Chapter One

Introduction to Indian English Literature

Literature views reality critically. Literature presents the essence of reality linking things together. As art is the negative knowledge of the actual world, it exists in the real world and has a function in it. Yet, it offers a knowledge that negates a false condition. Indian Literature in English is a historically verifiable phenomenon. It is the result of the commercial, cultural and literary encounter between India and Britain. It cannot be presumed that a set of historically given conditions are to be identically interpreted or understood by successive generations of critics and historians. The wealth of Indian Literature available reveals the fact that the creativity and the experience of the writers have made a lasting impression.

British historians made a strong belief that modern Indian history begins with the rise of the British rule in India. India had nationalist historians, subsequently, who found nothing good in the British. The entrance of the European scholars into the Indian scene, along with Jones, Wilkins, Halhes, Holwell, Arberry among others, discovered India through its ancient philosophy and literature in Sanskrit. It was a continuity of more than three thousand years, and the Europeans stressed the non-modern, non-utilitarian aspect of Indian culture which was largely found to be metaphysical with lots of subtleties of religious belief and a hatred for things. German romanticism strongly supported this image of India. India became a store-house of symbolism and mysticism, ‘the spiritual East’ for the average European. The Jesuits and the employees of the East India Company rediscovered India in this sense and their achievements in the fields of Linguistics, Indology, and related areas remain singular to this day.
The roots of Indian Literature in English could legitimately be traced in what has been said in the British and European attempts to understand and interpret India. A lot of hue and cry is raised by nationalist historians who argue that English is not an Indian language and therefore Indians cannot and should not write in English. An objective assessment tells us that Sanskrit may or may not have been an Indian language. India, over the centuries, has assimilated so many languages and cultures that it is difficult to call them alien. Sanskrit, Urdu and English have not only been natively contextualised but they have also become a part and parcel of the fabric of Indian reality, its social and metaphysical consciousness.

The historical duration of the art-work may or may not coincide with the duration of the forms they use. Form is relatively a longer continuity in time, sometimes across culture that admits of many changes, alterations, through the passage of time. The ancient man’s language was hieroglyphic – particularly so in the Indian tradition – with which we have lost touch. The dominant mode of the Indian tradition has been historiographical narrative which has excellently combined with myth to present the existential reality sweeping across all the three worlds.

India has had great narrative traditions exemplified by works like the Ramayana, the Mahabarata, the Puranas, the Panchatantra and Kathasaritsagar, and many others. Here, gods combine with human beings, clash with demons in order to sustain a human story. This consciousness would be called mythographic consciousness that is encyclopaedic in range and symbolical and archetypal in intent. The contemporary Indian novel in English, championed by Raja Rao, is making multiple uses of the puranic method where allegory and myth elevate layers of vocabulary to the visionary consciousness that still foregrounds the nuptials of its experience in the empirical ego. All forms of literary organisation do have historical evolution of concepts, patterns and structure. History is the name of the continuing dialogue and process. In other words,
implicity and explicity represent a historical sequence which represents a continuity of
literary history in particular, and history in general. It is not only the writer’s creative
frame of mind that destroys the use of his past literacy in historical or mythopoetic
experience, it is also the reader’s experience which realises the work of art at the level of
his own conclusions of the ontological status of historical praxis.

With the introduction of English Literature, a careful attempt at canon formation
was made to select certain kinds of texts while excluding others. British society ensured
that secular writings, analytic texts and imaginative products that give free play to an
inquiring mind were excluded from the academic system. With the purpose of introducing
the natives to the best of western thought and imagination, rather certain classics were
selected that would reinforce feudal beliefs, and allegiance to a higher order. To enact the
British policy of divide and rule, an attempt was made to polarise the Indian along a
discursive terrain by recommending classical studies for the upper classes and religious
studies for the lower classes. Thus, British education system had no place for English
literature until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was at that time a rising middle
class and reading public posed a challenge to the establishment, demanding alternative
courses incorporating modern studies like Physics, Chemistry, Biology and so on. The
British system also became aware of the exclusivity of secular and religious education,
and was looking for a neutral territory where the secular concerns and the missionary zeal
could meet. Such a synthesis was found in English Literature. Thus, it paved the way for
exposing Indians to the liberal ideas, while at the same time not losing sight of the
colonial ideological programme. The colonial rulers exploited this distinction between
western literature and oriental learning to their utmost advantage. They wanted to
undermine the powerful hold of the learned classes over the native population,
questioning their exclusivity to interpretation.
The role of English in India and its literature cannot overlook the disclosure of power that engendered it, and which from time to time, attended the perceptions of history. That English was and is a language of colonial imposition was not among the elite. As Ashis Nandy points out, there were “Psychological structures and cultural forces which supported or resisted the culture of colonisation in British India”. (The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism, 16). Gandhi, in his third Swaraj, was unambiguous in denouncing vulnerability amounting to the moral failure of sections of Indian society for their complicity with the British. Decolonising the mind and culture, in which language and literary productions play a significant role, presupposes an awareness of our colonial history in order to dismantle the imperialism’s authorised version (The Exclusions of Post Colonial Theory, 28).

Indeed Indian Literature in English eludes any homogenising enunciation to the role and formation and the subsequent growth. There is an undeniable collaboration between historicism and realism, and any contemporary writing will have a historical and teleological basis, since Foucault. Being aware of the trope of power which reproduces itself and permeates all configurations of social life and textuality, Edward Said opines that it has two faces:

One which I [Edward Said] shall call temporal and transitive, foresees a continuity that flows from it… the other kind of beginning which I shall call intransitive and conceptual … Is very much a creative of the mind, very much a bristling paradox… because it challenges continuities that go cheerfully forward with their beginning obediently affixed. It is therefore something of a necessary fiction. (Intention and Method, 76)
In a highly invidious manner, the assertion operates, what Edward Said has termed the dialectic information and control justifying a knowledge gained through coercion in a social communion between a privileged ruling class and a disenfranchised subject class.

The main points to be taken from Ashcroft’s *Empire Writes Back* are that there is no escape from global power-structures, because there is no escape from writing, discourse or language. This is true historically; the colonised have been a part of the processes of subjugation accompanying European advance around the world, from the moment of its inception. So, the term post-colonial is used to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day. What each and every national literature has in common beyond its special and distinctive regional characteristics is their emergence out of this process, and their assertion of difference from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial. Writing back is the key motive for this approach to post-colonial writings. Their resultant approach emerges as a development within the third major grouping of theory, of a dominated–dominating model, emphasising the inevitable tendency towards subversion of dominated literature.

Despite all its problems and challenges, Indian English novel has stood the test of time and proved its worth and relevance. The prose fiction in English written by the Indians is undoubtedly the most popular vehicle for the transmission of Indian ideas to the wider English speaking world. Most early novels in English by Indians were almost invariably imitative and immature. Quite a few of them turned out to be only poor relations of the novels written by the Victorians and proved to be all very feeble as works of literature. As K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar aptly points out, “the early novels have for us today no more than an antiquarian or historical interest” (*Indian Writing in English*, 315). After pointing out the real problems and “difficulties facing the Indian novelist”, he adds
that novels written in the vernacular are “more enterprising, richer in content, wider in range” than those written in English (Indian Writing in English, 322). The early Indian novelists’ grasp over the language was uncertain and their choice of themes was stereotypical. He (Srinivasa Iyengar) observes in A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction:

That they write in a foreign tongue is a serious handicap in itself. Then few of them possess any knowledge of the art of fiction; they do not seem to realise that prose fiction, inspite of its freedom, is subject to definite laws. In plot construction they are weak, and in characterisation weaker still. Their leaning towards didacticism and allegory is further an obstacle to their success as novelists. (309 – 310)

Thus, the literary scene in the beginning of the present century was bleak. But the fact remains that really pioneering efforts were made by some Indian novelists to exploit the resources and potential of a fluid form of self-expression.

