 CHAPTER-V

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it will not be incorrect to say that both, Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya have contributed significantly to Indian writing in English by producing a small body of fiction which is remarkable in its depiction of the contemporary Indian context and at the same time connotes universal meaning. The fictional world of Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya contains nuances of universality because the inhabitants of this world embody concerns that are common to mankind. The desires, longings and emotional oscillations depicted in the fiction of Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya do not belong to any particular period of time in history of people but reflect the feelings, the emotions and the concerns of all people through the passage of time. Unlike their contemporaries, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya do not concern themselves with the socio-political issues and instead focus on psychological concerns and socio-economic concerns. Partition and the post-partition period, the influence of Gandhi and the struggle for freedom itself do not find a place in the fiction of Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya. They do not also concern themselves with the post-colonial issues like analysing the psyche of the ruler and the ruled, the desire to establish
a nationalistic identity, or assessing the contextual situation from a
global perspective. Both these novelists on the other hand take up
significant contemporary issues as the subject matter of their fiction
while remaining rooted in the tradition at the same time, i.e. they
choose to write about poverty, lack of education, marital
incompatibility, cultural conflicts, alienation, identity, individualism,
feminine concerns and the conflict of the rural-urban life, joint family
system etc. Within this large socio-psychological framework these
writers raise, analyse and assess questions that have dogged the
Indian society over a long period of time. Each novelist approaches the
subject and has her unique perspective of life.

Anita Desai talks of the middle path, the balance between
modernity and tradition. Her protagonists are rebels to the extent that
they question and try to reassess their situation even if it means
breaking away from the norms but always return back to the known
though with a changed perspective of life. Kamala Markandaya, on the
other hand, continuously concerns herself with sociological issues,
where problems are raised, issues are brought to the forefront but
there is very little discussion about the manner and modalities of
resolving these issues. Whatever answers are offered to these
sociological problems they are in the form of a general authorial voice
or answers provided by society in general with very little struggle by
the individual character to seek answers.

Both Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya write about the
same human lot and their dominant interest is in the predicament of
modern man though their manner of presentation is quite different, while Anita Desai is interested in the psychic life of her characters, Kamala Markandaya's fiction is largely sociological in its focus especially the rural society. The challenges of urban reality are the concern of Anita Desai and the reality for her consists in the life of mind and soul - the inner life. In the novels of Anita Desai, it is the exploration of sensibility, the inner workings of mind that assume significance. So, the approach of both the novelists is different to the same problem. Both of them reflect the major contemporary social issues. Both explore the anguish of individuals living in modern society. Anita Desai's primary concern is with the conflict that goes on in the regions of human mind, an individual at war with himself, whereas, Kamala Markandaya presents external action overt strife.

Anita Desai's fictional world is limited and restricted in the sense that she takes her characters from the middle class sections of Indian society and most of them are alienated ones. The problems and plights of alienated individuals caught in the crises of changing society are delineated in her novels and her characters suffer from various complexes and psychic disorders. Sensitive young women are the major characters in the novels of Anita Desai. Kamala Markandaya on the other hand picks up her characters from a very wide spectrum ranging from Indian peasants, students to film producers, English working class types culled from London pubs and suburban flats. The heroes and heroines in the novels of Kamala Markandaya are ordinary people and they are themselves the sufferers at the cruel hands of
fate, the follies of their own character or of follies and malice of others.

Anita Desai, in her novels, takes up themes of man-woman relationship, alienation, withdrawal, loneliness, isolation and lack of communication. She focusses on psychological or spiritual problems without touching the day to day problems of life. Hunger, starvation, poverty, the mute misery of the millions of Indians are never touched upon by Anita Desai. What she highlights is the miserable position of highly sensitive and emotional women, tortured by a humiliating sense of neglect, of loneliness and of desperation. Kamala Markandaya, on the other hand, deals with the problem of strained relations of husband and wife, the compulsions of tradition and social hierarchy. Kamala Markandaya focusses on the theme of clash between cultures and the conflict prevailing in the Indian experience, is realised through common dilemmas of ordinary people who torn between traditional values and those spawned by modernism and whose loved ones are destroyed by political violence, have to make a choice between integrity and dubious prosperity while those who refuse to surrender their identity are destroyed by racialism. She also writes about indigence and appetite, uprootedness, prejudice. She writes about suffering which is the result of struggle and superstition.

In the novels of Anita Desai, individual protagonists are more dominant and the story revolves around him and she is not concerned with 'the great society' i.e. society at large - but, with the achievement of a little society which can be achieved, if at all only
through great patience and care. All the other characters fade into oblivion. Only one character remains in mind. Anita Desai depicts moods, wills, conflicting choices, and inner experiences of her characters. She explores the psyche of her characters very minutely and analyses their motives very thoroughly. Kamala Markandaya does not resort to psychological characterization. Her novels give a faithful account of visible contemporary Indian life. Her characters struggle against socio-economic problems. Her novels dramatize the agony and ecstasy of cultural changes in India. She is involved with the changing ethos of post-independent India particularly of villages down south and records all that is taking shape.

Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya differ in their style of working also. They use the techniques suitable to their manner of presenting contemporary problems. Anita Desai is an imagist novelist. Her novels teem with various powerful images that enrich the textual density of her novels. On the other hand, Kamala Markandaya is not an imagist novelist. She infrequently develops her images into independent units.

In the novels of Anita Desai we find the use of flashback and stream of consciousness technique. She makes liberal use of symbols. Her fiction depends on simple plot elements that lead to complex situations. Her characters come alive as they find situations where choices and commitments are involved despite the meaninglessness and shapelessness of human condition. The characters are always growing and changing, viable and mutable. Though English is a foreign
language she does not face any difficulty in handling this language. She says, it is the language of both reason and instinct, of sense and sensibility and the use and free play of this language amply suits the temperament of Anita Desai, whereas, straightforward narration is Kamala Markandaya's style which is exploited by her with efficacy, dexterity and efficiency. She rarely resorts to stream of consciousness and flashback technique. Her style, characterised by chastity, lucidity, economy and preciseness, crispness and raciness displays her felicity and feel for right words. Stephen Hemenway remarks, "she nearly always translates her characters, statements into proper colourless English."\(^1\) She shows concern for accuracy and effectiveness, sometimes become symbolic, sometimes ironical, sometimes reflective, sometimes explorating, sometimes eleptical, sometimes lyrical to suit the occasion.

Basically, they are quite different from each other but they have a thing that is common. Both of them are neither reformers nor philosophers but analysers. They write about society without any intention of reforming. Anita Desai is concerned with the portrayal of psychological reality. She imparts no messages and preaches no morals. For her literature is neither means of escaping reality, nor a vehicle for parading her political, social, religious and moral ideas but an exploration and an enquiry. For her each character is an embodiment of some unexplained mystery which the novelist's task is to peel and unravel layer by layer. Kamala Markandaya, too, does not
offer definite solutions to human problems. She holds the artistic mirror up to society from realistic and moral points of view.

The issues that Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya deal with are not subjective issues - as they are not related to a particular society or region. On the contrary, the issues that they deal with are the universal issues, which make their fiction worthy of detailed study. The problems taken up by them are prevalent all over the world and can be faced by any individual of society. So, in spite of the differences they go parallel to each other.
NOTES AND REFERENCES