CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION: Writing From the Margin

Beginning with Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864), the Indian English novel today portrays all possible contours of Indian life in all its dimensions at the social, economic, political, cultural, psychological and spiritual levels using a number of narrative techniques and strategies. Of all the genres of literature, fiction reflects most authentically the milieu of the age to which it belongs. Indian English fiction which germinated as a seedling in the novel mentioned above, was nurtured by the great trio- Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao in the nineteen thirties. With the overwhelming appreciation received by Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (Winner of the Booker Prize in 1981) in the West, it took a new turn during this period. Prestigious firms on both sides of the Atlantic publish the works of the Indian English writers. It is heartening to note that Indian English writers are getting published abroad and receiving honours and awards while competing with the writers in English elsewhere in the world. India has contributed significantly to World Literature in English (we may say “International English Literature”, Bruce King’s suggested nomenclature in the book edited by him titled, *New National and Post-colonial Literatures: An Introduction*, 1996). This contribution has been chiefly through Indian English fiction. It has matured into a many-branched tree bending under the opulence of plenty of novels that have bloomed since the 1930s. Novelists like Khushwant Singh, Attia Hosain, Manohar Malgonkar, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amit Chaudhuri, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Arvind Adiga, Chetan Bhagat, Rana Dasgupta, and many others have
revolutionized Indian English fiction. The new writers have challenged the “Imperial Centre” and subverted the notion of “standard” English. The novelists of the post-Independence period have authenticated the “english” tongue in which they write. Stretching from eighteen sixties to the famous “trio”, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, who made their beginning in nineteen thirties, followed by the partition novelists like Khushwant Singh, B. Rajan, Manohar Malgonkar, Attia Hossain in the forties and fifties and women novelists like Kamala Makandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, and Anita Desai in the sixties and seventies, Indian English fiction has won much acclamation. Finally, it has won international recognition in the nineteen eighties and nineties with the achievements of novelists like Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and a few others. Finally Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chetan Bhagat, Rana DasGupta, to name only a few, have arrived in the Indian literary scene. The purpose of this chapter is to make a diachronic study of Indian English fiction- from its inception in 1860s to its opulent growth in the hands of the novelists of the nineteen eighties and after. An in-depth study of the novels of Shashi Deshpande calls for such an analysis, as the tradition of Indian English fiction intersects with the individual talent.

Modern Indian English novels, therefore, mirror the dilemmas, paradoxes, contradictions, predicaments of human existence, bringing forth the eternal dichotomy between illusion and reality, hope and despair, ambition and disillusionment. The novels of the post-1980s fiction incorporates various and disparate human emotions. The result is the vibrating and pulsating nature of the Indian English novel portraying the multidimensional facets of life in all its variety and splendour. Indian English Literature generally refers to the body of work by
writers in India who write in the 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, writers who are of Indian origin such as Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie, who were born in India, and have settled abroad.

Now, a few words about the inception of this genre in the early decades. In the early years the Indian English novel had been held strongly by the spiritual prose of Rabindranath Tagore and the anti-violence declarations preached by Mahatma Gandhi. The early novels in English written in India, to put them chronologically, are mainly the following: Rajmohan’s Wife by Bankim Chandra chatterjee (1864); The Hindu Wife by Rajlakhshmi Devi (1876); Bianca by Toru Dutta (1878); Roshinara by Kali Krishna Lahiri (1881); Bijoy Chand by H. Dutt (1888); Kamala, a Story of Hindu Life by Krupabai Satthianadhan (1894); Saguna, A Story of native Christian Life by the former (1895); Sarata and Hingana by Khetrapal Chakrabarty (1895); Padmini by T. Ramakrishna (1903); The Slave Girl of Agra by Ramesh Chandra Dutta (1909); Nur Jahan by Jogendra Singh (1909); The Lake of Palms by Ramesh Chandra Dutta (1909); Nasrin by Jogendra Singh (1915); Thus, the pioneers of the novel in English made their appearance in the last quarter of the 19th Century. Makarand Paranjape provides an apt allegorical reading of Rajmohan’s Wife which happens to be the first Indian English novel:

I would not like to engage with Aijaz Ahmad’s incisive and relentless interrogation of “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness” (see Chapter 3 of In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures), except to say that we would do well to question binary
oppositions between the so called “First” and “Third” world, not to speak of singular and reductive ways of theorising their literatures. But, having accepted that national allegories are common to both Western, canonical and other postcolonial literatures, I think it would be useful to see if Rajmohan’s Wife can be read in this manner.... The trail of an epoch making novel like Midnight’s Children (1981) can thus be traced as far back as 1864.

(http://www.makarand.com/acad/AllegoryofRajmohansWife.htm)

As Uma Parameshwaran rightly observes, the Indian English writers in the earliest epoch “responded actively to certain kinds of English literature and Philosophy, such as romantic idylls, philosophical treaties, idealistic outpourings, reenactments of history. This accounts for their interest in Scott, Dickens, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Ruskin and Macaulay, and their imitation of them” (16). Under the influence of the popular British writers, these women novelists imitated their style to voice their concern for and sympathize with the suffering of Indian women rather than to censure the society. As early as 1894 in Kamala, Krupabai Satthianadhan explored the cultural clash suffered by a Hindu woman who is given a western education in India, and the experience of being caught between two cultures has remained a prominent theme in the writings of Indian woman. Toru Dutt (1856 – 1877) left behind two unpublished novels—Le Journal de Mademoiselle d’Arvers (thought to be the first novel in French by an Indian writer) and Bianca, or the Young Spanish Maiden (thought to be the first novel in English by an Indian woman writer). Dutt’s attitudes, feelings and sentiments, which are characteristically Indian in all respects, manifest in the characters of her heroines.
Shevanthi Bai Nikambe is another novelist who is no less renowned than her predecessors, Toru Dutt and Krupabai. As a champion of feminism, she combated injustice and ill-treatment meted out to simple, sober housewives. Her novel *Ratnabai* portrays a girl by the same name who is persecuted by her relatives of her father-in-law for going to school for higher education. This novel voices the need for emancipation of Indian women of that period.

While the social awareness of these early novels cannot be denied, Indian English novel witnessed an unprecedented growth of socially committed writing only during the 1930s. The 1930s marks the serious beginning of Indian English novel at the hands of Anand, Narayan and Rao, which prompted William Walsh to say that it was the age of ‘genuine novelists’ (63). The literary historiography cited above is needed to trace the literary history of the early phases down to the 1980s, but it is not all, for “Indian writing in English produced over the last hundred odd years does not reveal a homogeneous continuity, but rather a critical cyclical continuity” (Raghavacharyulu, 33). The Indian English novel and its eventful historical journey had begun with a bang and in the advancing years this genre has won much fame both at home and abroad. With the bursting in of ‘colonialism’ novel writing in India took a significant turn. With Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, the historical journey of the Indian English novel took its gigantic strides into the world of post-colonialism. There was an era when Indians were diffident about expressing themselves in English which was an alien tongue. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Toru Dutt and others tried to write like the Imperialists. The imperial education system installed a “standard” version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalized all “variants” as impurities. Therefore most of the novelists mentioned above tried to conform to
standard version of English in their writings. The past lured them and the themes they chose to address in their novels were reminiscences of the past. T. Ramkrishna's *Padmini* is a story of a tyrant king's love for Padmini who rejects him in favour of the impoverished but noble Chennappa. This historical romance enshrines the memory of the Vijaynagar Empire and the battle of Talikote in 1565 which brought an end of that empire. R. C. Dutt's *The Slave Girl of Agra*, Jogendra Singh's *Nurjahan* and K. K. Lahiri's *Roshinara* are the novels which take us back to the days of Mughal rule. R. C. Dutt's *The Lake of Palms* (1909) is the most daring of these novels. It is based on the social life in Bengal toward the end of the nineteenth century and its actions culminate in the marriage of a young widow, Sudha. But the critical insight and exploration of various facets of human psyche were lacking in their prose writings. The critical questioning and rejection of this notion of universalism marks the beginning of post-colonial phase. Thanks to the effort of the "trio", primarily R. K. Narayan, the novelists of the late twentieth century to the present decade could use English in a natural way. C. D. Narasimhaiah pays a glowing tribute to Narayan acknowledging our debt to him in the following words:

He has evolved an altogether new genre of English, Indian English in the best sense of the term. It is the kind of English which has grown out of the Indian soil during the past 150 years. Its virtue is its freedom and flexibility. It is simple, direct, fluent and reflects the intonations of the speaking voice, the rank and station of the characters who speak it. (Naik 196)
We have four generations of Indian English novelists during the last six decades of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century: for example, Mulk Raj Anand, R K Narayan, Raja Rao, Khuswant Singh, K.A. Abbas and a few others belong to the first generation. While Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Manohar Malgonkar, Shashi Deshpande and a few others belong to the second generation, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Sashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, Allan Sealy, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Raj Kamal Jha and a few others can be taken as belonging to the third generation novelists who arrived on the scene in the 1980’s and after. And finally we have Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakurni, Chetan Bhagat and a few others can be said to belong to the fourth generation of Indian English novelties. The Post-Independence era has witnessed the emergence of a large number of novelists whose works offer “interesting insights into the many ways in which the standard authentic notion of language has been subverted” (Ashcroft, et. al, 40). Their novels reveal divergent trends; they deal with complex themes related to gender, caste, colour, diaspora, feminism and even same-sex relationship.