The use of English in India, having reconciled itself to its inevitability, has given it a status which itself is an act of self-redemption. English, it can now be said in the context of our multilingual culture, has become one of the Indian languages. Indian Writing in English is to be treated as a subcategory of Indian Literature. While considering the larger and complex issues of tradition and identity of Indian Writing in English as a part of the Literature of India, it is possible to attribute to it the same tradition as is shared by the regional languages and their literatures. The tradition of Indian Writing in English begins with our colonial encounter with the British. Related to this is the intractable problem of defining identity. Indian identity is an essentialising concept, or identity is framed as the result of a dialectic, rather than a mixture of contending practices and traditions. And outside the Indian frame, the related issues of the contemporary Indian Writing in English have to grapple with as part of the Third-World
Literature or Commonwealth Literature, or, as the latest nomenclature goes, Post-Colonial Literature.

The passing of the Charter Act of 1813 by the British Parliament was a crucial event in the intervention of a foreign power in the native cultural and educational domain. The operations, also mapped out the future educational schemes to be implemented in India. On one hand, the British Government took the responsibility for the education of ‘natives’ as their work in India. The intervention of the British Parliament was necessitated by the growing clout of the company which was already a formidable presence in Bengal since 1757 with its ever-growing territorial interests. With increasing affluence and power, the servants of the East India Company were following a life style which, for the British Puritans back home, was nothing morale. To salvage their guilt-ridden conscience, it was resolved to impart moral and religious education, ostensibly to promote interests and happiness of the natives. Measures were to be adopted to provide useful knowledge to the natives. The purpose was two fold – to salvage their own conscience, and the other, perhaps more importantly, to contain the company’s powers and influence and equip the outfit of the British Raj. In fact, they were looking for an appropriate moment for more active intervention in the affairs of India. But as a historic irony, the civilizing mission of the British in India began not with a view to educate or instruct the natives but was indeed prompted by the reports of depravity of their people, administration and merchants. The ‘mission’ was followed with jealous consistency to better interact with their colonial subjects, and it was accompanied with a simultaneous manifestation of Academic Orientalism forming the mainstream of that phase of British imperialism, popularly known as Orientalist Phase. Burke had earlier warned the House of Lords about the dangerous fall out of underestimating the Indian people, and he had given them a detailed description of the exclusivity of the Indian society governed by its
own hierarchical class and caste rules. He had cautioned that the Indian society was not to be analysed using Western standards.

In his own way, Burke was trying to show reference to Indian past and historical continuity, and the concept was readily accepted. It was felt that an understanding of Indian society would result in a closer rapport between the rulers and the ruled, all for better governance, and to the greater advantage of the rulers. Warren Hastings, Governor General of India, showed general concern that the British rulers were not sufficiently responsive to the history and social move of the Indians, and this attitude needed correction. Indeed, Hastings’ administration was characterised by an unusual empathy for native customs and morals.

The domination over the natives, thus becomes a part of the project of granting legitimacy to the western intellectual hegemony as an exploitative political economy. The state is then in an unenviable role of mediating between the worlds of scholarship and political manoeuvres, all in the guise of accumulation of knowledge. It is obvious that all such knowledge is put to the task of domination and control over the natives. To represent all such knowledge as humanist scholarship is a mere play to confer legitimacy on the state which provides this knowledge, often decontextualising it and diverting it from its original intent. A devious equation is then sought to be worked out between state and humanist scholarship with the former providing necessary conditions for the latter. From a mere rhetorical exercise, it becomes a self-fortifying dialectic. The Orientalist approach resulted in creating another myth, that of equating the knowledge of the classical texts of India, with the reality of India, thus rendering an entire discursive zone into a representation of materiality. This false identification attributed the Indian reality to some sort of an ‘essence’ gathered from the texts. This essence was considered as trans-historical and supra-mundane, and an integral component of the Indian psyche. Indians,
thus were differentiated from the materialistic West. The latter, anti-colonial nationalism, however, was to make use of this dichotomy to create its own space for a future combative role. Partha Chatterjee in his *Colonial and Post Colonial Theories* observes:

Anti-colonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power. It does by dividing the world of social institution and practices into two domains - the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the outside, of the economy and of state craft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the essential marks of cultural identity. The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual culture. *(The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories, 6)*

According to Benedict Anderson, ‘that nation is an imagined community’; ‘it is in the spiritual domain that a colonial state, such as that of India, was constructed’. *(Nations and Narrations, 292)*. Chatterjee’s emphasis is that ‘in this, its true and essential domain, that nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power’. *(Nation and its Fragments, 6)*. But the colonial power uses the split to construct a picture of the colonial ‘other’ to distinguish its own superiority and identity. Historically this otherness was employed as a strategic device to keep the natives at margin of power. *(The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures, 77)*. The body of text generated in the process succeeded in creating what is known as colonial
difference. The spiritual domain thus created was not only transcendental but also trans-historical, giving the impression of a corresponding ‘lack’ in material domain turning the western authority into an object of desire and distancing it further from the native culture.

The Orientalists valorised the classical Indian texts testifying their excellence. There were English historical and missionaries who picked on those very texts to point out their weaknesses and imperfections. Underlying Grant’s idea of a system of education for Indians was a staunch evangelical mission which would serve the ends of political reform along Christian lines as well as reform of manners that would provide the colonial with a sense of personal identity. But, Grant was also aware that his zeal to impact religion would also inspire Indians for a quest for liberty, as they would hanker for their natural rights, disregarding their temporal rulers, and hence, a particular diffusion of Christianity was required. This selective indoctrination became a model on which an appropriate form of colonial subjectivity was to be constructed.

Central to Grant’s assumption was a need for social control through partial diffusion of Christianity. It was the way of “the imitation of English manners which will induce them to remain under our protection” (Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature, 127). No matter it was against the central tenets of Christianity and diluted the moral crusade of the missionaries. Grant did have a premonition of the response to his ideas, as he had perceived a class of people emerging among the English speaking Indians who had developed a pronounced tendency for imitation of western modes of living. The Bengali elite were particularly receptive to it. This prompted Grant to propagate his religion and language.

The policy of promotion of Oriental languages and literatures, however, generated discontent among several British loyalists, giving rise to a counter movement known as Anglicism. The adherents of this movement championed the cause of Western thought
and literatures instead of Eastern learning, with the result that they came in sharp conflict with the proponents of Orientalism, who went on pleading that such a counter move can only backfire, as it will alienate the natives from the British rulers. But despite their diametric opposition, both Anglicism and Orientalism depended on each other to further their programmes. Even as the Orientalist scholars ransacked the Eastern archives, the Anglicists used these products to mount their attack on the native culture, juxtaposing it with their own. The Anglicists would rebut the Orientalists’ position to indulge in comparative evaluations measuring one culture against the other. Despite their cross purposes, both Anglicism and Orientalism shared a common methodology and followed parallel trajectories as far as the issues regarding the natives’ governance were concerned. In other words, it could be said that their variance was in emphasis rather than in the objective.

With the assumption of Governor–generalship by Lord Cornwallis, there was a reveal of policy of accommodation followed by Warren Hastings. His argument was that the British would have to face an erosion in their power if they developed affinity for the native culture. The air of superiority which the British traditionally had, and with whatever knowledge they had of the natives’ chronicles, they concluded that the natives’ example would only furnish bad models of corruption, despotism and of chaotic rule and would be a definite bad influence that in the long enfeeble their power and undermine their will to govern effectively.

