Chapter One

Introduction

Beneath the crust of the corpus of her [Kamala Markandaya's] writings which may be taken as different essays on 'socio-literature,' lie the undercurrents of her concerns and her protest against social, political, racial and economic imbalances.

Singh

Indo-Anglian literature attracted the attention of the reading public towards the end of the nineteenth century. Contemporary Indian writing in English reveals the fact that the majority of writers write novels and the early Indo-Anglian novels were written under the influence of the popular English novelists. The common themes in these novels are man in relation to society, the portrayal of poverty and hunger, the suffering of the innumerable poor, social evils and tensions, inter-racial relations, changing values of modern civilizations, and crisis of character.
The themes of Indo-Anglian novels are varied and most of the men novelists recognise man in his social context. A socially committed novelist like Mulk Raj Anand cannot turn his back on the debasing and dehumanising issues and evils in the Indian society. His novels are portraits of suffering, revealing the hardships of the lower class people for survival. He chooses to be the mouthpiece of the underdogs, the untouchables, the urban proletariat and the poor peasantry. He forcefully emphasises that the evils which infest modern society should be eradicated.

R. K. Narayan's stories centre in his locale Malgudi and his themes are built around the matrix of tradition and modernity. Raja Rao reveals the manifold aspects of the rural and urban life of India in the Gandhian era. His novels are an attempt to produce heavily symbolic exploration of Indian consciousness. His contribution lies in revitalizing the past of India so as to make it relevant today.

Bhabani Bhattacharya upholds the concept of Art for Life's sake. He realistically portrays the social problems besetting the Indians engaged in creating a New India. His novels exhibit his social consciousness and warmheartedness for humanity.
Manohar Malgonkar's novels are an effective aid to an imaginative understanding of India's recent past. His themes revolve round the Indian Army, the unsettled days of the Partition of India and the princely states after 1947. He writes about the tragedy, the despair and the heroism of Indian Independence and the bloody communal vivisection which followed. Khushwant Singh's novels and short stories portray several aspects of the Sikhs - social, political and religious. In his fictional world the comic is inextricably linked up with social and moral criticism, and also with the free play of mind in a spirit of detachment. Arun Joshi, a recent novelist reveals the predicament of modern man, his rootlessness and the consequent loneliness. His awareness is also focussed on the evils of man's material concerns. He marks a definite departure from the general route of the other Indo-Anglian novelists. His technique of self-introspection intensified by self-mockery opens a new dimension in the art of Indo-Anglian fiction.

It is only after the Second World War that women novelists of quality have begun enriching Indian fiction in English. Of these writers Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabwala, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai and Santha Rama
Rau display a rare insight into Indian character. They have voiced their sweets and spoils, joys and sorrows, ills and blessings. Kamala Markandaya’s novels cover a wide range of themes. However, her main theme is the description of Indian life in all its facets. The vision and experience enshrined in her novels spring from the mud and soil of India. She is sensitive to the suffering which is the result of the struggle between tradition and modern, the individual and society or one race and the other. Her characters are mostly victims of landlordism, industrialization and East-West confrontation. She gives ample proof of her crusading spirit for the welfare of humanity.

Jhabwala concentrates upon family life, social problems and personal relationships. She presents life with all its domestic frictions and probes the mind and the sensibility of women. As she is no sentimentalist, she does not falsify or merely idealize life. As a novelist, she excels in treating incongruities of human character and situations.

Anita Desai has added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian women writers in English fiction. Desai is preoccupied with the inner world of sensibility
rather than the outer world of action. Unlike the majority of
the novelists, she is more interested in her characters than
in creating the environment which is used to define them.
The background is important only in so far as it reflects the
obsession of her characters. Nayantara Sehgal's novels deal
primarily with the political, historical and social changes
that have affected India during the last days of freedom
struggle and all these years after Independence. In her novels
she searches solutions for political problems. Santha Rama
Rau, has an indelible engagement with India; to use Donne's
image, one of the arms of her spiritual compass is fixed in
India, while the other is free to range over the entire world.
As a writer of travelogues she expresses the charm of south-
eastern Asia most persuasively. East-West encounter figures
prominently in her novels.

