Chapter I

INTRODUCTION
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The British arrived in India almost as an afterthought founded by Royal Charte in 1600, as the East India Company had its primary aim to share of the valuable spice trade with Indonesia. Finding the Dutch firmly in control, it turned its attention to a secondary market—India.

The British empire encompassed nearly a quarter of the earth’s land mass and a quarter of its population of all its possessions and none was more precious than India, the ‘jewel in the crown’ of Victoria’s empire. Other possessions may have been larger or more profitable but with none of them was there the same deep relationship as that which existed between Britain and India, a relationship whose essence was so perfectly captured by James Morris.

India was different from the rest of the British empire so long that it had become part of the national consciousness, and so immense that it really formed, with Britain itself, the second focus of a dual power. If much of the empire was a blank in British minds, India meant something to everybody, from the Queen herself with her Hindu menservants to the humblest family whose ne’er-do-well brother, long before, had sailed away to lose himself in the barracks of Cawnpore.

India appealed to the British love of pageantry and fairy-tale, and to most seemed not merely interwoven, but in dissoluble. India was the brightest gem, the Raj, part of the order of things. To the people of the drizzly north, the possession of such a country was like some marvel in the house, a caged phoenix perhaps, or the portrait of some fabulously endowed relative.

This unique relationship found expression in a large body of English literature, so large as to constitute a genre in itself, this body of literature has been almost totally ignored by scholars. Perhaps this has been due to a failure to recognize the relationship noted above or perhaps it may be attributable to a narrow and exclusive interpretation of what is meant of ‘English Literature’.

Whatever be the case, any attempt to introduce the literature of British India demands at least some familiarity on the part of the reader with the subject matter of the genre of the thousands of fictional books written about India, as the overwhelming
majority deal with the interaction between the small British community in India and the march of historical events in the sub-continent.

The following introduction to the literature of the British Raj is, therefore, preaced by two summaries of the historical and social backgrounds to nearly three centuries of British involvement in India.

The British were not the first Europeans to reach India. In the 4th century BC the conquering armies of Alexander the Great penetrated deep into Punjab and opened up trade routes that lasted for over 800 years. The fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Arabic power in the middle east virtually cut off western Europe from India, and it was not until the 16th century that Portuguese explorers began to re-establish contact.

With their superior maritime technology and proselytizing fervour, the Portuguese soon carved out a large empire for themselves in the Indian ocean. In 1580 Portugal was annexed to Spain and in 1588 the Spanish Armada was routed by the British navy. The collapse of the Portuguese Empire opened up the way for other European nations to sail into the Indian ocean in search of trade and profit. To enter the lucrative Indonesian spice trade, the East India Company turned to India, where the Mughal Empire was only too happy to have the British rid it of the last unwelcome vestiges of Portuguese naval power. In return the British were given trading rights and allowed to establish factories.

“In the 17th century there was slow but steady consolidation. France and other European countries also obtained similar land and trading rights, but the sheer size of the market and the relatively small scale of the enterprises, did not lead to any real competition.”\(^{(1)}\)

In 1742 England and France found themselves at war with each other, and this purely European conflict sparked a period of parallel military and political confrontation in India. The situation was dramatically altered by the war of the Austrian succession. Both the sides made full use of political intrigue and mechanization, entering into fragile alliances with local Indian rulers, backing rival claimants to vacant thrones, and Particularly manipulating the confused domestic Indian situation of the time to their own advantage. After a period of initial setbacks the military genius of Robert Clive turned the tide in favour of the British, and by 1761 the French presence had been totally neutralized.
The most important gain of this period of Anglo-French conflict was the establishment of undisputed British power in Bengal. Concerned only with the preservation of their trading post in Calcutta, the British successfully countered an armed attempt to oust them. In so doing, they found themselves the de facto rulers of a vast province many times the size of England.

The ultimate aim of the East Indian Company, however, trade and profit was not a territorial expansion. Using its position of military superiority, the company wrested numerous commercial concessions from the local rulers.

The most important of these was a total exemption from the tax levied on private trade by the members of the company. With this concession, the way was opened up for the amassing of huge private fortunes. The gross excesses of the next twenty years prompted the passage of William Pitt’s India Act of 1784, which set up dual control of Commerce and administration. Ultimate political power was taken from the hands of the East India Company, and the British government accepted a share of responsibility for its involvement in India.

The new century saw further changes in the pattern of British expansion in India. Hitherto, all political and economic activity had been motivated by purely mercenary considerations, but gradually there emerged a hesitant awareness of a new role: that of Connecting the many kingdoms of the fragmented Mughal Empire into a single, peaceful whole, and bringing western civilization to this vast sub-continent.

The great land settlements surveyed and apportioned land rights, and fixed the taxes due from each holding. For the first time in Indian history, the historical claims of Indian peasants to their own land were recognized in law, and an end was put to the corruption of the old tax-gathering systems.

Unfortunately for the peasants, most of the tax assessments were unrealistically high, and wholesale forfeiture of land led top for the creation of a new wealthy Indian land-owning class. By the middle of the 19th century many of these goals had been achieved. Almost all of India was either under direct British control, or under the rule of pliable native kings rendered weak the British monopoly of foreign affairs and military power.

In 1857 the apparent tranquility of the Indian sub-continent was shattered by the revolt of a handful of Indian soldiers in Meerut. The revolt quickly spread to Delhi, where the renegade soldiers proclaimed the decrepit Mughal Emperor as their leader. The Indian Mutiny lasted for only a few months. The last pockets of resistance
were finally put down in 1859 but not before two new names had been etched irrevocably on the psyche of the British nation: Lucknow and Cawnpore, the first a synonym for British courage, and the second the apostate of Indian perfidy.

Even today, there is disagreement on the scale and significance of the revolt. The causes of the Mutiny will, perhaps, remain forever a matter of controversy and conjecture. The effect of the Mutiny was observed on all subsequent relations between Indians and Englishmen. Even whilst the British army was exacting a bloody tool of reprisals in India as the government in London was hastily pushing through measures to ensure that such a revolt should never take place again. The government of Indian Act of 1858 transferred the remnants of the power of the East India Company to the crown, and in the same year a royal proclamation changed the direction of British policy in India. Consequently, there was no more annexation of Indian kingdoms, no more westernization of Indian society or culture.

The initial anger of the British in India was replaced with distrust and disinterest and the small Anglo-Indian community turned in upon itself. The relative stability and steady economic progress of the latter half of the century were marred by paranoid fears of Russian incursions in the north, and consequent involvement in the humiliating debacle of the second Afghan war. The occasional efforts of white hall liberals to grant Indians a measure of self determination in the affairs of their own country were greeted with fierce local antagonism.

The Ilbert Bill of 1883, which was to have ended discrimination in the legal system, and given Indian judges the power to try Europeans, was totally emasculated as a result of the violent outcry from the white community. The tide of history was turning however, and the attempt to partition Bengal in 1905 led to such an upsurge of organized Indian protest that the measure was finally revoked in 1911. The Bengal crisis reflected the new political reality of India: the triangular conflict of interest between the British administration on the one hand, and the emerging Hindu Congress and Muslim League on the other.

The first world war found Indians shelving their differences and animosities, and joining whole heartedly in the war effort. Expectations that their sacrifices would bring the reward of limited independence from a grateful crown were dashed, however, when the Rowalt Acts of 1919 extended existing emergency war-time power. The Government of India Act of December 1919 was an attempt to pacify the outrage that ensued but it did not come soon enough to avert the Amritsar Massacre.
As Gandhi’s campaigns of civil disobedience gained impetus, the British began to make reluctant concessions, allowing Indians to occupy a limited number of administrative posts, and espousing a policy of dual government. This policy of ‘dyarchy’ culminated in the Government of Indian Act of 1935, which offered a new Constitution and a wide Franchise. Members of both the Hindu Congress and the Muslim League were divided as to whether to co-operate or not, but finally the decision was made to put up candidates in the first elections to be held. Under the new constitution of the 1,585 seats contested, Congress won 716 seats and absolute majority in four states, whilst the league garnered 109 seats in Muslim-dominated areas. Thus was born the first elected Indian Congress and a brief period of uneasy co-operation with the British rulers began.

