CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Colonization was a historical process that ushered in unpredicted by-products. As a matter of fact, the scale and scope of the colonization of India were themselves unpredicted; it was only the political conditions in the vast subcontinent that ministered occasion to the colonizer to get such a strong foothold here, and enabled him to establish here a large trade and then political empire which eventually led to the cultural colonization of the country. When the western system of education was introduced into India in the era of liberals like Thomas Babington Macaulay and others, the practical ambition was only to get menials and clericals for the East India Company. To salve their conscience, the British built up theories like the Whiteman’s burden, and Macaulay indeed had a characteristically self-magnifying vision of “the proudest day” of the British ruling class when the benighted natives became enlightened and demanded the conditions of the liberal ideals of their masters for themselves too, and demanded, among other things, their liberty. Read and Fisher quote Macaulay’s views on ancient Indian Educaiton System:

“All the information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language, is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgement used at preparatory schools in England The question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach the [English] language, we shall teach languages in which there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own ... whether, when we can patronize sound philosophy and true .history, we shall countenance at the public expense medical doctrines which would disgrace an English farrier, astronomy which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, history abounding with kings thirty feet high, reigns 30,000 years long, and geography made up of seas of treacle and rivers of buffer? (77)”.
Read and Fisher go on to say after citing this extravaganza:

Macaulay was convinced that exposure to western ideas and ethics through education would lead Hindus to embrace Christianity in 30 years’ time, he prophesied to his father, there would not be a single idolater among the respectable classes of Bengal. On a less dubious note, he was also convinced that western education would lead the Indian people to independence. Echoing his House of Commons speech, he wrote in his Minute: “Come what may, self-knowledge will lead to self-rule, and that would be the proudest day in British history.” (78).

But by and large, the British and the whole of the colonizing west of the modern times were proved short-sighted in their under-estimation of the inherent strengths and potentialities of the peoples they colonized and enslaved. They did not quite realize India’s capacity to absorb new ideas without throwing away her own traditions. Nor did they realize the ability of India to continually forge a social system that could find unity in diversity: India could house a multicultural society from the earliest times of her history: in short, her resilience. In the matter of decades, the colonials absorbed the language, and the culture of their masters, and soon enough could overtake them in the subtlety with which they could employ what they had learnt from their masters. So they used the language and literature, and the sciences, and the characteristic intellectual abilities of their masters, and also found it possible to teach them a lesson or two, and excel them too. The development of the post colonial argument was not what the colonists had looked forward to-or even apprehended. Now the erstwhile colonials have become the equals of their masters in what they learnt from them; and they have made it very clear-it was done many, many decades ago-that Macaulay was very much mistaken (again in his characteristically self-magnifying vein) in his impertinent condescension and undervaluation of the cultural heritage of the colonized.

The evidence of the beginnings of the native’s ability to learn from new and strange sources is indeed unexciting though they showed their enormous
potentiality. They began with the grasp of the fundamental elements of the language of the masters, and with the application of the rationalism and the logic of which they were themselves eminently capable.

The earliest writings of Indians in English comprise prose, letters, memoranda, translations, religious, social, political and cultural tracts. They already show that Indians were already far ahead of the lower goals set for them by the company. It cannot be denied that the development of the Indian press paved the way for the rise of journalistic prose in which the likes of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the veritable morning star of the Indian renaissance, made a mark. The evolution of a lucid, clear, simple and idiomatic prose style and the deep concern for multitudinous social and national problems which permeate the work of Ram Mohan Roy, Ram Gopal Ghose, Surendranath Banerjee, G.K. Gokhale and other pioneers of the Indian Renaissance laid the foundation for the growth and development of Indian English fiction, which invariably requires the prose medium and which is mainly based on social themes. Indian English fiction is comparatively a late development.

As Dr. Sathis Kumar points out “India was the fountain head of storytelling in ancient days but fiction in the modern sense is the off spring of the impact of western literature on the Indian mind” (18). The novel in India was purely a foreign importation. The English novelists Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), Henry Fielding (1707-1754), Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), Oliver Smith (1728-1774), Walter Scott (1771-1832), Jane Austen (1775-1817), influenced them as they had influenced their British counterparts; and the later Indians were devotees and disciples of Charles Dickens (1812-1870), William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863), George Eliot (1819-1880), Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) and the other classics who influenced them powerfully. The English translations of the illustrious European novelists like Leo Tolstoy, Balzac, Dostoevsky, Victor Hugo and many others apprised the Indian writer with the themes and techniques of fiction. Indian writers became aware of the latest achievements of their contemporaries in foreign tongues and produced
work of a technically high standard. And Indian novelists successfully began to employ European technique of novel for expressing typical Indian ethos and sensibility.

The English renderings of novels written in various Indian languages contributed much to the development of Indian English novel in the nineteenth century and in the first two decades of the twentieth century. R C Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Tagore translated their own novels into English. Meenakshi Mukharjee rightly comments “the flowering of India Anglican fiction coincided with the novel’s coming of age in the regional language of India.”(16).

Early Indian English novels are derivative and imitative of English novels. Early fiction writers imitated their language from the works of the English Romantics and the Victorians. They obviously imitated Defoe, Fielding and Scott. What distinguished the Indian English novel from the very beginning is its social concern, realism and its unfailing interest in man. This is in tune with the normal perception of the language of all fiction. Ralph Fox comments in *The novel and the people*: “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”, and “the great feature which distinguishes the novel from other arts is that it has the power to make the Secret life visible”(26).

Indian English novelists have always been true to the fundamental rule of novel writing. Novelists from all parts of India contributed to the evolution of Indian English fiction. The early attempts, though immature, artless and crude are noticeable for synthesizing the old forms with new technical apparatus and for nativirzing English. A survey of the works and techniques of the major novelists of this early period is attempted here and it is worth mentioning here the contribution of early writers to the domain of Indian English novel.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1893), a member of the provincial civil service and an ardent patriot, can rightly be described a pioneer in the
realm of Indian English fiction. And he was richly endowed with all the characteristic features of a novelist genius. At the outset of his literary career, he composed an English novel named Rajmohan’s Wife. Then it was published in book form. This novel has the distinction of being the first Indian novel in English. And Toni Duff who has a romantic novel called Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden to her credit is worthy of mention. Other notable works of this period are: Lal Behari Day’s Bengal Peasant Life Chakravarthi’s Sarala and Hingana and B.R. Rajan Iyer’s famous Vasudeva Sastri.

It is generally said that the heartbeat of a nation can only be heard in novels. And it is an effective instrument to articulate the spirit of the age. The novel can never grow and flourish in isolation. Right from the beginning, Indian English fiction has been keen on mirroring the changing national scene and concerned about the destiny of the nation. The birth of the twentieth century witnessed the advent of a great national awakening in India. The unfulfilment of promises made in the Queen’s proclamation of 1858, the discrimination of Indians on grounds of religion, colour and race, and the denial of the fundamental rights and liberties to Indians by the British regime caused dissatisfaction and displeasure among the educated Indians who were influenced by western liberal thought and dramatic traditions. The discriminatory attitude of the British government forced them to form the Indian National Congress in 1885 to register their discontent. A.O. Hume and Surendranath Banerjee were the people who were solidly behind the establishment of the Indian National Congress. In the appeal he sent to all graduates of the Calcutta University in 1875, Home - a retired English official- wrote:

….There are aliens, like myself, who love India and her children ... but the real work must be done by the people of the country themselves ... If fifty men cannot be found with sufficient power of self-sacrifice, sufficient lover or and pride in their country, sufficient genuine and unselfish patriotism to take the initiative and if needs be to devote the
rest of their lives to the Cause—then there is no hope for India. Her sons must and will remain more humble and helpless instruments of foreign rulers.(71)

The partition of Bengal, the Hindu-Muslim divide and the ruthless suppression of national feelings were the notorious legacies of the British empire which were vehemently condemned by patriotic Indians.

