her later novels. Basically a political novel, it depicts the freedom struggle of the Indians against the English colonizers. It is also a love story of Mira and Richard Marlowe and deals with the dilemma between personal relationship and racial prejudice.

A Silence of Desire (1960) covers new ground and adds a
new thematic dimension to Markandaya's fictional achievement. It depicts the theme of the clash between spiritual faith and scientific reason and between tradition and modernity. The conflict is dramatized through the interplay of the central characters, Dandekar and his wife Sarojini. The novel also presents an ascetic who is a recurrent character in Indian Writing in English.

Possession (1968) moves from India to London and then back. Anasuya, a minor woman character, narrates the story. The novel explores the loss and recovery of identity and the spiritual quest of the central character, Valmiki, who recovers his aesthetic and spiritual wholeness only when he returns to the non-material and non-modern values of his rural caves in India.

A Handful of Rice (1966) is about urban poverty, the exodus from the village to the town and the destruction of the traditional artisan by modern industry. While Nectar in a Sieve is essentially a novel of rural problems, presenting the poverty and hunger of the rural people, A Handful of Rice primarily deals with urban life with the stern battle for survival. Ravi, the protagonist of the novel, is the proletarian product of the nineteen fifties. The novel shows how Ravi is ultimately ruined by the unjust socio-economic forces in society.
In *The Coffer Dams* (1969) Markandaya returns to the theme of technological invasion on the indigenous cultural value systems. The theme of East-West encounter also figures prominently in this novel. It also stresses the value of human sensibility and human relationships in the wake of modern industrialization and its progress. The novelist presents the various strands of themes and plot through the interplay of such diverse characters as Clinton, Bashiam, Mackendrick, Helen, Rawlings, Millie and Krishnan.

*The Nowhere Man* (1972) is Markandaya's maturest work. As the title vividly suggests, the novel deals with the theme of alienation. Depicting the East-West confrontation in a new perspective, the novel explores the problems of immigrants and racialism in all its harrowing aspects. Srinivas, a displaced South Indian immigrant, who even after having spent nearly fifty years in England, is forced to become a rootless and restless person. Though the novel deals with the theme of identity crisis in an alien environment, it is concerned with larger human relations and becomes a penetrating study of human relationship and human loneliness. It also marks a remarkable development in style.

*Two Virgins* (1973) studies the havoc that gross commercial modernity plays on the ignorance of the rural people. The two virgins are contrasting patterns of
attitudes and behaviour. While the elder sister falls a prey to the seductions of the tinsel world, the younger one sticks to age-old values and survives. The novel traces the growth of the two sisters as a sort of amplification of the characters.

The Golden Honeycomb (1977) is a historical novel. It depicts the events that rocked the State of Devapur for nearly three generations. Markandaya fictionally assesses the East-West encounter covering the period from the last decades of the nineteenth century to the attainment of Independence. The novel chiefly deals with the evolution of the central character namely Rabindranath.

Pleasure City (1982) is quite significant in the career of the novelist. Though it treats of the themes of tradition and modernity and the Indo-British relations, it is undeniably different from her other novels. Instead of confrontation, the novel marks a definite note of reconciliation between the East (India) and the West (Britain). It centres round the construction of a luxury hotel near a remote fishing village on the coast of a South Indian State. The main subject of the novel is the friendship between a native teenaged orphan and Tully, an Englishman.
The novels of Kamala Markandaya have been reviewed in various journals both in India and abroad and are discussed in many surveys of Indian Writing in English. The critics have written commentaries on individual novels and on Markandaya's merits as a novelist. But unfortunately no detailed full length critical study of the novels has so far appeared.

Of all the criticism available on Markandaya only important critics who have shown exceptional interest in Markandaya's literary career and arrived at significant critical insights are taken up for review.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's critical commentaries on some of the early works of Markandaya are quite perceptive and dispassionate. While evaluating the individual merits and thematic patterns of the novels, he highlights the finer artistic aspects of the works. His concluding remark that Markandaya does not repeat herself and thus turn the novel into a fixed formula justifies the claim of later critics that she is a committed writer, who writes naturally and spontaneously.

