ABSTRACT

The purpose of the proposed research entitled ‘The Study of the use of Ironic Vision as the literary device in Kamala Markandaya’s Novels’ is to conduct an in depth study and interpret the novels of Kamala Markandaya, a prolific writer in a post independence female novelist with special focus on the use of Ironic Vision as the literary device in delineating of the characters and situations.

As a novelist, she has remarkably contributed to the English fiction. Markandaya, like other well-known women novelists; Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahagal, R.P. Jhabwla, Kiran Desai and Arundhati Roy, goes beyond feminist concerns and elaborates the themes of poverty, starvation and human suffering as the inseparable part of rural life in India. In addition to this Markandaya skillfully handles the central issues like alienation in cities, the conflict between convention, culture modernity, and the clashes between east-west.

Markandaya has written eleven novels and delineated the life of rural as well as urban areas in almost all her novels, her themes are not new but it has attracted an attention of the research students for undertaking research in the areas concerned. It has wider scope because Markandaya has treated every aspect of Indian life and characters in her novels. The present research study has been divided in to five chapters.

The first chapter entitled ‘Introduction’ explains the aims and objectives, the significance of the study and is followed by the short review of the Markandaya’s literary works. It also states the hypothesis; The study of ironic vision in the novels of Kamla Markandaya helps us to get into the core of the critical infusion and diffusion of Indian social and moral aspect and their values in the lives of the masses. The present study is interesting as Markandaya’s Indianess is seen in her use of expression from the Indian language.
The study of ironic vision in novels of Kamala Markandaya is significant contribution to our understanding of the important social concerns such as poverty, starvation, exploitation, unemployment, industrialization victimizing the peasants in particular and poor people in general. The present study will help to enhance the reader’s knowledge of the societical resources and liabilities or the people and their culture, of their similarities and differences of their needs and problems. Markandaya very skillfully implies novel as means for communicating her perspective of her life.

Chapter II aims at explaining the meaning and nature of irony and its use as literary device in literary writing for achieving special artistic effects. It attempts to review the theoretical aspects, traditional approaches, marks of irony and interpreting irony. It explains the origin of the word irony which is used in English as a figure of speech in the 16th century and is similar to the word ironie. It is derived from the Latin ironia and ultimately from the eironeia, meaning dissimulation, ignorance purposely affected.

It is concluded with the observation. Kamala Markandaya has made the deft use of ironic vision to enrich the form and content of the novels. Markandaya deals with everyday problems of the rural community and presents peasants as truly human characteristics of self-delusion, pride, self-distortion, meanness, and mind with optimism, endurance and magnanimity. The systematic research in this regard helps to sharpen the readers’ sensitivity, the most required awareness and sense of responsibility of an Individual in general and political readers, research, scholars and policy makers in particular.

In Chapter III the attempt has been made to highlight the central concern of the novels and analyze the themes of the select novelsof Kamala Markandaya. Her very first novel “Nectar In a Sieve”, (1954).which achieved fame and recognition. In this novel we find realistic picture of Indian society where people live in hunger, deprivation and often die in starvation.

Other four novels are; “A Silence of Desire, Possession, A Handful of Rice and Nowhere Man. According to these novelist the mutual understanding is always possible among different ways of living between two nations. Markandaya believes that forcefull domination will work out to maintain the peaceful relationship between East and
West. Her novel “The Nowhere Man” present the record of the broader sensitivity towards changes in racial relationship at the universal level. Markandaya tries to show that hatred among different races are hazardous to the humanity in the world. Markandaya describes violent conflict among different races and at the same time insists for peaceful relationship among the people belong to various races or religions.

In Chapter IV the attempt has been made to identify the textual passages where we find the characters, situations and dialogues full of different types of irony easily be identified by the use of question mark, hyphenated words or sentences and background.

“A Silence of Desire” portrays traditional changes, beliefs and skeptic attitude of the modern society particularly western expressed in an ironic tone. This done through the revised real life experiences of Dandekar. Markandaya continues this ironic tone in describing image of the house. The image of house shows his peaceful life. He is satisfied to see his wife busy in cooking, but is unhappy when she goes to visit the swami for getting cured her disease.