These novelists have evoked an enthusiastic response
from readers and critics inside and outside India. The Indo-
Anglian novel is rooted in reality. It generally thrives in a
stable society with a dense social structure. It devotes
attention to the unique individual. It explores the ordinary
and the commonplace in all their bewildering complexity.
Truthfulness is its slogan and realism its animating
principle. Hence the picture is authentic.

Kamala Markandaya is a great realist whose pen portraits of Indian men and women explode the funny fairy tales afloat abroad about India as one of Sadhus and snakes, tigers and thieves. Her novels are poems of suffering, portraying the strain and stress of the society with a remarkable thoroughness and convincing effect. Her writing quivers with an outraged social conscience and deep concern for humanity. She has broken fresh ground by depicting the contemporary social reality.

Following the anthropological dictum that “the proper study of mankind is man” (Alexander Pope, An Essay on Man, Epistle II. 2). Kamala Markandaya studies man as a victim of the irrational systems, the inhuman cruelties of society. Her travels with her father in India and abroad have widened her experience. Her desire to know the rural India made her live and work in a South Indian village for some time. She herself says, “Oh, I was just doing a bit of social work. Everyone was doing that in those days, going into village” (Naseem Khan, “The Maharajahs : Pomp without Power” 3). The experiences she gained while staying in the village account for the
authenticity of her treatment of Indian rural life in her novels. Moreover she learnt lessons in ethics and moral courage from Gandhiji and this sharpened her response to the sufferings of her countrymen. She anchors her art to these personal experiences which enfoliate themselves dramatically and realistically in fictional form.

(All her novels are a protest against the deep-rooted social evils of India like social injustice, poverty, exploitation, inequalities and social disparities. Her writings are not a shallow concoction fabricated just with the purpose of providing some sort of sophisticated entertainment to the lazy leisure-loving class. They are not mere dross or newsreels on the peasant’s life; but sensitive records, in close and cogent fictional form, of the agonies and aspirations of the Indian society. In the portrayal of Indian rural life with realism, none can equal her. To quote A. V. Krishna Rao:

With her impeccable representational realism and evocative descriptions of the Indian arcadia, Markandaya achieves a perfect poise between the rural reality and the disciplined
urbanity of art. (The Indo-Anglian Novel and the Changing Tradition 57).

(Kamala Markandaya describes with dexterity the typical village scene, its terrible poverty, its agricultural tradition, its ancient and ritualistic religion, its caste system and its post-Independence social milieu. She interprets the real problems of the teeming millions. Their economic improvisation, their social insecurity and their class distinction are brought to light. The foremost problem of India after Independence was and still is, poverty staring in the faces of the poor.)

(The rural poverty which was emphasized by the Government, while presenting their first Five Year Plan has thrown up a new class of the novel with the hunger theme. Along with Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya is one of the finest exponents of this type of novel. The novels of the hunger theme share a deep awareness of the basic predicament of Indian masses who face hunger and starvation throughout their lives.)

Further, she records the changes which have affected tradition. She portrays the pre and post-Independent India
with all its struggles and problems. The matrix of her fiction has recurring themes primarily concerned with the society. All her novels can be called social documents in the sense that they present rural poverty, tension between tradition and modernity, national upsurge, psychological maladjustment and racial antagonism. In these conditions men and women are exploited and they become victims of social injustice, cultural conflict, economic imbalance and political violence.

The thesis *Exploitation Syndrome in Kamala Markandaya’s Novels* attempts a close study of the novels of Kamala Markandaya outlining the physical and psychological impact of exploitation. An analysis of the criticism on Kamala Markandaya brings to light the fact that though her novels are viewed with reference to society in general, emphasis has not been laid on exploitation in particular. The attempt made in this thesis, it is hoped, will be significant because Markandaya's novels are treated with full orientation to the various kinds of exploitation. To make the study meaningful, the first nine novels of Kamala Markandaya are selected. From the tenth novel *Pleasure City*
only parts that deal with cultural dichotomy are taken into consideration because it is more a novel of compromise between East and West than one of confrontation.

Her travels far and wide, her staff work for the Army in India during the time of war, her migration to England after her marriage and her residing in the land of the colonial power for decades have undoubtedly conditioned her creative consciousness. Born and bred in India, married and settled in England, she deals with the two distinct worlds, the Orient and the Occident with poise. She is Janus faced, one face turning towards the East and the other towards the West. By being away she perceives more of India. At the same time she is sensitive to the cultural dichotomy between East and West and the fact that the powerful West tries to exploit the East.

