Kamala Markandaya

(1924 - 2004)
CHAPTER - I
INTO THE DAWN

Any world is to be explored, whether real or fictional:
What is worthy to be explored, is worthy to be exposed.

About literature and society, Rene Wellek writes:

Literature is a social institution, using its medium language, a social creation. . . . but further more, Literature represents 'Life', and 'Life' is in a large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or the subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary “imitation”.

As a member of society, adds Wellek, “A writer inevitably expresses his experience and total conception of life”. (95)

A creative artist is not merely a member of the society as others are, but a representative of the society. He can not shut his eyes to the happenings of the society, become numb to the sufferings of his fellow beings and be a passive listener or an indifferent observer of what is happening around him and become immune to the degradation of values in society. It is a proven truth and a time honoured reality that most of the creative artists are deeply concerned about the sufferings and shortcomings of the society. Greatly moved by the misery of the common people, they react in different ways: some of them simply expose the pitiable state of the people, some others voice against the causes of the problems, and yet others, boldly
fight against the evils in the society, and to remove them, if not abolish them from society.

A novelist is first and foremost an individual with a personal vision. But he is a personality living in a specific period of time, in a specific place, in a specific social environment. He is an individual and a member of the society and society will inevitably play its part in his or her fiction. The novelists may in sympathy with his social environment, or in rebellion against it, try to reject it, but its picture will be there.

Kamala Markandaya is one of the most prominent Indian English novelists. She has dealt with epoch making events that brought about a sea-change in the socio economic scenario of the Indian society. She used the English language through the medium of her novels as an instrument to alleviate the social imbalance and injustice in the Indian society.

Kamala Markandaya's novels are a microcosm of India. They centre on the dictum that art must have a social purpose and she depicts the life of a man or a woman in relation to society and to destiny. As a novelist, she is sharply conscious of the contemporary socio-economic realities, as they affect the lives of millions of Indians and add to their misery and indignity.

A creative writer makes his or her own world. This creation may be a far cry from the actual world or a partial modification or a
convincing replica of it. It often happens that when events of great importance take place in a country they are reflected or echoed in its literature. As K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar points out, “it is in literature that the heart beats of a nation are heard”. (2)

Kamala Markandaya, born Kamala Purnaiya, is one of such novelists with an abundant concern for society, troubled in thought and pained at heart over the sufferings of the society and humanity as a whole.

But because of her long stay in England, she is often classified as an expatriate writer. However, Syed Amanuddin, in “Trans National Sensibility: Random Thoughts,” says that, when contacted in connection with a special issue of The Journal of Indian English Writing on expatriate writers Kamala Markandaya wrote to him, “I do not think of myself as an expatriate writer. All my thought processes are Indian, my parentage, religion and schooling are Indian . . . [sic] all my formative factors are Indian (4). Pre-occupied with controversies like whether she is an insider-outsider or not, whether her sensibility is Indian or English, and whether she writes for an Indian audience or a western one, most critics and scholars have not paid sufficient attention to the study of her characters, in the light of her high sense of social concern. That's why this study entitled, “Dreams and Realities in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya” tries to examine the social realism that reveals a continuous struggle between
man and fate which Kamala Markandaya portrays in her novels, by a comprehensive analysis of the themes and characters of her novels.

A continuous struggle between man and fate explains very well the human situation in Kamala Markandaya’s novels. Man is ranged against impersonal forces. Even evil characters are looked upon as creatures of circumstances that they are far more pitied than blamed. Fate is the common enemy of all in a just vision of human life. The hopeful dreams of man are mercilessly shattered by the cruel hands of reality. These observations may very well serve to highlight Kamala Markandaya’s social concern and her outlook on the overpowering forces of reality.

In her novels, Kamala Markandaya displays flair of virtuosity that orders and patterns her feelings and ideas, resulting in the production of truly enjoyable works of art. She has a clear understanding and a thorough grasp over all the finer aspects of fiction writing. To have a clear view of Kamala Markandaya’s artistic genius and her elite position among the Indian writers in English, an overview of the growth and development of Indian English novel will be of much help.

Kamala Markandaya uses fiction as a vehicle for communicating her vision of life as writer; she has clear perception of life in rural areas as well as urban areas. She differs from other indo-Anglian novelists in many ways. She focuses on the family structure to establish her themes in
different novels. She is different from her contemporaries in that she
depicts vividly and with a rare understanding the realities of Indian life.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar observes that the literary forms like epics,
lyrics, drama, short stories and fables date back to several centuries
in India. But the novel as a literary phenomenon had occurred and
taken root in India only during a period of little more than a century.
The novel, the long sustained piece of prose fiction, came into being
only in the later half of the nineteenth century as a result of the
western impact on the cultural front. It led to the development of
formal written prose in the regional languages, first as a functional,
and later as an artistic medium. Christian missionaries had
translated the Bible into the living languages of India. "The translation
of the Western classics, including novels followed. Such renderings
could take the form of adaptation, abridgement, or even the
Bottomian kind of transformation. The next step was the composition
of original works, in distant imitation or under the inspiration of
Western models."(315)