As argued by Meenakshi Mukherjee, in Chapter II of The Twice Born Fiction, the Indian novel in English as compared to novels in other Indian languages had a relatively slow start. Starting with K. S. Venkataramani’s Murugan, the Tiller (1927), essentially a work which highlights Gandhian economics, the classical period of the Indian English fiction saw the emergence of the three great masters – Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Mulk Raj Anand’s (1905 - 2004) first five novels, Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936), Two leaves and a Bud (1937), The Village (1939) and Across the Black Waters
(1940), simply endorse the critical judgment of his being a novelist-par-
excellence. The protagonists in Anand’s novels belong either to the class of
suffering human beings (like Bakha, Munoo or Gangu) or to the sensitive souls
who suffer because they see others suffer (e.g. Lalu and Ananta). Anand takes
great pains to portray the emotional problems of these human beings who are
perhaps non-entities in the eyes of the society. The author is aware of their great
potentials which often remain unrealized as they are treated as animals of
burden by a cruel and callous society. In their struggle to free themselves from
this situation and create an everyday life for themselves they become heroic. E.
M. Forster in his ‘preface’ to Anand’s Untouchable, makes an appreciable
comment:

Avoiding rhetoric and circumlocution, it has gone straight to the
heart of its subject... and it is to the directness of his attack that
Mr. Anand’s success is probably due... Untouchable could only
have been written by an Indian, and by an Indian who observed
from outside. No European, however sympathetic, could have
created the character of Bakha.... And no untouchable could
have written this book, because he would have been involved in

In the novel, Coolie, “Untouchable” and “Coolie” become metaphors of
enslavement, subjugation, servitude and abject poverty. Anand does not
glamorize India but presents life as it is. As K. Nagarajan remarks, he “sees life in
the raw and exposes it mercilessly...”(qtd. in Spencer 36 – 37). The Old Woman
and the Cow (1960) is the only novel where a woman becomes the central
character. This novel portrays in a unique way the gender relation that prevails in
the Indian Social System. After her marriage to the peasant boy Panchi, Gauri adjusts patiently to a life of unremitting hardships, pain and she even digests the insults thrust on her by her mother-in-law and her husband. Ultimately, guided by her own inner voice, she refuses to surrender to further humiliation and oppression as she had hitherto been doing. It is here that the parallel of Sita myth that has been drawn in the novel gets disentangled. Walsh detects in Anand “the habit of preaching at the reader” (64) but has to conclude that “when his imagination burns and the dross of propaganda is consumed...there is no doubt that he is a novelist of considerable power... Untouchable strikes us as the picture of place, of a society, and certain persons not easily to be forgotten” (64). It is an indictment of a decadent and perverted orthodoxy and yet it does not come to us as sermon as the novelist has succeeded in identifying himself with the hero totally. Rightly does Saros Cowasjee remark: “So strong indeed is the identification with his hero that for the best part of the novel we forget the presence of the novelist.” (53) Coolie is about twice as long as Untouchable and covers several years and a large space. While caste system is the oppressive, victimizing force in the first novel, the second shows the tyranny of money. Perhaps Anand wants to show that one can survive the tyranny of caste, but not the oppression of money that destroys the poor. Coolie too, like Untouchable, is an indictment of society as a whole. Swiftness and diffusion characterize the novel and the horrible and holy, the inhuman and the humane, the sordid and the beautiful mingle to present before us a novel which comes so close to actuality. P.K. Rajan finds "a unity of both a naturalistic representation of the brutal face of capitalism and a romantic lament for the tragedy of innocence" (58). To Marlene
Fisher, the novel brings "a sense of movement and its attendant color and restlessness – not only of Munoo, but of all India." (38-39).

R. K. Narayan (1906 – 2000) introduced his readers to the comedy and pathos of human existence with his portrayal of the common middle class people from 'Malgudi'. No doubt, Graham Greene in his introduction to The Bachelor of Arts writes: "Year by year Narayan has peopled Malgudi with characters we never forget ... Sadness and humour in the later books go hand in hand like twins..." (xiv – xv). With Swami and Friends (1935), The Bachelor of Arts (1937), A Tiger for Malgudi (his latest novel), Narayan has opened a new vista in this genre. Narayan also portrays the changing status of women in Indian society in a realistic way in almost all his novels. In The Dark Room (1938), Savitri's husband has an extra-marital affair. Savitri detests it and leaves her home in utter disgust. But like most Indian women, she too, is tormented by her longing for her children and has no option but to accept her lot and to return to her husband. The Guide, also presents a similar picture of marital discord. The heroine, Rosie, is a dancer. Her husband, Marco, dislikes her passion for dancing. He hates to see her dance and denies Rosie her right to pursue her passion. Rosie takes up a challenging step and leaves the comfort of her 'doll’s house' with the tourist guide Raju. But ultimately the true realization dawns on her and she understands that she has to get her own solace and has to be her own refuge. She leaves Raju also for a newer life. Thus we find the emergence of the new woman in Narayan's much acclaimed novel. The next novel, A Painter of Signs, goes even a step further. The heroine thinks of marriage as a hindrance to her vocation. A. Hariprasanna’s essay on R. K. Narayan’s humour, shows how Narayan’s comic vision deals with both the comical and serious aspects of life. The writer’s observation on the
comic realism of the master novelist merits the appreciation of the readers: "... it is this comic realism that makes him capable of weaving an intricate web of patterns of life" (70). Similar to Thomas Hardy's Wessex, Narayan created the fictitious town of Malgudi where he set his novels. Narayan's evocation of small town life and its experiences through the eyes of the endearing child protagonist Swaminathan in *Swami and Friends* is a good sample of his writing style. In R.K. Narayan's much-admired visionary village Malgudi, the invisible men and women of the country's ever-multiplying population, come to life and in a heart-rending manner and re-enact life with all its contrariness and arbitrariness.

Raja Rao (1908 – 2006), the youngest of the trio, has made his mark in the literary history of the country with his five novels – *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1961), *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), *Comrade Kirillov* (1976) and *The Chess Master and His Moves* (1988). Rao's debut novel, *Kanthapura*, his magnum opus, mainly portrays the Freedom Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in the 1920s. William Walsh has rightly observed that the theme of *Kanthapura* is "the transfiguration of the village by the influence of Gandhi" (69). H. M. Williams goes a step further and adds that the blending of the mythical and contemporary "makes us aware of the timeless and eternal quality of the Hindu consciousness beyond the contingency of the political struggle" (48 – 49). B. K. Das in his book *Aspects of Commonwealth Literature* makes a very significant observation:

... Raja Rao has been able to create an Indian English idiom by using English in our own way that helps to establish the identity of Indian English novel different from novels written in English elsewhere in the world. Secondly, Raja Rao has been able to create
a Gandhi cult in Indian English novel by creating a myth around him through comparisons with Lord Krishna and Rama. Kanthapura almost becomes an epic in prose when characters are described in terms of Gods and demons representing good and evil, virtue and vice respectively. (123)

_The Serpent and the Rope_, published in 1960, is deeply rooted in Indian philosophy and depicts man’s quest for self-realization. The theme of the novel, as Raja Rao observed in his letter to M. K. Naik is — “… the futility and barrenness of man in human existence when man (or woman) has no deep quest, and no thirst for the ultimate. Man’s life, here in Samsara, is an august mission to find the absolute” (qtd. in Naik 84). In the same letter, the author went further and said that the next novel, _The Cat and Shakespeare_, is a sequel to _The Serpent and The Rope_ and that it takes up the theme of metaphysical quest at the point at which Rama’s Story has carried it and shows the next step in his quest (Naik 113). With the publication of _The Cat and Shakespeare_, Rao’s wish — “I would want the reader to do is to weep at every page, not for what he sees, but for what he sees he sees …” (qtd. in the publisher’s blurb) came true. This fiction, still today, remains an enigmatic work for the readers because of its subtle interplay of the serious and the ludicrous. _The Chess Master and His Moves_ is more than 700 pages and is perhaps the first part of the trilogy, the two remaining parts being _The Daughter of the Mountains_ and _A Myrobalan on the Palm of your Hand_.

Bhabani Bhattacharya deserves special mention as a socially committed novelist. A much translated novelist, he got the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1967 for his novel, _Shadows from Ladakh_. His novels in the chronological order
are: *So Many Hungers* (1947), *Music of Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), *Shadows from Ladakh* (1966) and *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978). The first three of his novels show a deep concern for the suffering humanity and a keen eye for social problems. He has attained world-wide renown and his books have appeared in twenty-six languages, sixteen of which are European. All the novels of Bhattacharya present a true picture of India and its teeming millions surging with life and substance. He does not believe in the dictum of art for art’s sake. All writing for him has a social purpose. His wide range of experience in and around the world and his close association with men, manners and their personalities have enabled him to grasp the innate significance of humanity and all this finds expression in the characters of his novels carved out with a pen that never wavers. He has caught the vein of rural speech and the informal behaviour of the people, their rustic world and their small and simple views about the great things that take place around them. He holds the view that Indian writing in English has been a decisive factor in redressing the balance of false presentation by foreign story-tellers who with their limited possibilities of true experience have seen only the surface of our way of life, failing to reach deeper into our spirit. The Bengali famine which had so devastatingly swept his own province, Bengal, in 1943, was the background to his first novel *So Many Hungers*. It was a man-made famine that took a toll of two million innocent men, women and children. The story centres round the Basu family, the peasant family, the girl Kajoli, her mother and her brother. Bhattacharya paints the naked horror of this man-made famine with a pitiless precision and cumulative detail. Srinivasa Iyengar states, “*So Many Hungers* is no doubt an impeachment of man’s inhumanity to man, but it is also a dramatic
study of a set of human beings caught in a unique and tragic predicament" (87). His second novel, *Music for Mohini*, deals with caste distinctions and poverty. *The Chicago Tribune* showered its praise on this novel by stating that India as presented by Rudyard Kipling, Rabindranath Tagore and others has become a multiple image for us. Now these diverse pictures are brought into focus by a son of the native. In a splendid novel that may rank with Pearl Buck’s *The Good Earth*, Bhabani Bhattacharya depicts modern India. In this novel, a young girl of seventeen is married in the traditional manner after observing the auspicious signs and comparing the horoscopes. Mohini goes to her new home. Jayadev the quiet scholar who lives in his ancestral village, and Mohini, the young city-bred wife of his, adapts herself very well to her new environment, are the two forces that put the village on the path of progress and modernisation. The superstitious old mother of Jayadev realises in the end her mistake and reconciles herself to the changing times. The characters of Mohini and Jayadev and Heeralal are well drawn with sculpturesque precision and facile expression.