The second World War intervened and altered the course of modern Indian history. The British unilaterally declared India at war, without taking the trouble to consult congress on its opinion in the matter. After some heart searching indecision, Congress ministers resigned en masse and refused to co-operate with the British. As the Japanese advanced ever closer, Gandhi called upon the British to ‘Quit India’ and let the Indians come to a non-violent peace settlement with the Japanese. Gandhi’s expectations of a Japanese victory and the dawn of a new era in Asia were shared by members of the Indian National Army, and a small body of Indian prisoners-of-war recruited by Subhash Chandra Bose and persuaded by him that the future of an independent Indian lay in military co-operation with the Japanese.

The INA was soon disillusioned and abandoned by the Japanese as it was virtually annihilated at the battle of Imphal. The Japanese advance on India was checked and Congress hopes for a speedy British withdrawal from India again seemed to recede. “The end of the war and the election of a new labour government in Britain, however, produced a new political climate and the rush to independence began. Attempts to hand over the reins of power to a united and peaceful Indian proved fruitless and on the 15th of August 1947 the two new states of India and Pakistan were born.”

Literature in India, as any textbook history of Indian culture would tell us, is as old as its painting or its sculpture, perhaps a little less older than its community life. Sustained scholarly pursuit of the history of this literature, however, is of fairly recent origin and would not go back beyond the dawn of the 19th century. This indeed is the moment of the constitution of Indian literature as theoretical category.
certainly is not to deny the self-knowledge of the identity of the several regional literatures in India by regional language scholars in the past, though historiographic accounts of these literatures too do not go far back beyond the early 19th century.

In fact the first histories of most regional languages too get written only during this time. It is around this time, again, that Indian literature gets constituted as a self-validating body of knowledge. It has been pointed out that the first scholar to use this term was not an Indian, nor were Indian scholars particularly interested in tapping the unifying potential of the term in the 19th century. It was the German romantic theorist Wilhelm Von Schlegal, who in 1823 used it synonymously with Sanskrit literature.

Indian English Literature (IEL) has a relatively recent history as it is only one and a half centuries old. Spoken Indian English is often the butt of jokes by ‘educated’ British-American, and Indian-English-speakers. There is no dearth of jokes among Indians ‘riffing’ the pronunciation and idiomatic inconsistencies of Indian English.

Indian English literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian diaspora, especially people like Salman Rushdie who were born in India.

As a category, this production comes under the broader realm of post colonial literature- the production from previously colonized countries such as India. The first book written by an Indian in English was by Sake Dean Mahomet, entitled Travels of Dean Mahomet; published in 1793 in England. In it’s early stages it was influenced by the western art form of the novel.

Early Indian writers used English unadulterated by Indian words to convey an experience which was essentially Indian. Raja Rao’s ‘Kanthapura’ is Indian in terms of its story telling qualities. Rabindranath Tagore wrote in Bengali and English and was responsible for the translations of his own work into English Nirad C. Choudhari, a writer of non-fiction, is best known for his ‘The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian’ in which he related his life experiences and influences. He was a self-confessed Anglophile. P.Lal, a poet translator, publisher and essayist, is the epitome of the literature, and besides translating the entire Mahabharata into English, has written many essays in defence of Indian literature in English.

However, in spite of banter regarding colloquial English, India has produced many notable writers in the English language, including Sri Aurobindo, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohandas Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, the famous
novelist R.K. Narayan, Ruskin Bond and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. More contemporary Indians, such as Vikram Seth and Salman Rushdie are acknowledged masters of English literary style. “Indian-English writers and English writers of Indian origin—notably Booker Prize winners Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy; and Kiran Desai, Booker Prize shortlisted author Rohinton Mistry; Pulitzer prize winner Jhumpa Lahiri and Nobel Prize Winner V.S. Naipaul – have made creative use of more stereotypical Indian English through the characters in their works.”

A much overlooked category of Indian writing in English is poetry. Rabindranath Tagore wrote in Bengali and English and was responsible for the translations of his own work into English. Other early notable poets in English include Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Sarojini Naidu and her brother Harendranath Chattopadhyaya.

Indians began to use English for creative expression much before Macaulay’s Minutes and the implementation of his policy on English education. For example, Henry Derozio’s volume of poems was published in 1823, and Kashiprasad Ghose published his volume of poetry entitled The Shair and the other poems in 1830. These two eminent Indians may not be great as poets, their work is largely imitative of such English poets as Scott and Byron, but their historical importance is great, for they belong to that small group of Indians who wrote in English much before Macaulay.

Indian English Poetry in the nineteen sixties and there after registered a change both in its concerns for themes and techniques. Generally one comes across two kinds of poetry; ‘Direct poetry’ in which the meaning is explicitly stated, and ‘oblique poetry’ in which the usual approach is to juxtapose images and symbols so that the reader may draw the implicit connections for himself as in the works of the poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Jayanta Mahapatra, A.K.Ramanujan, R.Parthasarathy, Shiv K. Kumar, Keki N.Daruwalla, O.P. Bhatnagar, A.K. Mehrotra, Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Gauri Pant, Lila Ray, Monika Varma, Arun Kolatkar, Gieve Patel and Margaret Chatterjee.

The techniques adopted in Indian English poetry before 1960 were least imitative and derivative. That was in a way, a historical, imperative. Paradoxically enough more and more Indians began writing poetry in English freely and with some confidence only after they got rid of the native speakers of English. The new mind required the new voice which was discovered by the poet’s genius for intimately registering the idiom of his own world. In post 1960’s one notices the emergence of
new voices slowly making themselves heard as the important poets try to cast off
derivative techniques and break away from forms which are beginning to stifle their
creative freedom in a damaging way. Poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Jayanta Mahapatra,
A.K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarthy, Shiv K. Kumar, Keki N. Daruwalla, O.P. Bhatnagar,
Arun Kolatkar, Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Gauri Pant, Lila Ray, Monika Varma
and Margaret Chatterjee not only project new things but present it in a manner quite
different from their predecessors.

These poets have brought innovations in form, imagery, style, structure and
employed in their poetry a new kind of diction akin to colloquial language and
rhythm. These poets, as Professor William Walsh remarked elsewhere, “follow the
contours of a speech which is both contemporary and distinctively Indian”(4). The
informal, assertive and conversational tone marks a definite departure from the past
and a new beginning in the present. Some of the poets mentioned above are very
near to be called confessional poets, though the confessional tone is more a strategy than a
reality.

Indians have developed a kind of mannerism in spoken form and the post-
1960 Indian poets in English try to approximate to this speech rhythm in their poetry.
These poets follow the contours of speech and try to re-create a just and lively
presentation of Indian character and situation in their poetry. The purpose behind
employing such a technique is to catch the spirit of the personages in actual form so
that they can achieve the reader’s total participation. This technique also aims at
creating a new Indian English idiom. Nissim Ezekiel is the first poet to undertake
such a task.

