CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
Introduction

Indians have been utilizing English language to express themselves in terms of literature for more than 150 years. This term of literature is known as Indo-Anglian-literature. Indo-Anglian is the product of confrontation, amalgamation, synergy and adjudication between the British and the Indians.

Seafaring nature of Europeans especially the British brought the two nations into close contact with each other and the forced and unwilling contact had its impact on the creative minds of the two sub-continents. On the part of the Indians, it was an attempt at a consolidation of a new foreign culture and this attempt was made successful by eagerness of Indians to explore English. Motives to learn English were various but the outcome was that the Indians had a new and a widely accepted medium of expression. They started writing in English, but their thoughts, feelings, emotions and experience were completely Indian. This fusion of two different cultures and literature gave novel a new form to the world of literature. The following statement is true of this confluence of literature:

To be Indian in thought and feeling and emotion and experience yet also to court the grace and submit to the discipline of English
It was with appearance of R.K.Narayan that we could get true novel worth the name. ‘Waiting for the Mahatama’ by R.K.Narayan is a regional novel like Hardy’s Wessex novels. Here novelist has woven his plot with fine strands of love, politics and idealism. He has wonderfully described the events from (1941-1948). Mulk Raj Anand, is another great name, who wrote his novel ‘The Sword the Sickle’ (1942) which is particularly based on imperialism, landlordism, communism and Gandhism. His other famous novel is ‘Untouchable’ (1935) which reflects the degraded situation of the untouchables in India and their existence. It also reflects the impact of caste cruelty on the adolescent mind of boy. Another great novelist, Raja Rao, wrote ‘Kanthapura’ (1930). This novel is an unforgettable novel based on Gandhian thought. The novelists of the pre-independence era helped a lot in national movement. Some of them adopted the theme of Ahinsa and Satyagrah, some other adopted the theme of violence and terrorism; but, the aim of both types of writer was to awaken the citizens of India for the struggle of freedom.

Some prominent women-novelists have also tried to give some rare piece of novels to Indo-Anglian fiction. Toru Dutt who died young at the age of twenty one wrote only two novels and gained worldwide fame. The death of her brother and elder sister influenced her much and when she
turned to writing fiction, she expressed her grief and experience in it and her novels ‘Binaca’ and ‘Le Journal De Mademoiselled Arvers’ become autobiographical. The story of ‘Binaca’ and her sister Inez, and the story of Marguerite and sister Veronique tell us about the inner grief and sisterly love. Among other early women novelists may be mentioned Raj Lakshmi Devi. ‘Her Hindu Wife’ (1876) is a very famous novel. Mrs. Krupabai Sathinandan’s ‘Kamala’ is a story of a Hindu life.

After the end of Second World War, the women novelists started enriching the world of Indo-Anglian fiction. They wrote a number of rural, political and social novels. Among the women novelists of post-independence era, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawar Jhabala, Attai Hussain, Anita Desai, Nayan Tara Sahgal, Shanta Rama Rao attracted the attention of the scholars of the whole world. Six novels published by Ruth Prawar Jhabvala made her famous in the whole literary world. Her chief novels were ‘To Whom She Will’ (1955), ‘The Nature of Passion’ (1956), ‘Esmond in India’ (1958), ‘The House Holder’ (1960) and ‘A Black word Place’ (1965). Her first novel ‘To Whom She Will’ appeared with a glossary followed by a list of recipes. The novel strikes the reader for unique style of describing the recipes. Her ‘Esmond in India’ is the most enjoyable social documentation. This novel is more serious than her other
novels. She has described the aristocratic society of officers and big businessmen in this novel. In her later novels the comic spirit is focused. She satirizes the follies and foibles and self description and free from malice and ill-will. Mrs. Jhabvala won the great award, "The Booker Prize", for her prestigious novel 'Head and Dust'.

Anita Desai with her five novels has an established a new ground in the realer of Indo-Anglian fiction. Her chief novels 'Cry of the Peacock' (1963) and 'Voices of the City' have laid emphasis on inner world of the characters.