Kamala Markandaya made her literary debut with *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954). The novelist takes the readers to the heart of a South Indian village where life has been going on monotonously without any change for many years. Kamala Markandaya records vividly the change brought in the rural Indian society and the evils caused by industrialization. The
suffering of the rural community represented by Nathan and Rukmani exemplifies the tragedy caused by social injustice.

In *Some Inner Fury* (1955), her second novel, Kamala Markandaya, for the first time has chosen a theme that is to be repeated in her later novels, the conflict between East and West firmly touching the historical roots based on the political agitation of 1942. This results in racial animosities and cultural clashes. Political violence has victimised Richard, and Mira's love for him is foredoomed to failure.

Leaving behind economics and politics Markandaya deals with spiritual faith in her third novel *A Silence of Desire* (1960). She gives a new dimension to the theme of the clash between the spiritual faith and scientific reason, between tradition and modernity. She cleverly portrays the tension between these two different schools of thought, one orthodox and the other westernised.

*Possession* (1963), the fourth novel of Kamala Markandaya deals with the theme of East-West confrontation. She portrays how England is trying to possess the soul of India by patronising her Art. But Val, the country artist and the object of such exploitation is not lured by the
western sophistication. He returns to his native soil as his roots are firmly fixed in India.

In *A Handful of Rice* (1966), the novelist depicts hunger and poverty. It spotlights the problems of the city in relation to the struggle for survival. The crowded conditions of lower middle class, the rising prices and meagre wages are causes for Ravi's tragedy. He becomes frustrated when he encounters the evils inherent in the society.

In *The Coffer Dams* (1969), the author returns to the theme of technological invasion on the indigenous cultural value systems. The novel is a protest against the onslaught of modern technological ruthlessness, against the simplicity and humanity of an earlier order of life.

*The Nowhere Man* (1972) is a penetrating study on the problems of immigrants and racialism. The theme is the reaction of the society in Britain to the inflow of coloured immigrants. Srinivas is a victim of this racial prejudice which results in his rootlessness.

In *Two Virgins* (1973), the novelist contrasts the great values of tradition with the glamour of modern urban life. A
young girl's growing awareness of the adult world reveals the slow but irresistible encroachment of new and material values on the ancient beliefs and old established relationships within the family and the village.

The Golden Honeycomb (1977) is a voluminous saga of princely life in India. Kamala Markandaya analyses the relationship between the British and the Indian rulers. She pinpoints the wind of change that has swept over India and Britain's historic role that has come to an end.

In Pleasure City (1982), the novelist puts old wine in a new bottle. She repeats the theme of East-West confrontation in the form of a construction project in a remote coastal village. Certain situations, incidents and characters in The Coffer Dams are rehashed effectively in Pleasure City. The confrontation between East and West has positive overtones and the conflict has ended in concord.

Her novels are sociological in outlook and her themes have universal appeal. Her interest is in social comment rather than in characterization, complex technique or a profound vision of life. As P. P. Mehta points out, from the stark starvation theme of Nectar in a Sieve, "she moves to
subtler values of life and thus each of her novels is a significant contribution to human understanding and relationship" (Indo-Anglian Fiction: An Assessment 295).

During the last three decades a large number of Indo-Anglian novelists have attracted a great deal of recognition from critics. Research scholars have made in depth study and critics have written a plethora of commentary on the novels of Kamala Markandaya. Her novels have also been reviewed in various journals both in India and abroad. Of all available criticism a few significant works are being taken up for consideration.

In her critical monograph on Kamala Markandaya, Margaret P. Joseph reveals the fact that all her novels have tragic vision in them. What moulded her tragic vision is her birth in India and upbringing in England. Hence intercultural forces as well as personal, social and religious heritage may have had some bearing on the development of her tragic vision. She is a crusader of humanism and hence her works may be called "the literature of concern." Her concern for the poor and the downtrodden stems from her tragic vision that generates anguish over human
tribulations. She is concerned about human welfare.

