PREFACE

This thesis on Kamala Markandaya and Bharati Mukherjee seeks to unravel a new and broader realm of their creative arena comparatively. It is probably the first research work that has clubbed these two authors together. Most books have separate articles on these authors which are lacking in comparative analysis.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The opening chapter of the thesis, titled Introduction, discusses both the affinity as well as the basic differences in the outlook of these two authors in the light of their biological and creative fields more precisely. Why does Markandaya have the label of fidelity while Mukherjee the opposite trait? What are the events that compelled Mukherjee to show such dedication and affection towards the United States? Apart from addressing these major questions the chapter goes on to discuss the continual oscillation of immigrant people between their home and the host country, their clashes and also their problems of understanding and misunderstanding. Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve*, *The Nowhere Man* and *Possession* have been discussed alongside Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter* and *Jasmine*.

In Chapter II, the crisis of identity, theme of displacement, East-West encounter and conflict between the tradition and modern attitude have been shown in the novels *Nectar in a Sieve*, *Two Virgins*, *Wife*, *Jasmine* and *Desirable Daughters*. In *Nectar in a Sieve* the protagonist cum story-teller Rukmani represents the rural, Eastern, uncivilized traditional woman while Dr. Kenny is absolutely contrary to her qualities. Setting up of a tannery on the agricultural field is
essentially a gobbling up or victory over the productive field of farmers by industrialization. It is a defeat of rurality and establishment of urbanity.

The theme of *Two Virgins* is a variation of *Nectar in a Sieve*. It concerns with the conflict between the village and the city life. It is a story of two sisters— Lalitha and Saroja representing the modern and the traditional outlook respectively. Lalitha breaking all the taboos and shackles of society heads towards the city’s glamour where she, eventually, gets seduced. When Saroja comes to know about this, she visits the city with her parents to confront the seducer of her sister. Through this story Markandaya tries to teach a lesson to society that women need to be given more security and opportunity in order to flourish in life.

Dimple of Mukherjee’s *Wife* is much fascinated by the happiness of wifehood before marriage. But after wedlock her imagination shatters in such a way that she begins to seek it in western life, where again she is bereaved and this leads her towards a state of hallucination. Jasmine, one of the widely known characters of Bharati Mukherjee, represents a challenging woman against the patriarchal superiority over female subjections. The transformation of Jasmine is crucial, from Jyoti of Hasnapur to Jase of the United States. Tara Bhattacharjee of *Desirable Daughters* is an embodiment of the independent woman. The leitmotif of the novel is quest for identity. Tara is on a mission of discovery to reveal the identity of Tara Lata, the tree bride and of Chris. The novel is full of irony—or one can say retrospective irony—as the character always encounters something contrary to her expectations. When Tara and Bish settle at Stanford after marriage, Tara says “This is the life I’ve been waiting for, I thought, the liberating promise of marriage and
travel and the wider world.” (81). But soon she realizes that the life she is going to live there is not as it seems. It is full of clash, conflict, and dissatisfaction.

In Chapter III, the questions of authenticity have been raised against these two authors who have been living abroad and writing about India. How much their portrayal and representation of Indian life is genuine, constitutes the main argument of the discussion. The difference between these authors is that Markandaya glorifies India while Mukherjee is critical of it. While the former sets up her story, often, in pastoral landscape, the latter does it in urban city life.

The opinions of Markandaya and Mukherjee about orientalism have been explicitly discussed. Markandaya conforms to the norms of orientalism in her novels and never tries to be unfair towards Indians while Mukherjee does not sympathize with Indians at all. She leaves them struggling like some wreckage without any support.

According to Mukherjee, migrating Indians adopt the USA as their new home and new culture and it is almost as if they are reborn there. They begin afresh with a new enthusiasm, a newly created vicinity and especially with a new mindset. Unlike Mukherjee Markandaya never seems critical of Indians. In fact, she usually praised. Critic Gooneratne blames Markandaya for misrepresentation of a certain village regarding the portrayal of a farmer’s lifestyle.

Chapter IV of the thesis focuses on the use of language. In her writings Markandaya rarely uses any Hindi word. Instead she tries to translate its essence in English, except for her latest novel Bombay Tiger. Mukherjee, on the contrary,
frequently uses Hindi words—‘kirtan’, ‘pujah’, ‘pahari’ because she knows well that translation of these words cannot express the real meaning and understanding. Sometimes it is very difficult to give a real sense through translation (for instance the word ‘aap’.) Very often translation from one language to another creates a ridiculous image like translating of ‘Gai-Mata’ as mother cow. Here, in translation, we do not get the sense of reverence towards the sacred cow as it is found in the Hindu religion.

Chapter V delineates the characterization of protagonists of Markandaya’s novels from *Nectar in a Sieve* to *Bombay Tiger* and of Mukherjee’s works from *The Tiger’s Daughter* to *Miss New India*.

The foregoing discussions are summarized in the concluding chapter which sums up the arguments and facts dealt with earlier.

As regards citation, the seventh edition of the MLA handbook has been strictly followed and endnotes have been given at the end of every chapter.