Another novelist of an established fame is Shanta Rao, who wrote many travels books and a novel 'Remember the House' (1956). Shanta Rama Rao tries to write with an ease and urbanity appropriate to the theme. She explores and exposes the dividing gulf between East and West in her books very perceptibly. Nayan Tara Sahgal the daughter of Mrs. Vijay Laxmi Pandit wrote two novel- 'A Time to be Happy' (1957) and "This Time of Morning' (1965).

All above described women novelists of English novel have their own respective place in the world of Indo-Anglian fiction, but Miss Markandaya stands above all and is a most outstanding novelist of her time. Uma Permeshwaran rightly remark of the unique novelist:
Kamala Markandaya is, undoubtedly, one of the major novelists of the commonwealth scene.

(Indo-Anglian Fiction: An Assessment 295)

Kamala Markandaya, one of the most prolific and talented novelists of post-independence India, occupies a venerable niche in Anglo-Indian fiction. She has by now published ten novels - Nectar in a Sieve (1954), Some Inner Fury (1955), A Silence of Desire (1960), Possession (1963), A Handful of Rice (1966), The Coffer Dams (1969), The Nowhere Man (1972), Two Virgins (1973), The Golden Honey Comb (1979) and Pleasure City (1982). Her novels are noted for their well-contrived plots, vivid and life-like characters and keen observation of life. With the publication of the first novel, Nectar in a Sieve (1954), she immediately shot into international fame and has ever since remained one of the leading Indo-Anglian novelists.

Kamala Markandaya (b. 1924) was born and brought up in south India in an orthodox Madhawa Brahmin family. Her fore-fathers were landowners, financiers and government administrators. Her maternal grandfather was a member of the Indian civil service. Since Kamala markandaya's original name is Kamala Purnaiya, her links with the family of the Dewan Purnaiya of Mysore are clearly established. She prefers to
write under her pen name Ms. Kamala (Purnaiya) Markandaya. Since her marriage with Mr. John Taylor, an English man, she is known as Purnai Kamala Taylor. Her father was a transport officer in the British Indian railways.

Kamala Markandaya writes about her father that he was an inveterate traveller and something of a rebel; leaving the traditional preoccupations of his family, he had joined the railways. So that not only was the whole of south India opened to me during childhood and adolescence, but also a good part of England and the continent, a pleasant freemasonry prevailing. Among world railways which permits these superb free travel facilities.

She further says, "I think the role of observer which every traveler assumes is good training for any writer...... it makes a good starting point and I believe it was my starting point."

(Biography: Kamala Markandaya 296)

Owing to her father's frequent transfers she could not pursue her formal education systematically. She, therefore, was taught in various educational institutions of Mysore and Madras and was even coached by private tutors at home. In 1940, at the age of sixteen, she entered Madras University but was prevented from taking a degree in history, her favorite subject owing to her increasing interest in journalism; she was far more
interested in what was going on around her during crucial years of the World War II and Indian struggle for freedom. These developments influenced her so much that, in her teenage, she took part in the freedom struggle enthusiastically carrying flags and banners and raising slogans “Down with the British” and “Do or Die”.

On account of her keen interest in journalism, she joined a weekly paper which was soon closed down for want of funds. She then became an army liaison officer and when the war ended, she took to freelance writing in Madras and Bombay achieving moderate success. She cherished a deep seated interest in the rural life of India consequently. She lived in a south Indian village for a considerable time to get first-hand knowledge of rural Indian. When interviewed by Naseem Khan, Kamala Markandaya said: “Oh, I was just doing a bit of social work; everyone was doing that in those days, going into villages.” (Kamala Markandaya, Nectar in a Sieve: A Critical Study 11)

It must be noted that Miss. Markandaya made a good use of her experience of rural life in her classic novel, “Nectar in a Sieve”, subtitled “A Novel of Rural India”. It brought her world wide acclaim and established her as a novelist of a high repute.
In 1948, she left for England with the solemn intention to support dull but amiable jobs, perhaps of proof reading and secretaryship in a solicitor’s office. She, however, was not deterred from pursuing her career of a journalist as well as of a literary writer. Her meticulous constant efforts ultimately proved fruitful when ‘Nectar in a Sieve’ came to light.