In post 1960, the use of language by the Indian English poets is a marked
feature of their new technique. Kamala Das’ elliptical style, the sonorous style of
O.P. Bhatnagar, R. Parthasarathy and A.K. Ramanujan, the vigorous and deep engaging
style of Nissim Ezekiel, Jayanta Mahapatra and Keki N. Daruwalla, the emotive style
of Gauri Deshpande, Gauri Pant, Lila Ray and Monika Varma, the impressionistic
style of Shiv K. Kumar (particularly his use of very learned language in the manner of
English metaphysical poets) are distinctive features of their individual poetic
techniques. But very few of them are obsessed with the perfection of language. Shiv
K. Kumar’s use of language bears the stamp of his professional style and
learning. “Only A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy are concerned with the
perfection of language. Ezekiel and to some extent Daruwalla strive to approximate
the language in its spoken form. Ezekiel, moreover believes in revising a poem endlelstly till it achieves a kind of perfection, he desires.\(^{(5)}\) Other poets, particularly women poets seem to believe in Kamla Das’s diction:

Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak
Becomes mine, it’s distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
Indian, funny perhaps, but is honest,
It is as human as I am human, don’t you see)

(‘An Introduction’)

There seems to be an effort in the direction of developing their technique where they learn with some difficulty, to abandon styles inherited from others and to create their own styles. Some poets do try to write in traditional forms.

R.Parthasarathy seems to be determined to stick to his triplet stanza form. “The contention is that most of them are uncomfortable with regular metre and rhyme. Thus rigid and inflexible lest that should dominate and distort their context. These poet seems to say things in the most convincing manner in free verse and try to communicate their experiences by the flexibility of syntax and new uses of language. This gives rise to the hope of the creation of a new Indian English idiom.”\(^{(6)}\)

In modern times, Indian poetry in English was typified by two very different poets. Dom Moraes, Winner of the Hawthornden prize at the precocious age of 19 for his first book of poems “A Beginning” went on to occupy a pre-eminent position among Indian poet writing in English. Nissim Ezekiel, who came from India’s tiny Jewish community, created a voice and place for Indian poets writing in English and championed their work.

Their contemporaries in English poetry in India were Arvind Mehrotra, Jayanta Mahapatra, Gieve Patel, A.K.Ramanujan, Parthasarathy, Keki N. Daruwalla, Adil Jussawala, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Eunice De Souza, Kersi Katrak and Kamala Das among several others.

A generation of exiles also sprang from the Indian diaspora. Among these are names like Agha Shahid Ali, Sujata Bhatt, Melanie, Silgardo and Vikram Seth.

The mid-20th century saw the emergence of poets such as Nissim Ezekiel (The Unfurnished Man) P.Lal, A.K.Ramanujan (The Striders, Relations, Second Sight, Selected poems), Don Moraes (A Beginning), Keki Daruwalla, Geive Patel, Eunice
De Souza, Adil Jussawala, Kamala Das, Arun Kolatkar and R.Parthasarathy, who were heavily influenced literary movements, taking place in the west such as symbolism, surrealism, Existentialism Absurdism and Confessional poetry. These authors, used Indian phrases alongside English words and tried to reflect a blend of the Indian and the western cultures.

In poetry we have had a long tradition from Henry Derozio in 1820s to Aurobindo and Tagore in the mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century and after the Independence starts what we can call the age of Ezekiel. Similarly, Indian English fiction which supposedly begins in 1794 with a travelogue called Travels with Mahamood has by now made its mark on the international scene; the leading novelists of the world are either Indian or of Indian origin like V.S.Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy and many others. The poverty of the Indian languages in the field of drama is equally marked. There were translations of a number of English dramatists including Shakespeare into regional languages, and these translations stimulated the growth to the early Indian dramatists. The Indian drama, like the novel, and the short story, was the result of the impact of English studies.

The first Indian play in English ‘The Persecuted’ was written in 1832. But the solid contribution to Indian drama in English upto date is that of Tagore and Shri Aurobindo Ghosh. Drama presents fiction or fact in a form that could be acted before an audience. A Drama has a plot, characters, dialogue, an atmosphere, and an outlook on life much as a novel has, but it is as a rule intended to be performed in public, not read in private. Its full qualities are only revealed in presentation on the stage. A novel is self-contained. It can be enjoyed without recourse to any external accessory. It carries all its meaning within itself. So do all other forms of literature, both those that are subjective and those that have a story to tell like the epic and the ballad. The Drama alone “is a composite art, in which the author, the actor and the stage manager all combine to produce the total effect.” The management of the material of drama is, consequently, different from that of the novel. While the latter can be as long as the author pleases, a play must deliver its whole message within a very few hours. For that purpose it has to exercise great economy in the handling of the plot and the delineation of character, in both of which all superfluous detail must be omitted. Every detail must bring together the effect that is intended. The dramatist works within very strict limits. The novelist labours under no such handicap. He can be long-winded or
brief, minute or general, as he thinks fit, provided he can be sure of holding the attention of his reader.

The dramatist, however, has to work with a number of collaborators, all of whom have to be taken into account; the audience, the actors the producer, the scene-painter, the dressmaker, the musician, the electrician and many others. He has to consider costs and mechanical and physical limitations. To take but one instance, he cannot make one role unduly long, for that would put an undue strain on a single actor, night after night, and would be monotonous for the audience. His play, in short, will not be likely to be produced unless it conforms to a great many material requirements which the novelist is free to ignore. “It has often been said that when a novel is written, it is finished, but when a Drama has been written, the worst difficulties still lie ahead.”(7)

Drama in Indian English also began in the 19th century. M.K. Naik informs us that Drama in Indian English really begins with Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s play “Is This civilization” (1871) although the first play in Indian English is by Krishnadev Banerjee in 1831 titled ‘The Persecuted’. After that there is along list of plays according to one estimate there are as many as six hundred plays in Indian English today yet the notable names after Dutt are Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo. A playwright of the Bengal Renaissance is Ramkinoo Dutt with his Manipur Tragedy, (1893).

Thus Drama like poetry and fiction has a long history no doubt, and yet it remains sadly true that it has not made its presence felt even on the national scene. It is necessary to enquire into the factors responsible for this sorry state of affairs.

The first and foremost is the fact that those who wrote plays also happened to be poets. For instance Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Tagore and Aurobindo are known better for their poetry than plays. The result is something very close to what happened with the plays of the romantic poets. The plays of Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron and Keats suffer from a lack of stage-worthiness in spite of their being great poetry. In fact the works like Prometheus Unbound, The Cenci, Mustapha, Otho the Great are more poetic than dramatic.

In the case of the plays of Indian English poet much the same situation prevails for instance Tagore brought in his place for traditions of Bengali folk art known as Jatra blending it with the lyricism of the classical Sanskrit Drama and adapting them to the Western dramatic concepts and techniques.
Aurobindo’s plays like *Perseus the Deliverer* and *vasavdatta* are competent imitations of the Elizabethan verse plays. Naturally what is missing from these exercises is the dramatic element. And hence they suffer the same faith as that of the romantic closet Drama.

The other reason may be traced to the problems that Indian English writers generally face: the desire for verisimilitude. As can be seen the early dramatists depended heavily on Indian mythology and history.

Once drama is seen as an imitation of life writers have all along been a bit sceptical about using English as the medium of dialogue. The fear of sounding artificial might have led the dramatists to turn to poetic drama when it was practically dead in England. Dr. Paul Verghese in his seminal book ‘Problems of the Indian Writer in English’ (1968) mentions dialogue as a major obstacle. Whereas novelist like Mulk Raj Anand devised their own strategy in handling the problem and got over it. Dramatists however still seem to fight shy of the medium they have chosen. This might perhaps explain why there is such a dearth of plays originally written in English and why Indian English drama has failed to evolve an idiom of its own. As a result when we speak of Indian English Drama today, we have to depend heavily upon the translations of plays from regional languages. In short, Indian English Drama is not original but regional. The fear of sounding artificial and unrealistic still seems to possess our writers. For they seem to follow the well trodden path of using myth and history to comment upon our socio-political life. Girish Karnad one of our eminent playwrights follows the path shown by Kaliasam many years ago. Almost all his plays use myth and history much in the same way as Kaliasam’s before him. Whatever Indian English Drama we find is in translations and hence the socio realism is there because the plays were written in regional languages.