It is apt to note here that the Muslim League, which was started exclusively as a religious and social organization, joined the main stream of national life in the wake of the war between Turkey and Britain. The Congress and the Muslim League together devised a constitutional scheme with dominion status as its basis. In addition to the Congress and the Muslim League, various political organizations like the Hume Rule League vigorously forgot their differences for the sake of political reforms. The British Government sensed trouble and promised responsible government after the turmoil of the First World War subsided.

The economic backwardness of millions of Indians, the powerful persistence of feudalism which had completely disappeared in European countries and which the British government patronized and encouraged, social disparities and the exploitation of women attracted the attention of social reformers, thinkers, writers and novelists. A crusade was vigorously launched against these evils and political awakening was correlated with social and economic amelioration of the people of India. Christian missionaries, the Servants of India Society, the Theosophical Society and many social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Govind Rande, Vivekananda, Swami Ramamirtha and others castigated these despicable social evils and pleaded for a just social order. These things have been projected elaborately here because the national awakening and the rise of political consciousness gave a great impetus to the growth and development of the Indian English novel in its seminal stage. S. Jugendra Singh’s *Nagrin* (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 are some notable novels on the theme of national and social awakening.

Explaining the popularity of fiction in the nineteenth century India, Hansh Raizada says:

“As the appeal for improving the condition of Indian people and the relationship between India and England was to be made to the English rulers, many of the Indian writers chose to write in English and as novel was literary gear most suited to the proper representation of life and its problems, they took to fiction for expressing their views” (67).

The English models were the major outside influence on Indian English novel. The technique and pattern of early Victorian novelists was imitated. Indian English novelists tried a variety of subjects-social, historical and romantic—and they endeavoured to reveal fundamentally an Indian vision. Still, from the perspective of techniques, these novels were not of great significance but they were an indication of the future blooming and flowering of the genre. Indian English novelists were still groping their way at the crossroads of western models and eastern subjects. Their works are immature and have only an antiquarian value for us. Some of the novelists of this period called the era of national awakening (1900-1918) and their works are discussed here.

R.C. Dutt, who transcreated The Ramayana and The Mahabharata into English, wrote six novels in Bengali. He himself rendered into English two of them: Sansar and Madavi Kankan under the captions The Lake of Palms and The Slave Girls of Agra respectively. The Lake of Palms” is based on the theme of social reformation and advocates the cause of widow remarriage. The other is a historical romance set in the Mughal period. R.C. Duff added art and grace to storytelling. His two English transcreations are conspicuous for social realism, historical element, vividly portrayed characters and graceful and polished style.
Another novelist of note is Sir Joginder Singh who is known for Guru Nanak’s biography, *Sikh Ceremonies*, and who has the novels *Nur Jahan, Nasrin, Kamala* and *Kamini* to his credit. *Nur Jahan* is a historical novel. It is the romance of an Indian queen. It depicts the famous romance between the Moghul prince, Salim and Mihr-ul-Nisa the beautiful daughter of Ghias Beg. *Nasrin* is a fine attempt to portray the life of self indulgence characteristic of the Nowabs and Zamindars of yesteryears. *Nasrin* and *Nur Jahan* acquainted people with the life of the Muslims in India whereas Kamala and Kamini give us a peep into the life of Hindus. In these novels, the writer laid emphasis on the corrupt and dissipated life of the Rajahs and Tuluqaders. Joginder Singh brought social realism and humanism to the Indian English novel in its infancy. He is a trend setter in this respect.

Another novelist of this period was Bal Krishna who contributed to the development of Indian novels in English with his novel *Love of Kusuma* on the social life in the Punjab. It is a blend of realism and romance. And S.K. Ghose’s *1001 Indian Nights* and *The Prince of Destiny* are two celebrated novels of remarkable literary interest. *1001 Indian Nights* subtitled *The Trials of Narayan Lal* first appeared in *Pearson’s Magazine*. It stands comparison with *The Arabian Nights* in respect of structure and the art of storytelling. *The Prince of Destiny* is a novel with a purpose. It is a veritable epic on Northern India towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Other novelists of this phase are S.M. Mitra, S.B. Bannerjee, S. Mukherjee, T. Ramkrishna Pillai and A. Madhaviah. S.M. Mitra’s *Hindupore* subtitled *A Peep Behind the Indian Unrest* is a political novel describing the rising discontent among the Indians against the British Government. And S.B. Banerjee is remembered for two important collections of short stories: *Tales of Bengal* and *Indian Detective Stories*. S. Mukhejee’s best known work is *Indian Detective Stories* and T. Ram Kirhsna Pillai is a south Indian novelist who composed two romances *Padmini* and *The Dive for Death*. Madhaviah is the prolific writer who is remembered for his works
Another towering literary figure who contributed a great deal to the development of Indian fiction in English is Rabindranath Tagore who began in the line of Bankim but soon charted his own path and pioneered a new era in Indian fiction. Tagore’s novels were originally written in Bengali. Three of his novels—*The Wreck*, *Gora* and *The Home and the World* were rendered into English. His novels exercised great influence on the development of the Indian English novel. P.P. Mehta says in his work *Indo – Anglican Fiction*:

“If Romesh Chandra Duff brought realism and reform to the novel, if Bankim Chandra invested the novel with a romantic halo, Tagore revealed the innermost currents of man’s mind in his novels. He brought psychological delineation to the novel. He added depth and significance to the novel—a great step forward in the development of the novel” (56).

Tagore’s novels are imbued with the spirit of humanism and universalism. Deeply influenced by the Upanishads and the great humanist thinkers of the world, he developed a synthetic vision of mankind. As a humanist, was aware of the sufferings and the problems of people around him. And in his appraisal and criticism of those problems in the context of wide humanity and mankind, he is unique. Tagore’s boundless love and concern for the weak and the exploited inspired him to castigate and penalize various social and religious evils. Humanism which distinguishes Tagore’s novels and short stories became an important characteristic of the Indian English Novel.

*The Wreck* is social novel which discusses the problems of marriage. Two marriage parties are drowned in a boat wreck. The only survivors are one of the bridegrooms, Ramesh, and one of the brides, Kamala. Ramesh and Kamala think that they are the recently married couple and try to settle down somewhere. Ramesh realizes the error. Consequently, complications begin. The story ends happily when Kamala meets her husband Dr. Nalinaksha who accepts her. The novel is full of improbabilities and coincidences. *Gora*
projects Tagore’s vision of the individual’s role in ancient India. Gora’s mother, an Irish woman, takes shelter in a Hindu home fearing soldiers during the Sepoy Mutiny. Her husband is killed and she also dies having given birth to a son who is brought up in the Hindu family. Gora grows up as a militant and an orthodox Hindu, without being aware of his identity. The secret of his birth is kept up till the end of the novel. Gora, a sturdy patriot, denounces everything alien and accepts everything Indian. An embodiment of the aspirations and sentiments of the educated Bengalis of his age who rebel against the arrogance and injustice of the British rulers and try to protect their cultural heritage from all onslaughts. He is proud of Hinduism. Little does he know that in Hinduism to which he is fanatically devoted, there is no scope for him because he is not the full blooded Hindu Brabmin that he imagines himself to be. Because of his uncompromising orthodoxy, he gets ready to give up the girl he loves and who loves him because she is one of the modernist Hindus. His real identity is disclosed at a crucial point when he is getting ready to receive the title of “The light of the Hindu Religion” in a ceremony organised by the Hindu youths from all over the country. He then realizes that the bond of human love is the greatest religion.