Though firmly rooted in the rich cultural heritage of Indian, Miss Marakandaya owes her progressive liberal outlook to the Western influence. She expresses her deep admiration for western writers like Graham Green, E.M. Forster, John Updike, John Miller, Vladimir Nobokov, Arthur Miller, Ivy Compton Burnett and Patrick white.

Kamala Markandaya, now finally settled in England, is married to an English man, Mr. John Taylor and has a daughter, Kim. Ever conscious of her wifely duties, she leads a happy, contented life. Not much, however, is known about her personal life in London for she is reluctant to talk about her life and background preferring her work to speak for itself. Prema Nandkumar intended to write a book on Kamala Markandaya and when she approached her for biographical details, she firmly refused to say anything significant.

She is a Hindu and a staunch ant colonist and anti-imperialist in politics. But her work does not make over political pronouncements. Fairly
gifted with common-sense and sound judgment, Miss. Markandaya maintains a proper distance between herself and her writing. However, it cannot be denied that her novels bear considerable autobiographical suggestions. Mira, in “Some Inner Fury” and Anasuya, in “Possession” surprisingly come very close to their creator’s personality.

Miss. Markandaya is an extremely attractive woman, who appears occasionally on radio and television. She calls herself ‘non academic’ and keeps herself away from the spotlight of publicity. She often attends seminars; conference etc., gives interviews and travels abroad. She enjoys reading, films, the theatre, solitude and is found of pet animals. She pays little attention to the critical works devoted to her writing. She once said that very rarely she read critical work on her books. She is a recipient of National Association of independent School Award U.S.A., 1967 and Asia Prize 1974. She has also served as one of the jurors for Neusetadt International Prize for literature sponsored by World Literature Today.

“Nectar in a Sieve” (1954), ‘Magnum opus’ (Shiv K. Kumar) of Miss Kamala Markandaya has often been compared with Pearl S. Buck’s ‘The Good Earth’ and Venkat Ramani’s ‘Murugan the Tiller’. It deals with the predicament of an ill-fated south Indian peasant couple; Rukmani and
Nathan, who are subjected to the ferocities of nature and the callousness of man. In their monumental suffering they emerge as the archetypal figures.

The narrator heroine, Rukmani nostalgically recalls her family’s hard struggle of life for food. As a newly married couple, Rukmani and Nathan are happy and contented but when their family swells nature unsheathes its claws and their simple, joyous life is blasted. They are duped and fleeced by the money lender and the Zamindaar. The advent of tannery to the village not only pollutes the rural idyllic surroundings but also wraps; it moral fiber. Rukmani’s two elder sons join the tannery as indentured labourers’ child. Soon there is labour trouble that renders them jobless. They migrate to Ceylon to work in the tea-gardens and the family disintegrates. Raja is killed in a scuffle in the tannery. Ira, to save her starving brother Kuti, takes to prostitution; she gets pregnant and gives birth to an illegitimate albino child. The helpless peasant couples, after their eviction from the land, leave for the city. While they are staying in a city temple, they are stripped of their money and belongings. They work as stone breakers in a quarry. Nathan, Frail and weak, falls ill and dies. Rukmani, now a widow, returns to her village with an adopted leper boy Puli, to settle down with her son Selvam and daughter Ira. In spite of a series of harrowing incidents, the novel ends on an optimistic note.
The title of the novel signifies the irony of fate darkly shadowing the lives of the hardworking peasant couple. The plot set against the agrarian life in a south Indian village, represents millions of Indian's poor peasants. The character reflecting fortitude, courage, resignation and optimism in their personalities rise to the level of mythical figures. The story narrated in simple, fluent and evocative language and deals with the theme of hunger and poverty. Kamala Markandaya succeeds in impressing the conclusion that the troubles and hardships of life can break the body of a man but not his soul.