The twenties and thirties of the 20th century are in a way a borderline in this development of Indian English literature. This was the time of the origin of its artistic prose. The 19th century flooded Indian with a torrent of English books. But time gradually separated grain from weed. Out of a great numbers of English authors, the most favourite of the Indian intelligents remained Shakespeare, Swift, Fielding, Smollett, Goldsmith, Scott, Dickens, Bronte sisters, Jane Austen, Thackeray, Wilde, Romantic poets and some others.

The ‘novel’ as a literary phenomenon is new to India. Epics, lyrics, dramas, short stories and fables have their respectable ancestries, going back by several
centuries, but it is only during a period of little more than a century that the novel—the long sustained piece of prose fiction—has occurred and taken root in India. One might, of course, protest and say that Sanskrit works like Bana’s Kadambar and Subhandhu’s Vasavadatta are also novels, but the description would not really fit; and, besides these were isolated marvels.

For the novel, properly so called, we have to wait till the latter half of the nineteenth century when the western impact on India’s cultural front had resulted, among other things, in the development of formal written prose in the regional languages, first as a functional and presently as an artistic, medium. With the help of Indian scholars, Christian missionaries had translated the Bible into the living languages of India and the prose medium thus brought into currency came handy for official use, for petitions, records, journalism, and for the translation of Sanskrit classics into the spoken languages of the people. “Novels have been, and are being published in a dozen Indian languages, and also in English; and the reciprocal influence between the novels in English and the novel in the regional languages has been rather more intimate and purposive than such influence in the fields of poetry or drama. And this has, of course, been facilitated by the comparative ease with which a novel can be translated from one to another of the many languages current in the country.”

The first direct reaction of the ‘writer’ readers to this literature, built on different ideological-aesthetical origins, was displayed very soon and in an altogether unique form. The characters of the English novels, having obtained Indian names, continued to exist in India. The themes of plays and novels, and the types of personages were transplanted, like flowers, from the European conservatories to the Indian soil, and the seedlings got acclimatized.

For example, a Bengali novel, The General’s Daughter by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya was nothing but a paraphrasing of Walter Scott’s Ivanhoe, and the theme of Shakespearean play, The Tempest, was employed by Kishorilal Goswami of Shakespeare’s plays and also those of Molliere and Hugo by the Marathi writer Apte are well-known.

The Indian novel in English did not exercise the jokes of the swindlers; and it did not impress the reader by the zig-zags of successes in the picaresque novel. For as a genre it was already established during the thirties of the 20th century, and was immediately confronted by complicated problems to reproduce life objectively to
portray reality in the context of certain historical period, and reveal the psychology of human personality. A solution to these problems lay on the shoulders of eminent novelists like M.R. Anand, R.K. Narayan and others and their contribution was highly appreciated by critics.

The development of the English language novel in India was slow, as it was late, as though it still seemed to remember its modest birth by way of Bankim Chandra Chatopadhyaya’s unfortunate Rajmohan’s Wife (1864) and Toru Dutt’s Sentimental Bianca (1878). These experiments seemed to be unsuccessful and evoked only an unfavourable reaction.

After the first experiments came in a pause for a quarter of century. It was only in the beginning of the 20th century that the Indian novel in English once again hesitatingly declared about its own existence. This time the author was not from Bengal but from Bombay-Nagesh Vishwanath Pai, well known as the author of a humorous book, stray sketches in Chakmakpore and a poem, “The Angel of Misfortune” taking the reader back to the times of the reign of king Vikramaditya.

“Nagesh, Vishwanath Pai wrote two novels : ‘Padmini (1903)’ and ‘The Dance of Death (1912)’: but neither of these established itself. We could also mention some other Indian novels in English such as Kamala, a story of Hindu Life by Krupalai Satthianandhan (1894); The Prince of Destiny by Sarath Kumar Ghosh (1909); Hindupore, a peep behind the Indian Unrest by S.N. Mitra (1909); The Dive for Death and Indian Romance by T.Rama Krishnan (1911); The Love of Kusuma, an Eastern Love, by Bal Krishna (1910). But they were not of the high order either.”

“--------- good writers are, so to speak mediumistic to the deeper stirrings of life of their time while they are still unknown to, or at any rate unsuspected by the public, politicians and current received opinion--------- contemporary novels are the mirror of the age, but a very special kind of mirror, a mirror that reflects not merely the external features of the age but also its inner face, its nervous system, coursing of its blood and the unconscious promptings and conflicts which sway it.”

-Walter Allen

Indo-Anglian fictions, particularly the fiction of the thirties, are immensely influenced by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, who fought for the cause of the under-privileged classes, the have-nots and the downtrodden, the marginalized and the defenseless.
Apart from many other things, these writers have mirrored the various incidents and happenings of the life and activities of Mahatma Gandhi in particular and the contemporary social and political, economic and religious upheavals in general.

But their works, as can be seen, are not simply the collection of historical facts or events; they are highly literary saturated with poetic grandeur and artistic craftsmanship. “Among the works dealing with the theme of either Gandhi or the contemporary freedom struggle are Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935), Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938), K.S. Venkatramani’s *Kandan the Patriot* (1932), D.F. Karaka’s *We never Die* (1944), Amir Ali’s *Conflict* (1947), Venu Chitali’s *In Transit* (1950), K.A. Abbas’s *Inquailab* (1955), R.K. Narayan’s *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1956), Nayantara Sahgal’s *A time to be Happy* (1955) and K. Nagarajan’s *Chronicles of Kedaram* (1961).”¹¹

One of the prime duties of a great writer is to represent the society and its various influences in his art. His work may be morbidly called *fin de siecle* if it fails to portray the spirit of the age. In other words, literature and society are interwoven both internally and externally; they are the two sides of the same coin. Because the writer is the part and parcel of society. So, he is bound to reflect the zeitgeist or the spirit of the age. W.H. Hudson rightly holds the view: “Literature is the vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have gone experienced of it, what they have through and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is, thus, fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language ——– Man as we are often reminded, is a social animal; and as he is thus by the actual constitutional of his nature unable to keep his experiences, observations, ideas, emotions, fancies, to himself, but is on the contrary under stress of a constant desire to impart them to those about him.”¹²

And exactly this is what the novelist of the Gandhian Era did in their respective works mentioned above. A close study of their concerned works clearly reveal the fact that though they beautifully portray the contemporary movements, they are never devoid of the aesthetic functions of a great work of art. As a matter of fact, however rich and honest description of an event may be it has no permanent significance in a piece of work of art unless it is woven into the fabric of art.

One of the salient features of Gandhian literature is the simplicity and clarity of language as Mahatma Gandhi strongly believed in the dictum — ‘simple living and high thinking’. Perhaps this is why the writers of this age discarded ornateness,
artificiality, pedantry and laborious artistry in their language both in English and in the vernaculars. In theme, the novelists preferred the village to the city, the poor to the rich, the cultural heritage of the village to the urban luxury and sophistication. Almost all the protagonists of these novels come from the lower class of society—a society afflicted with British imperialism, economic exploitation, racial discrimination, religious conflicts and above all political crisis. English has been adopted in India as a language of education and literary expression besides being an important medium of communication amongst the people of various regions. The beginning of Indian literature in English is traced to the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, by which time English education was more or less firmly established in the three major centers of British power in India—Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

Ram Mohan Roy was followed in the early 19th century in Bengal by the poets Henry Derozio and Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Dutt started out writing epic verse in English, but returned to his native Bengali later in life. Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1833), a social reformist from Bengal who fought for widow remarriage and voting rights for women, was the pioneer of Indian writing in English. Roy insisted that for India to be included among the world’s nations, education in English was essential. He, therefore, campaigned for introduction of scientific education in India through the English medium.