Ironically enough a room “was empty”. It contains the “painted desert” on the wall to symbolize his dried up talents. The house image in Possession helps Markandaya to sharpen the bitterness of situations, creating contradictions in the life of Valmiki. P. Joseph has rightly noted the use of animal imagery in Possession. She says, “Caroline’s possessiveness is duplicated in Valmiki’s attitude to the monkey. Valmiki is treated almost like an animal. The monkey symbolizes Valmiki and Caroline possessing each other. The novelist describes in a bitter ironic tone, “Caroline, came first, all in her shining whiteness, leading by the hand Valmiki also in dazzling white and he leading by its chain tiny monkey wearing a scarlet hip length jacket and gilt leather collar”. Here the novelist uses the monkey as a symbol to sharpen an irony in the relationship of Caroline and Valmiki.

The novelist uses dramatic irony to describe the death of Srinivas. It lies in the depiction of the scene in which Dr. Radcliffe detetects Srinivas’s disease in the beginning of the novel and at the end of novel the same doctor comments not only on Srinivas’s disease but also Britsh community as such. Markandaya describes; ‘Shock’
said Dr Radcliffe, briefly, and rose, dusting off his knees, but the granules of disgust accumulating, he saw no reason to spare anyone, least of himself. Ironic tone persists till the end of novel; Mrs. Glass comes forward as a comforter and says to Mrs. Pickering, ‘Weep, dear, it will make you feel better.’ Markandaya, while portraying the theme of loneliness, makes the good use of irony to show that the modernity brings about the favourable change in the life style of the people, an individual’s personality. as is case of Srinivas in the novel “Nowhere man” The leading character considers himself is considers himself as a ‘Nowhere Man’ the outsider, even after his prolonged residence in England.

Thus Kamala Markandaya’s novel imparts the idea of the importance of values in human life. At the one hand she presents the realistic life of a peasant in rural villages while at the other hand the strange culture in modern urban city life of the sophisticated westernized peole.

Chapter Vth sums up the findings after having analyzed the select novels of Kamla Markandaya on the basis of elements of fiction. Kamala Markandaya’s use of ironic vision in her novels is significant contribution to readers’ understanding of the important social concerns such as; poverty, starvation, exploitation, unemployment, industrialization victimizing the peasants in particular and poor people in general. The Summing up takes us to cite the significant features of Kamala Markandaya as a woman novelist. Kamala Markandaya begins with the themes that are related to rural life in Indian villages which is reflected in ‘Nectar in a Sieve’, ‘A Handful of Rice’ and ‘A Silence of Desire’ and extends her themes at the universal level in the novels ‘Possession’ and ‘A Nowhere Man’ which reveal the relationship full of contradictions between two cultures; one is influenced by modernity and the other is by spirituality.

Realistic problems of her novels can be placed under three categories; rural problems- rural customs are responsible for the miseries of the characters. Social problems including unemployment, poverty, the problem of beggars, degradation of morality. Moral problems- the problem of unmarried mother, the problem conscience, inner conflict and the problem rehabilitation of a fallen woman in a society. Characters portrayed by Markandaya are highly realistic and they are men and women of their own
attitude towards life and society. Markandaya uses her ironic vision to describe a numbers of situations from the life of her characters in the different walks of life.

The use of ironic vision has enriched the content and form of her novels. Markandaya’s novels advocate the idea of mutual respect, understanding and appreciation of the everlasting peaceful relations between the East and the West. The novelist skillfully uses structural, dramatic, tragic and cosmic irony as an artistically effective literary device for communicating her extraordinary insight and passion through fiction. Markandaya uses ironic vision to sharpen the bitterness of the situations and contradictions in the life of her characters.

The present study helps to enhance the reader’s knowledge of the societrical resources and liabilities or the people and their culture, of their similarities and differences of their needs and problems. Markandaya implies novels as a tool to communicate vision of life. Her literary works exhibit different types of irony: such as structural, dramatic, cosmic and tragic irony. It makes concluding remarks contradictions, conflicts and compromise between society and individual reflected in Markandaya’s novels.

The present study of ironic vision in the novels of KamlaMarkandaya helps us to get into the core of the critical infusion and diffusion of Indian social and moral aspect and their values in the lives of the masses. The present study is interesting as Markandaya’s Indianness is seen in her use of expression from the Indian language. As a writer, Markandaya has clear perception of life in rural area as well as in urban centers.