Cornwallis had a lurking suspicion that the abuse of power by the East India Company officials was already jeopardising the British hold on India, and what was worse, was dividing the English nation on the legitimacy of the colonial enterprise. It was felt that the interaction with the natives would bring no good to the English in India. If anything, it contaminated the English life. Cornwallis was convinced that the root cause
of the declining European morals was their contact with natives and henceforth he announced his policy to exclude all Indians from responsible government position and administration, to shield the apparatus of the British Raj from an adverse effect and decadent influences. The English mind, thus operated on a principle of exclusion.

But, the programme of Anglicism suffered a setback when the successor of Cornwallis did not approve of the impersonal bureaucratic system of Government that excluded the natives’ participation. Cornwallis’ system had an ultimate authority where the mechanistic operations of law operated. Cornwallis was not much concerned with Orientalism and the studies it undertook, and he retained a neutral stance toward it, as long as the Oriental studies were the concern of Indians alone, and the Englishmen were not required to go through this kind of learning. The officers who came after Cornwallis, however, did not share this indifference to Orientalism for they were quick to realize its potential in consolidating the British rule. Indian society traditionally, had been feudal in character, and this understanding would evoke an identity in them and this is done with the feudal nature of the British rule. Orientalism, thus fitted in perfectly with their scheme of administration.

In order to carry out the new dispensation, Wellesley’s officers dismantled the centralised administrative system in favour of a more diffused system that operated through a network of hierarchical relationship between the British and the Indians. It was also realised that to enlist the active support of Indians, the support of traditionally ruling upper classes was essential. This alliance with the upper classes would ensure compliance with others’ Orientalism, which had faced neglect, was now a highly appealing doctrine and a practical proposition to Cornwallis’ successors. The emergence of what came to be known later as the filtration theory, was predicated on the notion that cultural values percolate downwards from a position of power, and by enlisting the cooperation of
intermediate classes representing the native elite. Macaulay was to later elaborate this concept as a full-fledged theory of culture in his famous *Minutes on Indian Education* of 1835.

Advocates of Orientalism however, could not hold long against the Anglicists, as Orientalism began to be construed as a half-hearted attempt to rectify morals in as much as it believed that even without transforming the Indian character, western values and structures could be directly transposed and grafted upon the Indian mind making it serviceable in the imperial project. But, the Anglicists opposed this assumption and practice and advocated a policy that would assail the vulnerability of natives by subjecting them to a direct reform process. In this, they found their allies in the missionaries who started playing a key role in the British educational programmes and policies.

Most prominent among them was Zachary Macaulay. The upshot of it was that the year 1813 saw the opening of India to missionary activities. Any interference with the religious beliefs of the natives would have meant provoking them to upset the British plans. But, inspite of these fears, the British involvement with the education of Indians was filled with contradictions, as it was to be an education without the input of English cultural or religious teachings and practices. Moreover, it was not quite in line with their avowed aims of the moral and intellectual development of the natives. The problem was indeed accentuated by Orientalism as it brought the natives in touch with their own faiths and beliefs, to the utter bewilderment of the British. It was a paradox – the urgency of the involvement in Indian education, and a strategic no-interference in religion that the policy makers found difficult to resolve. It was at this critical juncture that English Literature made its entry into the Indian academic scene. The induction proceeded from provision in the Government of India Charter Act which had empowered the Governor General with the
provision that a sum of not less than one lakh rupees shall be annually supplied to the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India.

Macaulay was quick to seize upon the ambiguity to argue a case for western literature, which he stressed had to be promoted. It is argued, or rather taken for granted, that by literatures, the Parliament meant only Arabic and Sanskrit Literatures, that they never would have given the honorable appellation of a learned native to a native who was familiar with the Poetry of Milton, the Metaphysics of Locke and the Physics of Newton. Only such persons might have studied the sacred books of the Hindus.

Macaulay’s plan on behalf of English Literature had a significant effect on the passing of the Education Act of 1835, which officially required the natives of India to submit to the discipline of English Literature. Even while trying to resolve the controversy between the Orientalists and the Anglicists, and to outline an educational policy, the Britishers suffered losses of the American colonies, and with this loss it became imperative for them to consolidate and retain their power over India. The Orientalists did have this concern and they did not want to antagonise the Indians and generate disaffection for the British rule.

India was not an easy country to rule, for the sheer size of its population, and with a society that had deep roots in its culture, tradition and ethnic divergences. But, with the loss of the American colonies and to maintain a balance of power in Europe, Indians’ subjugation was vital to British interests.

Meanwhile, Macaulay was formulating a policy which would alienate the Indian upper middle class from the masses and delay the process of self awareness in them. That led to the demand for freedom. Thomas Babington Macaulay, the architect of English education in India, enunciated in unequivocal terms the colonial culture design in his famous *Minutes on Indian Education* written in 1835: “English education”, he suggested
“would train natives who were Indian in blood and colour … English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect”. (Selected Writing of T.B. Macaulay: 249). He supplemented the argument by his remark that a single shelf of European Literature was worth all the books of India and Arabia. The design had its effect on the Indian mind; countless colonial Indian intellectuals imitated the lines of their masters. Macaulay’s presentation was full of rhetoric and he made the most of his position as a Law Member of the Governor–General’s council, to lay claim to an all knowing objective, neutrally. He wanted to assert that faith and morality were relevant to the extent they tended to serve utilitarian purposes. He rejected the study of vernacular languages saying that English alone was considered a language worth knowing and that other languages are poor in both imaginative and rational discourses, and therefore inferior to the English language. There is an implied equation between language and belief science: rationality and truth are equated with English, and, superstition, vague metaphysics and ambiguity are equated with Sanskrit and Arabic.

Macaulay was aware of the power of language in shaping a culture and could put this principle to use. To generate designed cultural proclivities, culture was obviously meant to serve the political ends. His main intention to transfer the ‘white man’s burden’ onto a class effectively dislocated from its cultural moorings and sufficiently motivated to ally itself with the imperial power.

The rhetoric of Macaulay did not fall in its appeal to patriotism and it is in this sense that the Orientalists had to lose ground to him. The common commitment was, he maintained, to their mother country, and the education policy could not overlook the material and political gains of colonisation. It was also felt that this policy would meet large approval among the Indian masses as there would be more employment for the educated Indians. While Britain would get more manpower for its military and
administrative machinery, the employment of Indians would mollify their attitude toward the British. It would also serve the evangelical purposes of the missionaries to the extent that European education could lead to Christianising many of the Indians. It is with this objective that they were initiated into English Literature, particularly at a formative early age, that they would adopt feelings from the standard writers which would make an immense impression upon them, resulting in an alteration in their perception, disposing them more towards the English life. The British education system had no place for it until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when a rising middle class and reading public posed a challenge to the establishment demanding alternative courses incorporating Modern Studies. The British educational system also became aware of the exclusivity of secular and religious education and it was looking for a neutral where the secular concerns and the missionary zeal could meet. Such a synthesis was now found in English Literature. It was a means of exposing Indians to liberal ideas, at the same time not losing sight of the colonial ideological programme.