The poems of Toru Dutt (1855-1876), who died at a tender age of 21. The daughter of Govind Chandra Dutta, who himself wrote tasteful English verse, and related to Sasi Chandra of the same family, a voluminous writer of English, she was in close contact with English or continental culture throughout most of her short life. She wrote a novel in French, which was published posthumously in Paris. “Her English poetry displayed real creative and imaginative power and almost faultless technical skill. In her English translations (A Sheaf Gleaned in French fields) and her Ancient Ballads and legends of Hindustan, she so nearly achieved a striking success as to make one regret that our language is essentially unsuited to imagery and ornament which form part of the natural texture of the oriental mind.”

Meantime her unfinished English novel, Bianca, or The Young Spanish Maiden appeared in the Bengal Magazine (January-April 1878) and her French novel, Le Journal de Mademoiselle d’Arvers had been issued in Paris in 1879 and had been hailed as “an extraordinary feat, without precedent” and compared to the Vathek of Beckford.
Her early death in 1877 at the age of 21 was a loss both to her own and to our race, but her life and literary achievements were an earnest of the more remarkable results which were likely to ensure, and are ensuing, from the fusing of western and eastern culture. The educational policy of the government of India is destined, given continuity of development, to react upon English literature in a manner realized even now by but a few, and certainly undreamt of by those who entered upon it. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838–94).

Despite the spread of the knowledge of English among the educated classes of India, Indians wrote comparatively little that can be regarded as permanent additions to English literature. The adoption of English as the language of the universities had the altogether unexpected, though in every way desirable result of revivifying the vernaculars. Stimulated by English literature and English knowledge, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the first graduate of Calcutta University, created Bengali fiction.

Under the influence of the works of Scott, he wrote successful historical novels, and followed these with novels of Indian social life. Bankim, undoubtedly was the first creative genius who sprang from the Indian renaissance brought about in the nineteenth century by the introduction of English education. But he deliberately turned his face away from all attempts to gain a reputation as an English writer.

The English classics were models for the Indians writing in English, and their works were moulded closely on these masters. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee became the first Indian writer of novel in English. His first published effort—Rajmohan’s Wife (1864)—was in English, have received academic acceptance as the earliest examples of Indian literature written in English.

In his life-time Bankim reigned as the literary dictator of renascent Bengal, and while he was a master of the romantic as well as the historical novel, he also frankly confessed: “I am a teacher or nothing”. If romance was his forte, he was no stranger to comedy or humour either. In both, ‘The Poison Tree’ and ‘Krishnakantha’s Will’, a married man falls in love with a young widow, and there are the usual consequences. The sad plight and disturbing influence of the widow in Hindu joint families and, generally, in Hindu society is to prove a recurrent motif in Indian fiction.

In his historical novels, Bankim was obviously inspired by Tod’s Annals of Rajasthan and Scott’s historical romances. Anandmath (1882) is Bankim’s best-known, though not his greatest novel.
In this and other novels, Bankim introduces Sannyasis (wandering ascetics) into the fictional narratives; and like the Hindu widow, the Sannyasi too (as Guru, Guide, Swami, Fakir, Yogi, Mahatma) figures often in Indian fiction sometimes as a merely ludicrous, character. It was over a decade after he had passed away that he suddenly leapt into national fame as the inspired author of the song, Bhandemataram, which is imbedded in Anandmath. “The mantra had been given”, said Sri Aurobindo at the time of the ‘Partition’ of Bengal, “and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism.”

Since his time, this pre-occupation with patriotism in one form or another-now as Indian nationalism, now as Muslim separatism leading to the creation of Pakistan, now as strong regionalism leading to the creation of the linguistic states, and recently as revolutionary Marxism in its different varieties: each form of Patriotism with its own call for tyaga, its particular brand of volunteer corps or sena, and its fanatic adherence to a set of dogmas-has been characteristic of some of the significant fiction produced in the country.

Bankim’s sterling vision may be lacking, but not his desire to make the novel a means of political education! Many a novelist would, if he could, be a prophet of things to come, an engineer of tomorrow’s world.

Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909):

Romesh Chunder Dutt was in London studying for the I.C.S. when Toru also was there with her parents and sister. Coming out successful in the examination in 1869, Romesh Chunder entered the Indian Civil Service, served in various capacities, retired in 1897, became in 1899 and later took office again as Dewan of Baroda. An able administrator, he found time also for scholarly undertakings; nor did he shun the ardours of literary creation in Bengali or in English.

Michael Madhusudan and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee had opened new avenues of development to Bengali literature, and Romesh Chunder too turned to creative writing. He was perhaps advised by Bankim Chandra to write his novels in Bengali, but he translated two of these into English (The Lake of Palms) (1902), and The slave-girl of Agra (1909). Three of his novels, Todar Mull, Sivaji and Pratap Singh have been translated into English by his son, Ajoy Dutt.

Romesh Chunder’s novels and historical surveys needn’t detain us. The slave-girl takes us to the Mughal times and we have glimpses of life in 17th century Agra—love, intrigue, jealousy being the inevitable ingredients of this romance. The Lake of
Palms, on the other hand, is a picture of Bengali life in the 19th century. The historical surveys are loaded with scholarship, and the patriot is revealed as much as the hard-headed historian.

Romesh Chunder was certainly an adroit versifier—although no poet—and since Valmiki or Vyasa is always behind the scenes to assist him, his condensed versions, notwithstanding their limitations, remain the best introductions in English verse to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The more recent abridged prose versions by Rajaji are in some respects more sensitive and rather closer to the originals and may therefore be read also with pleasure and profit.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1914): Tagore was a great poet and a great man, and he has left behind him a great institution the Vishvabharati at Shantiniketan. Tagore is the most outstanding name in modern Bengali literature, and he was the one writer who first gained for modern Indian a place on the world literary scene. The award of the Nobel Prize for literature to him was but the beginning of drama of recognition on a global scale to which there cannot be many parallels in literary history.

Rabindranath was born on 6 May 1861, on the same day Motilal Nehru was also born—a singular coincidence. Affluence and aristocratic culture surrounded him, and he grew up keenly alive and awake to the world around him.

Rabindranath’s forerunners—Madhusudan, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim had given Bengali poetry, prose and fiction a great start among the modern Indian languages. It was an atmosphere of expectancy, and Rabindranath readily breathed this air of infinite possibility. At 15 or earlier he had begun writing, and by 1875 his first efforts in prose and verse had begun to appear in print. He was drawn to the Bengali Vaishnava singers, and indeed to Indian devotional poetry in general.

A visit to England followed, and the English romantics—Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth—and the great Victorians, Tennyson and Browning exercised a potent influence on him; and the admired also Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Browne. Tagore was not a veracious or a systematic reader, but like Shakespeare, although he apparently read at random, he turned to capital use what had come his way. He lisped in numbers, and they came with astonishing facility. He had written about 7,000 lines of verse before he was eighteen!

He was a poet, dramatist, actor, producer; he was a musician and a painter; he was an educationist, a practical idealist who turned his dreams into reality at Shantiniketan; he was a reformer, philosopher, prophet; he was a novelist and short-
story, writer, and a critic of life and literature; he even made occasional incursions into nationalist politics; although he was essentially an internationalist. His active literary career extended over a period of 65 years. He wrote probably the largest number of lyrics ever attempted by any poet. He mused and wrote and travelled and talked untiringly. Next only to Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo, Tagore has been the supreme inspiration to millions in modern India.

In 1883, Tagore wrote a play which he later translated as Sanyasi, or the Ascetic. ‘The Sea Waves’ was written in 1887, after the boating tragedy that took a tool of several hundred pilgrims who were on their way to Puri. More poems and more plays-plays and play-acting and play-production-and restless activity on many fronts; and during the partition of Bengal agitation, he identified himself for a time with the movement and indited the celebrated poem, ‘Rabindranath Salutes Aurobindo’, when the latter, who was then editor of the ‘Bandematram’, was jailed and charged with sedition.