S.C. Harrex's insightful criticism on the early novels of Markandaya is worth considering. Concentrating on the first five novels, he points out how these novels deal with
different crises of identity for the protagonists. He, moreover, observes how each predicament is seriously impaired by the East-West encounter. Joan F. Adkins in his unbiased and perceptive criticism on some of the novels of Markandaya shows how the novelist tactfully portrays the Indo-British conflict as it appears on different class levels in the society.

While bracketing Markandaya with Anita Desai, H.M. Williams points out in his critical observation how both the writers explore in their novels the anguish of life in the modern society. Ann Lowry Weir's discerning article is a careful study on the theme of woman's consciousness as it is found in two of the novels of the author.

R.S. Singh's critical contribution is highly remarkable. He shows in his article, "Soulful East and Ratiocinative West: Kamala Markandaya," how the novelist judiciously depicts the social and cultural life of India and its conflict with Western modes of life. His critical study reveals the widening vision of the author regarding the process of modernization.

In his critical survey of Markandaya's early novels P.P. Mehta notes that there is a definite purpose in her artistic career but he feels that this purposive direction
does not mar in any way the aesthetic values of her works.

Margaret P. Joseph, as an astute critic, establishes Markandaya in her critical monograph, *Kamala Markandaya*, as a most distinguished literary artist in Indian Writing in English. With a penetrating critical insight she shows how the novelist with her tragic vision of modern life artistically brings out the tragic sense of life through characters, themes and remarkable stylistic techniques.

Hari Mohan Prasad in his article, "The Quintessence of Kamala Markandaya's Art," mainly focuses on Markandaya's dynamic sensibility and effortless art. Concentrating on the craftsmanship of the author, he highlights how the novelist uses different styles of prose in accordance with the nature of her characters and particular situations.

*Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya* edited by Madhusudan Prasad contains some stimulating and insightful studies of her novels. The studies of critics like Madhusudan Prasad, A.V. Krishna Rao, Haydn M. Williams, Harish Raizada, Edwin Thumboo and Krishna Sarma are immensely elucidating and scholarly. The studies of F.A. Inamdar, S.Z.H. Abidi and V.B. Gulati on the stylistic techniques of the novels reveal their erudition and adept critical judgement. In her perceptive article "The Image of India in the Novels of
Kamala Markandaya" Nidhi Srivastava observes how the themes chosen for her novels are essentially taken from typical Indian life and how the images and symbols employed in the novels prove the fact that Markandaya is basically an Indian novelist having Indian sensibility with specific social and cultural commitments. Her criticism is quite significant in the sense that it can be set against the criticism of some of the other critics who hold the view that Markandaya lacks Indian sensibility because of her expatriate status.

Shantha Krishnaswamy's analysis of women characters in the novels of Markandaya is quite objective and sensible. In her dispassionate criticism she is able to bring out the global vision of the novelist and establish the artistic talents of the author in creating woman characters. Rama Jha's article "Kamala Markandaya: An Overview" critically establishes the author's exceptional forte in accomplishing a unique insight into the female psyche.

O.P.Saxena's insightful article on the novels clearly establishes her merits as a gifted artist in her comprehensive depiction of the Indo-British conflict. But his criticism lacks an in-depth study as he fails to see the real intention of the novelist in such portrayal.

Ramesh K.Srivastava has made significant contributions
to the criticism of Markandaya. His articles on individual novels as well as the style of the author are worth considering. His criticism shows how the novelist uses English as an appropriate vehicle of her creative writing. He labels Markandaya as an orthodox perfectionist who always wants to maintain the purity of her language.

A. Jameela Begum, in her article, "Glimpses of Indian Women in Kamala Markandaya's Novels," focuses on the novelist's exploration of the woman consciousness of Indian women in her novels. Her study helps the readers to appreciate the author for a deft presentation of the human psyche trapped in the web of social, traditional and spiritual conflicts.