The third novel *He who rides a Tiger* is an attack on both who profited on people’s misery during the famine and those who exploited them as caste tyrants. It is a legend of freedom, a legend to inspire and awaken. This novel is based on an ancient saying “He who rides a tiger cannot dismount.” A humble village blacksmith, Kalo, takes his revenge on a rigid, caste-ridden society and makes a living for himself and his daughter by faking a miracle and passes himself off as a Brahmin priest. The story ends with a note of triumph for the soul over flesh. Eventually when the fraud is detected, other low caste people hail him as their brother and the outraged upholders of caste and custom panic. His fourth novel, *A Goddess named Gold* makes a most illuminating and satisfying reading.
experience. It is a masterly satire on those who live by the lure of gold. Bhattacharya's award winning novel *Shadow from Ladakh* tells an extremely gripping story of unsurpassed drama on a broad and revealing canvas. It tells what India needs for survival—a meeting point between Gandhian social ethics and tremendous forces of science and technology. It deals with India's conflict with China and her response to the challenge. The history of every nation is marked by events momentous as well as transient. Bhabani Bhattacharya, the illustrious novelist and a contemporary of Mulk Raj Anand, tried to focus his attention on the major historical crisis that shook and shaped the destiny of the nation during that period.

G. V. Desani's novel *All About H. Hattert*, is a classic of Indian English Fiction. Basavaraj Naikar in his article on the comedy in G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hattert*, argues that it "can be regarded as a philosophical comedy because the protagonist of the novel wants to seek Truth like a philosopher" (28). Hattert's escape from the evangelical institute reminds the reader of Fra Lippo Lippi's escape from the Carmelite church in Browning's poem. The various humorous episodes in Hattert's life, for example, Hatter's genealogy, his meeting with the seven saints of India, his experience with the washerwoman and his infatuation for Rosie, and finally his transformation into a Hindu Monk, makes this novel colourful and vibrant.

When one thinks of the partition of India on the eve of her independence one must concede it to be one of those experiences that can rake up the past to impinge upon the imaginative horizon of her people. The partition of 1947 rendered millions widowed, orphaned and homeless. This homogenizing grand narrative intercepts with other narratives. The horrors of partition, the bloodshed
in the name of independence had been so complicated experiences for the people that we fully agree with Masirul Hasan when he says that history cannot capture the complexity of such an experience; one has to look for creative writing: “In the study of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, in particular, literature has articulated the 'little' narratives against the grand; the unofficial histories against the official” (86). The migration of people across the borders, the reluctance of the feudal lords who enjoyed power and prestige during colonial period to adjust to the new situation and the suffering of a vast majority of people during the aftermath of independence become the major themes of novels like Train to Pakistan, Sunlight an a Broken Column and A Bend in the Ganges.

*Train to Pakistan* (1956), the first novel by Khushwant Singh, is perhaps the most realistic novel on the theme of partition. Set in the small village, Mano Majra, on the India – Pakistan frontier the narrative recounts the terrifying experiences of massive massacre in the village which was once the abode of peace. The calm and monotonous rhythm of rustic life was then occasionally disrupted only by the sound of trains over the bridge or by the call for prayer from the gurudwara or the mosque. Singh’s imaginary creation of Mano Majra has lent a realistic touch to his fiction. Instead of depicting the Partition in terms of only the political events surrounding it, Singh digs into a deep local focus, providing a human dimension which brings to the event a sense of reality, horror, and believability. When a train arrives, carrying the bodies of dead Sikhs, the village is transformed into a battlefield, and neither the magistrate nor the police are able to stem the rising tide of violence. Amidst conflicting loyalties, it is left to Juggut Singh, a gangster, to redeem himself and reclaim peace for his village. In an Interview with Anuradha Roy, Singh recalled: “Partition was a traumatic
experience for me. I had gone to Lahore, expecting to live there, to become a lawyer or a judge; then to be brutally torn out and never really being able to go back. That was what put me to writing. I wrote *Train to Pakistan*” Khushwant Singh (Sunday March 3, 2002. *The Hindu*, 1)

Singh’s second novel, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) depicts the deep-rooted trauma, psychological conflicts, despair and terror of a Sikh joint family in Punjab during the period of Second World War and the Quit India movement. H. M. Williams aptly observes in *Exploration in Modern Indo-English Fiction*: “When *Train to Pakistan* had been all actions, passion and a hymn to the heroism of simple peasants and wild bandits, the new novel was a complex and disturbing study of adolescent psychology” (192).

In the two decades after the Second World War almost a hundred new states emerged, having won independence from colonial rule. Most of the territories under European colonial domination achieved independence only after prolonged struggle. Though India was not the first nation to win Independence, the dissolution of the British Indian Empire which gave India its independence was a key moment in the dynamics of the de-colonization of the twentieth century. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* initiated literary analysis of the relationship of nationalism to narrative forms such as the novel. Perhaps the best known summation of this movement is Homi Bhabha’s edited volume *Nation and Narration*. Most of the novels that have appeared in India in response to the massive political movement while depicting events such as Civil Disobedience movement, Non co-operation, Dandi Yatra, Quit India and partition of the country focus to a large extent on the impact of Gandhiji on the Indians during these phases. Another important aspect
of the narratives is the emergence of the "new woman" of the 1930s in India. She is dauntless, questions the age-old patriarchal traditions, infused with nationality and ready to sacrifice her life for the country's independence.

Chaman Nahal, a winner of Sahitya Akademi Award is famous for his Gandhi Quartet. Azadi (1975), Nahal's Sahitya Akademi Award winning novel for 1977, highlights the aftermath of the partition and its psychological impact on the Indians. The partition of India had been such a harrowing experience—families torn apart, profuse bloodshed, 20 million people rendered homeless—that history cannot capture the complexity of such an experience. Against the background of the exciting political developments of the period, Nahal presents the history of the Punjabi joint-family of Thakur Shantinath. The second, The Crown and the Loincloth(1981), concentrates on the years 1915 to 1922 and on the towering figure of Gandhi whose burning idealism stimulated the entire nation's patriotism. He emerges as a leader and becomes the symbol of national strength. It foregrounds Gandhi's arrest as a consequence of the agitation against the infamous Rowlatt Act. The third, The Salt of Life, deals with the second phase of the freedom movement from 1930 to 1941. Amidst the fictionalizing of Subhas Bose's attitude to Gandhian movement, his escape from the house confinement, Bhagabat Singh's exploits, Salt Satyagraha and Zinnah's demand for Pakistan, Nahal describes the deep reverence of the Indians for the father of the nation. The heroine, Kusum represents feminine will power and the novel represents woman-emancipation of the 1930s. We are led to believe that it was she who suggested the salt satyagraha to Gandhiji. But the fourth novel, The Triumph of the Tricolour, is different in the sense that in addition to the
portrayal of the period of 1942 Quit India movement, it also shows how the younger revolutionaries were disillusioned with Gandhi.

Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* also takes up the theme of partition for its plot. She was interviewed in London on May 19, 1991 and during the course of this conversation, Hossain summarized the plot of the novel thus:

Laila, orphaned daughter of a distinguished Muslim family, is brought up in her grandfather's house by orthodox aunts who keep purdah. At fifteen she moves to the home of a 'liberal' but autocratic uncle in Lucknow....Here, during the 1930s, as the struggle for Indian independence intensifies, Laila is surrounded by relatives and university friends caught up in politics. But Laila is unable to commit herself to any cause: her own fight for independence is a struggle against the claustrophobia of traditional life, from which she can only break away when she falls in love with a man whom her family has not chosen for her.

(http://www.harappa.com/attia/sunlight.html)

With its beautiful evocation of India, its political insight and unsentimental understanding of the human heart, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, first published in 1961, is a classic of Muslim life. Hossain has written a novel which exudes the living experience of the trauma of partition:

I wanted to write about that agonizing heart break when we were all split up and a brother could not see a brother and a mother could not be with her dying son and families that had been proud to always collect together when there were weddings or deaths or births or anything, can not be together... And I wrote this book
[Sunlight on a Broken Column] and was dissatisfied with it. The last chapters of it are almost as if I've condensed what I would have done in the next one because it is as if she has come back to her home after the partition. But the in between has gone out of the actual, as I say the pain of that partition for most of us who were left behind and sad to think that now [of] the ones who are there [in Pakistan].

(http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0599/hossain/interview.html)

While Amitav Ghosh has written a number of novels, his best known is The Shadow Lines (1989), a novel on the theme of partition, which has been translated into many languages of the world. In this novel he attempts to come to term with as well as transcend the mundane reality of division, boundaries, borders and restrictions through memory and imagination. The novelist successfully employs the technique of magic realism for this novel which won Sahitya Akademi Award for 1989 and re-creates history in fictional terms. The protagonist Tridib's death in the communal riot in Dhaka could be seen as a sacrifice only because Tridib was a man without a country, a man whose imagination and cross cultural identifications had released him from the narrow national political consciousness of people divided by history of bloodshed. Amitav Ghosh's novels are both Indian and global and consequently may be termed as trans-national novels. The Shadow Lines published in 1989 is based upon the effort of the protagonist to re-live his childhood and to recover from his past that he needs most at the present state of his life. The east and the West confront and face one another in a meaningful way and as the narrative move backward and forward in time it tends to bridge geographical and emotional space between the
two cultures. *The Circle of Reason*, published in 1986, explores the past through the protagonist's adventure with scientific ideas. He discovers that his past is not confined to a geographical or national boundary. In an *Antique Land* and *Calcutta Chromosome* he blends historicism with meta-fiction. While *The Shadow Lines* focuses on political and ideological frontiers, *In An Antique Land* advances the argument that different cultures can co-exist peacefully. *The Circle of Reason* is a playful exploration of the working of the human mind and here also Ghosh blends historicism with metafiction. His later novels, *Calcutta Chromosome* and *The Glass Palace*, have gathered wide acclamation both for their themes and techniques.

