Importance of Research Topic:

With the growth of Indian English novel, critical studies on them have also grown in volume and approaches. The area, however, is so rich that a constant endeavour in this regard is needed. Hence, the fresh attempt to analyse the work of writers of past by applying the recent literary parameters or devices, is essential. Since irony is a very significant Literary device, writers not only use it to indicate the contraries of human life but also to delineate. The characters and situations. Kamla Markandaya’s works exhibit different types of irony: such as Structural, Dramatic, Tragic irony.

The Meaning, Nature and Types of Irony:

Webster's New Dictionary defines irony as: A combination of circumstances or a result that is the opposite of what is or might be expected or considered appropriate. In most of the modern critical uses of the irony there remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding. What is actually the case: not, however, in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic Effects.

The ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with indication in the overall speech situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite attitude or evaluation. Literary works exhibit different kinds of irony; such as structural irony, Socratic irony, Dramatic irony, Cosmic and Tragic irony.

i. Structural irony
Some literary works exhibit structural irony; that is, the author instead of using as occasional verbal irony, introduces a structural feature that serves to sustain a duplex meaning and evaluation throughout the work.\(^5\)

Structural irony depends on a knowledge of the author's ironic intention, which is shared by the reader but is not intended by the fictional speaker. Kamala Markandaya has aptly used the device of structural irony in her *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice*.

**ii. Dramatic irony**

Dramatic irony involves a situation in play or a narrative in which the audience or reader shares with author's knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant; in that situation, the character unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or the opposite of what we know that fate holds in store, or says some thing that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the ways that the character intends.

**iii. Tragic irony**

Writers of Greek tragedy, who based their plots on legends, whose outcome was already known to their audience, made frequent use of this device. Sophocles' Oedipus, is a very complex instance of tragic irony. Markandaya in her *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice*, in many ways follows a conventional pattern in its tragic delineations of the effect of poverty, natural disaster and unwelcome modernization upon a peasant's family.

**iv. Cosmic irony**
Cosmic irony or the irony of fate is attributed to literary works in which a deity or fate is represented as though deliberately manipulating event so as to lead the protagonist to false hopes, only frustrate and mock them. This is a favorite structural device of Thomas Hardy. Kamala Markandaya, too in her novels made an ample use of cosmic irony to portray the life story of Rukamini and Nathan in *Nectar in a Sieve* and the life of Ravi, the protagonist in *A Handful of Rice*.

Kamala Markandaya has made the deft use of ironic vision to enrich the form and content of the novels. Markandaya deals with everyday problems of the rural community and presents peasants as truly human characteristics of self-delusion, pride, self-distortion, meanness, mind with optimism, endurance and magnimity. The systematic research in this regard helps to sharpen the readers’ sensitivity, the most required awareness and sense of responsibility of an individual in general and political readers, research, scholars and policy makers in particular.