However, Tagore was too much of an individualist-too much also of a humanist-to be demagogue and court mere popularity. The satirical shafts in some of his plays and poems went home, and orthodoxy and parochialism trembled with rage. The nationalists were angry because he was not nationalist enough, and Government too was secretly suspicious of his moves and aims. He often retired to Shantiniketan, and lost himself in either the Frenzy of literary creation or the tasks of education. In course of time, Shantiniketan and the nearby Sriniketan became the focal centres of a new experiment in living. The cultures of the east were to be brought together, and a living relationship was to be attempted between the west and the East: the East was first to find its own soul, and then the world to transmute the seeming West-East dichotomy into a creative unity and thus achieve a broadbase for human understanding and purposive activity.

Further, the cultural front was to be related to the life of the community, and education was to include vocational training as well. Above all, harmony was to be the key note of all the activities in Shantiniketan and Sriniketan. These were the institutions that later grew to be the Vishvabharati University with an international team of dedicated scholars and artists, it made the valiant attempt to enact the drama of human unity and human understanding.

Tagore once declared, “We must recognize that it is providential that the west has come to India, and yet someone must show the east to the west, and convince the
west that the east has her contribution to make to the history of civilization. India is no beggar to the west. And yet even though the west may think she is, I am not for thrusting off Western civilization and becoming segregated in our independence.

The phenomenal success of Gitanjali emboldened Tagore and his English publishers, Messrs. Macmillan, to bring out other volumes of translations, either done by him or by others under his supervision, and even some original writing in English: poems, *The Crescent Moon, The Gardener, Fruit-Gathering, Lover’s Gift, Crossing, The fugitive and other poems;* plays *Chitra, The Post Office, The Cycle of Spring, Sacrifice and other plays, Red oleanders; Stray Birds,* a collection of epigrams and aphorisms and poetic miniatures; *Fiction, The Home and the World, The Wreck, Gora (1923), Hungry Stones Mashi, Broken Ties, Philosophy, Sadhana, Personality, creative Unity. The religion of Man; autobiography, Reminiscences (1917).*

Of Tagore’s full-length novels, only three appeared in approved English versions in his own life-time. *Naukhadubi* (1905) appeared as the Wreck, *Gora* (1910) retained the same title in English also, and *Ghare Bhaire* (1916) became *The Home and the World.* The wreck has always been one of Tagore’s popular novels. Mulk Raj Anand: Mulk Raj Anand, the novelist short story writer, essayist, art-critic and ‘bogus professor (as he calls himself) was born on December 12, 1905 in Hindu Kshatriya family in Peshawar. “Indo-Anglian literature, cultivated as it was by some of the best educated. People in India, was bound to throw up some eminent figures in course of time. The earlier writers like S.K.Ghosh, S.B.Bannerjee, Sorabji Cornelia and others had already broken the ground and Indo-Anglian fiction was ripe for a luxurious flowering.”

“The term “Indo-Anglian” is used to denote original literary creation in the English language by Indians. Educated Indians use the English language as a medium of the creative exploration and expression of their experience of life. Their writing has now developed into substantial literature in its own right and it is this substantial body of literature which is referred to as Indo-Anglian literature.”

Mulk Raj Anand alongwith R.K. Narayan is the best known writer of Indo-Anglian fiction today and his novels have been properly acclaimed by discriminating critics from the west as well. Mulk Raj Anand brought everything new to the Indo-Anglian novel and the short stories new matter, new technique, new style and new approach, but before we follow the paths trodden by his novels, it would not be out of
place to study the influence of some Indian masters on the writings of Anand-Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Tagore, Sharat Chandra Chatterjee and Munshi Premchand.

His novels and short stories, which vividly present Indian life and people, show the influence of Western thought. But from early childhood, Anand imbibed love and respect for ancient Indian culture, which potently influenced his view of life. The kind of humanism he believes in and the kind of world he hopes for are integral to the Indian tradition in which he grew up.

The Indian Freedom Movement gave him a new direction and brought to light the patriot in him. The nineteen thirties were the seed of modern independent India. These years were conspicuous for the Gandhian Salt Satyagrah Movement of 1930-32, The three Round Table Conferences, The Government of India Act of 1935, the introduction of the Provincial Autonomy of 1937 and the Gandhian Movement for political and social change. These movements, especially the Gandhian ideology deeply impressed him. His humanistic leanings were strengthened. Anand skillfully correlates nationalism, socialism and humanism in his novels. Anand’s first novel ‘Untouchable’ which won him immense fame and popularity appeared in 1935. It was followed by a series of realistic and humanistic novels ‘Coolie (1936)’, ‘Two Leaves And A Bud (1937)’, ‘The Village (1939)’, ‘Across the Black Waters (1941), ‘The Sword and the Sickle (1942)’ and The Big Heart in 1945’. Anand has also brought out seven collections of short stories – The child and other Stories (1934), The Barber’s Trade Union and other Stories (1944), The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and other Stories (1947), Reflections on the Golden Bed and other Stories (1953), The Power of Darkness and other stories (1959), Lajwanti and other stories (1966) and Between Tears and Laughter (1973). Anand has also retold traditional Indian tales in his Indian fairy Tales (1961). “In 1960 Anand’s famous Novel ‘The Old woman and the Cow’ appeared. It was followed by ‘The Road (1963)’ and ‘The Death of Hero (1964)’. In the seventies Anand returned to the autobiographical vein, which he first employed in Seven Symmers. ‘Morning Face (1970)’, ‘The Confession of A Lover (1976)’, and ‘The Bubble’ are parts of a long fictional autobiography reportedly planned in seven volumes.”

Raja Rao: Raja Rao, whom Santha Rama Rao has called “Perhaps the most brilliant – and certainly the most interesting – writer of modern India.” Was born in an orthodox family of the Brahmins of Mysore on Nov. 5, 1908.
As a novelist he is contemporary to Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan sharing sometimes with them in the choice of themes “But not in his art as a novelist or in his enchanting prose style”. As a writer, Raja Rao is the child of the Gandhian Age, and reveals in his work his sensitive awareness of the forces let loose by the Gandhian revolution as also of the thwarting or the steadying pulls of past tradition.


Raja Rao has an enormous reputation as a novelist. Winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award for The Serpent and the Rope, Raja Rao is among eleven recipients named in 1988 for the $25,000 Neustadt international prize for literature. The award, sponsored by the University of Oklahoma and its international literary journal World Literature Today is given every two years to outstanding writers. He has also been awarded the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India for his literary achievements. “Raja Rao has brought novelty and distinction to Indian English Novel. We shall discuss in detail the outstanding features of Rao’s novel and his lasting contribution to Indian English Novel.”

History of English language and literature in India starts in India. It all started in the summers of 1608 when Emperor Jahangir, in the courts of Moguls, Welcomed captain William Hawkins, Commander of British Navel Expedition Hector. It was India’s first tryst with an Englishman and English. As East India Company spread its wing in Southern Peninsula, English language started to get newer pockets of influence, But it was still time for the first English book to capitalize. “History of English literature in India, had by this time, taken much gigantic proportions, with the nascent buds beginning to bloom in a yet unsure direction. However, in such a context, a token grant of rupees one lakh per year was granted for education and the proposal was to promote only oriental education.”

Indian English fiction is a later development. The earliest writings of Indians in English Consisted of prose-letters, memoranda, translations, religious, social, political and cultural tracts. The growth of Indian press also contributed to the rise of journalistic prose which was excellently written by Raja Rammohan Roy, the veritable morning star of Indian Renaissance.
Impact of English Literature in India comparison with such literatures of India for many centuries, or with Tamil which counts for thousand years, Indian-English literature is very young.

In the 18th century the East Indian Company took advantage of the fact that England and France were at a state war, which went down in history under title of seven-year war (1756-1763). The battle of plassey in 1757, which the English people under the command of Robert Clive won and thus became the absolute rulers of Bengal, proved to be an important turning point in the history of India.

