Title of Thesis/Research: The Study of the Use of Ironic Vision as the Literary Device in the Novels of Kamla Markandaya.

Introduction:

While living in 21st century in the context of globalization and technological advancement, we may be tempted to look back at the past to assess its achievement including the directions and dimensions of Indian English Literature and try to relate them to the present.

Indian Literature is a phenomenon which about a century ago was obscure and was legitimately glossed under terms like, "Anglo-Indian Literature; considered to be the hybrid products. Some Critics even remark that this literature was already on decline, however, it is significantly came to be known as 'Indian English Literature' with emphasis on "Indian" and claiming itself as our own literature. The things, techniques and linguistic command of Indian English Literature have gradually broadened out. Its past was glorious.

The early writers like Mulkraj Ananad, R. K. Narayan, Rajarao, Bhattacharya, Sir Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu have made valuable contribution to enrich Indian writing in English.

The women-novelist after the world war-II began to emerge as successful novelist. Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahagal, Anita Chaudhari and a host of others have added feathers to it.
Indian English novel is characterized by verity of themes and techniques it is continuously changing and going towards perfection. The main themes of Indian English novel are- the theme of poverty, hunger, disease, portrayal of social evils, inter-racial relations, the Indian national movements and the struggle from freedom, conflict between tradition and modernity. And also the theme of East-West encounter a loneliness and the theme of the exploration of the psyche of man.

Kamala Markandaya occupies a very prominent place in the history of Indo-Anglian fiction. She is one of the greatest of the Indian women novelists. Markandaya's novels largely depicts social and economic background. Her novels seem to be fully reflective of the awakened feminine sensibility in modern India, as she attempts to reject the image of the changing traditional society. Marakandaya has tried her best to manifest the common problems of Indian fanners in *Nectar in a Sieve* and the problem of evils of urbanization in *A Handful of Rice*.

Kamala Markandaya, like the Greek tragedians, puts the responsibility for man's misery on fate, that will not allow mortals to exercise free will successfully. Her characters are the victims of the irony of life or of fate. What happens to them is quite contrary to their wishes and expectations. Her *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Handful of Rice* are the two such novels, in which Kamala Markandaya has used ironic vision in delineation of characters and situations.

In *Nectar in a Sieve* Nathan and Rukamini represent Indian Tanners who are bound to face boundless miseries of life. In *Handful of Rice*, Ravi, the protagonist, is the representative of young generation of the Indian society, suffers from poverty and hunger, joins the exodus to the cities where he has to face unemployment and frustration. *A Handful of Rice* is a fine portrayal of the problem of conscience. It is a tragic commentary on the moral values and
material values as practiced in life. The present research is the modest attempt study the use of ironic vision in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice*.

Kamala Markandaya’s Indian sensibility enables her to grasp the plight of her Indian characters more easily than her English characters set in the Indian context. Sarita Varma in her article rightly pointed out, “One can’t miss the presence of human compassion in the novels of Kamala Markandaya which lends the philosophic and the religious charm to her writing.”¹

Uma Parmeshwaran has made a very significant observation about Markandaya’s fiction, “Kamala Markandaya’s themes are not new but this weakness becomes strength because the Indian settings still has the attraction of themes set against and Indian background are welcome”²