Published in 1998, Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* is her maiden venture in writing fiction. Written against the backdrop of the Indian Freedom Movement, the Partition of India and the War between Allied and Axis forces, it delicately analyses the modern dynamics of man-woman relationship, particularly in the Indian social background. The time frame is from the thirties to the present; India's freedom struggle and women's emancipation moving hand-in-hand. A movingly told story of three daughters belonging to three generations- the grandmother Kasturi, her daughter Virmati and Virmati's daughter, Ida, the narrator, *Difficult Daughters* begins with a funeral scene- the narrator watching the cremation of her mother-"Now she was gone and I stared at the fire that rose from her shrivelled body" (1). From this end the narrative moves to the beginning following the traditional linear structure.

This family saga which presents the "story of sorrow and coping, love and compromise" (from the publisher's blurb) has the setting in pre-partition Amritsar and Lahore. While in Kasturi's generation women's role was confined to child
bearing and kitchen work, Virmati was not satisfied with this type of bliss. As a young woman, she was drawn more to the intellectual pursuits of life. As the relatives tell Ida later-

She was so keen to study, *bap re.*

First FA, then BA, then BT on top of that. Even after her marriage, she went for an MA to Government College, Lahore, you know- very good college, not like nowadays. The Oxford of the East they called it. (5)

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* thus depicts the deviation of Virmati, the difficult daughter, from family code of conduct and traditional sexual norms. Virmati's daughter, Ida who could never understand why it was so important to please her father, has also been a difficult daughter in her own way. We can best sum up the theme of the novel in the words of Alka Singh-

The narrative fabric of *Difficult Daughters* set around the time of partition is the story of a woman whose battle for independence engulfs her, leaving a contour of partition and pain on her outwardly calm face. (132)

The talented novelist Shiv K Kumar, received the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his poetry and the Padma Bhushan for his contribution to literature. Poetic sensibility combined with his acute power of perception enables him to blend history and fiction in his two novels *A River with Three Banks* and *Two Mirrors at the Ashram* with an unimaginable finesse making these distinctly different from his other works of fiction. While the former uses the backdrop of partition to render a touching tale of love and deceit most
poignantly, the latter makes only passing references to the historical event. No doubt, M.K. Naik and Shyamala A Narayan argue in *Indian English Literature* that *A River with Three Banks* is not a proper partition novel -

Kumar’s third novel, *A River with Three Banks: The Partition of India: Agony and Ecstasy* (1999) differs from the first two because it has strong political colouring, though the obsessive theme of sexual betrayal is once again at its centre. ... it can hardly be called a political novel proper. (33)

But fiction is neither truth nor is it falsehood and the literary artist, much like Browning’s persona, creates out of three sounds not a fourth but a star. Shiv K. Kumar, too, in his own way constructs a powerful novel with the perfect merging of history and fiction that exudes both beauty and a tragic spirit. Mulk Raj Anand’s glowing tribute to the work (quoted in the jacket of the book) deserves special mention-

Shiv K Kumar’s novel ...re-creates, in a language that glows with fragrance and colour, not only the trauma that one associates with partition, but also love, compassion and forgiveness that it evoked in the midst of communal frenzy.

Here is a poet’s visualization of the India of 1947- its brutality and romance, its agony and ecstasy.

*A River with Three Banks* portrays both the promising dawn of Indian independence and the tragedy of the partition- the mass massacres and the huge influx as well as mass exodus of refugees. The theme depicts the brutal impact of the partition in the lives of a few individuals. It is thus a story of retribution and romance sketched against the backdrop of communal ferocity. The first chapter
begins with a gruesome description of violence and horrid spectacle of murder caused by Hindu-Muslim atrocity. Raising the war cry "Har Har Mahadev!" that was most of the times followed by the deafening yell "Sat Sri Akal", the Sikhs carried on rape, loot, and murder in the name of religion as an act of vengeance for what the Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan had suffered. The Muslims in Pakistan were no less either. Both the communities, too eager to kill and die for the sake of "nation", let hell loose in both the nation-states. Perhaps it will be not out of place here to recall Anderson's significant observation in this context:

Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.

(125)

Shiv K. Kumar's novel re-evaluates the official history in terms of all these meta-narratives as well. What Marvin Mudrick in his thoughtful article on "character and event in fiction" asserts, that fiction is more philosophical than a verifiable record of the past and our great novelists can create "a whole community of complex individuals who give us better insight into human weakness and strength than the real figures of recorded history" (97), is applicable to Kumar's novels as well. While such ghastly descriptions of horror as-

... a menacing voice slashed the air: "Kill him Har Har Mahadev!"
followed by another deafening yell: "Sat Sri Akal!"... As the church warden unlatched the gate, there slumped on the floor the body of
an old bearded man- his chest, neck and abdomen riddled with
stab wounds. His intestines lay sprawling about. (9)

-could have turned *A River With Three Banks* (1998) into a novel of sensation, the
intensely emotional aesthetic passages combine the traits of novel of sensibility in it.

The next novel *Two Mirrors at the Ashram* (2006) portrays the self
realization and change in attitude of the fiction writer Rajesh Sahni. Enjoying life
almost like a hedonist, the skeptic and an expert womanizer, Sahni, enters the
peaceful and idyllic ashram of Swami Shanti Swaroop at Mullagarhi in remote
South India to cure himself of his deep-seated malaise and to get ideas for his
new novel. “You could still meet some interesting characters there, for your next
novel”(2-3), his friend had suggested after an evening spent in unrestrained
drinking and philandering. Being an agnostic, the hero fails to cull any comfort in
the promise of salvation through meditation and renunciation. Distrustful of all
godmen, Rajesh lamented his stay at the ashram. But his disdainful approach to
the Swami and his deliberate violations of the ashram’s rules- womanizing, taking
non-vegetarian food, drinking, etc.- took a total turn after his conversations with
the Swami which convinced him of the latter's honesty. There is also a change in
the Swami, and both come out of their ordeals as better human beings. Both
Rajesh and the Swami give up their debauchery and seek the path of true
salvation. As Shiv K Kumar puts it succinctly towards the end, they understand
that they are two mirrors reflecting each other. Kumar makes Rajesh a round
character, palpably human. In an interview with Mukund Padmanabhan, Shiv K.
Kumar made a very significant comment about his hero-
You would have noticed that my protagonist is a pretty unusual man. A boozer, a womaniser, an agnostic. So is my Swami, an unusual character. My protagonist enjoys debunking the Swami and there is a transformation, which I feel is very critical and natural... Rajesh Sahni doesn't lend himself to any woman.

(Monday, Feb 26, 2007, The Hindu)

Kumar, in this novel also deftly handles the incidences of communal riots which let hell loose in different parts of India after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. Thus, history and fiction intersect making the novel multifaceted and prismatic. Chapter seventeen gives a gruesome depiction of the horrid picture of communal frenzy:

All hell broke loose in Delhi on the morning of 4 November, a little after nine. I began to hear slogans just outside my window- 'Death to the killers of Indira Gandhi!... Har Har Mahadev!' It seemed as if every Sikh was an accomplice in the assassination, and the Hindu pantheon had given its blessings for the fanatic desire to wipe out the entire Sikh community. As I looked out, I saw hordes of men, armed with crowbars, hatchets, lathis, knives and daggers. On the curb were some cycle-rickshaws loaded with petrol cans.

(114)

The Sikhs had faced unimaginable humiliation, physical and mental torture following the aftermath of this agonizing historical incident. In the interview cited earlier (The Hindu, Monday, Feb 26, 2007), the novelist said that his main task as a fiction writer was to make his readers hear, to feel. He demonstrated his point
by asserting that his book contains a section on the Delhi riots following the assassination of Indira Gandhi, and if he could make the reader literally hear the cries, and the chaos during the riots, he considered his job done. Truly, Kumar has succeeded in making his readers feel the tremendous impact of the violence. He culls experiences and characters from everyday life and uses them in a skillful manner. B K Das makes a significant observation on this aspect:

Kumar’s art of writing fiction is influenced by Joseph Conrad.
He chooses his characters from among the people whom he knows and only changes the proper names to avoid controversy. An element of autobiography is clearly discernible and he makes a confession of it in course of an interview given to Saraswati Sabu: I must confess that often I have written my stories with the names of original characters. (Postmodern Indian English Literature 74)

Manohar Malgonkar is one of the most significant Indian novelists writing in English. His novels feature some of the violences that occurred during the partition. These include Distant Drum (1960), The Princess (1963), A Bend in the Ganges (1964), The Devil’s Wind, The Garland Keepers (1987), Cactus Country (1992). Malgonkar’s A Bend in the Ganges is a historic narrative, much in the tradition of Walter Scott, dealing with the colossal impact of World War II, British colonialism and India’s struggle for freedom. Thus, partition and nationalism has been the fabric on which the plots of many novels have been woven.