It was in Bengal that the beginning of the novel manifested
itself. However, the real beginnings of the novel were with the work of
the great Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94). His first published
effort, Raj Mohan's Wife (1864) was in English. It proved that it is not
impossible to exhibit Indian life in an alien language. Toru Dutt's
novel, named Binaca was published after her death. Two of Ramesh
Dutt's novels were translated into English by himself. They are *The Slave Girl of Agra* and *The Lake of Palms. One Thousand and One Nights* by S. K. Ghosh and *Indian Detective Stories* by S.B. Banerjee are other works of prose fiction in Indian English. The development of Indian English fiction may be classified into four phases. The works of the pioneers are imitative of British models. This early phase may be called 'The Phase of Imitation.' The second one is "The phase of Indianisation." It began with the works of Toru Dutt in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The third phase is of "Increasing Indianisation." In this period Indian writing in English acquired a national consciousness and even became popular in the West. The fourth one is "The phase of Experimentation and Individual Talent." This phase is remarkable for the growing confidence and originality in the writing of Indian English writers.

Indian English novel has a late beginning. It began to appear in the nineteen twenties and gathered momentum in the following two decades. When India became free, Indian English novel had already established itself as a branch of literature. The ideals of Indian struggle for freedom are reflected in many novels. Nineteen sixties and seventies are remarkable for a huge output of Indian English novel. The growth of Indian English novel is not regular. V. A. Shahane opines:
The Indo-Anglian novel is in many ways a haphazard growth and its fortuitous development is partly product of lack of clear objectives. An objective like the image of India or Western reader is more often a pious platitude than a genuinely realized artistic goal. (35)

To get a clear view of the Indian English novel we must take the prominent individual novelists into consideration. Social concern – concern for the poor, the hungry and the destitutes born out of renascent humanism and of growing influence of social realism has been a prominent theme in the post-romantic phase of Indian literature in English. When the whole nation was fighting against the tyranny of the British rule that had destroyed the Indian economy, the writers of the country too, joined hands with them. The situation led to the development of protest literature. Bhattacharya believes that novel must have a social purpose. In the field of fiction Mulkraj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya give full vent to their smouldring resentment against the economic and social evils in fictional terms.

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the most prominent Indian English writers. His first three novels Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936), and Two Leaves and a Bud (1937) exhibit the real Indian society. The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1940) and The Sword and the Sickle (1942) are based on realism. The Old Women and the Cow
(1960) and *The Road* (1961) are tendentious novels. His autobiographical novel *Seven Summers* (1951) and *Morning Face* (1968) are not strongly tendentious. *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953) has a political as well as a psychological theme.

V.A. Shahane comments on this novel: "Although the novelist has a political theme – the problem of the princely states in free democratic India- it is assimilated to a psychological theme: the tragic collapse of the hero's will power, his self-destruction in the face of events that are beyond his control"(35).

R.K. Narayan is another eminent Indian English novelist. He is very much famous both in India and abroad. Narayan's novels come from the soil of Malgudi, the fictitious world he himself has created. He had written a number of novels. His first novel *Swami and Friends* (1935) made an instant appeal to the prominent writers and critics of England. Graham Green hails it as a 'book in ten thousand'. His early novels, *Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher* are characterized by the autobiographical elements. *The Dark Room* is a study of domestic disharmony and *The Financial Expert* and *Mr. Sampath* are novels of average value. *The Guide* is a very popular novel which has won the Sahitya Academy Award. *The Man Eater of Malgudi* also is a popular novel. All the novels of R.K. Narayan are enjoyable. According to P.S. Sudaram, all the novels of R.K. Narayan are eminently readable. His works have been called "comedies of
sadness”. Though all of Narayan’s novels have Indian setting they have universal appeal.

Raja Rao is one of the most significant Indian English novelists. *Kanthapura*, *The Serpent and the Rope* and *The Cat and Shakespeare* won him great fame. *Kanthapura* describes the freedom struggle and is deeply concerned with the Gandhian philosophy. *The Serpent and the Rope* deals with Indian mysticism and Vedantic philosophy. *The Cat and Shakespeare* was warmly hailed in India as well as abroad.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala has achieved worldwide fame as one of India’s leading fiction writers. She has written more than half a dozen novels. She is mostly concerned with social problems, personal relationships, family life and so on. Her novels may be called “social comedies of manners”. She excels in her presentation of human behaviour and character. Her most famous novel is *Heat and Dust* (1975). It was awarded the Booker Prize in London.

Kuswant Singh, a Sikh journalist and diplomat, is also famous as a novelist. In his novels social theme is treated comically. His *Train to Pakistan* and *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* are famous novels. These novels deal with the fortune of Sikh family and are tragic in character.

Manohar Malgonkar, another prominent novelist depicts the tragedy, the despair and heroism of the Indian struggle for freedom in his novels. *Distant Drum* is the story of an Indian officer’s love affairs.
In this novel we are in the present and also in the heroic days of the World War II. *The Princess* is romantically treated. *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) describes the freedom struggle of the Indian nationalists in the background of the Japanese invasion on British Asian territories in the World War II. H.M. Williams opines that “both Kushwant Singh and Manohar Malgonkar intoxicates us with a heavy wine of adventure and action that brings a touch of optimism to the picture of the contemporary India they present”.(83)

As a novelist, Anita Desai has also achieved great success and fame. Her first novel *Cry the Peacock* (1963) is presented through the device interior monologue. It is the story of a young lady, Maya. Her another novel, *Voice in the City* is primarily a tragic novel. The technique of stream of consciousness is employed in the narration.