But despite these avowals, it was obvious that Christianity was not seen to permeate English Literature, an Indian religion and philosophy, for instance, were identified with the study of Sanskrit and its classical texts. As the missionaries were not quite convinced about the efficacy of secular education, theological studies formed an important component of them. British rulers, however, made the most of the texts in the form of English Literature to make it appear embodying objective knowledge, which had been the “discourse of western historiography” (Interrogating Post Colonialism, 214). It was however, a devious tactic to obscure the fact that this knowledge was produced in a specific, social context and at a certain historical period. On the other hand, the native body of knowledge, derived from its own literatures and traditions, was rated for its reliance on some trans-historical authority.
A sharp demarcation was made: western literature was an intellectual production, subject to and augmented by the evolving human consciousness and intelligence, whereas the oriental learning was marked by its dependence on divine authority, based upon revelation rather than progression. The distinction served to emphasise the arbitrariness of the oriental conception of truth which derived its claims from the power of the explicator (the learned elite) to intermediate between the popular mind and sacred knowledge. (*Literary Theory Today*, 203)

The colonial rulers exploited this distinction to the utmost advantage to undermine the powerful hold of the learned classes over the native populations. The native learned classes’ belief, had strengthened their hold on the masses by an exclusive arrogation as role explicators of the texts and the underlying normative framework, and if an erosion of their power base was to be affected, the authority vested in these texts needed to be displaced and relocated elsewhere. This relocation of authority would automatically weaken that bond and transfer the allegiance of the masses to the English literary texts, serving as surrogate Englishmen. These texts were presented as containing objective, scientific, empirically verifiable knowledge, not contingent upon certain socio-political conditions, but universal, and aimed at the enlightenment of humanity. Literature is language based, and language being a cultural phenomenon is all but wholly conditioned by its locale and the socio-historical forces that are in operation through the ages in that particular locale. But, a powerful indoctrination was at work in weaning the natives away from their own literary tradition, to create enough space for induction of western ideology.

With investing authority in English literary texts as products of rational mind, a different reading process was required, whereby the reader would lead to intellectual
inquiry by logical analysis, rather than by placing implicit faith in the text and its explications. It had a liberating effect on the reader, but it also required faith in an alternate, totalitarian system of post-enlightened rationalism. The rational attitude, it was alleged, was missing from a consideration and evaluation of Oriental religions and literatures.

By denying any objectivity to Indian learning, Alexander Duff, a missionary, privileges English Literature on these very grounds but overlooks the fact that besides having a common strand of universalism, literary production is culture specific and cannot be judged on any absolute scale. But, the imperial game plan was obvious: the British rulers were at the same time cautious enough not to rely overwhelmingly on force to pre-empt the colonial resistance or insurrection. Yet, the discursive strategy is to disperse intention, and by extension, the British authority, over a textual space. Thus, the Englishman’s presence on the material site was de-actualised and diffused. The English literary text furnished both the ideology and legitimacy of colonial expansionism while containing the native resistance. The colonial was encountering a verbal construction, and was often valorised rather than condemned.

The entire history of British colonialism in India betrays a split between the material and discursive practices. Language became an important site for epistemic violence, and ideology functioned to construct the colonial subject. Any consideration of the role of English in India and its literature cannot overlook the disclosure of power that engendered it, and which from time to time, attended the perceptions of history. That English was and is a language of colonial imposition is not among the elite. The vulnerability of sections of Indian society for their complicity with the British resulted in moral failure. Decolonizing the mind and culture, in which language and literary productions play a significant role, presuppose an awareness of our colonial history in
order to dismantle the imperialism’s authorised version (The Exclusions of Post-Colonial Theory, 28). This liberates our national life from a constructive colonial history. That perhaps, is the salutary basis for the Indian Writing in English. Granting English the status of an Indian language gives it sufficient eclecticism for expression of indigenous as well as diasporic experience. The colonial encounter also wanted a nascent space in which British and Indian social codes began to intersect and mutually determine one another, and that quite independent of the Orientalist programme, the Indian languages, since the early years of national movement for independence, have articulated an oppositional and subaltern discourse creating a literary space which was later appropriated by the Indian Writing in English.

The legacy of English in India, then, depends not only on the acceptance of the contemporary canonical texts, but also on its intersection with other regional languages, not in a binary and fixed manner, but in an emerging relationship, in a multilateral and reciprocal manner. With the blurring of oppositional categories of Indian and Western tradition and modernity, English and other Indian languages can come closer to one another. This is not to coalesce and efface all differentiation, but to effect an epistemic transformation to rectify the different social and cultural codes, a task that the Indian writer in English is performing.

English was not regarded as the primary language of creativity by anyone despite the so called collaborative activities of India and particularly, Bengali bourgeoisie. No doubt, they were eager to learn English, acquire new professional skills, explore modern vistas of knowledge as well as engage in new commercial enterprises through the medium of English. The vernacular or the mother tongue remained the stasis of colonised identity. In fact, it was the vernacular which gained far greater importance and space in colonised life than it ever did in pre-colonial history.
During the colonial period the belief that mother tongue is the natural medium of self-expression produced tremendous and far reaching impact on the people as it also happened to be the basic tenet of nationalism. Language is the external visible badge of difference which distinguishes one nation from another. The emphasis on the use of native medium as a kind of political act resistance against the imperial domination emanated particularly from Calcutta, the capital of British Empire. This apparent paradox originates in the nature of modern European, particularly British Empire formation which established domination over multitude of heterogeneous people with differences in languages, culture, religion and ethnicity, while the colonial powers themselves were turning into homogenous unilingual national states. In the ancient empires, there was no barrier of nationhood to separate the subject from the ruling power. They might have spoken Sanskrit or different mother tongues at home or in the market place. The medium of expression constituted their identity, not the space they were born in nor the language they spoke to their mother.

To consider English as the weapon only of deracination and linguistic – cultural denationalisation is reductive. The English language and its literature transformed the conditions of writing and reading on the subcontinent, permanently altering the subjectivity of the Indian writer in unanticipated ways. For the subjects of the colony, English became a language to write in, to translate from and into, generating powerful and durable new strategies of appropriation, amplification, assimilation and synthesis which cannot be contained now by a simple narrative of domination and control.

The Indian novel in English has won international acclaim and distinction. The growth of English novel in India is characterised by the adoption, growing naturalisation and final expropriation of the language use. The three phases are characterised by changing equation of form- content. The nativity of the English novel in India dates back
to the year 1865 in the view of critics, which refers to the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Raj Mohan’s Wife*, 1964. However, dissenting voices of the writers reflect that the first Indian novel in English was Kylash Chunder Dutt’s futuristic novel *A Journal of Forty Eight Hours of the Year*, 1945. Published in the year 1835, it was followed by a period of nearly more than seventy years which may be described as characterised by a search for a form and a medium. The basic issue of the English novel to be subsumed to Indian reality is characterised by contradictory tendency which even today remains unresolved.

The phase of confluxion of fictions was an amalgamation of Indian substantiality with western consciousness of the medium manoeuvred with the confidence in one’s right to use it, followed by Meenakshi Mukerjee’s seminal lead. Then the second milestone can be dated to 1930, though the truly significant year is 1935, in which Mulk Raj Anand published *The Untouchable* and R.K.Narayanan published *Kanthapura*. In the first phase its specificity was located in changing attitude towards theme and the medium of language used. The focus shifts to the Indian multicultural society linked by an English language unapologetically Indianised and laden with the Anglicised idioms of the Indian Language while the self-questioning about the clandestine unauthorised use of the colonising language is no longer an issue. The urge to present oneself as an object for Western eyes still defines the substance of the novels, mainly because the target reader is perceived to be Western.

The second phase of the Indian English novel had an inevitable task of defining the civilization ruptures caused by the colonial intervention and at the same time make it counter-canon, paradoxically, accessible and acceptable to the reader afflicted to the other side of the colonial divide. Therefore the narrative discourse is still defined by Western rationalists and realistic parameters.
The third phase of culmination is most characterised by the mastery over the medium and unimaginable ambition to contribute to world literature. Indian metaphysical and epistemological systems have dimensions of essential human experience. The contemporary novelists of the third phase have gained prominence during the past fifteen years. The risk in defining patterns in contemporary events is that one’s assessment of the present and the consequent and inevitable prediction about the future may become spacious.