Uma Parameswaran in her critical work, *A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelist* feels that the novels of Kamala Markandaya are artistically constructed and hence she is one of the major novelists of the commonwealth scene. Her chief merit lies in the presentation of Indian ways of life without authorial commentary. She analyses the structure, dialogue, sociological verity and use of symbols in Kamala Markandaya's novels.

In the post-Independence Indo-Anglian novel there is a marked shift from the life of the community and nation to the delineation of the inner life of individual human beings. According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, Kamala Markandaya seems to fall in line with the trend in depicting the individuals groping towards self-realization. She points out Markandaya's clever knack of generalization by avoiding naming the location. Herein lies her uniqueness.

Ann Lowry Weir deals with the feminine consciousness conveyed by Kamala Markandaya in *Nectar in a Sieve* and *The Coffeer Dams*. Rukmani is shown as a typical Indian woman with devotion and obedience. On the other hand there is
Helen who has strands of Indian sentiment interwoven in her western background. Through them Markandaya presents the woman's view of the world.

P. Geetha in her essay on "Reassessing Feminine Identity in Kamala Markandaya's Novels" strongly believes that in a study of Kamala Markandaya, the woman subject cannot be ignored because women play a significant role in her novels. In many of her novels women are the narrators and the plot is revealed through feminine consciousness. Her concern about the contemporary women's lives and their problems is what makes the critic apply the term 'feminism' in its broadest sense to her works. She categorises the women characters as typically, Indian, western and modern. Geetha's paper reveals that there is a new awareness of feminine identities in a social, emotional and spiritual context.

Joanna Kirkpatrick in her paper "Women in Indian English Literature" investigates the issue of autonomy and self-chosen identity of women in Kamala Markandaya's novels. Her study is based on the two autobiographies, one by Ishvani and the other by Savitri Devi Nanda, and Nectar in
a Sieve and Two Virgins, two novels by Kamala Markandaya, and R. K. Narayan's The Dark Room.

Prema Nandakumar finds a parallel between the stories of the Christian waif in Malamud's The Assistant and the petty thief Ravi in Kamala Markandaya's A Handful of Rice. Both come to steal but stay on as assistants, marry the daughters of the house and on the death of the master become indispensable householders. In this process they are transformed and agonised. In her critical essay "Swim against the tide" she considers Srinivas as an example of a man who is capable of infinite adaptation and he swims against hostile tides at all times. He is a victim of man-made miseries and brutalities.

Jameela Bano in her essay analyses The Nowhere Man as a tragedy. She applies Aristotle's conception of tragedy to this novel and says that the action is not serious or of a great magnitude and that the conflict is not well pronounced. The novelist fills the novel with pathetic situations of Srinivas. Compared to Tess of D'urbervilles this novel has no tragic effect or tragic vision.

K. R. Srinivasa iyengar in his fourth edition of Indian
Writing in English places Kamala Markandaya as unquestionably the most outstanding woman novelist. He makes a comparative study of her individual novels and shows how the themes are varied. To suit the themes her prose is suggestive and he illustrates his point with examples of passages taken from *Nectar in a Sieve*, *Some Inner Fury*, *Possession* and *A Handful of Rice*. He also examines the technique of narration in her novels. He comes to the conclusion that she is able to sustain her creativity throughout her literary career.

Haydn Moore Williams has analysed the characters in the novels of Kamala Markandaya as victims, victims of fate, victims of their own character or of the follies and malice of others. Hence her characters lie under inescapable doom. He places Kamala Markandaya along with Hardy and Gorky because she too is a bitter writer like them.

P. S. Chauhan in his article, “Kamala Markandaya: Sense and Sensibility” is of the view that Kamala Markandaya does not write of unreal issues or of romantic fantasies. She deals with the confrontation of two cultures, the Indian and the English. The critic points out a few
examples of cultural contrasts from *The Coffer Dams*.

In Hari Mohan Prasad's opinion the achievement of Kamala Markandaya as a novelist lies in her live sensibility and effortless art. She explores man in his social relationships, emotional responses and psychological motivations. He shows how her art includes reverie, flashback and central consciousness, and how above all, there is fidelity between experience and the language used by Markandaya.

Another critic B K. Das examines the novels thematically and says that Kamala Markandaya's main theme is the description of Indian life in all its facets. The urban and rural Indian society, its poverty, exodus to the city, economic conditions and class consciousness are described with consummate skill. In spite of the tragic human drama, her novels end with a note of confidence.