Dr. Bhabani Bhattacharya is a well-known Indian English fiction writer. He has won the Sahitya Academy Award for his novel *Shadow from Ladakh*. The main theme of his novels is the problem of hunger and human degradation. *So Many Hungers* presents the real picture of the Bengal famine during World War II. *He Who Rides a Tiger* powerfully deals with the problem of hunger and human dignity. *Music for Mohini* deals with caste distinctions and poverty. *A Goddess Named Gold* is a realistic presentation of Indian village life. *Shadow from Ladakh* deals with the Indo-China conflict and *A Dream in Hawai* has powerful spiritual element in it.
Arun Joshi’s contribution to the field of Indian English is certainly remarkable. His three novels, *The Foreigner*, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and *The Apprentice*, which were published in quick succession, established him as a great novelist.

Mrs. Nayantara Sahgal, daughter of Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit is one of the most famous Indian English novelists. Her novels primarily deal with the political, social and historical themes. Her first novel, *A Time to be Happy*, deals with the theme of India’s struggle for freedom and also shows us the days just after independence. *Storm in Chandigarh* strongly deals with the political theme. It shows Gandhism as a spent force.

K. Nagarajan has written two novels - *Athwart House* and *Chronicles of Kedaram*. Both are social novels based on marital life. Prof. Rama Sharma has three novels to his credit. They are – *The Stream* (1965), *The Farewell Party* (1971), and *Look Homeward* (1976). Except *The Stream*, the other novels were warmly welcomed.

Chaman Nahal, a Sahitya Academy Award winner has three novels to his credit. They are - *My True Faces* (1973), *Azadi* (1975), and *Into Another Dawn* (1977). His first two novels exhibit cultural life of Punjab and his third novel reveals the comparative view of the Indian and the American ethos.

Two distinguished poets of Indian English literature, Kamala Das, Shiv.K.Kumar, have also written novels. *The Alphabet of Lust* by
Kamala Das is a satire on the greed of an ambitious woman, Mansi and on the immoral conduct of a politician, Vijay. The novel is interesting and the theme of love and sex is frankly discussed in the novel.

Prof. Shiv. K. Kumar's *The Bone's Prayer* is an exquisite novel. It describes a philosopher's quest for the meaning of love through suffering and deaths. The novel is remarkable from the viewpoint of exposing the superstitious and false religious propaganda in contemporary society.

Besides these eminent Indian English fiction writers, some new rising novelists are Santha Rama Rao, Prof. B. Rajan, Attia Hussain, Padmini Sengupta and Veena Paintal.

It is among these prominent writers that Kamala Markandaya had established herself a place of prominence and fame. A brief look into her life in the real world and a short sojourn through her fictional world would be but a fitting effort for the good, before endeavouring to analyse her art and genius in the field of fiction. It is to her credit that A.V.Krishna Rao comments, "Kamala Markandaya's novels, in comparison with those of her contemporary women writers, seem to be more fully reflective of the awakened feminine sensibility in modern India."(55)

Stephen Ignatius Hemenway praises her highly: "she is definitely one of the most productive, popular and skilled Indo-
Anglian novelists and a superb representative of the growing number of Indian women writing serious literature in English” (52).

Kamala Markandaya was born in a well-to-do Brahmin family of Mysore in 1924. Her father was a transport officer. Owing to her father’s transfers, Kamala’s education was not steady. At the same time, her lot of travelling was a good training for her. Going to England and Europe she acquired considerable knowledge of Western civilization. Her travelling proved to be very useful to her for her writings. In an interview she herself has stated, “the role of observer which every traveller assumes is good training for any writer ..... it makes a good starting point.”

After a short schooling in Mysore, Kamala entered Madras University at the age of sixteen. She left the university without achieving a degree and began to write. She completed her graduation later. Markandaya is the author’s pen name. Before her marriage she was Kamala Purnaiya, but she started writing with the pen name Kamala Markandaya.

After leaving university, Kamala Markandaya worked as a journalist for a short-lived weekly news paper and after that she worked as an army liaison officer. Soon she quit this job and began to work as a freelance journalist in Madras and Bombay.
She went to England in 1948, but she could not succeed in getting a job as a journalist. For some time she worked as a proof reader and as a secretary in some private firm. Kamala Markandaya married John Taylor and she had one daughter. On 16 May 2004, she died at her peaceful home in suburban London at the ripe age of 80.

Kamala Markandaya was awarded the National Association of Independent Schools Award (USA) in 1967 and the Asian Prize in 1974. Joseph Hitric had called her one of the crispest and most warmly persons of Indian writers. It is easy to find in her work intensity and depth exceptional even among her highly talented contemporary novelists.

Kamala Markandaya has written ten novels:  


Shortly after her death her daughter found a typewritten copy of her novel and it was published posthumously with the title The Catalyst: Alias Bombay Tiger.

To understand Kamala Markandaya’s concept of life and concern for society, evolution of genius, and art and technique, one must have a bird’s eye-view of all her novels. The main themes of her novels are
hunger, poverty, love and sex and East-West cultural encounter, through which the personality and the attitude of the author are revealed.