The development of Indian Writing in English is divided into five periods. The history of Indian fiction in English may be dated from mid-ninth century to 1930. This is a period which is related to the development of the genre, negotiation with the Western concept of romance, and of historical writing and the beginning of an engagement with India’s freedom. The second phase and the actual take-off points is between the 1930s and the 1950s which includes writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, and Raja Rao. The third phase includes younger generation writers who emerged in the fifties. Santha Rama Rau, Kamala Markandaya, Battacharya, Attia Hossain, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruskin Bond, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi and Malgonkar were other writers of the period between 1950 and 1970. The fourth period begins with Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, a period which heralded a greater freedom with language, fantasy, laughter, irony and satire. Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande and Shashi Tharoor are some of the writers of this period. In this phase of experimentation, there is also a resurgence of women’s writing.

Religion and the attitude to religion has been a strong strand in fiction, for, religion intrudes into every sphere of life: learning, worship, rituals, birth, marriage and death, as well as the workplace, the social system, and the caste attitudes. It is also reflected in the philosophical beliefs and thus encompasses the personal, the interpersonal
and the socio-political sphere. Religion and faith have often been written about in other cultures, but in Indian writing it has acquired a political connotation and is much more than a relationship between the individual and his god. Religion has even appropriated the place of race. The confrontations with the white race may be mutual, peripheral and sometimes positive but cultural differences are highlighted through ways of worship, rituals, engulfing relationship, riots and way of thinking. In a society where even food habits and cooking area are affected by caste, religion cannot be far from any subject. Those who wrote about the freedom struggle also were not able to keep away from such themes.

The historical consciousness is also a religious one in the Indian novel. The early novel in the late nineteenth century in its exploration of history and in its search for a national identity placed it within a religious context. Religion is very much present in Nayantara Sahgal’s political novel The Day in Shadow, wherein the restrictive roles of religion are portrayed at different levels.

The facts of nineteenth and early twentieth century Indian Writing in English bear out the complexity of the cultural exchange between England and India. The dominant genres in this body of writing are lyric and narrative verse, as practised by Henry Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, Romesh Chunder Dutt, Manmohan Ghose and Aurobindo Ghose. This continuity was found to be strongly supportive to the development of Indian self-awareness and national aspirations. These developed first in a cultural response to the challenge of British rule and thus a mainly cultural nationalism.

The original fiction in English is rather slight until the generation of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. In fact, the plays, short stories, and novels of Rabindranath Tagore in translation provide the most interesting colonial examples of drama and fiction in English, prefiguring the importance of bilingualism and translation
in Post-colonial Indian English Literature. He was a translator of his own works, including *The Gitanjali* into English. Occasionally an original writer in English, and an international spokesman for Indian Literature and culture, Tagore, as numerous postcolonial critics have pointed out, is also unquestionably the most powerful model for bilingualism from the pre-independence period.

The earliest Indian Literature in English was in the form of essays, memoirs and treatises, e.g., those of Rammohan Roy. It was in fact mainly a liberal humanist criticism of Indian society, of Indian religions itself and of imperialism also. Rammohan Roy’s objective was to demonstrate to Europe a religion in its pure form that was a viable, admirable and highly ethical culture, strongly theistic and moralistic. But, the unfortunate side-effects however included the creation of new sects, and the disturbance of an ancient culture, exposing India unexpectedly to alien and uncertain changes. Roy can therefore be considered as an unconscious ally of the imperialists and also as the first nationalist and liberal reformer. He was essentially a humanist and a syncretistic and in this respect as much as religious as Kabir, Gandhi and Nehru.

The nineteenth century showed a reflection of violent criticism of colonialism while admitting the benefits of British rule. Moving from Roy to the more purely literary groups, one among them to encounter would be Henry Derozio (1809 - 1836), a Eurasian poet. He was an aggressive Christian. He was also a romantic revolutionary modelling his life styles on Lord Byron. He hungered for the overthrow of ancients regimes. His poems *The Harp of India* and *To India of a Regenerated Young India* express his feelings. He was wild and fiery unlike Roy, who was calm and tolerant.

Derozio’s Christianity which often took on a violently anti-Hindu form is found in the Dutt family, the most dazzling member of which was Tarulata Dutt (1856 - 77), a poet of both European and Indian inspiration. Though primarily a personal poet, she followed
Roy in eliminating social backwardness and shifting conformity and cruelty of Indian caste society in the middle of the nineteenth century. When rising suppressed in 1857, the British had consolidated and rationalised their imperial power over India. There were signs that her rediscovery of the ancient Indian classics were bringing her a new awareness of the Hindu Cultural Heritage.

This awareness was already present in the tolerant humanism of Rabindranath Tagore, heir to Roy’s reform of Hindu cultural life. Tagore’s sympathy for Christian ideas reinforced his natural hatred of priesthood, mammary and orthodoxies. His personal religious faith and social philosophy were reflected in some of the poems like *The Gitanjali* and *The Gardener*. Though Tagore disliked politics he became an active nationalist as Sri Aurobindo Gosh had been in his early days before a religious experience in Alipur jail turned him into the great religious leader and mystic of *The Life Divine*. Roy, Toru Dutt, Tagore, Aurobindo, all spoke in their poetry and prose of a regenerated free India, which with the British gone, the Indian people could re-make their flawed society along new lines.

The emergence of the ‘Big Three’ – Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan – however, on the literary firmament brought new hopes about the creative activity in the form of fiction. William Walsh maintains: “It was in 1930s that the Indians began what has now turned out to be their very substantial contribution to the novel in English and one peculiarly suited to their talents” (*The Indian Sensibility in English*, 66). The development of Indian English novel seems to follow certain definite patterns and consists of well-defined stages. Although the earliest novels were not remarkable, they struggled to carve out their identity. The gradual progression from the imitative stage to realistic, to psychological to experimental is not difficult to trace. After World War I, Indian novels became determinedly more realistic and less idealised. The novelists made
deliberate efforts to depict the distress of the downtrodden classes, portraying Indians as they really were. The novels written between the two World Wars were primarily concerned with the contemporary social milieu and were greatly influenced by the Gandhian ethos. It is in this phase that the time was ripened by the emergence of a few talented writers of Indo-English fiction, of the writers who could fit this form to international status and universal recognition. The three names mentioned in literary circles is ‘the Big Threes,’ an epithet coined by the noted English critic William Walsh in *The Big Three, Indian Writing in English*. This enthusiastic critic may be quoted at some length as:

There is no doubt that there has always been a remarkable quantity of first rate Indian work in English in scholarship, philosophy, autobiography, religion and especially in politics. Gandhi and Nehru themselves were both in their different styles masters of an oratorical idiom. But it was not till the 1930s that a number of novelists began to write in English – genuine novelists that is, for whom fiction is an end in itself and not a means for communication of other kinds of truth. Some forty years later it is clear that this was the form peculiarly suited to the Indian sensibility and the one to which the Indian writers have made a distinct and significant contribution. (26)

Speaking of ‘the Big Three’ Walsh writes:

It is these three writers who defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate. They established its assumptions, they sketched its main themes, freed the first model of its characters, and elaborated its peculiar logic. Each of them used an easy, natural idiom which was unaffected by the opacity of a British inheritance. Their language has
been freed of the foggy taste of Britain and transferred to a wholly new setting of brutal heat and brilliant light. (26)

The inwardness of the struggle for freedom is also found in new ways among the writers of post-independence period. Of these three novelists, Mulk Raj Anand was whole heartedly devoted to the simple life of villagers, whose poverty and caste-feeling touched him deeply. He is equally concerned with orphans, untouchables, and urban labourers, and he is not much different from Dickens and Wells. There is a strong touch of humanism in his writings. He comes out in them as a semi-marxist and a social reformist. Even politics and propaganda are not excluded.

R.K. Narayan whose first novel appeared in 1935 is the most unpretentious and unassuming novelist. He always creates a convincing situation to suit his characters who live in the limited region of Malgudi. We may recall Thomas Hardy immediately. This small South India town – “a blend of oriental and pre-1914 British” – imposes structural limits on Narayan’s novels, but it also tends to provide them with textual cohesion and unity, leaving little space for digression and ramblings. Narayan is the truest artist who does not bother about social or political doctrines, nor is he bothered about the contemporary nature of his subject matter. Sex does not make an appealing theme to him. Thus, R.K. Narayan keeps himself distinct and distinguished from other Indo-English novelists.