P. P. Mehta in his work, *Indo-Anglian Fiction : An Assessment* is of the view that the earlier novels of Kamala Markandaya have a purpose or a motive driving the plot of each novel to its predestined end. He exemplifies his view with the help of the first eight novels. He also presents
Kamala Markandaya as an artist in plot construction. Her themes have a wide range in a small canvas. Sensibility and reflection give a rich colouring to all the novels.

East-West confrontation has caught the attention of many critics of Kamala Markandaya. In his essay on "East and West" K. R. Chandrasekharan opines that the conflict between India and Britain is of central importance in her novels. Her first four novels deal with some aspects of life in India or the interaction of the East and the West on each other. The novels also highlight the conflict between the Orient and the Occident. The novelist presents the image of the West as ruler, as patron and mentor, as missionary and as individual. In her estimate, there is not much understanding between East and West in spite of the long association between them.

Harish Raizada shows how Markandaya treats the tensions and points of contacts between people belonging to two races and two views of life by bringing East and West together. Her mixed allegiance makes the treatment of racial relationships realistic and unbiased. In *Nectar in a Sieve* she brings the two opposing poles of East and West together in
the characters of Rukmani and Kenny. Unlike other Indo-Anglian writers Kamala Markandaya's approach to the problem of mixed marriages and mixed romance too are realistic. Her treatment of the immigrant problems in an alien land also is authentic. Balachandra Rajan gives the answer. The presence of two cultures in the novelist's mind forms a wider and saner basis for her and it makes her a contemporary Everyman. Hence she is able to view with serenity the challenge of contrasting cultures. Hena Ahmad comparing Kamala Markandaya with other Indo-Anglian writers, says that their common impulse is to examine issues arising out of their immigrant conditions as does Salman Rushdie who straddles two cultures and explores the emergence of a complex identity in *Midnight's Children*. But in the novels of Kamala Markandaya, though similar issues are dealt with there is a humane undercurrent between the two different people. Though poles apart, East and West have met in diverse ways and at different levels.

Shyam M. Asnani too has discussed the theme of East and West in several of Markandaya's novels. He holds the view that Markandaya's major preoccupation is the exploration of such factors that come into clash with the two
races, Indian and British, and their cultures. The conflict finds its expression in three dimensions-social, political and cultural. Susheela N. Rao deals with the presentation of England in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. She opines that the novelist projects a picture of England from two points of view, her political activities in India and her economic exploitation of our nation with particular reference to *The Coffer Dams*, *The Nowhere Man*, *Two Virgins* and *The Golden Honeycomb*. H. S. Mahle too has dwelt on the problem of East-West relationship in his critical essay and says that Markandaya seems to be Kiplingian, implying that the twain shall never meet.

Ramesh Chadha analyses the interplay of the two cultures in the novels *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Some Inner Fury*. He says that the novelist's intercultural relationship, and mixed allegiance enable her to view with serenity the challenge of contrasting cultures. She compares and contrasts both cultures with dispassionate objectivity. In the essay "Getting Ready for Battle" Chadha reveals the scientific and technological superiority of the West in *The Coffer Dams*. Chadha also makes a comparative study of *Heat*
and Dust and The Coffer Dams and points out that Jhabvala and Markandaya describe the first few years of the married life of their characters, and their emotional conflicts. Both of them seem to suggest that adjustment is the best solution to family conflicts and each spouse should care for the other. The novelist's positive and humanistic vision does not fail to underline the significance of human sensibilities and human values. Similarly through the enactment of racial discord and its sinister consequence in The Nowhere Man, the novelist decries racial and cultural animosity and stresses the need for harmony, mutual understanding and appreciation, brotherhood and tolerance between two cultures, as fanaticism poses a menacing threat to human existence.