In his critical study of the novels of Markandaya and Jhabvala, Cross Cultural Interaction in Indian-English Fiction, Ramesh Chadha analyses Markandaya's treatment of the theme of cross-cultural interaction objectively. Despite his incisive and perceptive commentaries, his criticism and scope fail to be complete as he confines himself only to half of her fictional corpus.

Rekha Jha too in her critical work, The Novels of Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Jhabvala, has made a perceptive study of the treatment of the theme of East-West encounter in the
novels. This thought provoking and astute criticism highlights the novelist's artistic ability to portray the phenomenon of cultural schizophrenia and her successful integration of language with themes.

Among the latest criticisms Usha Pathania's critical contribution to the novels of Markandaya is worth noting. In her critical work, Human Bonds and Bondages: The Fiction of Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya, she studies the novels of Markandaya from the viewpoint of human relationships. She shows in her study how Markandaya deals with the impact of the diverse contemporary problems upon the natural human relationships.

So far the critics have not studied the novels of Markandaya from the historical perspective. The present study, therefore, is quite unique in the sense that for the first time Kamala Markandaya is treated as a historical novelist and her novels as history without footnotes. The researcher attempts to prove in this study how the novels of Markandaya deal with the themes of contemporaneity as well as timelessness.

A survey of the fictional works of Markandaya indicates that the major themes in her novels are the conflict between tradition and modernity, faith and reason, the uprootedness,
alienation and loss of identity of modern man, racial tension and prejudice, and the East-West dichotomy. These themes have been explored in all her ten novels with a fresh perspective and from different viewpoints. The novels of Kamala Markandaya are studied here to understand how the novelist depicts the various absorbing trends that have taken place in the changing social, political and cultural scene of India with her excellent sense of history.

Markandaya's unique historical insight is found in her treatment of important trends like the transition period in the twentieth century India, the struggle for independence, the advent of industrialization and modern technology, the historically significant event of the eruption of racialism in England in the 1960s and the Indo-British relations. The historical consciousness that is evident in her novels is national and international rather than provincial. In truth, what is distinctly visible in her novels is the unified experience in history of the whole of mankind which seems to be both intra-cultural and inter-cultural. No wonder, Kamala Markandaya's unique historical perception of the emergence of New India and its changing socio-political and cultural scenario sets her apart from other writers of Indian English fiction.

Kamala Markandaya does not present the history of any
particular period or age or the heroic deeds of particular historical personages like a historian or a historical novelist. Her focus is mainly on various currents in the history of the nation and of the people. She writes about how changes at social, cultural and political levels have influenced the people and vice versa. In fact, characters in her novels become archetypal in nature and some of the important characters like Rukmani, Nathan, Mira, Sarojini, Dandekar, Ravi and Srinivas become universal beings at the end.

Markandaya's novels present the historical truth rather than an accumulation of facts. They do not depict any formal history at all and Markandaya is not out and out a historian either who portrays only the history of the nation without any literary or artistic excellence. Her observation of life is thorough and sincere and she recreates history and the reality of life in her novels. Though the novels contain fictitious names of characters, they present the historical and cultural transformation of Indian life and tradition. "What saves Markandaya's novels from stark realism is her fine sense of history. She cannot look upon the present as an episode, complete in itself; in her stories, eternity converges at each moment" (Chauhan 138).

The novels of Markandaya show how the novelist succeeds
"in recording the inner workings of the minds of her characters, their perplexities and social confrontations. She endeavours to portray them as individuals growing to themselves, unfolding the delicate processes of their being and becoming. (Shahane 2615). In fact, she is not writing about what has happened as a true historian does, but after reading her novels one feels that this is what must have happened. What Cleanth Brooks says -- "imaginative perception of essentials -- in The Well Wrought Urn (134) is quite applicable to the novels of Markandaya also. Such a historical vision is undeniably aesthetically excellent and it is also true. The novels of Markandaya clearly show that she is a good historian with extraordinary artistic talents.