Gora reveals Tagore’s humanistic views. He denounces the caste ridden Hindu society. This is a remarkable novel known for well portrayed characters and a well structured plot. The Home and the World takes us into the mainstream of Indian politics, not so much to a phase of politics, but a new type of beyond good and evil anarchism that has emerged in India as well. Tagore’s novels impacted the development of Indian English fiction in a big way. The exploitation of the weak, socialism, stark realism, all embracing humanism, psychological analysis of human characters and all pervading poetical beauty which characterize Tagore’s novels influenced Mulk Raj Anand, and R.K. Narayan.
In passing from the pre-independence era to the post-independence era, we see the work of other towering personalities like Mulk Raj Anand, R K Narayan and B Raja Rao.

Mulk Rai Anand was born in 1905 at Peshawar and had his education at Lahore, London and Cambridge and took a Doctorate in Philosophy. As a novelist Anand is a product of the East - West encounter. Alastair Niven writes *In the Yoke of Pity*: “Mulk Raj Anand’s work has been influenced by Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Chekov and the Soviet realists, by Thomas Mann and D.H. Lawrence, by the Ramayana and the ancient scriptures, by Punjabi folklore, Chinese poetry and Persian romance”(36). 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 our ancient 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. This is important to note in the context of criticism against him that he is a pro-leftist propagandist.

The Indian freedom movement gave him a new direction and brought to light the patriot in him. The nineteen-thirtees were the seed time of modern Independent India. These years were conspicuous for the Gandhian Salt Satyagraha Movement of 1930-32, the three Round Table Conferences, the Government of India Act of 1935, the introduction of provincial autonomy in 1937, and the Gandhian movement for political and social change. These movements, especially the Gandhian ideology, deeply impressed him. His humanistic learning was strengthened. Anand skillfully correlates nationalism, socialism and humanism in his novels. H.M. Williams puts it thus in *Indo – Anglican Literature (1800 – 1970) : A Survey*:

“Mulk Raj Anand was able to unite nationalism with socialism into one humanitarian movement, a single revolt against oppression. The three Stalwarts of Indian fiction, Rabindranath Tagore, Prem Chand and Sarat Chandra Chatteijee, who too had been influenced by Gandhian ideology
and freedom movement, exercised considerable influence on Anand. Tagore’s humanism, Prem Chand’s realism and boundless sympathy for the underdog, and Sarat Chandra’s remarkable knowledge of human heart greatly impacted both the thinking and the fictional art of Anand. Anand brought all these elements together and transformed them into a highly personal creative art. Mulk Raj Anand wrote of the people, for the people, and as a man of the people” (45).

The coal miners’ strike in 1926 was a vehement expression of resentment against the apathy and inconsideration of the British Government towards the amelioration of the condition of the coal-miners. He felt deeply for the miners, who were symbolic of the suppressed community. He wrote in Apology for Heroism: “We had set our hears on our liberation and of the other suppressed peoples, however they were, wherever they were and of whatever shape, time and colour” (76).

The repercussion of the coal-miners’ strike compelled him to take interest in Communism and Marxism. He read the Communist Manifesto and befriended Allen Huff, the trade union leader and pamphleteer. He also read Marx, Engels and other Communist thinkers. He felt that Marxism was the scientific and rational method for the study of society. Mulk Raj Anand denounced capitalism and acquired a comprehensive view of socialism through Tolstoy, Ruskn, Morris and Gandhi. To him, socialism was the panacea to cure social evils, misery, ugliness and inequality. He was also aware of the shortcomings of Communism. It denies to people the very liberties and human rights for which the revolutions were fought. In fact, Anand is neither a Marxist nor a Communist but a humanist whose outlook has been moulded by Marxism. As a staunch humanist he believes in the inherent goodness of man. Saroj Cowasjee remarks in Coolie - An Assessment: “One must not lose sight of the close relationship between Marxism and humanism in Anand’s mind, a relationship that is better evident in his works than in his numerous protestations” (76).
A powerful undercurrent of humanism runs through all the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. In 1934, Anand married Kathleen Van Gelder a theatre actress. Anand’s first novel *Untouchable* that won him immense fame and popularity appeared in 1935. It was followed by a series of realistic and humanistic novels—*Coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud, The Village, Across the Black Waters, The Sword and the Sickle* and *The Big Heart*. Anand also brought out seven collections of short stories He also retold traditional Indian tales in his *Indian Fairy Tales*. After spending about twenty years in England, he returned to India in 1945. By the time he came back to India he was unquestionably the most distinguished Indian novelist writing in English. He settled in India and wanted to live with his wife and daughter. But in Bombay, he was attracted towards a clever woman and wanted to marry her. He went back to England to get a divorce from his wife and was hugely shocked to learn that the woman he wanted to marry had fallen in love with a French man and had entered into wedlock with him and had gone to France. He suffered a nervous breakdown. A Greek dancer, who nursed him, advised Anand to write the anguish out of his system. The result was *The Private life of an Indian Prince*. The reader of the 1960s and 1970s saw Mulk Raj Anand publishing the novels *The Old Woman and the Cow*, *The Road, The Death of a Hero, Morning Face, The Confessions of a Lover* and *The Bubble*. Mulk Raj Anand thus dealt with a variety of themes: social, political, cultural and autobiographical.

R K Narayan is one of the most eminent and distinguished novelists of India. He was born in 1906 in Rasipuram in Tamilnadu. Narayan’s mother tongue was Tamil and he settled down in Mysore where the language spoken is Kanada and he wrote in English. [Later he lived in Coimbatore,] Narayan had his education entirely in South India, unlike Mulk Raj Anand who completed his education in Cambridge and London. Narayan was not a bright student and he failed his intermediate examination several times. He graduated at twenty-four. Narayan’s family life, the milieu in which he was born and grew up and the social changes creeping into the well-knit texture of Indian society
especially of the south deeply influenced Narayan’s vision as a novelist. He once told Ved Mehta in an interview for “The Illustrated weekly of India” dated on January 23, 1972: To be a good writer anywhere, you must have roots both in religion and in family. I have these things. I am rooted to the right triangle of Madras, Mysore and Coimbatore, none of them more than a couple of hundred miles distant from the others” (6). R.K. Narayan is a novelist par excellence. After being a journalist for a brief period, Narayan published his first novel Swami and Friends in 1935. Malgudi an imaginary place was introduced in it. Two more novels of Narayan, Bachelor of Arts and The Dark Room appeared in quick succession. During the Second World War, he was not in a position to compose any fictional work. After the end of the war, he published the novels Mr. Sampath, The Financial Expert and Waiting for the Mahatma. When he had an opportunity to go to America on a tour arranged by the Rockefeller Foundation, he used the experiences there to compose The Guide and My Dateless Diary. He also collected two volumes of short stories, “An Astrologer’s Day” and Other Stories and Lawley Road. He came out with the novels The Man Eater of Malgudi, The Vendor of Sweets, The Painter of signs, A Tiger for Malgudi and The World of Nagaraj.

R.K. Narayan carefully avoids propaganda though his novels. In an interview with Sunil Saxena for “probe”. He once remarked: “I am so detached from what I write that I don’t feel anywhere personal in it.” His writing is not always reflective of society. He says, “When I am writing about something I am imagining if it fits into society, Okay. If it does not, then people will read it for amusement. I have no greater purpose than that” (6).

In many respects, Swami and Friends can be considered the most enjoyable work. When one goes through the novel, one cannot help becoming nostalgic because one would identify oneself with one of these boys-Swami the average, even the obscure Somu, the self-important monitor Mani “the mighty good for nothing”, Samuel the ordinary, and Rajam with his dash, romance and propensity for leadership. The reader of the novel may have studied under the
“fire-eyed” Vedanayakam and the fanatical Ebenezar and dreamt, planned and blundered. The reader may have taken part in hartals and strikes. And when they read the novel, they would be made to recall their boyhood days.