Some of the critics deal with the technique of Kamala Markandaya as a novelist. S. Z. H. Abidi shows the circular pattern which gives an impressive touch to her novels. In many of her novels the mood of reminiscence and recollection dominate throughout. She has shown considerable skill in handling various narrative techniques in her nine novels. Sunaina Kumar too analyses the different forms of fictional narration. His attempt is to show
the palatable blend of theme and technique and how the novelist effectively handles the story and the plot together. Ramesh K. Srivastava lays emphasis on the style of Markandaya. She has a perfect command over English and hence her style is rich, sparkling with luxurious details. The rhythmic flow of words makes the descriptions poetic. V. B. Gulati deals with the structure in the novels of Markandaya. The novels display great harmony between motifs which develop into plot. Arundhati Chatterjee considers Rukmani in Nectar in a Sieve as the Mother figure who unites the whole structure of the novel. Edwin Kennebeck observes that Kamala Markandaya’s style in Some Inner Fury is bare and simple. She writes adroitly with feeling. Manners, tradition, the landscape and even the furniture are minutely described.

Individual novels of Kamala Markandaya are examined by the critics in India and abroad. A host of critics have shared their opinion of Nectar in a Sieve. Yashoda Bhat considers it as a novel of change in rural India. The tannery which is a representative of industrialization is the cause of change. The critic gives three main attitudes to this great change; as a welcome one by Kunthi, as a loss of bliss by
Rukmani and as a philosophically accepted one by Nathan. K. Venkata Reddy calls *Nectar in a Sieve* a classic of hunger theme that has attained epic dimensions. Ramesh K. Srivastava says that *Nectar in a Sieve* has a pattern of hope and fear, hope for a bright future, and fear of death, twin forces which are constant companions of a peasant. He also deals with *Nectar in a Sieve* as a tragedy applying the Aristotelian conception of tragedy to it. C. T. Indra studies the character of Rukmani and concludes that she is a symbol of endurance, archetypal mother earth, and an interesting narrator.

In a critical perspective of *Some Inner Fury*, S. Krishna Sarma gives various reasons to show how it can be called a political novel. The beginning, the end and the final choice before the central character, between her people and her love indicate that this is a political novel. But O. P. Bhatnagar does not make mention of this novel in his account of political novels in Indo-Anglian Literature. H. M. Champness is of the opinion that Kamala Markandaya has selected the War-time India but has restricted her ground in *Some Inner Fury*. She has very cleverly, skilfully and clearly described
her chosen ground. Rumer Godden says that the theme in *Some Inner Fury* is well conceived and it culminates in 1942. Her picture of India is complicated and entangled with a hybrid society of Englishmen living in India.

According to Paul Pickrel, the novelist has presented a moving story about what the conflict of cultures can mean for two people in *A Silence of Desire*. They struggle between the two views of life which divide them. Rosanne Archer notices that in this novel Kamala Markandaya explores a family whose members are losing all that made their lives meaningful. She reflects in a particularly Indian situation, the universal qualities of men and women caught unawares by trouble. N. Ramachandran Nair says that Markandaya sticks fast to her basic notion regarding Indian life placed in the perspective of western progress. Uma Banerjee opines that Sarojini in *A Silence of Desire* is an unconvincing middle class wife. Anita Mahajan points out the role of tradition and modernity in this novel and how Markandaya portrays these two sets of attitudes and ideas, the resultant tension and the inevitable resolution. Usha Pathania insists that lack of communication between spouses gives rise to an unprecedented crisis which shatters the peace and harmony
of a household. Silence threatens conjual bliss.

Margaret Parton finds that Possession is interesting because of the Pygmalion theme. Joseph Hitrec says that its theme is the possessive urge of human beings in their relation to each other. Kamal N. Awasthi shows the archetypal view of relationship between East and West in Possession and concludes that there is no possibility of the two meeting each other at any point. Rekha Jha vehemently decries the role of the British as rulers.

Subash Chandra in, “Crisis of Values in ‘A Handful of Rice’ ” points out that the motif in Kamala Markandaya’s novels is the struggle for survival of the poor in a society which has inequalities. She attacks the system which undermines moral values too. Ramesh K. Srivastava compares Ravi, the protagonist in A Handful of Rice to the convict Jean Valjean in “The Bishop’s Candlesticks.” Both are intruders because they are in gnawing hunger. Ravi breaks the rusty bar of a tailor’s house and demands food. The convict intrudes into the Bishop’s house and demands food. Both are under the hold of grim poverty and misery. Orville Prescott observes that the terrible poverty of India is
only an abstract fact to most Americans. Figures about it in the newspapers are only statistics, horrifying but soon forgotten. But any one who has read Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* will find himself intimately acquainted with the poverty of Indian life.