H.M. Williams points out, “She treats the themes of tragic waste, despair of unfulfilled or ruined love, the agony of artistic ambition, the quest for self-realization and truth by the young, all themes popular with European and American novelists of recent decades, (Camus, Saul Bellow, Updike)” (54).

*Nectar in a Sieve* is Kamala Markandaya's first published novel. It is a powerful novel of rural India. It deals with the story of Rukmani and Nathan against the background of suffering and agony of rural India. The technique of stream of consciousness is employed in this novel. Rukmani is married to Nathan, a farmer. Their marriage is successful and they are quite happy. First Rukmani gives birth to a girl Ira. After that she gives birth to six male children, Arjun, Thambi, Murugan, Selvan, Raja, and Kuti. Crop is not good for many years and they have to face a great financial problem. They are unable to pay the owner who forces them to vacate the house. Rukmani is shocked by it. She does not want to leave the house as it is full of memories of the past. All her children are born in that house. Yet they have to vacate it because it stands on the land of another person. Rukmani's cup of woe is always full.

Ira is married at the age of fourteen to a farmer. She is unable to become a mother and returns to her parents and she is now a burden on
them. Arjun and Thambi leave for Ceylon. Murugan leaves for the city. Nathan’s economic condition worsens. Raja dies and Kuti falls ill. In order to lessen her parent’s burden Ira involves herself in prostitution. She gives birth to a child. Kuti’s condition worsens and soon he dies. Nathan and Rukmani go to the city in search of Murugan but they cannot find him. Nathan dies and Rukmani returns to the village with a boy, Puli, who helped her in the city.

Commenting upon the novel H.M. Williams writes:

Seasons come and go, bringing both joy and tragedy, a backdrop to the human drama. Life for the peasants exists exclusively at the survival level. Even the poor land they own racked with drought but loved is taken from them. Yet Markandaya’s picture is not despairing. Human dignity survives especially in the passionate and loyal Rukmani, a brilliantly conceived character who changed from dignified stoicism to acts of near lunatic madness when goaded beyond patience, is made credible, the dignified religious sense of fate in the Indian peasant is portrayed with sympathy. (84)

*Some Inner Fury* also has a woman, Mira, as the protagonist. She is totally different from Rukmani. She is sophisticated and westernized. The novel has a political theme – India’s struggle for freedom. Mira, the
daughter from a rich Indian family, falls in love with an English
government official, Richard. Unfortunately the Indian political
atmosphere is not smooth and their love is hindered. Mira and Richard
are faithful to their communities. Govind, the adopted brother of Mira is
a terrorist and plans to burn the village school run by Hicky, the
missionary. Mira’s brother and District Magistrate Kit, rushes to the
school. His wife, Premala gets suffocated and dies. Kit dies of a knife
wound and Richards falls a victim to mob fury.

*Some Inner Fury* is a remarkable love story drawn against the
backdrop of national freedom. According to A.V. Krishna Rao, it would
appear in the final analysis, that this socio-political novel of modern
India is symbolically significant on two levels- first the emotional inner
fury of Mira is completely quenched when her love for Richard results in
an ecstatic experience of the sweep and surge; secondly, the wider inner
fury of the nation at large is fully vented, culminating in the violent
demonstration of national indignation at the foreign rule, Govind being
its focal figure.

Kamala Markandya’s third novel *A Silence of Desire* is concerned
with spiritual realities. She shows the clash between tradition and
modernity within a family. After fifteen years of happy married life.
Dandekar is suspicious of the character of his wife Sarojini. He is an
ordinary clerk with some pretensions to intellectualism. He is often
irritated with his God-fearing and religious wife. She is suffering from a
tumor and goes to a swamy for its treatment. She has no faith in hospitals because her mother had died in an hospital. Dandekar seeks the help of the District Magistrate to get the swamy ousted from the city. Now his wife is changed. She is ready for the operation because the swamy has asked her to do so. Dandekar irks and he becomes jealous of the swamy who was ruling the mind of his wife. He is obsessed with a feeling of inferiority complex. Kamala Markandaya has tried to show that the swamy is a menace to the educated people but actually he was a solace to the anguished souls.

P.P. Metha observes that the evolution of her art is seen in the fact that the novel,

is more attractive and moves at a faster space than in her other novels because Kamala Markandaya spins her crisis and tension round the eternal topic of jealousy and blind religious trust. The grip of the minutest details of city life shown by our author is wonderful in its accuracy....the domestic bliss of Dandekar's family, happy in their mutual confidence, is also a typical picture of harmony in lower middle class life which still exists in the India of today. (23)

According to Prof. Williams,

In some ways like Graham Green's novel of faith and doubt - The End of the Affair, A Silence of Desire is a subtle study of
the reality of religious faith and of the opposition between man's modern quest for scientific truth and technological certainty and the sense of mystery and the inexplicable in the human condition. (47)

*Possession* is Kamala Markandaya's fourth novel. Its action moves from India to London and back again to India. The narrator of the novel Anasuya is not it's heroine but a minor character. Lady Caroline Bell and Valmiki (or Val) are the central figures. Valmiki is an illiterate peasant boy with a gift for painting. The Swamy again appears in the novel and plays a critical role.

Lady Caroline goes to a village with Anasuya and there she meets Valmiki. She discovers the talent for painting in him and asks him to go to London with her. Before leaving, he goes to Swamy who knows his talent. With Swamy's permission and blessing Val goes to London with Lady Caroline.