In *Bachelor of Arts* the hero gets frustrated with the rigid caste prohibitions in society. He goes to the extreme of abandoning worldly life and becoming a wandering Sadhu. Then he returns home and finds the girl chosen by his parents for him to be very charming. He marries her. He becomes a teacher of English Literature in the Albert Mission College. From a room in the hostel, he moves to a corner house in Saraya Street. His wife Susila and his child Leela come to live with him. The story of their marriage life is verse in prose. Unfortunately, Susila falls a prey to typhoid fever. The description of Kirshna’s married life - the first few years of joy, the agony during her illness; the last journey to the cremation ground is one of the amazing pieces of writing in modern English fiction. Though Narayan is not a pronouncedly autobiographical novels the poignancy of this novel derives in part with his own marriage with Rajam for love and her untimely death due to an infection, leaving him with an infant daughter.

K.R. Srinivas Iyengar observes that *Swami and Friends*, *Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*, for all practical purposes, make a triology of Malgudi on the Sarayu. *The Dark Room* which appeared between the Bachelor and the Teacher is a novel apart, a study of domestic disharmony. *Waiting for the Mahatma* is another novel that is different, though in terms of the date of publication it falls between *The Financial Expert* and *The Guide*. In two aspects, Waiting for the Mahatma is exceptional. The place of action is sometimes out of Malgudi and the two key characters are existentially engaged in politics. With the other group of novels, *Mr. Sampath*, *The financial Expert*, *The Guide*, *The Man Eater of Malgudi* and *The Sweet Vendor*, readers enter an exotic world of half-headed dreamers, artists, financiers, speculators, twisters, adventurers, eccentrics, cranks, cinema stars and analysis.
The Financial Expert is mildly satirical. The main shortcoming of the novel is that its key, characters bear resemblance to caricatures: Mr. Margayya, the hero of the novel, is seen in five phases of his development in the first five parts of the novel.

Another towering novelist in the domain of Indian writing in English is Raja Rao. He was born on November 5 in 1908. He spent a part of his childhood with Ms grandmother who injected in him the value of spirituality that characterizes all his novels and short stories. Having got his early education in Hyderabad, he was sent to the University of Aligarh, where he was greatly influenced by Prof. Dickinson, the renowned educationist. It was he who discovered Raja Rao’s special talent for writing and nurtured him to study French and English Literatures. At the age of twenty, he started doing his research work, first at the University of Mont Pellier and then at the Sorbonne under Prof Cazamian. His first collection of short stories entitled Javni was published in 1930 in French.

Raja Rao returned to India in 1940 and spent the war years studying the spiritual traditions of his country. He shut himself up in a room in Varanasi for several days to decide whether to continue writing or to become a Sanyasi. He stayed in India for eight years and met Swami Atmananda, the great Vedantist and philosopher. He became Rao’s guru. Atmananda impressed upon him that writing was his true vocation.

Raja Rao went to America in 1950. He married an American actress by name Katherine Rao. He taught philosophy at the University of Texas. Though he maintained complete aloofness in the general course of life he mingled well with his students. As a writer, Raja Rao has been greatly influenced by the masterpieces of Italian; German and Russian literatures. Among the contemporary writers, Andre Mairatix has influenced him most. Among modern Indian thinkers, Anand Coomaraswamy counts most for him. His works have been a great source of strength for Raja Rao. As a novelist he is contemporary with Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan sharing sometimes with
them in the choice of themes but not in his art as 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 released by the Gandhian Revolution as also of the thwarting of the steadying pulls of tradition. Raja Rao’s works include Kanthapura, The Cow at the Barricade, The Serpent and the Rope, The Cat and Shakespeare, Comrade Kirillov and The Policeman and the Rose.

Raja Rao is a dedicated writer and he has a high sense of the dignity of his vocation as a writer. He has an enormous reputation as a novelist. Winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award for The Serpent and the Rope Raja Rao is among the eleven recipients named in 1988 for the $25,000 Neustadt International Prize for Literature.

With regard to the plot of Raja Rao’s novels, he introduced the elements of epic breadth of vision, a metaphysical rigour, a philosophical depth and symbolic richness in the Indian English novel. He has produced a truly Indian species of the novel, and has thus raised this genre of literature to a high status by presenting Indian sensibility to the western world. To achieve this end he has been variously influenced. He has learnt the art of narration from Joyce, Conrad, Valmiki and Veda Vyasa. Raja Rao subtly weaves Indian sensibility, tradition, myth, mysticism, religion and narrative technique in his themes. The plots are naturally and effortlessly developed. Raja Rao is very successful in the art of characterization. Though his characters are mostly simple, unsophisticated people of the villages, he has invested them with a poetic and dreamlike quality and symbolic significance. They are equally significant as individuals and possess their peculiar characteristics and idiosyncrasies. They are living men and women not mere symbols. And Raja Rao’s main aim as a novelist is to reveal and interpret Indian sensibility through plot, characterization, atmosphere, setting, style and language in his novels.

Among other novelists of note who have made solid contribution to the realm of Indian fiction in English are: Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kushwant Singh,
Chaman Nahal and Manohar Malgonkar. Bhabani Bhattacharya who was born on November 10, 1906 of Bengali Brabmin parents at Bhagalpur in Bihar: As the son of a well-to-do judge the boy was heir to the cultural riches of two worlds. He took his B.A. Honours in English Literature from the Patna College and was awarded the D.Phil. in History by the University of London. He also worked at the research centre of the University of Hawaii. Bhabani Bhattacharya has six novels and two collections of short stories to his credit. His novels are: *So Many Hungers, Music for Mohini, He who Rides a Tiger, A Goddess Named Gold, Shadow from Ladakh* and *A Dream in Hawaii.* He was awarded the coveted Sahitya Akademi Award for 1967 for his famous novel Shadow from Ladakh. His demise on October 9, 1988 has been an irreplaceable loss to Indian writing in English.

Bhattacharya is not a prolific writer but his six novels form an impressive and memorable achievement. All his novels have a social purpose. As we read his novels we hear the dialogue between man and his situation, between man and man, and between man and the ideas he lives by. He does not believe in the dictum “art for art’s sake”. In an interview with Sudhakar Josh termed “An Evening with Bhaban” for Sunday Standard in April 98, he once remarked: “I hold that a novel must have a social purpose. It must place before the reader something from the society’s point of view. Art is not necessarily for art’s sake. Purposeless art and literature which is much in vogue does not appear to me a sound judgement.”

High idealism, social purpose and an affirmative vision of life, are suffused in Bhattacharya’s works which are an authentic record of the urges and aspirations of people heroically involved in the struggle between the old and the new and the establishment of a just social order. In this respect he enjoys a high place in Indian English novel. Harish Raizada in her article in “Bhaban Bhattacharya”. A Novelist of social ferment” remarks: “very few Indian writers are his equal in his faithful and sober depiction of the horrors characteristic of the dying alien rule and the old mode of life, very few have
visited such lower depths of society and been so ruthless in tearing the mask from avaricious vultures who live on human flesh”(19).

From the point of view of technique too, Bhattacharya’s novels are praiseworthy. His novels are replete with quick narration, clear insights interlaced with a racy style. He is very sharp in grasping the meaning and matrix of movements in society and registers them in his works.

Kushwant Singh was born in 1915 in Hadali, the Punjab, and was educated at the Government College, Lahore, and at the King’s College and the Inner Temple in London. He practised at the Lahore High Court for several years before joining the Indian Ministry of External Affairs in 1947. He was sent on diplomatic duty to Canada and London and later went to Paris to work with the UNESCO.

Kushwant Singh started his career as a journalist with the All India Radio in 1951. He was the founder editor of Yojana, The Illustrated Weekly of India, The National Herald, and the Hindustan Times, and chief editor of New Delhi. Singh has written for all the major national dailies in India and abroad and has made several T.V. and Radio appearances. He is India’s best known columnist and journalist.