Whereas the landscape of fiction until the sixties was dominated by three celebrities – Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan – there appeared on
the scene thereafter scores of novelists, men and women, who experimented
with the narrative technique to make it a supple medium of social comment or
pure creative communication. Rushdie with his famous work *Midnight's Children*
(Booker Prize 1981, Booker of Bookers 1992, and Best of the Bookers 2008)
ushered in a new trend of writing. He used a hybrid language – English
generously peppered with Indian terms – to convey a theme that could be seen
as representing the vast canvas of India. He is usually categorised under the
magic realism mode of writing. *Midnight's Children*, history intersects with private
lives and realism blends with fantasy- to use Rushdie’s phrase- makes
"chutnification of history". Saleem Sinai's vision of India is so interlaced with his
own traumatic life that he is unable to figure out what constitute the boundary of
history and boundary of private lives. The appearance of *Midnight's Children*
brought about a renaissance in Indian writing in English which has out done that
of the 1930s. Rushdie's work is often associated with several categories of
literary fiction, including magical realism, postcolonial fiction, and postmodern
literature. His work is often compared to, and admittedly influenced by, novels
like Gunter Grass's *Tin Drum* and Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years
of Solitude*. Equally significant as the incorporation of mythical and fantastical
elements into his fiction is Rushdie's uniquely Indian perspective on the English
language. Rushdie's novels echo the rhythm and slang of English as it is
colloquially spoken in India. Familiar English words get combined in new and
unusual ways, and long, unbroken sentences run on freely, sometimes spanning
a page or more. Saleem Sinai, the narrator of *Midnight's Children*, opens the
novel by explaining that he was born on midnight, August 15, 1947, at the exact
moment India gained its independence from British rule. Now nearing his thirty-
first birthday, Saleem believes that his body is beginning to crack and fall apart. Fearing that his death is imminent, he grows anxious to tell his life story. Padma, his loyal and loving companion, serves as his patient, often skeptical audience. The much influential *Midnight's Children* marked the beginning of an era. B. K. Das makes a pertinent comment in *Postmodern Indian English Literature*:

> Indian English novel had its luxuriant growth in the hands of Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, and a few others in the nineteen eighties and after. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, a novel that won Booker's Booker Prize can be said to be the epoch-making book that has revolutionized Indian English fiction in the postmodern period. (55)

St. Stephen's students, the "Stephenians", were making their mark in writing Indian English novels. Rukun Advani, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amitav Ghosh, Mukul Kesavan, Allan Sealy, Shashi Tharoor and others belonging to "Stephen's" ushered in a new trend. In his thought provoking article, "From Chatterjee to Chatterjee" Ranga Rao observes:

> The 80s novelists demand much from their readers- more often than not, they are voluminous – but the reader keeps company with them because of their magnetic powers: they realize with competence, action, dialogue, scene, all the staples of fictional art. They have a winsome way with the reader, ...a playfulness of tone that makes and keeps readers. With Sealy, as with Rushdie and others, wit is a habit of mind.
own merit. The hero becomes a sort of “Karmayogi” – a believer in right and useful action – at the end. *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, the next novel published in 1971, contains events which are “strange” only to the “civilized” people whose sub-conscious has been mapped by “modernity”. In *The Apprentice* (1974), Ratan Rathor wades through corruption to arrive at an understanding of life and its affirmation. *The Last Labyrinth* (1981) also has been well accepted by the readers both at home and abroad. Vikram Chandra’s debut novel *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995) won for him Commonwealth Writers’ Best First Book Prize in 1996 for its innovation in theme and technique. Vikram Seth created history by writing a novel in verse, *The Golden Gate* for which he won Central Sahitya Akademi Award in 1988. This was followed by *A Suitable Boy* (1993) and *An Equal Music* (1999), which catapulted Vikram Seth to the centre-stage of Indian English fiction. Vikram Seth, the author of *A Suitable Boy* (1994) writes in impeccable English. Being a self-confessed fan of Jane Austen, his attention is on the story, its details and its twists and turns. Shashi Tharoor, in his *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), follows a story-telling (though in a satirical) mode as in the *Mahabharata* drawing his ideas by going back and forth in time. His work as UN official living outside India has given him a vantage point that helps construct an objective Indianness.

The Indian English writers, notably, Raja Rao became an expatriate even before the independence of the country; G. V. Desani was born in Kenya and lived in England, India and U.S.A.; and Kamala Markandaya married an Englishman and lived in Britain. Nirad C. Chaudhuri preferred the English shores because his views were not readily accepted in India. Salman Rushdie’s “imaginary homeland” encompasses the world over. Indian English literature has
transcended the barriers of petty classification and has almost become a cousin of main stream English literature. A major contribution in this regard has been that of the writers of Indian origin like a Rushdie and Naipaul, who live as world citizens. Indian English writers like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Sunetra Gupta, Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri and Hari Kunzru have all made there names while residing abroad. The non-resident Indian writers have explored their sense of displacement. They have given more poignancy to the exploration by dealing not only with a geographical location but also a socio-cultural sense of displacement. As Emmanuel S. Nelson rightly states that "In all its contexts, however the concept of Diaspora remains problematic, for it raises complex questions about the meanings of a number of related terms, such as "nationality, ethnicity and migrancy" (IX). It is essentially a fabric interwoven with the mingled yarn of cultures, languages, and histories of people. People who get dispersed in different places form new communities and retain all identities- old and new. This displacement is not merely a change of address but is also socio-cultural. Emigration results in the physical as well as imaginative border crossing. To Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, Diaspora cannot be separated from colonialism because it was primarily the latter that led to the displacement of people across the world. In their famous book Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies, they observe:

The development of diasporic cultures necessarily questions essentialist models, interrogating the ideology of a unified, 'natural' cultural norm, one that underpins the centre/margin model of colonialist discourse. It also questions the simpler kinds of theories of nativism which suggest the decolonization
can be affected by a recovery or reconstruction of pre-colonial
societies (Ashcroft et al. 70)

All postcolonial literatures have dual identities. According to Peter Barry,
postcolonial writings celebrate ‘hybridity’ (199) and ‘cross-cultural’ interactions
(196). As a result a majority of the expatriate South Asian writers are part of
postcolonial Diaspora literature. Since the Indian Independence, two classes of
writers have emerged from the Diaspora. The first group consists of non-resident
Indians who have spent a part of their life in India and have later settled abroad
while the second consists of those who have been born and brought up outside
India. Added to this is the third category of Indian diasporic writers whose
ancestors left India in the colonial period. V. S. Naipaul belongs to this category,
whose grandfather left Mumbai for Trinidad during British rule. Most of these
writers are preoccupied with themes of rootlessness and displacement. The
cultural dislocation, alienation and loss of identity related to Diaspora open up
multiple perspectives for writers who wish to portray these experiences in their
writings. Manju Sampat rightly points out about the South Asian diaspora writers
that-

The style and content of their writing has been greatly influenced
by the extent to which they have been able to identify and adapt to
their new country and tend to write about people and events which
are ‘typical’ of their country of origin and are anxious to put South
Asian or Indian local colour in their country. However, those who
have been able to identify with their new host country, are blessed
with a bi-cultural perception which enables them to write from a
wider and more exciting angle. (140)
The immigrants or the expatriates, in most cases, are citizens of two countries (their homeland and the new place of their settlement). So they somehow veer between their social and cultural identities which are in a way unstable and fluid. Despite living in a foreign land for a considerable amount of time, their identities are connected directly or indirectly with their old homelands. In their new countries they live almost like trees without roots. To allude to the Indian myth we can say that they are like *Trisanku* suspended between two worlds. The diasporic Indian writers have generally dealt with characters from their own displaced community but some of them have also taken a liking for Western characters and they have been convincing in dealing with them. Bharati Mukherjee, author of *Jasmine* (1989), has spent much of her career exploring issues involving immigration and identity with a particular focus upon the United States and Canada. Two of Vikram Seth’s novel *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music* has as their subjects exclusively the lives of Americans and Europeans respectively. Two of the earliest novels that have successfully depicted diasporic Indian characters are Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird* and Kamala Markandaya’s *The Nowhere Man*. These novels depict how racial prejudice against Indians in the UK of the 1960s alienates the characters and aggravate their sense of displacement. Bharati Mukherjee’s novels like *Wife and Jasmine* depict Indians in the US – the land of immigrants, both legal and illegal – before globalization got its impetus. Salman Rushdie in the novel *The Satanic Versus* approaches the allegory of migration by adopting the technique of magic realism. The physical transformation of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha after their fall from the bursting jumbo jet on the English Channel is symbolic of the self-fashioning that immigrants have to undergo in their adopted country. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
in her novel *The Mistress of Spices* depicts Tilo, the protagonist, as an exotic character to bring out the migrant’s angst. Amitav Ghosh’s novel *The Shadow Lines* has the character Ila whose father is a roaming diplomat and whose upbringing has been totally on foreign soils. She finds herself as much out of place in India as any foreigner. But when she conjures up the story of her doppelganger Magda being rescued by Nick Price from Denise, it shows the extent of her sense of rootlessness. Amit Chaudhuri in his novel *Afternoon Raag* portrays the lives of Indian students in Oxford. Anita Desai in the second part of her novel *Fasting, Feasting* depicts Arun as a migrant student living in the suburbs of Massachusetts. The important point to note is that in a cosmopolitan world one cannot literally be a cultural and social outsider in a foreign land. The diasporic Indian writers of the first generation have already established their credentials by winning numerous literary awards and honours. But recently the ranks of the second generation of Indian writers in the West have swelled enormously and many among them have won international recognition. Meera Syal, who was born in England, has successfully represented the lives of first generation as well as second generation non-resident Indians in the West in her novels *Anita and Me* and *Life isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee*. Sunetra Gupta has shown with candor both the unpleasantness and the pleasantness of intercultural relationships through characters like Moni and Niharika from her novels *Memories of Rain* and *A Sin of Colour*.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a new star in this galaxy. Lahiri’s debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, took the world by storm when along with winning the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for fiction it received the PEN/Hemingway Award, the New Yorker Debut of the Year award, an American Academy of Arts and Letters
Addison Metcalf Award, and a nomination for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. It was translated into twenty-nine languages and became a bestseller both in the United States and abroad. Makarand Paranjape is right in saying that “the text themselves are journeys between source cultures and target cultures, between homelands and diaspora, until the two overlap, change places or merge.” (163) The loneliness and a deep sense of emotional alienation that some of Lahiri’s fictional characters go through depict the plight of most people belonging to diaspora. With an amazing insight she probes deep into the psyche of her characters and expresses her observations with a simple yet mesmerizing style. In an online interview to Radhika S. Shankar she explained quite elaborately her choice of Calcutta as a locale of some of her stories:

I went to Calcutta neither as a tourist nor a former resident – a valuable position, I think for a writer. I learned to observe things as an outsider, and yet I also knew that as different Calcutta is from Rhode Island, I belonged there in some fundamental way, in the ways I didn’t seem to belong in the United States. The reason my first stories were set in Calcutta is due partly because of that perspective, that necessary combination of distance and intimacy with a place. (http://www.rediff.com/news/1999/jun/19us3.htm)

Lahiri at the same time depicts the typical immigrant phenomenon of belonging to nowhere or everywhere she lived. The author can portray these losses so realistically perhaps because she herself suffered from a sense of exile. In an online interview she spoke about her experience:

The question of identity is always a difficult one, but especially so for those who are culturally displaced, as immigrants are, or those who grow up in two worlds… I have somehow inherited a sense of exile
from my parents, even though in many ways I am so much more
American than they are. ... I think that for immigrants, the challenges
of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, the
knowledge of and longing for a lost world, are more explicit and
distressing than for their children.