Raja Rao whose fictional works are very meagre when compared to that of Mulk Raj Anand or R.K. Narayan, makes “a remarkable trait” (Iyengar, 386). In Kanthapura (1938), Raja Rao had taken the struggle of a village peasant community in South India under Gandhi’s leadership against British rule and capitalist exploitation. Raja Rao not only attacked the British through his writings but also showed the people of India being exploited by both native and foreign exploiters. Even the form of this novel and the
deliberatively invented Indianism of the language are aggressively and gloriously Indian.

Thus, the novels proved to be highly valuable to the nationalist and revolutionaries as a convenient and effective means to popularise and disseminate their cause. In the first place, in *The Big Three* the title itself is somewhat pinching and painful, as this exalts a few Indian novelists over a score of others who are presently engaged in the production of Indo-English Fiction. In the second place, this smacks of the anti-India stance of the imperialistic Britishers who strongly believed in the ‘divide and rule’ policy which they unsparingly implemented till they were established in India.

The attitude to romantic art in general and to its Indian writers like Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Sarojini Naidu in particular demonstrates the validity of these impressions. The editors of *Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry* (1959), the first notable anthology of the new poets, denounced “the greasy, weak-spined and purple adjectived spiritual poetry, the blurred and rubbery sentiments of Sri Aurobindo” and that “the phase of Indo-Anglian romanticism ended with Sarojini Naidu” (*Modern Indo Anglian Poetry*, iii). Since then, some of our modern poets have steadily maintained a barrage of gun fire against Indian English romantic poetry of the pre-independence days. Even more interesting in some ways is the dramatist-poet, Nissim Ezekiel’s attempt in *Three Plays* (1969) to combine symbolism and some features of Absurd theatre with realism.

Western critics have often found Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore sentimental and have dutifully endorsed the judgement. But, the uninhibited expression of emotion has not only been an age-old Indian literary convention but like all such conventions, it also has its roots in the cultural ethos of the land. The Indian personality does not fight hesitant of open expression of emotion and even today in certain parts of India employment of professional mourners is one of the accepted ways of showing customary respect to the dead. Apart from plays, all the other prominent examples of
pathos in Sanskrit Literature are marked by a potently stylised expression of grief, deliberately couched in decorative terms, with a free use of simile, metaphor and other poetic figures. These passages as artificial and sentimental to display depicts the ignorance of the literary and cultural tradition to which they belong. Surely what appears sentimental to the stiff-lipped Englishman need not necessarily seem to be so to those who have their roots in another way of life.

The Indian Literature in English had taken a different direction from Mulk Raj Anand since 1947 in aim, though his naturalistic methods have not done it with approval and imitation. It was obvious that with the British gone, the new elected rulers and social classes of the New India would come under scrutiny. Mohan Malgonkar, in his novel *The Princes* (1963) paid tribute to the martial tradition. Malgonkar’s military interests have led him to non-fictional as well as fictional studies of the martial traditions of the Indian people. The pacifist approach seems curiously irrelevant to the brutal facts of history and national destiny.

Another writer who saw violence as a key element in Indian life is Khushwant Singh. He viewed violence as a serious problem for the country that gained its independence at the expense of losing Pakistan in a gigantic bloodletting ordeal. Khushwant Singh’s admiration for Narayan has been recorded and his novels of the Sikhs of Punjab are both romantic and fiercely naturalistic with unusual freedom in depiction of sexual and violent behaviour.

Thus, it could be concluded that, the post-independence Indo-Anglian writers had a strong sociological bias and social consciousness and had responded to the impulse of the age like a barometer. The short fiction of this period faithfully registers the strain and stresses, obvious features, flux and gradation, the obvious and not so obvious features of the social conditions. Some writers had tried to capture the irony and comedy in the
changed circumstances after independence. The Indo-Anglian writers in their fidelity to
the existing social context have portrayed the paradoxes of the Indian society.

Many writers, while portraying contemporary Indian society in a state of transition, have not been ignorant to the persisting elements in the Indian social context. As noted earlier, social change in modern India has been precipitated by the increasingly felt changes of the traditional morals and values. Various social evils and superstitions flourishing in the traditional set-up have been made fun of by as widely different authors as R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand. But the importance of tradition and certain institutions today cannot be completely denied. The role of faith and religion in day-to-day life is one such aspect which has been captured by contemporary Indian writers.

Since 1947 Indian society has continued to change both materially and culturally. Keeping in mind this change, Indian Literature in English has become a key vehicle of the central socio-cultural concerns of the post-independence India. Indian Literature in English can be compared to a social document presenting the changing social conditions produced after the achievements of independence, exploring the process of modernisation and the inevitable conflict between tradition and modernity.

On the whole, the alienation of the contemporary Indian writer is further influenced by the fact that he mostly belongs to the urban or semi-urban middle class which has now lost touch not only with the vast rural masses, but also with traditional, religious and cultural beliefs, and values. In this kind of a situation, the theory and practice of western modernism naturally had great attraction for them and the resulting spirit of emulation may have intensified their alienation further, particularly since the alienated artist has now become one of the archetypes of modern Western civilization.

According to Western critics, another charge often levelled at Indian writers is that of ornateness, magniloquent, grandiloquent, over-decorative and lush. These are
some of the adjectives often used in describing the style of some Indian writers. It is important to remember the connection between style, and both the man and the social changes. It is no wonder that India is a land which provides astonishing variety of climate, scene and setting and where nature sports an unimaginably manifold display of vivid colour and shade almost throughout the whole year. Decorativeness should be a value firmly rooted in popular experience. Ornamentation has always been an important value in the Indian literary tradition. Jayadeva says, “A man who argues that there can be poetry without figures is capable of maintaining that there can be fire without heat;” (Chandraloka, 4) and Kuntaka states that “the adornment and the adorned … together constitute poetry” (Vakrokljivita, 6). The general ornateness of Sanskrit style was a natural result of these attitudes.

This ornamentation in art probably made the ancient Hindus see no distinction between fine and useful arts, so that even the practitioner of a useful art was supposed to display his aesthetic sense in his creation. The extreme limit to which this principle was stretched is illustrated in Sudraka’s Mrichchakatika.

The cult of ornamentation was further strengthened under the Persian influence after the Muslim conquest, and made for the courtly style with its high-flown flourishes, of which a letter written by the Sikh King, Ranjit Singh to the British Governor general is a fine specimen. The king tells his correspondent: “Friendship was refreshed with a fragrant drop of dew. It gave me delight as the rose–petal in the beak of the bulbul on the dawn of accomplished hopes” (Ranjit Singh, 138). We do not of course speak in this strain any longer, but its influence has gone very deep into our culture.

The problems involved in judging our literature exclusively by Western norms cannot thus be over-emphasised. Our aesthetic cannot be divorced from our roots. But it has been argued that the modern Indian has now completely lost his roots in the ancient
tradition and has adopted instead “an elitist pseudo-culture which has permanently condemned him to secondrateness” (*Communication and Literature*, 363-368). R.B. Patankar, in his books *Communication and Literature* and *The Three Books* holds this view. He further says that the British conquest violently arrested our natural growth, severing our roots in the ancient past completely, so that this past is now no longer of relevance to us, particularly because the Indian intellectual tradition which was strong up to the tenth century then declined and lost touch with the main stream of Indian life. Hence, the modern Indian critic cannot have any roots in the Sanskrit critical tradition and Sanskrit aesthetic theory, for the most part, is now “like an ancient piece of architecture, meant to be looked at and not to be lived in, particularly since most forms of writing in modern Indian languages have been borrowed from the West” (*The Three Alternatives*, 56-63). The Sanskrit theory cannot be fruitfully used for judging modern works because it would be very arbitrary to use it when it is not demanded by the content of modern works and then we find that the modern conceptual framework is adequate and does not need to be changed. The second reason for not reintroducing the Sanskrit theory is that there is no provision in it for certain evaluative principles which are demanded by modern literary works. For example, realism is an interpretative and evaluatory literary category.