He is also writer of eminence. He has done enduring and memorable work in the field of Sikhsh history and biography. His major works in non-fiction include History of the Sikhs in II volumes, Ranjit Singh: Maharaja of the Punjab, Fall of the Sikh Kingdom. Indira Gandhi Returns and Nature Watch. He has also published three novels: Train to Pakistan, I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale and Delhi. Besides, he has published two collections of short stories: The Mark of Vishnu and A Bribe for the Sahib; his translations include I Take This Woman, Umrao Jan Ada - Courtesan of Lucknow, Land of the Five Rivers and Iqbal’s Dialogue with India and his essays are contained in Kushwant Singh ‘s India and Editor’s Page.

As a novelist Kushwant Singh is a realist. He has his roots in the Punjab. His training as a lawyer strengthened his innate realism. He read famous Indian
novelists-Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. After reading their works he came to the conclusion that one does not have to be a good student to be a good story teller. He won the Grove Press Award for Train to Pakistan as the best work of fiction in 1954. Khushwant Singh is on the surface a lighthearted writer who forays into light pornography quite willfully and wantonly but he is capable of seriousness and earnestness. His novels that deal with the Partition are known for their intensity and the effort to recreate understanding and emotional integration. His satire is heaped on the superficial people, and among his famous targets are the Indians who ape the British ways and he relishes their humiliation. But he records with sincerity the graces of the old world, and the brotherhood that the Hindus and Muslims felt in their life together in the undivided India; His short stories are even greater than his novels.

Manohar Malgonkar was born in 1913. He spent his boyhood in the jungles of Canara. Having graduated from the Bombay University, and became a professional big game hunter. After a few years, he joined Government service as a fierce wild life conservationist. During World War II Malgonkar worked in the Indian Army and reached the rank of Lieutenant- Colonel. His army experiences are artistically recorded in Distant Drum.

Manohar Malgonkar is an efficient story teller. His novels- *Distant Drum, Combat of Shadows, The Princess, A Bend in the Ganges, Spy in Amber, The Devil’s Wind Shalimar* and the anthology of short stories entitled *Bombay Beware* and *A Toast in Warm Wine* bear testimony to his calibre as a story teller and his impeccable craftsmanship as a fictionist. His novels are famous for variety of themes, army life and the lifestyle of princes and the communal frenzy during the partition of the country and the mutiny of 1857.

Malgonkar’s novels bear striking similarities to those of Kushuwant Singh. Like Singh, he also dwelt on the themes of tragedy, the despair and heroism of Indian Independence and the bloody communal vivisection which followed. Like Kushwant Singh, Manohar also looks for a code of heroism that
is capable of sustaining men in the Sikh traditions and in the manly peasants of Northern India, Malgonkar’s ideal code is that of the ex-British Indian army combined with the heroic virtues of the old Indian aristocracy.


Azadi is a monumental novel which realistically deals with the theme of Partition that has also been dealt with in Kushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan, Manohar Malgonkar’s A Bend in the Ganges, Abbas’s Inquilab and Attia Hossain’s Sunlight on a Broken Column. Nahal, himself a refugee, writes with remarkable penetration, realism and convincingness. Azadi won the Sahitya Akademi award for the year 1977. Compared to other novels on the theme of the Partition of India, it is a more elaborate fictional account of the holocaust in Indian English literature.

Arun Joshi was born in 1939. He hails from an enlightened family. His father was vice-chancellor of the Punjab University. Arun Joshi obtained an engineering degree from Kansas and a degree in Industrial Management from the M.I.T. of Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1957, he worked for a brief period in a mental hospital in the USA where he happened to be in touch with schizophrenics. His experiences in the hospital treating mental illnesses greatly impacted his young and impressionistic mind and later had a bearing on his creative craftsmanship. All his key characters, Sindi Oberai in The Foreigner, Billy Biswas in The Strange Case Of Billy Biswas, Rathan Rathore in The Apprentice and Som Bhaskar in The Last Labyrinth depict the inner life within the underworld of the soul divided against itself. His fictional works have an existential flavour, as he has been influenced by Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and Soren Kierkegard.

Joshi was also influenced by the Bhagavad Gita and Mahatma Gandhi. To him, Hinduism provides an existence oriented philosophy because it
attaches much value to the right way to live not just exist. All his novels concentrate on man’s alienation, his awareness of his rootlessness and the consequent loneliness and anxiety that envelops man in a highly materialistic self-centred and corrupt society. He delves deep into the human soul divided against itself and articulates its urges and aspirations with rare psychological insight. He is not only a connoisseur of souls divided against themselves but also of the doomed contemporary superficial society in which man has to exist. His novels present an existential vision of life which is more emphatically concerned with the search for the essence of human living and the need for the acculturation of man to establish him in his roots, self and peace. What differentiates Joshi’s novels is the evolution of a flawless technique which reveals his de novo vision with impeccable artistic excellence. Some of his themes and theoretical scenario owe their origin to the romantic tradition. One of his novels describes the flight of a highly educated and well-placed modernist who falls his society and his family and takes refuge in a forest in an adi vasi group much in the manner of Matthew Arnold’s “The Scholar Gypsy.” The hero of his first novel, the son of parents from different continents and races, is unable to commit himself to any relationship because of his feeling of rootlessness. Another protagonist is driven to despair because his career forces on him all sorts of moral compromise, and he finds it impossible to forge and maintain an integrated personality of his own. Arun Joshi radically departs from the technique of realistic novels variously practised by Anand, Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kushwant Singh and others.

Salman Rushdi was born in 1947 in Bombay and he along with his parents migrated to Karachi in Pakistan. He was educated at Rugby and Cambridge. Even though he returned to Karachi, he finally settled in London as an expatriate. Endowed with the comprehensive knowledge of India’s Partition and its subsequent horrors, vivid creative imagination, fecundity and creativity, unfailing command over language to express various nuances of characters in the catastrophic situation of rootlessness, loss of identity and cross cultural tensions, Rushdie has so far published *Grimus, Midnight’s Children, Shame,*
The Jaguar Smile and The Satanic Verses, and Shalimar the Clown, The Moor’s Last Sigh, The Ground beneath Her Feet, Haroon and the Sea of Stories, and Futy. He is the unrepentant recipient of bouquets and brickbats for the last named novel which provoked the orthodox Muslim community internationally and attracted a fat price on his head declared by Ayotullah Komeini. It is really teasing to find this provocative writer being the author books for children also.

The content of his novels is realistic and is based mainly on contemporary history. But Rushdie has the unique knack of creating historical fantasy, combining both realism and romance. Rushdie is a brilliant novelist. He has actually conjured up a striking new genre by mixing free flight fairy-tale with savage political indictment. Rushdie’s stylistic and linguistic experiments also reveal his talent as a novelist. As a writer, Rushdie is idiosyncratic and individualistic.

Some established women novelists have made solid contributions to the domain of Indian fiction in English, like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth P. Jhabvala, Attia Hossain, Anita Desai, Nayantara Saghal, Santha Rama Ray, Kamala Das, Bharati Mutheijee, Arunthathi Roy and Kiran Desai. Indian women novelists in English have developed a style of their own. Each one is different from the other. Each one of them has her own world of experience and her own way of looking at things and of portraying characters.

Kamala Markandaya was born in 1924 in Madras and belonged to an educated Brahmin family. She was educated at the Madras University and worked for sometime on a weekly newspaper in Madras. Later, she went to London where she supported her writing by working in a solicitor’s office. Married to an Englishman and settled permanently in London as an expatriate, she wrote under her maiden name, although after marriage she is Purani Kamala Taylor. She is a prolific novelist. She discusses a wide range of themes that have universality of appeal and an inherent purpose. Her purposive direction of her creative sensibility endows her novels with a certain
representative character that marks them out as a significant entity in Indian novel in English.