Karl Marx wrote, “The events of the seven years war, transformed the East India Company from a commercial into a military and territorial power. It was then that the foundation was laid of the present British Empire in the East.”(19) Embodying the political and economic power of the British Empire, the East India Company had widened its machinery.

“Great Zeal in the study of not only Indian law, but also of Indian culture was displayed by a member of the English Supreme Court, Sir William Jones (1746-1794) who founded in the year 1784 in Bengal “The Royal Society of Asian Studies” or “Asiatic Society”. (20)

As the local languages did not contain essential professional and scientific terminology, the English people came to the conclusion that knowledge of English was essential for the Indian employees for work in the government machinery.

With a beginning of the nineteenth century, the first organizations of educative character in India came up in many respects due to the impact of these progressive ideas round which were united all the rising bourgeois elements. One such organization was a society called Brahmo Samaj Founded in Bengal in 1828 by the first eminent enlightener of India, Raja Rammohan Roy.

Pre-Independence Indian English literature, this period therefore, marks a great leap forward. There is a clearcut advance in technique, form and style. Raja Rao enriched the novel with highly poetic prose and artistic narration. This period threw up men like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, D.F.Karaka, Ahmed Abbas, Ahmed Ali and many others whose contribution to the growth of the Indo-Anglian novel is of no mean order.

Indian literature virtually encompasses the whole of India and its every single aspect, both symbolically as well as realistically. And this certainly is not an overstatement or hyperbole as writers beginning from the pre-historic age have tried
to mirror their society, their times at large, a work to which they have also been
successful. Indeed the thought themes in Indian literature broadly hold within itself a
magnificent yet clandestine vision, if viewed in an open angle.

The Indian novel has emerged not simply as a pure literary exercise, but as an
artistic in the country. For, the factors that shaped and moulded the growth of the
Indian novel, since the mid-nineteenth century, arose as much from the political and
social problems of a colonized country as from indigenous narrative traditions of
novels of Ramesh Chandra Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath
Tagore in which the socio-political situation existing in the country is faithfully
mirrored right from the early phase of reformist exuberance to the growth of a
revolutionary consciousness among the common masses of India.

The Indian English novel with a social purpose can be said to have stuck deep
roots in the Indian soil by imaginatively treating the contemporary problems and
artistically exploring and interpreting Indian in all its variegated aspects. All the same,
some critics contend that the India novel with a social purpose neglects the fate of the
individual in a particular human situation in that it does not deal with a personal and
private predicament. “But, what we have to keep in mind is that, dealing as they do
with a social milieu, these novels are more concerned with presenting the entire
picture of society than with the individuals personal history. Moreover, we have to
realize that in the works of a genuine artist there is no conflict between the individual
and the social.” (21)

Contribution of pre-independence Indian English writer such as Mulk Raj Anand
would plumb the depth of humble life and reveal dignity or majesty in the manhood
of an untouchable or a Coolie; another like R.K.Narayan would depict the middle
class man of south Indian; a Raja Rao or a Karaka would soar into utopias of the soul
and proclaim “the world’s greatest age begins a new.”

In point of technique they brought the Indo-Anglian novel within hailing distance
of the latest novels of the west. A village granny narrates the dramatic times of the
Independence struggle in Raja Rao’s “Kanthapura” The autobiographical form of
narration so useful in analyzing the character is well utilized by Raja Rao. The
technique here is Conradian; the grand mother in this novel takes the place of
Marlow.

Mulk Raj Anand used advanced technique of story telling in all his novels, at the
same time fighting the cause of the poor and the have-nots Karaka.
The novelists have shown considerable knowledge of the form of novel. They have tried all the forms from the traditional novels to the highly advanced novels like “Kanthapura” or “Untouchable”.

Another change that is discernable in the Indo-Anglian novels of this period is that they are comparatively free from didacticism. The stories of R.K.Narayan are a fine example of a writer’s objectivity. Mulk Raj Anand, unluckily is not free from this propagandist motive “when a conscious purpose, however good, becomes the predominant motive with a literacy artist, his creation ceases to be true literature. It becomes only an instrument. Fundamentally, we must realize that literature is the flowering of the creative urge in the artist expressed through words, the spontaneous expression of a mood, emotion or impression of the joy of living or the anguish of suffering; a creation, like the flower which a tree puts forth, or the song which a lark sings as it soars overhead.”(22)

20 years after independence, R.K.Narayan was till tackling issues of Colonialism. ‘The Vendor of Sweets (1967)’ takes us through the tensions integral to a family in which two generations belong to two different cultures. Narayan explores the inevitable clash of what is, in many ways, both a colonial and a post-colonial encounter. Jagan a follower of Gandhi and a Veteran of the wars against British Imperialism must attempt a negotiation of an ethos invasive to his own definitions of nationality, Mali without this structure, must reconcile an American capitalism with India’s own sense of what constitutes a modern nation.

Indian English literature is a contest over the nature, identity and ultimately destiny of modern India. Of late, the realistic, modernistic, pessimistic, mode of the first three decades of post-independence writing is giving way to non-representational, experimental, self-conscious and optimistic literature. But the real challenge the writers of today face is the homogenization and standardization of culture due to globalization and the new; easy and superficial internationalism which tempts Indian English writers to market themselves abroad.

Literatures in English are now a days recognized as part of the national literatures, and English is also recognized in the over-all language policy of the nation. The language has penetrated deeply in the society, which has, in its turn, resulted in several varieties of English in India.

Indian English is used mainly by Indians whose native language it is not. It is a minority language, but yet a language of national affairs, and its status is often called
into question by, as Bailey puts it, “not only by foreigners with their ideas of proper English, but also by Indians who remain ambivalent about its distinctive features and uncertain about its future.” In fact, many of transplanted kinds of English are attuned to the idea of a foreign standards of property that their independence remains partial.

The spread of English across different cultures and languages has meant the diversification of English, which, in turn, raises questions about the standardization of English. The emergence of these new varieties has raised question concerning the power of English language, questions of identity and pragmatics of the language in new, foreign surroundings. “To study language attitudes in India (specially attitudes towards English) and to analyze the use of languages in different domains (family, friendship, neighbourhood, transactions, education, government, employment). Additionally, the aim is also to find out about the informants, preference for the model of the variety of English in Indian.”(23)

There was the stream of translations of western master-pieces of fiction, which came to the Indo-Anglian novelist through English translations of foreign works of merit. Tolstoy, Balzac, Dostoevsky and Victor Hugo are a few of the great novelists, the Indo-Anglian novelists read in English translations.

The second was the stream of translations and English renderings of notable books from Indian languages. Both these influences brought within the range of the Indo-Anglian novelists the best that India and the world had to offer. “Translations of works of merit from one language into another are arteries through which the life-blood of our culture circulates giving strength and new life to every part.”(24)

Translations revitalize various literary form “And by the translation of a large number of world books into our languages. The vocabulary and technique of the novel, the short story and drama would receive a fresh impetus and they could emancipate themselves from some of the stagnating conventions in which they are still steeped for want of life-giving ideas.”(25)

The translator of an Indian novel in English faces some basic hurdles. A novel reflects the society it depicts; it is also the emotional picture of that society. But how for can a translation be effective? “It may, therefore be argued that the identity of a novel is changed when it is translated into the words of another language in the same way as the identity of a poem suffers much more than that of a novel.”(26)

Literature gives tongue to the hopes, aspirations, dreams and culture of a nation. “The writer must show inner conflicts and contradictions; he must note all symptoms
of emotional disorder, he must throw light on the struggle between good and bad going on in the depth of the human heart."(27) It therefore, represents this cultural level of the people. Literatures all over the world, have developed on uneven lines depending upon the local environment.

Indian literature perhaps seizes the most sublime attention, owing to its most ancient and pre-historic approach by religious thinkers and spiritual believers. Time and again it is said that literature in India represents that body of artistic works, which were both oral and written, depending upon the times. However, it is not also that the beginnings of Indian literature had been pushed all by itself.