(http://hinduism.about.com/library/weekly/extra/bl-jhumpainterview.htm)

Lahiri's debut novel, *The Namesake*, tells the story of Gogol Ganguli, a first-
generation Indian American. The novel begins in 1968, before Gogol's birth,
when Gogol's father, Ashoke, is nearly killed in a train disaster in India. His father
is rescued from the wreckage because he was still clutching a single page of 'The
Overcoat,' crumpled tightly in his fist, and when he raised his hand the paper
dropped from his fingers. Years later, when Ashoke's wife Ashima gives birth to
their first child, Ashoke names the boy Gogol, in honor of the writer who, in a
way, saved his life. Lahiri gracefully shifts the narrative focus from the Ganguli
parents to Gogol as he reaches school age. Gogol struggles with his name,
which he regards as absurd and inappropriate, as well as with his Bengali
American heritage. Many thought provoking questions arise in our minds as we
read the novel. The issue of culture—What constitutes it? Who is a part of which
culture? Is Gogol Bengali, American or Bengali American?—permeates the
novel, from the early dislocation of immigration in the first half of the novel to
Gogol's departure from home to Yale University. This transition is marked by
Gogol's decision to change his name to Nikhil, the formal name his parents had
chosen for him as a child. Gogol can never, even when he moves to New York to
work in a large architecture firm, shake his past, his culture or his name as he
wishes to do. Born to Bengali parents in London and raised in Rhode Island,
Lahiri, too, is American by citizenship, British by birth, and Indian only by origin. Because of her multicultural background, critics have often raised doubts regarding her culture specific categorization—though she was born in London and raised in Rhode Island can she be labeled as an "American" with her South Asian lineage? Does she belong to the ethnic category "Asian American" or is she a diasporic postcolonial writer? But the writer herself resists any such singular categorization. In a very witty online essay "To Heaven Without Dying," she writes:

Once made public, both my book and myself were immediately and copiously categorized. Take, for instance, the various ways I am described: as an American author, as an Indian-American author, as a British-born author, as an Anglo-Indian author, as an NRI (non-resident Indian) author, as an ABCD author (ABCD stands for American born confused "desi"—"desi" meaning Indian—and is an acronym coined by Indian nationals to describe culturally challenged second-generation Indians raised in the U.S.). According to Indian academics, I've written something known as "Diaspora fiction"; in the U.S., it's "immigrant fiction." ... The fact that I am described in two ways or twenty is of no consequence; as it turns out, each of those labels is accurate. I have always lived under the pressure to be bilingual, bicultural, at ease on either side of the Lahiri family map.

(http://www.sawf.org/newedit/edit09042000/usroundup.asp)

(http://hinduism.about.com/library/weekly EXTRA/bl-jhumpainterview.htm)
Manju Kapur has evolved as a sensitive author from her first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) followed by *A Married Woman* (2002) and *Home* (2006) to the latest, *the immigrant* (2008). While *Difficult Daughters* ushered its characters from pre-Independence days up to the time of writing, *A Married Woman* and *Home* had a near-contemporary setting and *the immigrant* differs from all three in being located throughout in a period recent but not contemporary, the 1970s of Indira Gandhi’s Emergency. As the title of the latest novel suggests, its fictional locale shifts between India and Canada. *the immigrant* is set in the era when the great migration to North America had just started after the US and Canada changed their immigration policies for Asians. In an interview (Saturday, August 09, 2008) the author mentioned that the genesis of the book was her desire to explore the NRI sensibility, as well as to convey a sense of the darkness that surrounded India around the time of the Emergency – “when there was this idea that India was just not a place to be in, you had to get out, nobody could get anywhere here.” (http://jaiarjun.blogspot.com/). Though the novel takes up the seventies as its background, the feelings of isolation and dislocation that Manju Kapur portrays would surely strike a chord with the present-day Indian immigrants trying to adjust to life in the west.

*the immigrant* is the story of Delhi-based Nina Batra, a 30-year-old unmarried lecturer in English at Miranda House, Delhi University. The death of her diplomat father has left Nina and her mother struggling to make ends meet in strained circumstances in a small flat in Delhi’s Jangpura neighbourhood. The novel begins on her thirtieth birthday with a grim realization of her diminishing prospects of marriage. But, a visit to a bureaucrat-cum-astrologer sets her life into a different path through an “arranged introduction” with an NRI dentist, who
arrives from Halifax, Canada to meet her. Ananda, the prospective groom, left New Delhi a few years back after his parents were killed in an accident. Young, ambitious and determined to qualify as a Canadian dentist and citizen, he has made his mark as a wealthy doctor in Halifax. Nina is finally able to leave her colourless life behind to fly to a small-town in Canada, only to discover later her husband's sexual and emotional dysfunctions. The couple seeks neither to understand nor love each other. Nina finds she is not only ill prepared for the cultural gulf she encounters, but also the gaping distances (intellectual, emotional and physical) in her barren relationship. Nina suffers a two-fold alienation. In a foreign land with no one to talk to but the husband, she feels rootless. This displacement is not merely a change of address but is also socio-cultural. Immigration results in the physical as well as imaginative border crossing. In addition to this is the oppression that a woman suffers from in a male dominated society. In an interview when the author was asked about the impetus that drove her to write about this particular novel, she replied:

This was an idea I had for a long time - partly as a response to the numerous NRIs (Non-Resident Indian) that any Indian is witness to. They strike one as not quite Indian, yet not completely foreign, they inhabit an in-between space that they themselves are all too aware

http://www.faber.co.uk/article/2009/1/manju-kapur-on-the-immigrant

Jabberwock

In the past three decades literature in general and fiction in particular has reflected the rejection of certain patriarchal traditions and stereotypes summarily. There has been a proliferation of women's fiction during the mid-twentieth century. Gynofiction of this period is informed by a forceful protest against
patriarchy, a new sense of freedom, assertion of self-sufficiency and by the influence of socially uninhibited women. Shiv K. Kumar, a novelist himself apart from being a poet and critic, has made a pertinent comment on the growth of Indian English fiction in the following words:

If among men-novelists may be mentioned Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Balraj Khanna and Ranga Rao, the notable writers are legion – Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Namita Gokhle, Raji Narsimhan, Shakuntala Sriganesh, Daniels Shourie and, more recently, Shashi Deshpande. In fact, it seems that in this vast corpus of Indian fiction written during the past two decades or so, women novelists appear to have distinguished themselves for their boldness in presenting man-woman relationship, and for their sensitive manipulation of language. (17)

The younger generation women novelists dare to break certain conventional attitudes that are never questioned in our society and have shown a great deal of courage in dealing with the hitherto taboo subject of female sexuality. Socio-political problems of contemporary life portrayed in terms of individual's quest for identity and freedom along with a sensitive handling of issues like gender, sexuality and diaspora make make these writers emerge with a difference. A number of Indian women novelists made their debut in the 1990s, producing novels which revealed the true state of Indian society and its treatment of women. These writers were born after Indian independence, and the English language does not have colonial associations for them. Their work is marked by an impressive feel for the language, and an authentic presentation of
contemporary India, with all its regional variations. They generally write about the urban middle class, the stratum of society they know best. Many of these authors, such as Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), use magic realism in their novels. Suniti Namjoshi stands out for her use of fantasy and surrealism, and Anuradha Marwah-Roy's *Idol Love* (1999) presents a chilling picture of an Indian dystopia in the twenty-first century. Other novels deal with various aspects of college life, such as Meena Alexander's *Nampally House* (1991), and Rani Dharker's *The Virgin Syndrome* (1997). Women writers in India are moving forward with their strong and sure strides, matching the pace of the world. We see them bursting out in full bloom spreading their own individual fragrances. They are recognized for their originality, versatility and the indigenous flavor of the soil that they bring to their work.

Kamala Markandaya is a pioneering post-Independence Indian English novelist with a substantial body of work to her credit. Her debut novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) is centred round a poor lady Rukmani who is the symbol of crudest poverty in India. This novel has been often compared with Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth*. Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice* (1966), like Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers*, deals with hunger and poverty and the consequent degeneration of human values. *A Silence of Desire* (1960) depicts the unconscious desire of a housewife, Sarojini, to fight the decay of her self within the marital relationship. In the five novels that have followed, Markandaya presents the picture of Indian life emerging from a struggle between tradition and modernity. Her other novels include *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), and *Pleasure City* (1982). Kamala Markandaya
belonged to that pioneering group of Indian women writers who made their mark not just through their subject matter, but also through their fluid, polished literary style. Pleasure City (1982) marks a new direction in her work. The cultural confrontation here is not the usual East versus West, it is tradition and modernity.