With the British conquest, India’s roots in its ancient tradition were totally severed. Actually, it was the re-discovery of the distant past that was one of the significant factors in the Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century. Jawaharlal Nehru has noted how the awakening of India was “two fold; she looked to the West and at the same time, she looked at herself and her own past” (*The Discovery of India*, 330). The thought of prominent modern Indians like Tilak, Tagore, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and others had firm roots in the ancient Indian tradition, though all of them were well versed in Western thinking also. And the rise of savants like Ramakrishna
Paramahamsa and Ramana Maharishi is ample proof of the unbroken continuity of the Indian religious-mystical tradition. As far as literature is concerned, long after Sanskrit ceased to be a living language, its literary norms continued to shape popular forms of art especially drama and hence there was no sudden or complete break with the past at any time in the history of Indian thought and culture. Indian Literature in English offers several examples of how writers have drawn sustenance from the Indian tradition.

The problem of adapting the language to one’s purpose is one that is common to all writers not only to the Indian writers in English but also to the writers in the regional languages like Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam. African writers in English who also face this problem show how well English can be adapted to reflect the African environment. Chinua Achebe, for example in his *Things Fall Apart* achieves this, by drawing his changes out of his surroundings and from traditional African sources instead of lifting them from British literary English.

Whenever the creative writer wields the language with honesty and in the free certainty of his own vision, not only does the language become his, but he remakes the language. English though not native to the Indian soil, can be adapted by the Indian writer to the needs of expressing the subtle nuances of Indian thought and tradition without being grossly misused. Whatever merits the Indian languages can claim to have for expressing the life of the Indian people and the distinctiveness of the values of Indian life are possessed by English too. The fact that it is a world-language makes it in a sense a better medium of creative effort than our own regional languages in so far as what is written in the regional languages has to be translated into English before it can hope to reach an audience all over India and the world. A writer whether he is Indian, American or British, writing in English or for that matter in any other language, therefore will do well to remember what Joseph Conrad, a novelist whose native language was Polish, not
English, has said about the problems involved in recording the vision in words on paper. According to him only through complete unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance “… an unremitting never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour” (The Nigger of the Narcissus, xii).

Commenting on the dilemma faced by the Indian creative writer in the choice of the medium, John Wain says in his Essays on Literature and Ideas that if he were in the position of an Indian writer hesitating between English and Marathi he would certainly choose to write in Marathi and let the big sales and wide publicity take care of themselves (254). But one wonders why Wain should forgo the literary advantages which are his by virtue of his writing in English, for after all, by choosing English as his medium he subjects himself to more rigorous international standards of criticism than he has to face as a Marathi writer.

The conflicts and contradictions inherent in the emergence of an English literary tradition in India, however, manifest themselves in two separate parts which provide a bridge between the colonial and post-colonial periods. First, the status of Indian writing in English has remained ambiguous for more than a century because, as Meenakshi Mukherjee notes, even early-twentieth century critics “use the term ‘Anglo-Indian to cover all writing in English about India without making any distinction between Indians writing in English and Englishmen using India as material” (Twice Born Fiction, 9). Second, as a linguistic and literary medium English becomes deeply implicated in the cultural politics of nationalism. Mahatma Gandhi’s Hind Swaraj (1909), for example, formulated an anti-colonial politics principally in terms of a rejection of everything foreign, from European food, clothing, and other manufactured goods to the English language itself (Perspective on Indian Prose in English, 66). In the 1920s and the 1930s
the Gandhian-nationalist rejection of colonialism combined with socialist and communist critiques of British imperialism to create a split among Indian writers and intellectuals. One group, consisting of writers in Bengali and Hindi, protested against Indian writing in English on nationalistic grounds, mainly because it was the language of British domination. The other group, consisting of Indian writers in English continued to write in the language of the coloniser, but now used the alien medium to produce poems, novels, stories and essays along overtly indigenous lines. When independence from Britain became imminent, the first group hoped that English language itself would disappear from India along with the imperial agent. But the second group, already expanding to include the first generation of post-colonial Indian English writers, found that English was not a language it could give up easily or at will. These, then, are the polarities at the end of the colonial period which generate an extended debate after independence and lead to long-term consequences, both for Indian Writing in English and for Indian-Language Literatures.

Throughout the 1950s and the 1960s Indian-English writers and their counterparts in the Indian languages fought out a national, even nationalistic, battle in the post-colonial public sphere over the place of the English language and Indian-English Writing in the contemporary Indian literary and cultural worlds. From Datta’s viewpoint, English was not close to any of the social and regional groups or populations in India; its literary function in modern India was not similar to that of Sanskrit in ancient India; and even though it is more developed than the Indian languages, this does not mean that works written in it are automatically superior to those in the Indian languages. Moreover, Datta feels that, English in India is a dead language, especially after independence; it is used to convey information and not to explore feelings or new ideas; and so it deprives the Indian English writers’ imaginations of the stimulus of living speech. Instead, in a nightmare of
sterility, English writers produce novels feeding on past novels, poems springing from other poems.

Around the mid-1970s, however, the two polarised groups entered a fresh symbiotic relationship. Saleem Peeradina’s anthology, *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English* (1972), demonstrated the high quality of the latest Indian English verse, while Adil Jussawalla’s Anthology, *New Writing in India* (1974), using exciting new English translations, pointed to the excellence of post-independence writing in about a dozen Indian languages. Such books, along with periodicals like *Poetry India, Quest, Opinion Literary Quarterly, Dialogue India, Indian Literature, Soliloquy, Vagarta, Chandrabhaga*, and *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, generated the discursive space for a phenomenon that had been unduly marginalised in the heated debates of the preceding two or more decades: the presence of a strong bilingualism or multilingualism among modern Indian writers, and the concomitant practice of literary translation.

During the 1970s it became evident once more that several of the best post-colonial Indian-English writers, along with a number of talented writers committed to writing in their mother tongues, were first rate translators from the Indian languages into English. Among the former were A.K. Ramanujam (Tamil, Kannada), Arun Kolatkar and Dilip Chitre (Marathi), Arvind Krishna Mehotra (Hindi), Jayanta Jyotirmoy Datta (Bengali), Vinda Karandikar (Marathi), Kishori Charan Das (Oriya), and K. Ayyappa Paniker and O.V. Vijayan (Malayalam), to name a few obvious examples. These writers articulated a complex continuum between English and the various modern Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages, all of them related to each other through translation mainly into the common medium of English. This renewed symbiosis maintained the complicated tensions between English and the Indian languages, but it also helped to rehabilitate
English as a culturally necessary and historically inescapable component of the national literary system, and to domesticate it in a network of linguistic interdependences.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, the status of Indian English Writing in relation to writing in the regional languages changed drastically because of two publication events. The first was the appearance in 1976, almost simultaneously, of ten excellent books of Indian English Poetry: six from Oxford University Press (New Delhi) and four from The Clearing House, Bombay. The second event was the appearance in 1980 of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight Children*, a book that catapulted its author into the front rank of contemporary fiction writers from around the world. The literary and commercial success of these publications made the position of Indian Writing in English as a whole virtually unassailable fact: it could no longer be attacked, as it had been until the 1960s, for lack of linguistic and technical competence, literary quality, imaginative force, public impact, or cultural significance.