In *The Coffer Dams*, Linda Hess notices that Kamala Markandaya writes best about what she values most-organic things, earth and flesh. Industrial drama, intercultural confrontation and socio-economic dislocation mark the novel. Kenneth Graham deals with characterisation in this novel and says that Clinton, the harsh western pragmatist, is the archetypal dam and empire builder. V. D. Katamble in his essay, "Kamala Markandaya's 'The Coffer Dams' : An Apology for Techno-industrialization of Rural India" deals with the theme of technological invasion coupled with the East-West encounter.

In his paper "And Never the Twain shall meet" Thakur Guruprasad depicts the conflict of cultures and shows the triumphant pull of the country of one's origin in the novel *The Nowhere Man*. V. C. Sudheer in his essay on "In search of a Nest" says that outwardly the novel appears to be a
confrontation between East and West. But a thin layer of human bond runs throughout in spite of racial prejudices. Martin Levin feels that the novel is an unrelenting anatomy of alienation and racial polarity. Ronald Bryden is of the opinion that the novel is restrained, distinguished and sad, remembering affectionately the England which found foreigners who had been living there for ages feeling out of place and odd.

**Two virgins**, according to John Spurling, shows the rapid deterioration of relationships and identities. Roberta Rubenstein says that this novel is a moving tableau of life in a village and its theme is the archetypal one of the journey from innocence to experience. K. S. Ramamurti considers **Two Virgins** as a poor or immature work when compared to her other novels. The major flaw in the novel is its lack of a well defined theme. Though it has a number of thematic strands, they are not artistically woven together. Unlike the other novels, **Two Virgins** is not built around a single motif such as the East-West encounter, the struggle for freedom, racial tension and the conflict between tradition and modernity. Moreover it has an air of improbability. Fawzia Afzal-Khan points out that there is a conflict between the old
and new, mythic and real, ancient and modern.

In Arthur Pollard's opinion *The Golden Honeycomb* provides a perspective and a rapprochement in Indo-British relationship. Kamala Markandaya reciprocates the sentiment from the Indian point of view. It is true that the hatreds cannot be forgotten but the loyalties and the sense of service can be viewed without prejudice. A. V. Krishna Rao points out that this novel creates a sense of history in the minds of the readers. Markandaya dramatises the saga of princely patriotism and the growth of individual consciousness without changing the facts of history. Charles R. Larson says that the novelist has given a humanistic account of the princely oppressors. Martha Spaulding opines that Markandaya has woven a rich tapestry in which subtle shifts of power and the nurture of illusions are the primary pursuits.

Aparna Jack comments on *Pleasure City*. The critic says that the Englishmen understood the feelings of the natives and what Shalimar seems to destroy in the fishing village is communal suffering. But Judy Astor is of the view that it is a confrontation between the primitive and the
sophisticated and also between East and West. Elizabeth Claridge observes that the novelist is more benign and charitable towards her Western characters than she is towards her Indians. Dean Flower also agrees with Claridge and says that the novel shows how the Anglo-Indian world has reversed itself. In Madhavi Menon's opinion racial and cultural issues, colonialism and invasion of technology are the main concern of this novel. The theme of construction is an old one and that Kamala Markandaya should move on to fresh pastures.

Walsh, Harrex, and Barry Argyle have received Kamala Markandaya's novels more warmly than Indian critics on the ground that the novels are remarkable for their range of experience. But some of the critics point their fingers towards her limitation. Shyamala Narayan holds the view that the locale of her novels lack authenticity and that she does not give precise geographical location. Ramesh K. Srivastava says that in Nectar in a Sieve, a false and jarring note is struck occasionally. The novelist has attributed a fine literary style to Rukmani, an unsophisticated woman. Often she lacks accuracy and she misrepresents the scene.
Commenting on *A Handful of Rice*, I. K. Masih says that though the novelist successfully weaves a good story, she lacks commitment. Her style, language, experience of the world and the awareness of the socio-economic problems are not sufficient to make the story effective. Another reason is that she tries to depict the experiences which are alien to her and she has no genuine understanding or sympathy for the life-death issues of the lower middle class people. As she seems to speak from the ivory tower of the upper middle class morality, there is no personal involvement in the problem of the characters. According to Anthony Arau, the chief criticism that can be made on *Some Inner Fury* is that it is formidably stiff and nearly Victorian in its style. John Spurling calls Markandaya’s style in *Two Virgins*, “faux naïf” and she repeats short sentences and proper names instead of pronouns.