"Some Inner Fury" is highly absorbing narrative of a hopeless, tragic love swaying, an Indian girl and an English man, against the backdrop of 1942 freedom movement. Mira falls in love with Richard, who comes to India with kitmasy to stay in his house as a guest for some time. After a couple of years, Mira goes to stay with her brother, kit, now a District magistrate. She is engaged in journalistic work in the course of which she visits the government office where perchance, she comes across Richard. Their dormant emotions flare up, making them pass through "the sweep and surge of love" the romantic love of Mira and Richard and the national movement run parallel till the end of the novel. In the course of the activities, the village school of hickey, the British missionary, is set on fire.
and Premala, the wife of Kitmasy who was already there, dies of asphyxiation. Kit, who reaches the spot, is stabbed to death in the Meler. Govind, Mira’s adopted brother and terrorist activist, is arrested on the charge of Kit’s murder and is put on trial. Hickey is going to give his evidence against him. Mira, utterly desperate, tries to save her brother, but, when the court is on; a huge mob crushes in and takes Govind away declaring him innocent. Mira, pulled in different directions by her love for Richard and the patriotic urge, finally decides to leave Richard and join the nationalist forces.

The poignant love of an inter-racial nature and the Quit India Movement of 1942 coalesce beautifully to form the theme of the novel. The characters are lively and rounded. The passionate love of Richard and Mira has been described in a richly poetic language. The autobiographical technique adopted by Kamala Markandaya exhibits some amassing parallelisms, between Mira, the protagonist, of the novel and the author. H.M. Williams calls Some Inner Fury a “psychological exploration.” (Studies in Modern Indian Fiction in English 168) S.C. Harrex maintains that “Some Inner Fury has a respectable place in the literature of independence.” (The Fire and the Offering 237)
'A Silence of Desire' deals with the theme of conflict between tradition and modernity, faith and reason as seen in the life of a married couple, Sarojini and Dandekar, who belong to the lower middle class in a south Indian town. After fifteen years of happy married life, Dandekar grows suspicious of his wife's fidelity, when he discovers that Sarojini is frequently absent from the house. The poppy cock talk on sex and women in the office complicate the situation all the more. He shadows his wife in her outdoor movements and in the process he finds her consorting with a swamy.

Sarojini informs him that, she had a growth in her womb and to get it cured. She went to the swamy for faith-healing. Dandekar, though greatly astonished, advises her to go for a modern medical treatment. But Sarojini remains resolutely stuck to faith cure. Dandekar desperately attempts to seek the help of the swamy. He further requests Chari, his boss, to get the swamy out of the town. The problem is, however, solved when Swamy leaves the town of his own accord. Sarojini, as advised by the Swamy, agrees to undergo the modern treatment. Dandekar, though not fully contented, finds that his happy cosmetics life is revived.

The novelist has very artistically brought out that a wife and husband, who move on two different planes of life can be happily united if they agree
to give due importance to faith and reason in life. Their desires, quite often conflicting, are silenced with a little understanding. M.K. Naik, who is more often than not critical of Markandaya, however, detects in "A Silence of Desire" "living character in meaningful dilemmas." (A History of Indian English Literature 237)

Her novel 'Possession' dealing with the east-west encounter adroitly contracts the possessiveness of an English lady, Caroline Bell and the artistic and spiritualistic language of the young Indian boy, Valmiki and his spiritual guru. Caroline, during her visit to India, discovers in a south Indian village a goatherd boy, who is a talented artist; she is fascinated by him and whisks him away to London. Besides civilizing him and popularizing his art she enters into incestuous relations with him. Val distinguishes with the false pompous life of the west, finally returns to India to devote himself to the service of God.