Nayantara Sahgal (1927) vividly portrays in her novels the grim situations that women face in our country. In The Day in Shadow (1971), violence and male chauvinism make the life of the heroine hellish. Opting out of the marital life is the only way for a sensitive woman like Simrit. In the next novel, Storm in Chandigarh (1962), Saroj emerges as the liberated "New Woman". Sahgal's later novels, namely, Rich Like us (1985, fetched her Sahitya Akademi Award for the year 1986), Plans for Departure (1985) and Mistaken Identity (1989), as observed by B. K. Das in Postmodern Indian English Literature, are "novels about history, nationalism and above all, contemporary life" (79). She believes that:

Through the rewriting women do, new Sitas and Savitrīs will arise, stripped of false sanctity and crowned with the human virtue of courage. Then at last we will know why they did what they did, and how their lone, remote struggles can help our search for identity and emancipation. (Sahgal, 1997:33)

Her novels from A Time to be Happy to Mistaken Identity show her deep concern with the perilous state of women in the patriarchal society. Her women are victims of a conventional society which does not permit them to hold their own and considers the very issue of identity-crisis as ridiculous in relation to women.
Sahgal's first two women Maya and Rashmi are still women in stasis but the next three protagonists - namely Saroj, Simrit and Devi - mark a clear advancement from the point of view of self-determination. Despite all their initial hesitance, when Saroj and Simrit break free from the shackles of oppression there is no remorse. Quest for identity may be a Herculean task in a patriarchal society but once women have strong will and determination, they act as real "Shaktis'. In her last three novels we come across women who disseminate the concept of freedom and self-realisation and more importantly they do so without the supporting crutches of their male-friends. Sonali Ranade, Anna Hansen and the nameless but certainly not faceless ranee of Vijaygarh, dare to differ from the praxis of the patriarchal society. They refuse to abide by the fossilized concept of male-supremacy and seek to deflate male superiority successfully unaided by a man. In a male-dominated society these women hoist the flag of gender-equality. In Rich Like Us, especially in the portrayal of Sonali Ranade, we notice the feminist in Sahgal coming of age. In her article, "Women's Liberation: The Indian Way," Sahgal recognises "women-power" but laments that Indian society has still not accepted this notion. Ours is a patriarchal society, where personality is a luxury for women. The need of the times is a whole new look at woman "not as the property of father, husband or son, and dependent on their bounty but as valuable human material to be brought to full flower and full participation in her life and events"(Sahgal 1971:6). Sahgal's concept of emancipation reaches its culmination duly and justly in her last novel Mistaken Identity. Here we meet a woman who is out and out a rebel. The ranee of Vijaygarh defies all moulds and definitions. She breaks all boundaries and makes her own rules. This woman shines in the firmament of Sahgal's fiction as the pole star, the brightest and the
most firm. Here is a woman, who is living in 1920-30s, is uneducated, rather illiterate, has an apathetic husband, has nothing to look forward to, and yet she dares to shun her husband from her life, when she discovers the man has no respect for her kind. There are no outside forces which make her aware of this (like Vishal for Saroj), there is no one to support her in her crusade against female exploitation (like Raj for Simrit), and yet she dares to challenge the authority of her husband in his own home. Exhibiting exemplary strength of character the woman behind the veil breaks all ties with her husband, when he marries for the third time. When in the end she breaks free from all inhibitions and marries comrade Yusuf, it is without any infesting sense of guilt that she does so. Her marriage to comrade Yusuf, then, is not an effort to seek refuge from the evils that the Raja has subjected her to. Such refuge, she does not ask for. This woman does not need support even from her son Bhushan. She walks her own proud way even when there is no comrade Yusuf in her life. Sahgal shows a steady evolution in the course of her writing career. Ranee of Vijaygarh, though a nameless character, marks the culmination of the onward march of Sahgal's new woman towards freedom. She demands social justice for women, her focus being on freedom. Sahgal's fictional women threaten the stranglehold of men and reaffirm their faith in their own potentials. The battle that starts quite demurely with Maya keeps advancing and gathering momentum through Rashmi, Saroj, Simrit and Devi and in Sonali it reaches its culmination. Anna and the ranee take it to its glorious heights.

In dealing with the interior landscape and the psychic journey of the characters, Anita Desai has extended and enlarged the thematic horizon of the Indo-Anglian novel. She is the foremost woman novelist of the post-
Independence era. A close reading of her novels reveals that her concern is with the exploration of human psyche. Very few Indian English novelists have paid so much attention to form and technique as this talented writer. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly observes: "Since her pre-occupation is with the inner world of sensibility rather than the outer world of action she has tried to forge a style supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fretfulness of the stream-of-consciousness of her principal characters" (16). The central theme of Desai's novels is the existential predicament of woman as an individual. *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) her first novel narrates the story of Maya's dull marital relationship with her husband Gautama. To R. S. Sharma, *Cry, the Peacock* is "the first step in the direction of psychological fiction in English (127)." The dissonance of Maya-Gautama marital relationship is re-enacted in the life of Monisha-Jiban in *Voice in the City* (1965). The female protagonists of both these novels are driven to madness and despair by the insensitivity of their husbands. In *Where shall we go this Summer?* (1975), Sita the protagonist and the wife of an upper-middle-class factory owner, mother of four children, greying at the age of forty – finally revolts against her milieu. Her other novels *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Village by the sea* (1983) and *Clear Light of Day* (1977) – have become popular because of her lucid style and appreciable, realistic themes. *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) represents the feelings of joy and sorrow related with the birth of a son and a daughter respectively. As Jasbir Jain points out – "The world of Anita Desai is an ambivalent one; it is a world where the central harmony is aspired to but not arrived at ..." (16). The novelist considers *Clear Light Of Day* (1980) her most autobiographical work as it is set during her coming of age and also in the same neighborhood in which she grew.
In Custody, her novel about an Urdu poet in his declining days, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

A Thousand Faces of Night by Githa Hariharan was received with much critical acclaim, winning in 1992 the prize for commonwealth fiction for the best first novel written in the Eurasian region. In many respects, it also marks a coming-of-age of a certain kind of women's fiction in English. Her other novels include The Art of Dying (1993), The Ghosts of Vasu Master (1994), When Dreams Travel (1999), In Times of Siege (2003). The first novel, along with some other novels as well, makes use of magic realism a lá Salman Rushdie.

Sobha De is a writer with a difference. From her first novel Socialite Evenings (1990) followed by Sisters (1992) and Snapshots (1995) to the latest autobiographical work Speedpost, she has evolved as a sensitive writer. De's novels show the struggle of women against the predatory male-dominated society. The themes are also very controversial sometimes and verge on the level of eroticism. I would like to quote at length B. K. Das's pertinent observation in this regard:

An overdose of sex in De's novels may distract the readers for a while and prompt them to question the literary merit of her fiction, but occasional flashes of poetic language save to a great extent the novels from being pornography. Not only De talks about sex...she presents love, sex and quarrels within the ambit of fictional framework. Life is presented as it is, not as it should be. De's use of language and her creation of new idiom by acclimatizing the contemporary society to the English language, adds to
the charm of the novel. What is important in De’s novels is not their unconventional theme but an unusual treatment of sensual opulence in an intimate conversational language and the result is that her novels become best sellers.

(Critical Essays on Post-colonial Literature, 102)

In the urban milieu that forms the backdrop of almost all her novels, the institution of marriage no longer carries with it the traditional sense of security. Karuna, the heroine of *Socialite Evenings* raises a very pertinent question: “But mother why does security rest with a man? I feel confident now that I can look after myself. I am earning as much money as any man; I have a roof over my head” (276). To the modern women of this class an extra-marital affair can be a warm, exciting event and not necessarily a symptom of moral decay or emotional disturbance. Through many twists and turns De explores this space and reveals the myriad issues that are deep-rooted within the family—revolt against the age-old tradition, the search for selfhood, woman’s rights and the politics of marriage. Chitralekha Banerjee Divakaruni’s major novels include *The Mistress of Spices, Sister of My Heart* and *Queen of Dreams*. While many of her novels are written for adults, she has also written the first two books in a juvenile fantasy series called *The Brotherhood of the Conch* which, like many of her adult novels, takes place in India and draws on the culture and folklore of that region. The first book of the series, *The Conch Bearer* was nominated for the 2003 Bluebonnet Award. Divakaruni’s latest novel for adults, *The Palace of Illusions* is a re-telling of the Indian epic, *The Mahabharata* from a female character’s perspective. While speaking about her novel *The Mistress of Spices* she observed:
I mused a lot about boundaries as I lay in bed recovering over the next few months, learning to live again. And it seemed to me, in some wordless way, that the art of dissolving boundaries is what living is all about. I ached to give this discovery a voice and a form. But I didn't know how until Tilo, my heroine, the Mistress of Spices, came to me. I wrote the book urgently--almost breathlessly. Having been so close to death, I could no longer take even a single day for granted. Stylistically the book was completely different from my last work of fiction, *Arranged Marriage*, for the first separation I felt I needed to remove was that between poetry and prose. I had to give Tilo the lyricism she demanded. It was a book full of risks for me. I ventured into paths I hadn't traveled before, breaking ethnic barriers, showing people of different races at war and in love. I dipped into the language and imagery of my childhood, the tales I grew up on, and alternated them with slang from Oakland's inner-city streets. And I wrote in a spirit of play, collapsing the divisions between the realistic world of twentieth century America and the timeless one of myth and magic in my attempt to create a modern fable. (The Hindu, Tuesday, Mar 22, 2005

http://www.hindu.com/mp/2005/03/22/stories/2005032200830400.htm)

For her, Tilo, thus became the quintessential dissolver of boundaries, moving between different ages and worlds and the communities that people them, passing through a trial by water, then a trial by fire, and finally the trial of earth-burial to emerge transformed, each time with a new name and a new identity. She commented in another interview:

Reading passages aloud, as I often do when I am revising, I was surprised to find--how much I identified with her. But looking back I
see that it is not so surprising after all. I too have lived in the
diametrically opposed worlds of India and America. I too have taken
on a new identity in a new land. And I too, in my quiet way, have
visited that emptiness, at once vast and minute, that shimmers
between life and death... We write from experience, and there is no
denying the fact that I've spent the first half of my life here and the
other half in the U.S... Categorising authors does not bother me so
much, as long as the categories are inclusive... I fit into the category
of Indian writing in English, South Asian Woman Writer, and...
Bengali-Indian American Writer.