Markandaya's novels convey history without footnotes. The novelist quietly ignores names, dates and special historical circumstances and data. She is certainly not a formal historian. A formal historian who writes novels has several limitations. He cannot distort history as such and factual history has to be strictly adhered to. As Chaman Nahal writes: "Herein lies the additional burden that a historical novel places on the artist. The novelist is obliged to do careful research into the period he has chosen for presentation and every detail of that period has to be accurate"(8). But it is true that a novelist cannot always depend on the mere accumulation of facts. Mere accumulation
of facts is certainly meaningless. Moreover, a historical novelist who gives so much importance to facts and data always deals with the past like an antiquarian. Though the historical novelist, in the post-modernist view, is expected to include the present in the portrayal of the past, his reliance on accumulation of facts and specific historical events is very deep. But Kamala Markandaya probes various historically significant factors not as a historian does but as an artist with historical perception and consciousness. It is thus that the history that one gets out of her novels is a history without footnotes.

The historical novelist makes a conscious foray into the past and its history. But the novelist, who deals with his own time, writes contemporary history through a perceptive recording of the ways of his contemporaries. Contemporary history may sound a contradiction in terms but it traces history in the making. The perception that the historical novelist derives from the privilege of his hind sight, the novelist of the present derives from the perception of the human significance of contemporary life. Markandaya, strictly speaking, is not a historical novelist. In her novels "time is a continuum rather than a matter of the mechanical computations of a chronometer" (A.V.Krishna Rao, "Nayantara Sahgal's Recent Fictions of History: A Study")
Kamala Markandaya's literary sensibility projects itself in her novels as an acute, if ambivalent, perception of the different and distant forms of national consciousness which shape and sustain the individual identity. Her fictional achievement lies in her being artistically rooted in the continuing, though changing, tradition of India... Her contribution to the Indo-English fiction lies in her capacity to explore these vital, formative areas of individual consciousness that project the images of cultural change, and in her uncanny gift of inhabiting the shifting landscapes of an outer reality with human beings whose sensibility becomes a sensitive measure of the inner reality as it responds to the stimulus of change. (The Indo-Anglian Novel and the Changing Tradition 67)

The functional difference between the artist and the historian is very clear as it is made by Aristotle in his Poetics. In his opinion the function of an artist is not to describe the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e. what is possible as being probable or necessary. That is why, according to Aristotle,
literature is "more philosophic and of graver importance than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars" (qtd. in Selden 50). It seems to be true that historical sense and reality enter into the sphere of art imperceptibly as they are important factors in determining the ultimate value of a given piece of art. R.K. Dhawan rightly observes:

In a sense every novelist tries to enshrine a period in a book; in other words every novelist is a historical novelist. This historical reality, in terms of time and space, forms an integral part of a work of art and is transmuted in the process of giving it a creative expression; in the process it achieves wider dimensions of universality and at times a state of timelessness. ("The Artist as Historian: Some New Writers" 240)

Great literature is timeless and great literary writers transcend the particular outward forms of history because their works present a universally valid account of human nature. The novels of Markandaya too depict the basic and essential perception of man and his problems. She as a creative artist succeeds in accomplishing the delicate balance between disclosing the individual's psychological and social predicaments and in delineating wider cultural and
political settings which generate these crises. This exquisite balance is the hallmark of her success as a novelist. A.V.Krishna Rao puts it succinctly:

The quintessence of Markandaya's fiction consists in artistic exploration of the human psyche in the context of complex cultural values. This concern for individual consciousness and its growth and refinement is the hallmark of Markandaya's art. The purposive direction of her creative sensibility endows her novels with a certain representative character that marks them out as a significant entity in the Indo-Anglian fiction. ("Continuity and Change in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya" 3)

The individual's inner conflict as presented by Kamala Markandaya becomes all the more significant in the sociological context of the clash between tradition and modernity. British rule has brought in industrialization which has done more harm to rural life than help. The result is tension in the minds of the people. And this tension forms the nucleus of the next chapter.