A short survey of the criticism on Kamala Markandaya makes it quite clear that the major themes in her novels are conflict between tradition and modernity, faith and reason, individual and society, old generation and the new generation, the rural and urban, and East and West dichotomy. These conflicts are explored in all her nine novels.
from different angles. The rampant hunger, the indebtedness of the Indian peasants to the landlord, their submission to the vagaries of natural calamities and the introduction of the ruthless machines that invade the peace of their existence, are some of the social issues that find detailed analyses.

Closely allied to the themes of poverty, hunger, widespread social evils and rural life is the theme of conflict between the East and the West. The indigenous Indian traditions and the imported European conceptions are prominent in the complex fabric of contemporary Indian civilization. Almost every educated Indian today is the product of the clashes and reconciliations of the traditional values of India and the wave of modern westernisation. The conflicts of the old and the new make up the personality of Kamala Markandaya's characters - one inherited from their birth and the other imbibed through education and experience. In such a context her characters become victims of their own inner fury, of external chance, brutality or of political prejudices. She upholds the interest through irony and sympathy that prevail the whole fabric of the novel. Though she creates individual characters, she writes of people. The negation of healthy moral values through the
issues she raises fill the reader with the mixed feelings. She views people not as brown or black but as human beings.

There are different symptoms of the Exploitation Syndrome in Kamala Markandaya's novels. Exploitation is a term which is encountered often. An individual is exploited whenever advantage is taken of his ignorance or timidity, his weakness or isolation, to force him to part with his goods or his services at less than the just price, or to pay more for the goods or services of others than they are worth. Exploitation is an organic defect in the social order. The constant phenomenon in society is the rich robbing the poor. They draw their resources from the fertile, easily cultivated fields and wallow in their wealth, while the cultivator who creates the revenue is dying of hunger and is never allowed to enjoy his dues. This kind of exploitation is the source of inequality.

"A syndrome is a group of symptoms or traits that tend to appear together and that serve to characterise and diagnose a particular disease" (Gordon Eldin, Human Genetics 38). Pears Medical Encyclopaedia defines syndrome as "a set of signs and symptoms which occur together in a
definite pattern always associated with a particular disease process." According to Donald's Pocket Medical Dictionary a syndrome is "the sum of signs of any morbid state." At the literary level in this thesis, it means a particular combination of a person's actions or opinions that can be expected to occur together, leading to repeated exploitation.

In Kamala Markandaya's novels certain events get repeated in the society causing exploitation invariably. The various symptoms of the exploitation syndrome are the intrusion of industrialization, encroachment of western technology, cultural tensions, economic disparity and social antagonism. This exploitation syndrome affects both men and women in the novels of Markandaya physically in the form of acute poverty, exodus from the rural abode to urban land, upset of agrarian equilibrium, encroachment into tribal settlement, alienation and loss of identity. One gets an idea of how life flows in an Indian village standing at the periphery of urban civilization. Under such tiring circumstances the innocent village yokels and the primitive tribals suffer intensely. As the novelist has a staunch commitment to society, she presents the social evils inherent in it.
Kamala Markandaya has first-hand knowledge of the ill-treatment of the have-nots by the haves. They hit the poor badly in the belly and suppress and oppress them. Kamala Markandaya depicts life in India as she has seen it with poverty and penury, corruption and exploitation. She presents men as creatures of society exploiting one another. In her fictional world man is the victim of society's unjust persecutions. He is tortured and tormented by social oppressions. The dumb suffering of the poor makes the novelist take sides with them. Indirectly she becomes the mouthpiece of the oppressed and raises her voice against injustice of all kinds because the country needs reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The economic disparity has spread far and wide in India culminating in the sordid poverty of the poor. This compartmentalises the rich and the poor. It is this class antagonism that crushes human life from different sides and the poor man seems fated to find himself in a tragic dilemma. The stark picture of the iron-handed sceptre's rule and the gruelling poverty of the sickle forms the nucleus of the next chapter.