Valmiki becomes an artist of international fame. Lady Caroline falls in love with him and she wants to possess him. But Val loves Ellie, the refugee working maid of Caroline. She becomes pregnant and Lady Caroline turns her out without the knowledge of Val. The Swamy comes to England to free Val from Caroline's influence but she takes Valmiki on a tour of America. After returning from America, Val meets a young artist, Annabel and falls in love with her. Val leaves Caroline and begins
to live with Annabel. Caroline is again successful in breaking their love. She tells Annabel everything about Val’s affair with Ellie and Annabel leaves him. Valmiki returns to India and to the Swamy. Lady Caroline tries to take him back but in vain. In the opinion of Prof. H.M. Williams, this novel is one of the most forceful artistic explorations of the distortion of India’s national character in the British embrace and of her consequent urge to be free.

A Handful of Rice, Kamala Markandaya’s fifth novel has an urban setting. It is the male version of Nectar in a Sieve. Ravi, a village lad is discontented with the inexorable poverty in his village and he goes to the city. He finds himself on the roadside with shady characters. One day, in order to escape from a policeman, he breaks into a house and is promptly knocked down unconscious. When he recovers, he sees Nalini, the young girl in the house and is attracted to her. The next day he goes back to the house and becomes an assistant to Nalini’s father Apu, a tailor. The household is burdened with parasites and the women do no productive work. Apu suffers a stroke, and is paralised. Ravi is not an accomplished tailor and he could not earn much. After the death of Apu, Ravi sends the parasites away but poverty still stacks the household. One day in a drunken state, he rapes his mother-in-law, Jeyamma who does not seem to mind it at all. Wandering about the city in frustration, he comes across a mob ransacking go-downs of blackmarketeers. Ravi is
tempted to throw stones at the godowns but he desists from doing so and
he returns to his former good self.

*The Coffer Dams*, Kamala Markandaya’s sixth novel, is one of her
most ambitious, dramatic and engrossing novels. The plot of the novel is
complex. The great dam is being constructed across a wild South Indian
Highlands. It is being constructed by Clinton and Mackendrick. It must
be constructed before the onslaught of the monsoon. Helen, Clinton’s
wife, takes much interest in the natives who are driven out of their
territory for it was chosen as the site for the bungalows of the staff on
work. Bashiam, one of the natives, is also working there. Helen is very
much interested in him. In an accident some of the workers are crushed
under a boulder. Their dead bodies are to be taken out and given to the
natives for funeral rites. This difficult task is given to Bashiam. He lifts
the boulder with a crane but unfortunately the tip of the crane breaks
and Bashiam dies.

Coffer dams are completed. The monsoon approaches and it rains
heavily and continuously. It seems that coffer dams will break. The whole
land space is in danger of inundation. Though the novel ends on a happy
note, it leaves the readers with an uncomfortable feeling. They are
confused about the novelist’s approach to the novel. To some it may
mean the East-West encounter, and to others tradition versus modernity.
In fact it is a complex but well written novel.
According to Nand Kumar, the theme of *The Coffer Dams* is material versus spiritual values. The novel is well constructed and the end is satisfying. The hysteria that can be generated by the political time servers against idealistic entrepreneurs resulting in the victimization of aborigines is well brought out. The novel seeks to lay bare the human problems so conveniently forgotten by the plan protagonists in favour of heavy engineering industries. It is a work of power, of sharp and varied ironies, of extraordinary insight and passion—all conveyed in a prose of singular distinction.

*The Nowhere Man* is Kamala Markandaya's seventh novel. Its theme is East-West encounter. Indian immigrants in England are its central characters. The novel is a psychological study in the problems of alienation and rootlessness.

Srinivas and his wife, Vasantha, are Indian immigrants in England, carry Indian habits and live in an alien land without assimilating its culture. Vasantha keeps with her a handful of Indian soil and a bottle of Ganga water. She lives rooted in Indian values and ways of life. But for Srinivas and his son Laxman, there is no Indian soil or Ganga water. They are nowhere men. They have no connection with India. They were living a peaceful life in England but in 1960's racism rears up. Srinivas becomes the target of Fred Fletcher, a neighbour, who torments him in various ways and finally burns him alive by setting fire to his house.
The novel shows a further maturity of the powers of the novelist. The style has considerably been improved and the prose is immaculate. The title of the novel is appropriate and the theme of East-West encounter is skillfully treated.

In her eighth novel *Two Virgins*, Kamala Markandaya treats the theme of disintegration of the rural way of life under the impact of modernity. The setting is provided by some unknown village in Karnataka. It is the story of two sisters – Lalitha and Saroja. Their father is an old freedom fighter. Lalitha loves glamour but Saroja is a simple girl. Once Mr. Gupta, a film director, visits their village. Lalitha runs away with him and acts in a documentary film of a village. When she is pregnant she returns to her village. She intends to commit suicide and tells everything to Saroja. The whole family goes to the city but Gupta refuses to take any responsibility of the child. The family arranges an abortion and Lalitha again runs away but Saroja returns to the village. Commenting on the novel Nissim Ezekiel observes:

Stereotypes of characters and situation fill the novel to the brim. Not a breath of fresh air ever relieves the tedium. Mr. Gupta, the film director, Miss. Mendoza of the Mission high School, Appa and Amma, and the two virgins themselves, all of them are puppets, manufactured for the entertainment of those who know nothing about India. The strength of the novel lies in the technique of narration- the
constant use of flashback and stream of consciousness
technique-and its action and movement. (32)

Unlike all her other novels, *The Golden Honeycomb* is a historical
novel. It does not deal with the social and economic problems of Indian
people. The novel deals with interaction of British and Indian peoples,
spreading over three generations. Bawajiraj, the third of his line, is a
Maharaja of a rich Indian state. He rules over it with the help of his
Brahmin Prime Minister and British adviser. The Maharaja is good but
he is a puppet in the hands of the British. Mohini is not his lawful wife
and they have a son, Rabi. He is the protagonist of the novel. The
responsibility of his education is in the hands of a Pandit with modern
socialist leanings. He makes him aware of the condition of the common
people. He has already deviated from the royal path when he refuses to
fight for the British in the First World War. After his frustrated emotional
involvement with Sophie, the daughter of the Resident (British Advisor)
he realizes that Usha, the Dewan's spirited and nationalist daughter is
suitable for him.

This novel gives us a realistic picture of the life of the Indian
rulers. The novelist is at great pains to present the national feeling and
the insidious ways in which it involves both public and private life. She is
able to show the changing ways of thought and feeling among the old
ones as well as the young ones.
Pleasure City, Kamala Markandaya's tenth novel is a novel of development. It deals with the development of a tourist complex on the one hand and the mind and character of a young boy on the other. The Atlas International Development Corporation, AIDCORP for short, has come to India to develop a tourist complex near a fishing village on the South Indian coast. Toby Tully, an engineer and Director of the company was born in India and he understands India. He befriends a fisher boy named Rikky, who has already learnt the English language and artistic skills from a missionary couple named the Bridies. Tully takes up where the Bridies left off. Being a sculptor, Tully develops the mind and character of Rikky to a fine polish. As the Shalimar grows, so do the mind and character of Rikky, his imagination as well as his skills. As unofficial assistant to Tully and as a bartender and life-saver at Shalimar, Rikky observes the flow of colourful humanity of several kinds and temperaments. He also watches the transformation of his fishing village in the shadow of the Shalimar. Tully's wife Corinna arrives and she teaches Rikky the art of surfing at which he soon excels. Tully and Rikky join together in restoring Avalon, the mansion built by Tully's grandfather during the colonial period. Tully sculpts a marble cherub in the pool room, which more or less resembles Rikky, who constructs a pebble mosaic round the pool. As the last phase of the Shalimar is completed, a surfing competition is conducted. After winning the competition, Corinna vainly goes for a last ride and is swept away. Rikky
saves her, but is severely injured in the process. Tully stays back till Rikky recovers fully and Rikki opts to stay on in the employ of Shalimar. Then Tully leaves in perfect contentment.

A thorough study of Kamala Markandaya’s novels shows a gradual evolution and maturity of her art and genius. Her work grows in complexity and new themes, ideas and characters are constantly introduced. One always finds novelty in her novels. Even the same recurrent theme, the theme of East-West encounter is treated in different ways.

Now Kamala Markandaya is regarded as one the most gifted Indian English women novelists. According to Dr. A.V. Krishna Rao, Kamala Markandaya’s novels seem to be more fully reflective of the awakened feminine sensibility in modern India as she attempts to project the image of the traditional society. She merits a special mention as a representative of a major trend in the history of the Indio-Anglian novel. In her novels, she not only displays a flair for virtuosity that orders and patterns her feelings and ideas, resulting in the production of a truly enjoyable work of art, but also she projects the national image on many levels of aesthetic awareness. Indeed, her novels seem to be uniquely reflective of the national consciousness in its multiple forms with the
characteristic sensibility of the modern, educated Indian women. (55)

Kamala Markandaya is a brilliant story-teller. All her novels are absorbing and highly readable. But as a technician she is a traditionalist. Her technique of narration, her art of characterisation and plot construction are all on traditional values. Except *The Nowhere Man* and *Two Virgins* there is no probing into the conscious or subconscious as in the modern novel. But as a novel is meant to entertain, all her novels are engaging and entertaining. As a story-teller she is unique.

Kamala Markandaya's power of narration is wonderful. The narration in her first three novels is simple and straightforward. R.S. Singh writes about it that three of her novels, *Nectar in a Sieve*, *Inner Fury* and *Possession* are presented in reminiscent mood. All the three narrators are women and the plots are circular. *In Nectar in a Sieve*, a simple uneducated woman, Rukmani is the narrator, while in *Some Inner Fury*, the narrator Mira is westernized and educated. Both these women narrators are the central figures of the novels but the narrator of *Possession* is a minor character, Anasuya, the writer friend of the heroine. In *A Silence of Desire* and *A Handful of Rice* the author herself narrates the story as omniscient writer. In both the novels male characters occupy the central place. In *The Coffer Dams* the tradition of the omniscient author is followed but the novel is remarkable for the evolution of the novelist's genius. It shows the signs of maturity in her
art. In *The Nowhere Man* and *Two Virgins* stream of consciousness technique is employed.

The plot construction of Kamala Markandaya's novels is traditional. Her plots are well-organized as in a classical play. The focus is always on the main character. The plot is gradually revealed and the climax is followed by a rapid denouement. Nothing is superfluous and all the characters and incidents contribute to the action. Though there is only a single action, there are a few digressions.

