Kamala Markandaya, who moved to Britain after India declared its independence, is known for writing about culture-clash between Indian urban and rural societies. She belongs to that pioneering women writers who made their presence felt in the literary world not only through their subject-matter but also through their fluid and polished literary style. The distinguished Indian novelist, Shashi Tharoor acknowledges her greatness and contribution to the evolution of Indian Writing in English: 'Markandaya was a pioneer who influenced all of us Indians writing in English.' From 1960s onwards it was a common sight to find her novels on the shelves of bookstores throughout America and in every public library. Her fiction has drawn sufficient critical attention which is testified by the various doctoral thesis written on her work.

Indo-Canadian poet and academic Ilma Parameshwaran, who has published a scholarly book on Markandaya's novels and has interviewed her, says, “She is a pioneer member of the Indian diaspora and in her best novel ‘The Nowhere Man’ (1972) foreshadows many diasporic issues with which we are preoccupied today.” She adds, “Markandaya's strength as a novelist comes from her sensitive creation of individual characters and situations which are simultaneously representative of a larger collective. ... her prose style is mellifluous and controlled.”
All of Markandaya's novels reveal her intense preoccupation with the changing Indian social and political scene; her careful, conscious craftsmanship and her skilful use of the English language for creative purposes. She is very keen in recording the workings of the minds of her characters, their personal perplexities and social confrontations. She has tried to portray them as individuals growing into themselves, unfolding the delicate processes of their being and becoming. In their encounter with an alien political power, the anti-colonial or anti-imperialist attitudes are powerfully expressed and Markandaya's major characters project these viewpoints.

Markandaya is respected by many for her candid comments and is often credited for bringing recognition and visibility to Indian English writing. Charles Larson of American University in Washington wrote: "Most Americans' perception of India came through Kamala Markandaya; she helped forge the image of India for American readers in schools and book-clubs."

In her novels, Kamala Markandaya is mainly concerned with the complication of post-colonial and traditional Indian social hierarchy as well as the implications prevalent within both systems. These themes are clearly traceable in her novel 'A Silence of Desire' where she addresses the issues of social classes of India and the controversies that emerge from this social hierarchy. Markandaya points out the plight of the rural peasants in 'A Handful of Rice'. Her first and by far the best novel 'Nectar in a Sieve' depicts the privations an Indian rural
woman suffers. Markandaya’s oeuvre is symbolic of the duality of her own life: born and raised an Indian, and married to a British. In ‘Some Inner Fury’, she concentrates on India in the early phase of colonial rule, and the struggle of Indians to create their own identity, distinct from that of the British. In this semi-autobiographical work, she talks about a young Indian woman, Mira, who falls in love with an Englishman, Robert, but eventually chooses her own people over him.

Markandaya also emphasizes the inherent dissimilarities among Indians and Englishmen. To achieve this purpose, she constantly draws boundaries throughout her writing about the potential fusion of these two very disparate cultures. She states that: ‘You belong to one side - if you don’t, you belong to the other. It is as simple as that, even children understand it. And in between? There is no in-between, you have shown your badge, you have taken your stance, you on the left, you on the right, there is no middle standing. You hadn’t a badge? But it was there in your face, the colour of your skin, the accents of your speech, in the clothes on your back. You didn't ask to be there? Ah, but you had no option; whatever you thought, there was no option, for you there was no other place’.

There have been some serious critical studies of her fiction. The studies which deserve mention are: a notable study of the works of Kamala Markandaya by Uma Parameshwaran, ‘Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya’ by Madhusudan Prasad, ‘Religious Elements in Kamala
Markandaya's Novels' by K.S. Narayan Rao and 'Kamala Markandaya: A Thematic Study' by Anil K. Bhatnagar. But all these studies fall short of a balanced and judicious appraisal of her work. This study seeks to fill the gap by a thorough critical appraisal of her fiction which conceals within it nuances of great import.

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter 'Introduction' offers a brief overview of the major Indian English novelists and points out that Kamala Markandaya is a prominent writer of Indian diaspora. It also summarizes the themes of her novels. The second chapter entitled 'Her Life and Works' presents a detailed biography of Kamala Markandaya who led a dual life. India was the home of her childhood and adolescence, and Britain the home of her youth and middle age. But her love of first home eventually brings her back to India. With this in view, her works are discussed in detail with equanimous focus both on her themes and style.

Chapter three of this study examines her first three novels: 'Nectar in a Sieve', 'Some Inner Fury' and 'Possession'. 'Nectar in Sieve' narrates the plight of Rukmani and Nathan who endure hardships that never end. 'Some Inner Fury' is a semi-autobiographical novel which deals with Mira's Love for Robert which ends in unhappiness. The theme reflects the life of the author who deserted her husband and returned to her own people. "Possession" is a symbolic novel concerned with the contradistinctive values of the east and the west." The fourth chapter is given to the analysis of five novels: 'A Handful of Rice', 'The Coffer Dams', 'Nowhere
Man', 'Two Virgins', and 'The Golden Honeycomb'. 'A Handful of Rice' presents a miserable picture of Ravi who persists in his struggle but fails. 'The Coffer Dams' deals with the love affair between Helen and Bashiam and the fate of the dam that remains safe. 'The Nowhere Man' is an attack on British racialism while 'Two Virgins' hardly calls for attention. 'The Golden Honeycomb' is a historical novel dealing with the events around Indian independence in the princely state of Devapur. The fifth and the final chapter 'Conclusion' sums up the observations made in the previous chapters, trying at the same to situate the author in proper perspective.