She produced distinguished novels like *Nectar in a Sieve, A Handful of Rice, Some Inner Fury, A Silence of Desire*, Possession, *The Coffer Dams, The Nowhere Man, Two Virgins* and *The Golden Honeycomb*. Her novels reveal a gradual development of her fictional craftswoman ship. Her works grow in complexity, intricacy and new themes, ideas and characters are constantly brought in. She hardly repeats herself. Even the recurrent theme of the East-West encounter is treated from different angles. Markandaya is a talented craftswoman. She harnesses her techniques to communicate her tragic vision. She does not approve of art for art’s sake. She fervently thinks that literature must be purposive and play a remarkable role in the amelioration of humanity. But never is she a propagandist or didactic. While dealing with the changing life style and destiny of India, she also comments on the position of Indian expatriates in places like the UK.

Kamala Markandaya’s novels are remarkable for well-structured plots. She values highly structural tautness in the novel as an art form. The structure in most of her novels is carefully built like one in a classical play and the plot unfolds her vision step by step and there is a rapid denouement after the climax. She constructs her plots with classical simplicity and economy. There is no sub-plot no superfluity of any kind. Every occurrence and every character contributes to the development of the action.

Ruth P. Jhabvala is a Pole by parentage and was born in Germany. She got to Britain in 1939 at the age of twelve. She post graduated from the London University and married an Indian architect and has settled in India since 1951. She has little sympathy for the lay man of India and she is vehemently critical of the penury and economic backwardness of India. She does not seem to have that much compassion for the common man in India. She has a lot in common with a westernized Indian woman whose company alone she enjoys. She has huge difficulty in adjusting with the Indian situation.
Ruth Jhabvala holds a unique position in the realm of Indian fiction in English. A European sealed in India, she is free from the tendency of the regional writer to romanticize her subject matter. At the same time, she cannot be as remote from the Indian scene as the western writer who flits in search of material. Her Indian perception combined with her involvement in the Indian situation leads to an objectivity and detachment rare even in Indians writing in English. H.M. Williams in Indo-Anglican Literature 1800-1970: A Survey remarks that Ruth P. Thabvala living in Delhi in the years after Independence had the opportunities of exercising her powers of close observation on a milieu that changes chameleon—like from local to cosmopolitan, from traditional to modern and from native to sophisticated.

A prolific writer, she has dwelt on personal relationship, man-woman relationship and domestic life in her novels like To Whom She Will, The Nature of Passion, Esmond in India, The Householder, Get Ready for Battle, A Backward Place, A New Dominion, Heat and Dust, and short stories collected in An experience of India, Like Rink, Like Fishes and A Stranger Climate.

As a novelist Jhabvala has been compared with Jane Austen. She views life in modern Delhi with amused yet detached interest and she lights upon what is bizarre, what is knotted with self-deception and contradiction, what is ludicrous, what is fantastic and once in a while very occasionally even what is perilously close to tragedy. Jhabvala is a keen and minute observer of the Indian Scene and Indian character. She exposes the foibles and eccentricities of her characters in a humorous and ironic manner.

Attia Hossain with her novel Sunlight on A Broken Column and a few short stories collected in Phoenix Fled, created a lasting impact and secured a permanent place in Indian English Literature. Living through the Partition, she made the conscious decision to stay back in India. She chronicled the changes in the Muslim familial and social milieu. The novel deals with a young woman’s personal crisis set against the larger historical background of the independence movement in India. It records the growing up of Laila, an orphan
daughter in a rich joint family of landowning eminent Muslims; very sensitively and intimately she captures the slow changes that come over the personal life style of the orthodox Muslims, and the pulls of property and affection on boys and girls, the strangle-hold of a woman-oppressive social tradition, and so oh. She subtly presented the changing Hindu-Muslim relationship, the growing tensions between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, and the change from the feudal set up to the democratic political set up where the scion of a taluqdar family has to enter the election fray to become an MLA competing with any common Tom, Dick or Harry!

Anita Desai was born in 1937. She is the daughter of a Bengali father and German mother. Anita Desai had her early education in Delhi-first at Queen Mary’s School and then at Miranda House, Delhi University, where she graduated in English in 1957.

Anita Desai’s way of life is essentially western and the language barrier perhaps explains her almost total unawareness of the strength and beauty of Indian writers like Munshi Prem Chand. She was the daughter of a Bengali father and a German mother. Emily Bronte, George Eliot and D.H. Lawrence have influenced her. Anita Desai wrote famous novels like City, the Peacock Where Shall We Go This Summer?, Voices in the City Bye-Bye Blackbird, Fire on the Mountain, Clear Light of Day, The Village by the Sea, In Custody, Baumgartner’s Bombay, Fasting, Feasting and Journey to Ithaca. Iyengar calls her an original talent that has the courage to go its own way (26). As a novelist, she is an innovator. She is more involved in depicting the mental rather than physical experiences of her characters, mental anguish rather than the pang of hunger. As a novelist, she has propounded her own views. She found English to be a suitable link language. She is very delighted to be writing in a language as rich, as flexible, supple adaptable, varied and vital as English. It is the language of both reason and instinct, of sense and sensibility.

As a novelist, Anita Desai has no emphasis on plot construction with the traditional notion of having a beginning, middle and an end. She lays utmost
emphasis on the form, pattern, rhythm and the singleness of vision in a novel. She says that she is not particular about the selection of themes. To Desai, writing is not an act of deliberation, reason or choice. It is a mailer of instinct, silence, compulsion and waiting. The most conspicuous feature of Anita Desai’s art is the delineation of character. She portrays with remarkable ease and adroitness female characters who live in separate, closed, sequestered world of existential problems and passions. Yet that is not to say that she is a woman’s novelist or a feminist. In her later career, she produced novels on men and their conflicts with themselves, spiritual pursuit as well as material life. She comments that she is not primarily interested in feminism, and she makes it clear that she wants to represent in her novels the whole of life, not just female emotional life.

Anita Desai holds a distinguished place in modern Indian English novel. In her novels she achieves that difficult task of moulding the English language and idiom to her purpose without a self-conscious attempt of sounding Indian. Known for her sensitivity in the structuring of the pattern of her novels, integrity of artistic vision, creative mind, sharp observation, awareness and competent craftsmanship, she has turned out to be a much sought after writer. And Anita Desai is a talented novelist who has imparted psychological depth to the Indian English novel. She explores with rare insight and observation the complexities and intricacies of the human psyche. Her favourite themes are man-woman relationship, alienation, East-West encounter, violence and death suffused with psychological implications.

Kamala Das’s novels are the expression of the sexual exploitation of women and theft quest for liberation and the search for identity. Like her autobiography My Story the theme of her novel is autobiographical as her own life has been an eternal quest for identity. She is indeed best known as a poet in English, and much of her poetry is described as confessional poetry. She is a woman of exceptional courage who talks with a provoking honesty and intensity of female sexuality, flaunting woman’s desires and disappointments
with men. Her novel *Alphabet of Lust* is a robust, plain-speaking work, and she explores the physical urges and their disappointment and the consequences. She has two collections of short stories to her credit- *Padmavathy the Harlot and Other Stories* and *A Doll for a Child Prostitute*. These short stories - a couple of them as short as one and a half or two pages, some much longer, and a few quite longer. Their themes are daring, dealing with the traditional life of Kerala with explosive frankness and criticism, homosexuality, and the personal lives of prostitutes. *A Doll for a Child Prostitute* is a marvelous creation, poetic in spite of its poetic theme, laying bare the human heart, hard as a rock behind a feminine front, or gentle and soft behind a rough skin and lustful aggression in a police official.