Conflict is seen in all her novels. *Nectar in a Sieve* is a story of a peasant woman, Rukmani, whose rustic life is disturbed by the rapid industrialization. In *Some Inner Fury*, the westernised upper class has its conflict of loyalties. Mira falls in love with an Englishman, her brother Kit, upholds the authority of the British and her adopted brother Govind, seeks to overthrow the British Raj through terrorist activities. In *A Silence of Desire*, we see the lower middle class facing conflict between different values- old and new, Eastern and Western, religious, agnostic and so on. In Possession and other novels one finds the hero or the heroine passing through many sorts of conflicts.

In her three novels, *The Coffer Dams*, *The Nowhere Man* and *Two Virgins*, the plot is rather limited. In these novels the stream of consciousness technique is used and the action moves forward and
backward. Uma Parameswaran opines that the later novels employ weak devices that subjugate artistry to plot technicalities.

Kamala Markandaya has shown great dexterity in portraying her characters. Her characters are well developed and lively. According to Mrs. Nayantara Sahgal, her characters seem to be made of flesh and blood.

In her earlier novels the characters are studied only from the outside and the reader is unable to probe into the depths of the soul. In the later novels one is able to see the inner man. She employs stream of consciousness technique in these novels and one can probe into the psyche of the characters.

Mostly, women are the important characters in her novels. In the novels which are narrated in the first person, the narrators are women.

Some characters reappear in the fictional world of Kamala Markandaya. Such characters are swamis, beggars, artists, peasants, patriots, prostitutes and government officers and so on. Some of these characters represent the financial backwardness of the country and the others symbolise the traditional values.

Kamala Markandaya's English characters have the feeling of superiority and hatred for India. Uma Parameswaran writes that the English in Kamala Markandaya's novels are insulting, arrogant and impatient with Indians but they are also endowed with sterling qualities.
and the Indian characters pay tribute to them, some times reluctantly and sometimes readily.

Kamala Markandaya's novels cover a wide range of themes. As she is an Indian-English novelist her Indianness is seen in the themes of her novels. Poverty, and starvation, the East-West encounter, cultural conflicts, freedom movement, dislocation of rural life as a result of industrialization, religious tradition and the like are the important and recurring themes of her novels. But hunger and poverty are major themes.

Though in most of her novels the same themes are repeated, they all have a touch of novelty. For example the theme of *Nectar in a Sieve* is poverty, starvation and the degradation caused by it. Here it is mainly studied in a rural setting, though the theme of urban poverty, exodus and rootlessness is also dealt with. The theme of hunger and poverty is studied in an urban setting in *A Handful of Rice*. It also deals with the economic situation of India.

The East-West encounter is another major theme in Kamala Markandaya's novels and it is also dealt with subtle variations. In *Nectar in a Sieve* the theme is studied through Dr.Kenny. The themes of tradition and modernity, industrial and agricultural conflicts, exodus and rootlessness are also brought in. *Some Inner Fury* also deals with the East-West theme. In this novel there is a conflict between passion and
patriotism. *A Silence of Desire* deals with the East-West tensions—tensions between convention and modernity within the family. *Possession* is an excellent novel dealing with the theme of East-West and political theme also is present there. *The Coffer Dams* is another variation of the East-West theme. It is a protest against the increasing industrialization which is disturbing rural life. *The Nowhere Man* is another variation of East-West theme. In this novel the novelist describes the condition of the expatriates. *The Nowhere Man* is a rootless person—he belongs neither to the East nor the West.

Kamala Markandaya's message is that if the East and the West have the attitude of compromise, they may understand each other. The novels of Kamala Markandaya teach that people should cling to their traditional values but at the same time they must readily accept what is best in Western culture.

Kamala Markandaya is an expatriate writer, living in London. So she has enviable command over English language. She writes it very naturally and her English is grace for its clarity and simplicity. In the opinion of Srinivasa Iyengar, suggestiveness and sufficiency are the outstanding qualities of her prose.

Kamala Markandaya does not localise English language like other Indian English novelists. She writes English within the framework of English tradition. Regional dialects and literal translations of Indian
swear words and proverbs are discarded by her. Kamala Markandaya's language is endowed with poetic beauty. Nectar in a Sieve and Some Inner Fury are highly replete with poetic expressions.

Critics point out that her vision of life is not profound and she does not care to probe the depths. Another defect of her novels is vagueness and generalization. For instance, hunger theme and East-West encounter are repeated in her novels.

These smaller shortcomings are nothing when compared to her skill and greatness. She is a major Indo-Anglian novelist. She has won laurels both in India and abroad.

One of the most significant aspects of Kamala Markandaya's novels is her authorial interest in the formation and development of the mind and character of her protagonists. Some of the critics have failed to notice this aspect of her novels. K. Madhavi Menon is an exception and she observes of Mira, the narrator of Some Inner Fury:

Her fictional progress is that of the bildungsroman- the adolescent turning adult, the naïve turning mature the careless turning responsible. Encountering the conscious and the unconscious restrictions placed on her as a girl belonging to an orthodox upper class Hindu family, she always breaks away to win her freedom. (36)
After having poignantly portrayed the consequences of traditional fatalism in her first novel, Kamala Markandaya is tempted to explore the process of growing up in her second novel, *Some Inner Fury*. That perhaps is why Roshan and Mira, and in the later part of the novel, Premala too, are so different from the meek and passive Rukmani of *Nectar in a Sieve*. Since Roshan and Premala are already adults, the novelist focuses her attention on Mira’s consciousness by making her the narrator of the story. However, the process of growing up that is shown is brief, as Mira is a developed girl of sixteen when the story begins.