The title is quite suggestive. The protagonist of the novel, Caroline treats Val as a commodity in her possession. The archaic words and quaint expressions lend a note of exoticism. The characters, excepting Caroline, are puppet-like creations markandaya has, however, endeavored to impress the conclusion that the ultimate goal of life lies in a spiritual guest and not in the pursuit of materialistic achievements. H.M. Williams observes: This
novel is one of the most forceful artistic explorations of the distortion of Indian’s national character in the British embrace and of her consequent urge to be free.” (Indo-Anglian Literature (1800-1970), A Survey 87)

“A Handful of Rice” was the story of stark realities in the life of a family of artisans, in a big south Indian city. Ravi, a village youth, comes to Madras in search of food and falls in the evil hands Damodar and his gangmen. One night, while loitering in the streets in a drunken state, he is chased by the police. He gets food and shelter in the house of Apu, the tailor. Thereafter, he is not only allowed to work as an apprentice with Apu, but is married to Nalini, his beautiful daughter. In the beginning of his marital life he appears to be extremely happy but very soon, the problems in practical life kill the initial flush of love and compel him to struggle for survival. He swings between the good and the evil. At the end of the novel, he is seen with the rioting people who are all out to plunder the godowns of rice. Ravi badly needs ‘a handful of rice’ but he admirably resists the temptation to join the loot. Though apparently disappointed, Ravi remains morally upright and strong. The novel, written in a simple and racy language, very authentically deals with the harsh realities of life in urban Indian. Ravi, a true representative of the proletarian youth of our times,
powerfully protests against the sharp economic disparities and shockingly poor Government management.

Miss Markandaya through her novel ‘Coffer Dam’ has covered a wide field and broken a new ground. The novelist sharply focused the confrontation between two chiefs of different races and culture. Clinton, the head contractor appointed to build a dam across a South Indian River, has modern and materialistic outlook. He also appoints some Indian engineers and technicians to help him. The Britisher uproots the tribal’s dwelling at site near the river, because the site is suitable for their own bungalows. So, the establishment of the town by the British contractors at the place of huts is a direct confrontation between tradition and technology. These native and homeless in their own country and thinks homelessness is caused by the Britons. A critic asserts that “The Coffer Dams, the best novel so far, should help Kamala Markandaya to establish herself as a writer of world stature.” (The Coffer Dams: A Review 256-57) Miss Markandaya through her novel ‘Coffer Dam’, “a very mediocre novel”, (India and west in the Indian novel: A Note) has covered a wide field and broken a new ground.

The confluence is not between the natives and the Britons but also between two groups of engineers. The Britons, engineers or technicians, their attitude towards Indians are not equal. They always behave with them
like ruler. The feeling of superiority is root of their conflict and confrontation.

'The Nowhere Man' was a powerful study of the tragic predicament of the nowhereness of Srinivas, an Indian immigrant who had been living in London for the last fifty years. He becomes gradually alienated from his native country, his own son Laxman and his neighbours. He is subjected to racial victimization. Fred Fletcher, not only tars and feathers Srinivas, but also sets his house on fire to burn him alive. Srinivas who providentially escapes the fury of fire however, dies of shock. He stands nobly and unswervingly for Gandhism in his life. Amidst something gloom the Srinivas-Mrs. Pickering friendship comes out as a bright ray of light.

'The Nowhere Man' written in powerfully chiselled English takes up the global issue of racism. Srinivas through his mute suffering fairly succeeds in highlighting the cruelty of man to man. The novelist achieves her artistic purpose in this highly finished novel. A critic opines that the novelist "has shown a steady progress in her art and this is further demonstrated in her latest novel The Nowhere Man." (Indian Literature since Independence: A Symposium 60). Another critic proclaims it as "the most powerful and mature of the novels of Markandaya." (Introduction to
Perspectives on Kamala Markandaya IX). The language and style fascinate the reader and prove the master artist par-excellence.

'Two Virgins' deals with the unsettling impact of modern civilization upon a South Indian village. The novelist has presented it through the lives of two village girls; Lalitha and Saroja who are real sisters. Born and brought up under the same roof, they vastly differ from each other as they are exposed to different kinds of environment. Lalitha who is taught in 'three Kings School' of Miss Mendoza is alienated from the traditional roots of her family. Her mind is filled with vanity and a feeling of superiority. She becomes alarmingly sex-conscious and indulges in exhibitionism and masturbation. She hankers after the career of a cine-star and attaches herself to Mr. Gupta, a film maker. She is seduced by Mr. Gupta, gets pregnant who too learns a lot about life, remains a virgin.