Nayantara Sahgal born in 1927 is one of the most important writers of this period because she concentrates on the political and social changes in the post-independence era. Being the niece of Jawaharlal Nehru she has an insider’s vantage position in observing national developments. She makes good use of it in her fiction. She had her higher education in the United States of America, and to some extent this influenced her outlook on life. For instance, the Feminist Movement was getting into stride when she was in the States and she was influenced by it. She developed a philosophy of man-woman relationship which questions the traditional Indian concept of womanhood.

She spoke of her generation thus in her autobiographical work *Prison and Chocolate Cake*: “We are truly the children of Gandhi’s India, born at a time when India was being reborn from an incarnation of darkness into one of light. Our growing up was India’s growing up into political maturity.” (32) She was saddened by the decline of India into political highhandedness and the mire of selfishness and the playground of ego clashes. Her second autobiographical volume *From Fear Set Free* was published in 1962, and the first had been published in 1954. Apart from this she published numerous articles and historical texts, including *The Freedom Movement in India* (1970), *A Voice of Freedom* (1977) and *Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power* (1982).
wrote about ten novels, published a collection of her articles and commentaries, and recently she has produced a book on Jawaharial Nehru. Her novels are *A Time to Be Happy* (1958), *This Time of Morning* (1965), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977), *Rich Like Us* (1985), *Plans for Departure* (19?6), and *Mistaken Identify* (1988). They closely capture the plummeting political and social and moral values of contemporary society, and each novel has got a couple of sensible and selfless and patriotic people who debate among themselves the contradictory situations. *In Rich Like Us*, dealing with what she called the pseudo-emergency, she ruthlessly exposes the crass selfishness and the mindless brutality of the ambitious neo-rich and the new leaders. In one of her novels the protagonist is a lady who is caught in the tangles of a scheming husband who seeks to cripple the existence of his wife who seeks a divorces from him-and his clever plan is to make her rich in the provisions of his will and impoverish her practical life!

Suzanna Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize for fiction in 1997 for her *The God of Small Things*. She was the child of divorced parents, and her mother took her back to a rural part of Kerala which was her native place. She lived on her own from the age of sixteen till her first marriage. She is an architect by training, but she has turned to various fields like political journalism, drama acting and production, writing for television, and after winning her Booker Prize in 1997 she has turned away from creative writing and devoted her energy to social activism, and busied herself with movements like building dams that ruin people’s lives, nuclear weapons, the Kashmir question, and campaign against Anna Hazarre’s brand of activism. She loves controversy and has of course been accused of creating controversies for attention-grabbing. Her novel is basically very autobiographical, dealing with homes broken by divorces and such other domestic tragedies that are multiplying today.’

Kiran Desai, born in 1971 as one of the four children of Anita Desai, has made a mark in the field of Indian fiction in English. Her work *The Inheritance*
of Loss has elevated her to world fame winning her the Booker Prize in 2006. She has so far produced only two novels. The first, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, is a farcical satire on modern life, presenting an anti-hero who however takes a bold step in quitting the company of fellow humans. The second novel is a far more ambitious and well researched novel that deals with two long generations of life in contemporary India.

This thesis takes the fictional young Indian English writer Vikram Seth for its theme.

A good number of writers have written on Vikram Seth. Nandini Chandru in *A Different Gaze: Vikram Seth’s Journey thorough Mainland China* has dwelt at seth’s experiences in china and his journey through the heartland of china. This piece of writing has not focused on the themes of Vikram Seth’s fiction as well as poetry. It is only a travel book. And GJV prsad in *The solitary Wanderer the Seth of the Garden* has said that Vikram seth is a poet’s poet, someone who is so much in control of language and who seems to be in love with its rhythms; that one has to listen to the music of his verge and learn from his craft. This compliment could however also imply the critical position that it is not important to hear what he says and the poet himself does not care the content as much he does about from, that his poems have nothing to convey (33)”. Thus GJV Prasad has laid emphasis only on the form of Vikram Seth’s poetry including *The Golden Gate“* a novel in verge. But the researcher attempts to explore the themes of Vikram Seth’s works.

This thesis focuses on the theme of vikram Seth’s novels which has not been done by the above mentioned writers.

Besides, Rowena Hill in *Vikram Seth’s the Golden Gate: A quick Look* has said that “after going through the novel, it is hard to see how vikram Seth can be considered as an Indian writer, except by accident of birth. There are only a few Indian references in the text such as the “Taste of Honey” and the charioteer metaphor and the non-violent attitude of the place marchers have obvious Gandhian connection” (87). Rowena Hill makes an attempt to study
Vikram Seth in the perspective of nationality. Throwing light on the characteristic features of nationalities, the writer endeavours to put Vikram Seth in that context. With regard to the novel *An Equal music*” by Seth, R.K. Kani has said in *Music Lovers sealed off from the world outside* that “the novel celebrates the music of the late 18th and early 19th century. The author successfully captures the emotional resonance and technical knowledge of this music and has directly confined his range to this period” (22). The writer here has concentrated on Seth’s handling of the subject of western music. And no effort has been made to view Seth’s literary creativity in the backdrop of his themes. Besides, R. Radhiga priyadharshini in her work entitled *The Recent Fiction: Mythical Intention in Vikram Seth’s A Suitable Boy* has brought the mythical elements in his second novel. She has undertaken an exploration of mythology in the second novel of vikram Seth. And pier Paolo piciuco in the work entitled *Elizabethan Influences in Vikram Seth’s A suitable Boy* has undertaken a comparative study of Elizabethan works and Vikram seth’s works.

Vikram Seth was born in Calcutta in 1952. His father Prem Seth was an executive with the Bath shoe company and his mother Leila was the first woman judge on the Bench of the Delhi High Court as well the first woman to become chief justice of a state’s High Court, at Simla. She studied Law in London, while she was pregnant with Seth’s younger brother and came first in her bar examinations conducted only weeks after she had delivered her second child. Vikram Seth’s younger brother, Shantum, leads Buddhist meditational tours. His younger sister, Aradhana is a film-maker married to an Austrian diplomat and she has worked on Deepa Mehta’s movies “Earth” and “Fire”.

Vikram Seth was educated at Michael’s High School in Patna, and The Doon School in Debra Dun. He later went to the Tombridge School in Kent, England, to complete his A- levels and then he did Philosophy, Politics and Economics at the Corpus Christi College at Oxford. Later he undertook doctoral studies at the Stanford University where he spent eleven years (1974-
1986) working on his doctoral thesis. Along with this, he did poetic studies as a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Creative Writing (1977-78). While at Stanford, he also studied Mandarin language. When he was a Wallace Stegner Fellow, he worked with the poet Timothy Steele. Steele’s traditionally structured verse with formal rhyme and metre inspired Seth to adopt a similar formal discipline in his own poetry. In 1980-82 Vikram Seth did extensive work in China gathering data for his intended doctoral dissertation in economic on Chinese population planning. He was attached to the Nanjing University and became fluent in Mandarin within six months later translating Chinese as well as Hindi poetry into English. He took advantage of his Chinese language fluency to return home to Delhi overland via Xinjiang and Tibet, these experiences resulting in From Heaven Gate: Travels through Sinkian and Tibet (1983), a combination of travel narrative and personal memoir written at the suggestion of his father.

Vikram Seth, a polyglot, detailed in an interview (in the year 2005) in the Australian magazine Good Weekend that he has studied several languages including Welsh, German and later French in addition to Mandarin, Urdu and Hindi. He plays the Indian flute and the Cello and sings German lieder, especially Schubert. Vilcram Seth is a poet, novelist, travel writer, librettist, children’s writer, biographer and memorist.