Indian literature is warmly wrapped up with the Indian religious system. The earliest sacred writings are the Vedas. It is certainly not an overstatement to say that one of the primary influencing factors on Indian literature since ages is, religion.

India in the 19th century, was more or less torn by various fluctuating political and linguistic border lines. Many languages were at various stages of development and while some literatures like the Bengali literature were sufficiently advanced, there were other literatures which had not seen the dawn of the awakening. This uneven curve of literary progress had to be smoothened but the task of bringing the excellences of one literature to another was not very easy.

English was the only language of interprovincial importance in the 19th century and the translations of say Rabindranath Tagore and others could expect to reach and did reach the farthest corners of India, through English renderings or translations.

In the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, some Bengali works of merit were translated into English, the foremost being the well-known translations of the books of Rabindra Nath Tagore and Bankim Chandra. “These vernacular classics translated into English have come to form a common base on an all-India levels. “This must necessarily lead to a considerable cross fertilizations and provoke the mutual enrichment of the Indian literatures.”(28)

In the 20th century, several Indian writers have distinguished themselves not only in traditional Indian languages but also in English. India’s only Nobel laureate in literature was the Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore, who wrote some of this work originally in English, and did some of his own English translations from Bengali.

More recent major writers in English who are either Indian or of Indian origin and derive much inspiration from Indian themes are R.K.Narayan, Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Raja Rao, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram

Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, alongwith a few others of a lesser stature, blazed the trial long before, and they themselves have kept up with the times and eminently fulfilled their early promises.

Before independence, however it could be said, with some justification that the best fiction in India was written in Indian languages the best creative talents did not take to English and Indian life did not yield completely to the English language proficiency of the Indian writers. The best creative literature on Indian themes written in English before independence was the work of Englishmen like Kipling and forster. That the approval and recognition of an English author was in itself considered a blessing is indicated by the fact that the 1935 edition of Anand’s Untouchable carried a preface by E.M. Forster and the 1937 edition of Narayan’s The Bachelor of Arts appeared with an introduction by Graham Greene. (In a sense this attitude has continued to persist till recently, for it is often pointed out that a special distinction of Malgonkar’s A Bend in the Ganges (1964) is that it was one of the best novels of the year according to forster).

With the coming of independence the situation may have partly changed as seen from the increasing number of talented writers turning to English. But the foundations for the post-independence development were perhaps laid in the schools and colleges in the two decade before independence.

The spread of education, the attractions of a world market, the growing sense of national self-confidence and maturity, the diversion of talents from regional languages into English for a variety of reasons—was there a brain drain inside India from regional languages into English? The acceptance and reputation of the early masters outside India, the prestige and recognition accorded to creative writing in English within India: all these probably led the way.

But is primarily the fact that a number of gifted writers succeeded in producing a sizable volume of fiction, far above the average in quality, that justifies the view that English fiction, by Indian writers today can hold its own in comparison with the work of their counterpart from other areas of the Commonwealth. And among the authors
responsible for this favourable change in critical climate, Manohar Malgonkar is one of the most important.

Review of Literature:

Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. In recent years it “has attracted widespread interest, both in India and abroad.” It is not only part of commonwealth literature but also occupies a “great significance in the world literature”, and won for itself international acclaim. Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels.

One of the important factors for the late development of novel in Indian literature was the absence of novel as an important genre of imaginative literature, which gives artistic expression to the relationship of man and society. Novel as an art form came to India with the British. It was a new genre in Indian literature. The English renderings of novels written in various Indian languages contributed much to the evolution of Indian English novel in the ninetieth century and in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

R.C.Dutta, Bankim Chandra and Tagore translated their novels into English. The output of Indian English novel is not worthy of note until the year 1920.

Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly comments: “---the flowering of Indo-Anglian fiction coincided with the novel’s coming of age in the regional languages of India.”

Early Indian English novel is derivative and imitative of English models. Early fiction writers copied their language from the words of English. Romantics and Victorians. They obviously imitated Defoe, Fielding and Scott. They evinced little creative effort. Most of the early novels are mediocre and from the technical viewpoint are shabbily written. What distinguish Indian English novel from the very beginning is its social concern, realism and its unfailing interest in man.

Ralph Fox says: “The novel is not merely fictional prose, it is the prose of man’s life, the first art to attempt to take the whole man and give him expression ------- the great feature which distinguishes the novel from the other arts is that it has the power to make the secret life visible.”

The origin of Indian English novel dates back to June 6, 1835 with the publication of Kylash Chonder Dutt’s A Journal of 48 hour of the year 1945 in the
Calcutta Literature Gazette. Indian English novelists have given expression to the hopes, aspirations, dreams and culture of a nation from the very beginning.

Indian English novel was inembryo in the nineteenth century but the tendencies and fictional genres-realistic novel, social novel, autobiographical novel, historical novel, romance and short story began in the nineteenth century.

The national awakening (1900-1918) and the rise of political consciousness gave a great impetus to the growth and development of Indian English novel in its seminal stage S.Jogendra Singh’s Nasrin (1915), The Love of Kusuma (1910) by Balkrishna, Sorabji Cornelia’s Love and Life Behind the Purdah and Sun Babies (1910) and Between the Twilight (1908) are some notable novels on the theme of national and social awakening.

Very few novels of pre-independence period have achieved even a tolerable measure of artistic beauty only a student of literary history would like to turn their pages in wan’t of readability. Technical skill, vivid character portrayal and various artistic methods of story-telling are conspicuous by their absence in the novels of this period. They are weak both in plot construction and characterization. The novelist lean towards didacticism and allegory. The importance “of these novels is only historical as milestones on the path of achievements to come.”

The Indian English novel of this period deals directly with the national experience as the central theme. The various momentous events of this turbulent period-Mahatma Gandhi’s passive resistance movement against the Black Rowalt Act, the inhuman Massacre in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, the Khilafat Movement, the boycott of Simon Commission, the prohibition and the boycott of the foreign goods, the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, the famous Dandi March, the Government of India Act of 1935, the emancipation of women, the Quit India Movement of 1942 and many other facets of the Gandhian movement are vividly described in the novels written during this period.

The Indian English novel of this period has a distinct corpus of works which are conscious for revealing the spirit of the age in an authentic manner Indian society in transition from the old to the new, the traumatic experiences of the disintegration of the old values and the instability of the new ones, growing interest in modernism and progressivism, national awakening and fascination for Gandhi and Gandhian ideology, the rise of realism and humanism, the development of fictional technique
and the evolution of various fictional genres are some major characteristics of novel during this period.

Modern Indian English novel is thus, preoccupied with the inner life and individual problems of men and women passing through revolutionary changes. The novel in the previous era as mainly concerned with the external aspects of society, and little with the exteriorization of the inner landscape of the human psyche. It has become more subtle, philosophical and psychological. This change in the content of the novel has necessitated the use of new technical devices.

Anand deftly uses the device of the stream of consciousness in his first novel ‘Untouchable’. Myth too has been used as a technique to illustrate the novelists vision or point of view. Raja Rao’s Kanthapura presents the collision of two rival forces as is formed in a myth.

Almost all the novelists of this period have interpreted myth in their own manner so that it may contribute to the expression of their point of view.

The Indian English novel has passed through a tough time. There was a time when Mulk Raj Anands’ ‘Untouchable’ was left untouched by British publishers before being recommended by E.M.Foster to Lawrence and Wishart to accept it. But today the case is different. Indian English literature is now readily accepted abroad.

In fact Indian English novelists have elevated themselves by overtaking novelists whose mother-tongue is English in the race to win major literary awards. Although Indian English fiction struggled hard to gain its establishment, the recent acclaim won by Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga has put it in the global spotlight and is capable to change its face and fate in global context.
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