Kamala Markandaya’s next novel *Possession* is a full-fledged bildungsroman and, that too, a kunstlerroman. *The Nowhere Man* has a bildungsroman motif in one crucial part of the novel. *Two Virgins*, *The Golden Honeycomb* and *Pleasure City* are full-fledged bildungsroman. M.H. Abrams defines bildungsroman and kunstlerroman:

Bildungsroman and Erziehungsroman are German terms signifying “novels of formation” or “novels of education”. The subject of all these novels is the development of the protagonist’s mind and character as he passes from childhood through varied experiences—and usually through a spiritual crisis—into maturity and the recognition of his identity and role in the world. . . . an important sub type of the bildungsroman is the kunstlerroman (artist-novel, which
represents the development of a novelist or other artist into the stage of maturity in which he recognizes his artistic destiny and achieves mastery of his artistic craft . . . (112-13).

P.S. Chauhan says that the careers of many of Kamala Markandaya’s heroes “follow the pattern of a mythical hero’s life,” and, in a footnote, he quotes Joseph Campbell’s definition of “the common pattern of a mythical hero’s life, ‘which mentioned’ the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation, initiation, return.” (137).

In the light of these definitions and the critical opinions, it may be said that Some Inner Fury tends towards the bildungsroman, that Possession, Two Virgins, The Golden Honeycomb and Pleasure City are bildungsroman. Together they point to a bildungsroman strain in Kamala Markandya’s novels, especially in her later novels. As these novels have the growth motif as their theme, the dreams of the protagonists do not go beyond their attaining maturity.

The original captions that are provided at the beginning of each chapter serve as symbols to the concepts that are analysed in the respective chapters.

The first chapter of this thesis entitled, “Into the Dawn”, introduces Kamala Markandaya, provides an overview of her novels, and touches upon salient features of her art. It also points out her outlook on life and
her concern for society, highlights briefly the superiority of her women characters, refers to her interest in the development of the mind and character of her protagonists, points to the failure of most critics to notice the bildungsroman strain in her novels, provides definitions of the bildungsroman and asserts that a bildungsroman strain can be traced in Kamala Markandya's later fiction.

The second chapter entitled "Myriad Forms, Myriad Scenes" highlights the thematic pattern of Kamala Markandya's novels. It traces out the most recurring themes of hunger and poverty, growing up and development of characters, and the East-West encounter in her novel. It also traces Kamala Markandya's viewpoint of life and her social concern that is revealed through these themes. The critical opinions of scholars pertaining to the themes of the novels are presented in support of the analyses of her novels. Internal evidence to the same effect has also been given wherever necessary.

In chapter three under the title, "The Way They Blossom", the novels projected as bildungsroman are analysed. This chapter examines Possession, Two Virgins, The Golden Honeycomb and Pleasure City as bildungsroman. While analyzing these novels, critical opinions pointing to the growth and development of the protagonists' mind and character are provided and internal evidences for the same have been cited as proof of the bildungsroman strain.
The dreams of the protagonists of these novels with the growth motif invariably end at the point of their reaching maturity. In essence, they are rather youthful dreams. Though the protagonists of these novels undergo varied experiences and difficult phases, mostly their dreams get fulfilled. However, they have to get into some sort of compromise with the realities of life.

The fourth chapter entitled, “The Soul of Life”, throws light on the women characters in the novels of Kamala Markandaya. The possible reasons for her excellence in the portrayal of women characters rather than in her depiction of men characters are analyzed. The various ways in which women are portrayed as superior to men are also examined closely. Kamala Markandaya has a strong conviction that man is a mere puppet in the hands of fate. However hard he may struggle to escape from the grips of destiny, he invariably finds himself being washed away by the overpowering realities of life. The way in which her women characters serve her purpose of exposing her concept of life also is analysed in this chapter.

The opinions of critics on this aspect of Kamala Markandaya are provided to support the analysis. Sufficient textual evidence also is given to strengthen the point of view.
The fifth and the concluding chapter entitled, “Revealing Twilight”, sums up the contents of the previous four chapters and offers suggestions for further research.

Works cited lists the sources of this study.

Thus, this initial chapter introduces Kamala Markandaya, provides an overview of her novels, and touches upon the salient features of her art like themes and plot construction. It also traces out her interest in the growth and development of her characters and also her concept of life as a whole that can be seen in the delineation of themes and portrayal of her characters.

The following chapter analyses the thematic pattern in the novels of Kamala Markandaya because these varied themes clearly illustrate her outlook on life and the opposing forces of man and fate, and also her genuine concern for society and the welfare of humanity.

This thesis has been documented in accordance with the guidelines provided by the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, by Joseph Gibaldi, 6th Ed, (New Delhi: Affiliated East-West, 1996). Kamala Markandya’s name has been used in full throughout the thesis because it is her pen-name.