A new generation of Indian English writers – the second since independence – emerged in print in the mid-to-late 1980s, directly reaching large international audiences and achieving more or less instant fame. This generation includes Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, I. Allan Sealy, Shashi Tharoor, Rohinton Mistry, Agha Shahid Ali, and Sujata Bhatt, and, together with slightly older writers like Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee. Indian English texts have become an accepted part not only as Indian Literature, but also as British or Commonwealth Literature, Third World and Post-colonial Literature, and Contemporary International Literature. The success of the Indian English writers of the 1970s and the 1980s, in fact, has turned them into models for Indian writers. Thus magical realism, post-modernism, and minimalism, for example, have become commonplace in languages like Hindi, Marathi, Bengali and Urdu since the 1980s, at least partly because of their successful use a little earlier by the Indian English writers. In
the 1990s, therefore, there is rarely any questioning of the authenticity or relevance of Indian English Writing.

The cultural situation in India—especially with the numerous languages, the literatures with long histories and classical origins, and the extensive interrelations among them—makes it virtually impossible for Indian English literature to remain a homogenous or unified phenomenon. Moreover, in the last four or five decades, Indian Writing in English has changed so rapidly and in such unexpected ways that it cannot manifest or represent either nationalistic pride or post-colonial resistance unequivocally. In fact, throughout the post-independence period, there is a complexity interconnected yet continuously changing set of attitudes in the literature toward nation, national identity, nationalism, colonialism, post-colonialism, anti-colonialism, resistance, subversion and conservation.

Contemporary Indian culture is extremely complex and fascinating on account of the peculiar amalgam of tradition and modernity as well as multiplicity of subcultures and languages. The literary works, either in the regional languages or in English, are a significant means of communicating the vast variety and diversity of such a culture. While the treasures of regional literatures remain largely hidden from the sight of even Indians belonging to diverse regions, Indian English Literature is somewhat limited in scope, dealing with certain common cultural traits. Indian language writers as well as English writers have yet to probe deeper into the submerged layers of their own cultures.

This state of the Indian society may persist even today, but there is no cause for alarm since there are checks and balances inherent in the Indian system. The Indian multiculturalism should not be viewed in the narrow perspective. The common factors of Indianness not withstanding each of the subcultures presents a unique value system. It is essential to be aware of the multiple subcultures so that one feels reassured of the riches
of Indian life. As a vibrant society, India has undergone great changes over the centuries. But the uniqueness of Indian culture lies in its flexibility, the overall structure remaining ever strong, despite upheavals.

On account of the complex pattern of Indian life its various geographical areas, it is true that the overall temperate climate of the country has given the Indians an apparently common outlook and temperament moulding the thought and action. The intellectual and cultural movements in India were inspired by religious motives, but the impact of Western culture on the educated class has served as a unifying factor. This is all the more on account of the absence of a link language. English language and Westernised life style have indeed served as a common bond among the Indian elitist circles. On account of economic competition and Westernisation, the joint family systems in India are breaking up and the system of a hierarchically graded society remains ever strong.

Indian culture does not consist of only maharajahs, elephants, and snake charmers on the social level, and Maya, Karma and Advaita on the spiritual. In the contemporary situation, it has changed immensely. While the ancient Indian tradition is a source of great strength for the Indian mind, it is the ever-changing contemporary hi-tech culture that contributes to the advancement of the society. The simultaneous presence of tradition and modernity makes Indian culture unique today. But we should also be aware of the hypocrisy and double standard that have characterised the modern educated elite, largely the negative affect of Westernisation which is perhaps a sort of biculturation.

The cultural variation is present in India too. While multiple religions exist, often culture is more palpable in the sub-regional cultures even within the individual linguistic groups in several states of the country. But all these multicultural variations have only contributed to the sickness and colour of Indian culture. The sub-cultural groups are sometimes called deviant cultural groups.
On account of the widespread higher technology, this kind of mass culture is conspicuous in Indian society too. Another significant aspect of the contemporary Indian culture is the presence of a deviant cultural group called the elite. The educated elite constituting a minority are distinct in addition to the majority poor as well as the lesser numbers of the middle and lower middle classes.

This limited and stereo-typed presentation of Indian culture is conspicuous in Indian English Literature. Even though the novelists and poets writing in English belong to various cultural groups and inspite of certain variations of settings, they generally tend to present the same stereo-typed themes like the East-West encounter, the rural-urban conflict, and Vedantic mysticism. Whether on account of a foreign medium of expression or Westernisation on the part of the Indian English writers there is a lack of total involvement with the Indian situation, and the imaginative writings sound inadequate in representing the multi-faceted Indian culture.

Creative writing in Indian languages is extremely vast and complex, reflecting not only the Indian culture in its broad features, but also the several regional and sub-regional aspects. However while popular and cheap writings proliferate, one feels that something more serious can still be said in Indian writing to bring out the cultural variety. Inspite of the enormity of the literature in Indian languages, it is difficult to have access to the writings in languages other than one’s own. Authentic translations of regional fiction and poetry into English may help us appreciate the other Indian subcultures. The rituals, folklore and social customs of one region vastly differ from those of the others. But this richness of the Indian cultural tapestry is not known even to the majority of Indians, not to speak of the foreigners.

In a recent article, Reed Way Dasenbrock uses the term “multicultural literature” to include “both works that are explicitly about multicultural societies and those that are
implicitly multicultural in the sense of insuumbing readers from other cultures inside their own textual dynamics” (Intelligibility and Meaning fullness in Multicultural Literature in English, 10). Thus the literature like the Indian English not only presents the multiple Indian cultural scenes but also poses problems of reader-response for those belonging to the other cultures, in general. The Indian multiculturalism refers to the multistate, multicommunal, multilingual Indian nation as a whole. Multiculturalism also means the complexity, if not identity, in Indian individuals, prevalent among English-users as well as among other bilinguals and multilinguals. However, the most isolated mono-cultured village out of touch with the modern society presents an interesting case study. Indian English writers, novelists as well as poets, generally, tend to be ironic in presenting such a mono-culture Indian villager, may be on account of their distance from him resulting from their own pseudo-western urban upbringing. Total involvement on the part of the writer and sympathetic rendering of the typically Indian cultural or sub cultural scene is more conspicuous in literatures written in Indian languages.

Indian Writing in English is projected in the world as the representative literary activity of the subcontinent to be received as the authentic voice of the former colonised people. Most scholars engaged in theorising the uniqueness of similar literatures produced in other former colonies seem to be unaware of the fact that in India the indigenous languages and literatures always represented this ‘authentic’ voice and it is the so-called decolonisation that has elevated the once-imperial and alien to the national status.

The relation between the small world of a novel and the large world, from which it draws its sustenance, is essentially complicated. Although the novel is a complex and self-contained literary form, Indian English novelists have taken up the challenge with commendable competence and resourcefullness. The Indian novel in English seems to have grown into the most authentic writing of the urbanised and globalised India of the
late nineties where any attempt of the individual to hold to an unsullied native identity is becoming impossible.

Thus, it could be concluded that Indian Literature in English began as an interesting byproduct of an eventful encounter in the eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India. Indian Literature in English has acquired a new identity as much identity as American and Austrian Literature have acquired, which of course is quite distinct from Indian English. The efforts by writers like Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand in Indianising English language cannot be ignored though it is very difficult to express the Indian sensibility in English.

Upamanyu Chatterjee belongs to this authentic phase. He is one of the most representative writers of urban novels. He comes under post-colonial writers and there is also concern for the rediscovery of one’s cultural roots and the past and to come to terms with the post-colonial status. His protagonists suffer being caught under two cultural identities and live with an assumption of alienated beings. In the present study, the investigator describes how the protagonists react to the situations they face and analyses why the protagonists feel so. In the next chapter, the investigator discusses Upamanyu Chatterjee and his works under the title, “Upamanyu Chatterjee: A Critique of his Works”.