Kamala Markandaya deals with the tempestuous period of adolescence and its impact on the two sisters. The theme, though psychological in nature, has not been handled convincingly, for it fails in probing deep onto the inner working of the adolescent mind. The characters do not see to grow, they are puppet like figures. The story is thin and incoherent and smacks of artificiality. Shyam M. Asnani is not wholly wrong when he says that, "Two virgins.......... hardly seems to
make a significant contribution to the artistic realization of the theme”.
(East West Encounter in Kamala Markandaya’s Novels 28)

‘The Golden Honey Comb’, a rich colorful dynastic novel, divided into three parts, depicts three generations of the rulers of Devapur state. S.P. Appasamy rightly regards it as “A saga, told by a master story teller- a modern saga.” (The Journal of Indian Writing in English 63). It is also a very bold and engrossing narrative of complex human relationships caught up in the confrontation between the East and the West. Bawaji Raj III, the Maharaj of the Devapur state, remains a puppet in the hands of the British. The British resident, Sir Arthur Copeland and Lord Buckeridge, dominate the state affairs and impoverish the state almost to the point of bankruptcy. The poor, spineless people groan under extreme penury.

Rabi, the natural son of Mohani and the Maharajah, grows and develops differently by learning a lot about Indian life and culture. Rubi associated with Usha, the daughter of the Dewan, works for the welfare of the people to usher in a new era of happiness and prosperity. The novel ends with a note of hope for the resurgent India.

Kamala Markandaya has dealt with the pomp and show of the princely state of Devapur, the crooked strategies of the British in Indian, the
object poverty of the Indian masses etc in the novel, primarily a politico-historical novel. "The Golden Honey Comb" deals with almost all the significant issues of the then Indian society. A.V. Krishna Rao rightly observes: "The novel is not only her best imaginative effort to project the development of national consciousness but also her most ambitious and brilliant work of art. It reveals at once her extra ordinary sense of conscious realism and historicity, unmatched in Indo-English fiction and only rarely evident in contemporary British Fiction". (Studies in Indian Fiction in English 79)

‘Pleasure City’ deals primarily with the clash between tradition and modernity. The age-old fishing community on the one hand and the nouveau rich class of people on the other stand in sharp opposition to each other. The installation of shal mar complex, a ‘pleasure Report’ by the AIDCORP multinational on the sea beach in the fishing village appears to be painfully frustrating for Apu, the headman. But Rikki, Apu’s foster son and the education he had received from Mr. Bride, the missionary teacher. He is a delightful connecting link between the fisherman and the upstart people. He comes in association with Toby-Tully and serves as a life saver in the swimming pool of the Shalimar complex. But, remains thoroughly
rooted in his traditional culture. The Europeans and Indian, who together in the ‘pleasure resort’, stand for the cross-cultural interaction. The advent of neo-culture, shorn of moral values, reveals the hollowness of ultra modern life. Men and women, in general, seek pleasure at all casts. They are unmindful of the evil that follows.

The characters though not individualized are, however, highly complex in nature. The charm of the story which is Markandaya’s forte is missing from there novel. The highly ornate and metaphorical English replaces the usually simple and fluent style of the novelist. Kamala markandaya succeeds in establishing that slow and steady change without corroding the human values and the traditional mores is readily acceptable to all. Uma Parameswan while reviewing the novel rightly comments: “though not one of her best, it has her hall marks of sensitivity and restrained passion that sparks and sparkles because of its very restraint.” (Pleasure City Shalimar 512)

Kamala Markandaya is an outstanding postcolonial Indo-Anglian novelist. She uses fiction as a vehicle for communicating her extra-ordinary vision of life. In her novels she depicts race conflicts, temperamental
disparities, cultural conflicts and sexual perversion as factors working in the
form of barriers of communication. The thesis is an endeavour to present
the social vision in her novels dealing with social perception – moral
disparity and distinction of classes, political perception and cultural outlook.
WORKS CITED