Vikram Seth lived in London for many years and he now maintains residences near Salisbury, England, where he is a partipant in local literary and cultural events. He bought and renovated the house of the Anglican poet George Herbert in 1996 and in Delhi also he owns a house where he lives with his parents while on visits India and maintains his extensive library and papers. A glance at his poetic collections is attempted here.

Mappings has a total of 23 poems, of which two are translation. 21 poems have a good mix. The poet points out in a brief foreword that these poems were composed when he was in his twenties and when he was a student in England. In this poetic collection there are references to places such as Panipat, Departure Lounga, Grand Canyon, Home Thoughts from the Bay, From Mount Tamalpais, Anubode and Quakina Bridge and references to seasons and nature, such as “A Winter Word”, “Rain”, “The Yellow Cricket”, “At Evening”, “Moonless Night”, “Moths”, and “Tomatoes”. And what dominates most of the poems of is a reflective spirit and Seth’s desire to understand and identify human relationships. In fact a probe into human relationships is an important trend in the poems. Allied to this are such sentiments as desire for attachment and adjustment and Operation of such feelings as pleasure and bliss on the one hand, and bitterness and emptiness on the other. Strong sensitivity to nature and nature’s beauty, understanding through time and change across time, references to routine things of life and attachment to live, sense of distance and nearness, personal and impersonal assessment of relationship, a knowing sense of pain hidden by levity, changing mindset linked by different places, incapacity to fight time and counter death, awareness of final extinction and how that can be avoided, a strong social awareness about misery and how people are deprived, and about life and about hope and uncertainty-these are various strands that pervade the poetic structure. On the whole one can state that the poems show a young, sensitive soul ranging from love to nature and mutability, in a mindset of both levity and seriousness and in a frame seemingly flippant but ruminative.

The next collection of poems called The Humble Administrator’s Garden comprise 33 poems in three divisions—“Wutong”, “Neem” and “Live-oak” the names of three different frees denoting Vikram Seth’s differing connections in China, India and America. They also indicate the poet’s keen sensitiveness and intimacy with nature, which form an important structural element in the poems here, and happened in the earlier volume too. They also continue the poet’s habit of writing in rhymes, half-rhymes or in prose pattern
and with wide-ranging references invariably with a strong personal point of view.

The next poetic collection is titled *All You Who Sleep Tonight* and it has five subsections, a total of 53 poems, including 20 poems of four lines each, entitled “Quatrains”. The sub-sections are (i) “Romantic Residue”, (ii) “In Other Voices”, (iii) “In other Places” and (iv) “Meditations of the Heart”. The structural trends are similar to what is given earlier in the previous poems, related to love and relationship, to nature and to a sense of distress and pain and death at one level, and happiness, playfulness and a sense of relaxation on the other. At the same time, there is strong social awareness along with the mind’s capacity to be reflective about situations, and to accept distress etc as part of living.

*Three Chinese Poets* is the next in the series of the anthology of poems. In this collection Vikram Seth has translated a section of the poetry of three Chinese poets- Wang Lei, Li Bai and Du Fu into English. The three were contemporaries and are considered to be amongst the greatest Chinese poets, though Du Fu did not receive much recognition for his literary creations in his life time. The three have been described as Buddhist recluse, Taoist immortal and Confucian sage respectively.

Although this trichotomy has been criticized as simplistic and artificial, it can act as a guiding figure. They lived near the end of the Tang Dynasty and the political strife then brough about an effect in all their lives and this impact is evident in the poetry of all the three. There is no certainty over whether Wang Wei and Li Bai met but they had a mutual companion in Meng Haoran.

In the introductory part of *Three Chinese Poets*, Seth dwells on the impact of translations on him. He says that sometimes he has been so touched by a translation that he learnt another language to read the original and he doubts whether he would be able to do this as much as he wished to do. Still, he states that Charles Johnston’s translation of Alexander Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*, Richard Wilbur’s translation of *Moliere’s Tartuffe* and Robert
Fitzgerald’s translation of *The Iliad* have assisted him to a great extent to venture into the domain of translation.

Another poetic collection called *Beastly Tales From Here and There*, as Vikram Seth points out, is a group of ten animal fables in rhymed couplets. The fables are in the grand tradition of the *Panchatantra*, the incomparable work by Pandit Vishnu Sharma belonging to the Sanskrit literature of the 1 century where the subjects of philosophy, psychology, politics, music, astronomy and human relationship have been combined to delight all readers, children, youngsters and adults. The other work to which the similarities of the Beastly Tales can be traced is T.S. Eliot’s *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats*. In Vishnu Sharma animals in general are the humanized characters and in Eliot cats in particular have been humanized and they share the characteristics of love and hatred, compassion and wit, courage and cowardice, and generosity and meanness with human beings as whole and provide a picture of life, viewed with great sympathy, humour and insight. The tales in the Beastly Tales are also humanized. In addition to that, human details such as human habits, conversation, relationship behaviour, mindset, etc on the whole, form the content and the frame. Thus the beasts are not only humanized, they become by themselves human beings with all their multiple activities and manners and with all their involvements in the daily process of life.

The aim of this research work is to study the evolution of Vikram Seth as a novelist. So far he has come out with three novels namely *The Golden Gate* published in 1986 which is a novel in verse, *A Suitable Boy* which is a novel of 1349 pages completed in 1993 and *An Equal Music* which is his latest novel released in 1999. The researcher endeavours to depict Vikram Seth’s evolution as a novelist by undertaking a thematic study of these three fictional works.

Seth’s first novel *The Golden Gate* was published in 1986. Composed of no less than 690 rhyming tetrameter sonnets (more than 7000 lines) it describes the love and life of key characters John, Janet Hawakaya, Phil, Liz and Ed.
Gore Vidal has called it “The Great California Novel”(50). The novel has 594 sonnets written in iambic tetrameter and it follows the fourteen-line stanza pattern of *Eugene Onegin*. In his next novel, *A Suitable Boy*, Seth combines satire and romance to even greater effect in what became one of the most popular epic narratives of the late twentieth century. This heavy weight novel, described by one critic as three and half pounds of perfection, has earned Seth comparison with Leo Tolstoy, Charles Dickens and George Eliot. Its realism which took Seth almost a decade to write was for many readers of Indian fiction in English a welcome break from the magical realism of that other heavy weight author from the sub-continent Salman Rushdie.

Set in Brahmpur, *A Suitable Boy* uses the taboo relationship between a boy and a girl as metonym through which to explore the post-independence conflict in India between Hindus and Muslims. The novel centres on four families: the Kapoors, the Mehras, the Chatterjees and the Khans. Mrs Rupa Mehra is looking for a suitable boy for her younger daughter Lata. “Suitable” here means Hindu, but Lata, it seems, has set her eyes on a Muslim boy. The repercussions of this relationship consume one thousand three hundred and forty-nine pages.

Seth’s next novel, *An Equal Music*, is another romantic novel but this time without the satire of *A Suitable Boy*. This novel centres on two gifted musicians: Michael Holme and Julia McNicael. While Michael works on a Beethoven piece for the Maggiore Quartet, he grows increasingly preoccupied with the recollection of his student days in Vienna where he had met Julia. When the two meet by a chance in London their relationship is rekindled. One of the most impressive aspects of this novel is the way in which it manages to convey music through language. While Seth is modest about his musical abilities, the fact that he was commissioned to write a libretto which was later published as Anon and the Dolphin for the English National opera in 1994, suggests he is no novice. *An Equal Music* takes a conventional romantic plot
and renders it compelling and novel through the seductive clarity and precision of its prose.

This dissertation apart from the introductory chapter where the growth of Indian fiction in English is discussed to place Vikram Seth in his context, and the Summation, consists of four chapters: “Love and Life in San Francisco”, “History, Politics and Romance in A Suitable Boy”, “An Equal Music: A Critical Study” and Thematic Analysis of Seth’s Novels.