Namita Gokhale was born in Lucknow, India in 1956. Gokhale’s first novel,
Paro: Dreams of Passion, 1984, a satire upon the Mumbai and Delhi elite was
critically acclaimed and caused an uproar due to its mischievous sexual humour.
Gods Graves and Grandmother- an ironic fable about street life in Delhi was
adapted into a musical play. Gokhale was diagnosed with cancer when she was
just thirty-five and her husband died a few years later. The experience of illness
and loss has informed her later books, A Himalayan Love Story, The Book of
Shadows and Shakuntala, The Play of Memory.

Githa Hariharan's first novel, The Thousand Faces of Night (1992) won the
Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1993. Her other novels include The Ghosts of
Vasu Master (1994), When Dreams Travel (1999), In Times of Siege (2003), and
The New Fugitive Histories (2009). Githa Hariharan (born 1954) is an Indian

Gita Mehta has emerged as a writer in her own right. Her books have been translated into 21 languages and been on the bestseller lists in Europe, the US and India. The subject of both her fiction and non-fiction is exclusively focused on India: its culture and history, and the Western perception of it. While *Karma Cola* is a satire on the hippies' pilgrimages to the mystic East in the 1960s, *Raj* is a historical novel about the maharajas and the early phases of India's independence struggle and *A River Sutra* is a novel of quest stories woven into an exquisite tapestry of secular-humanistic philosophy. When she was asked about whether there is a touch of Zen Buddhism in the philosophical aspect of her novel, *River Sutra*, she replied:

Zen Buddhist thinking comes, as you know, from the Indian "Dhyana." Zen is a corruption of the term "dhyan," which means awareness. I'm very happy with your characterization. But you know, funnily enough, these constructs I can see only after writing the book. It's such a funny book, it seemed to write itself. I don't know whether it was because I had the good fortune of sitting on the banks of a river. Later, when I was in Varanasi, I talked with a professor of Sanskrit at the Hindu University. I told him that I had put the narrator in the novel later. I was trying to bring mythological time, historical time, contemporary time, and narrative time - all into say one paragraph. And he said that, you know, the "Sutradhar" of classical Sanskrit drama was there precisely for this. Just sheer chance.

Indira Ganesan was born in India, and moved to St. Louis, Missouri, at the age of five. She is the author of two novels, *The Journey* and *Inheritance*. *Inheritance* was selected as a Barnes & Noble Discover New Writers selection for Winter 1998. It is a short novel about a teenage girl named Sonil. Her father was an American she had never met, only heard about, and her mother is an Indian woman who has disgraced the family by bearing children from different fathers and not playing by society's rules. Sonil struggles with understanding her roots while coming of age and trying to find her own path. In Sonil we find the emergence of the new woman, bold and confident.

With the publication of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (Booker Prize Winning novel for 1997), Indian English novel has attracted worldwide attention. As rightly pointed out by K. V. Surendran, "Ms. Arundhati Roy has established herself as a novelist par excellence with her epoch making work *The God of Small Things*" (vii). The novel focuses on several things. To Surendran, it is "a saga of lost dreams" (10), to Pramod K. Nayar, "it is a journey to secret places" (73), while Alex Tickell contends that *The God of Small Things* can be read "as complex engagement with certain aspects of postcolonial theory via the formal strategies of the cosmopolitan novel" (67). Having a strong political undercurrent, it can also be read as a "protest" novel that is radical and unconventional. Roy also needles the thread of exploitation of women by patriarchy in the fabric of this memorable novel. The problems of patriarchal domination and female subalternity and the confrontation between these constitute the backbone of the novel. Roy is one of the few Indian English writers who are actively interested in contemporary socio-political issues and this is evident from the theme of this movingly told fiction.
The God of Small Things is basically a saga that depicts the life and destiny of three generations of a Syrian Christian family in Ayemenam, a sleepy village in central Travancore. As Binoo John rightly points out-

In the tumult of feudalism's dying pang, in the wide swathe that the narrative cuts through Kerala's modern history, in its pungent ironies, in the nerve tingling passions, in the overarching pathos, the novel has few modern parallels in Indo-Anglian writing. (qtd. in Shiela Mani 8)

The novel appears as a document on Kerala and a critique of Kerala's social, political, religious and cultural institutions. It presents a cinematographic description that curiously blends fact and fiction and this novel is also autobiographical to a certain extent. Roy herself admitted that - "Writing [the novel] was a fictional way of making sense of the world I lived in, and the novel was the technical key with which I did it" (qtd in Dasan 25). With the locale of her novel set in the lush green lap of Kerala with the mysterious Meenachal river speeding along its periphery, Roy has managed to make the whole world a stage for Ayemenem and its people. The entire story of the novel is cast in the very first chapter that narrates the return of Rahel to her home in Ayemenem (Roy has changed the name from Ayemanam to Ayemenem) in Southern India from America, after her divorce. She returns in the rain to be reunited with her twin brother Estha after a separation of twenty-three years. The story is re-created through the use of flashbacks and linear-narration, reminiscences and memories. Narrated by Rahel, this circular narrative begins almost near its end.
Set in 1969, the plot depicts the events in the lives of the members related to the "grand old house, the Ayemenem House, but aloof-looking. As though it had little to do with the people that lived in it" (165) with the blind old Mammachi (Rahel's grandmother), widow of the ambitious entomologist Pappachi (her grandfather), presiding over it. Efficient and hardworking, Mammachi sets up the "pickle" business (later named as "Paradise Pickles and Preserves" by Chacko) and brings huge profit to it. From her childhood days Ammu, their daughter, had seen and faced the oppressions of patriarchy. A highly educated Anglophile, Pappachi used to thrash up his wife with a vase every night. While Chacko is send abroad to study, Ammu has to remain at home because the only option for a girl was to marry and rear a family. She leaves the ancestral home in utter disgust, goes to Calcutta and marries an alcoholic assistant manager in a tea estate in Assam to escape the misery she was in- "She thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem" (39). A liar to the marrow and without morals, Ammu's husband plans to sell her off to the English manager of the tea-plantation. Disillusioned, she soon divorces him and returns to Ayemenem with her twins Rahel and Estha. Roy gives a heartrending picture of her return-

Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem. To everything that she had fled from only a few years ago. Except that she had two young children. And no more dreams.

(42)

Later when Ammu tells Pappachi about Mr Hollick's improper desire for her, he would not believe her simply because he thought it impossible that "an
Englishman, *any Englishman*, would covet another man’s wife (42).” After she came back home divorced from her drunkard husband, she faced the worst sort of humiliation. Though she helped in managing the pickles factory, Ammu had no claim to the property because she was the daughter (57) – she had no “Locusts Stand I” (57). The twins remained neglected and appeared more like “a pair of small bewildered frogs” (43). Though unloved by others, except Ammu and later Velutha, the “love between Rahel and Estha, the twins who do not look alike but who dream each other’s dreams, is so complete and so self-evident to both that it is often experienced not as love of one being for another but as the identity of a single existence” (Ahmad 42).

To quote Aijaz Ahmad, Arundhati Roy has written a novel that “has learned all that there is to be learned from modernism, magic realism, cinematic cutting and montage and other such developments of narrative technique in the 20th century, but a novel that nevertheless remains Realist in all its essential features” (33). With the universal themes of love, death, transgression and exploitation, Roy has given us a new direction of Indian English Novel. We are reminded of Roy’s assertion:

I have to say that my book is not about history but biology and transgression…. And so the book deals with both things- it deals with our ability to be brutal as well as our ability to be deeply intimate and so deeply loving. (qtd. in Nair 43)

The authorial comment sums up the theme of the novel. Ammu, Estha, Rahel and Velutha will continue to haunt the readers long after the reading is done. Though the method and manner of Kapur’s writing is very different from Roy, she too, takes up the themes of love, sex and plight of women in her novels.
A Married Woman (2002), Manju Kapur’s second novel, won comparable commercial success both in India and abroad. Though it was shortlisted in India for the Encore Award 2004 for the Best Second Book, it has raised lots of controversies ever since its inception because it deals with the highly sensitive issues of communalism, gender confrontations and same-sex relationship. In a telling and poignant language Kapur portrays the life of the heroine, Astha – her growing up, attaining motherhood and her struggle for having an identity of her own.

Asta is the only child of middle-class parents living in the government quarter in South Delhi. Her traditional and protective parents expect her to conform to the social traditions. As the opening line of this enticing novel states, she "was brought up properly, as befits a woman, with large supplements of fear." She was brought up with utmost care and calculation in order to get a good husband in future. Though her father is quite emancipated in his wishes for his daughter to be independent and have a successful career her mother only thinks of her successful marriage- "When you are married, our responsibilities will be over" (1). Before her marriage Astha was attracted towards Bunty, a young boy of another colony, but had to put him away from her mind owing to her mother’s interference. This was followed by another episode when a smart boy of her college, Rohan, created in her the first sensation of sexual proximity while driving in the car. Astha realized the sheer infatuation of adolescent love when Rohan left for overseas to curve a better career for himself. These relationships left a sad yearning in Astha’s heart though she accepted her lot.

Finally, she is married to Hemant, a foreign returned MBA and a successful businessman settled in Delhi. Though she enters a traditional Indian arranged
marriage, initially she finds love and companionship in her husband- "her husband was going to encourage her writing. Maybe she could become a poetess as well as a painter. Her life was opening up before her in golden vistas" (42). But after the initial few months she feels lonely and takes up the job of teaching with the permission of her husband and her in-laws because she will only be out half the day so the home will not suffer" (47). Situation becomes worse when she becomes the mother of two children, Himanshu and Anuradha. Following the birth of her two children, she begins to find that she has sacrificed her own identity while striving to satisfy the traditional duties and family values. With Hemant too busy with his work and most of the times in tour, "Asth a was now virtually a single mother" (71).

The main plot takes a new turn with the introduction of the cultural artist, Aijaz Akhtar Khan, who creates a stir in the feelings of Astha and makes her feel as an independent woman, a woman who has to seek her own self, her identity and her existence away from the world of her husband, children in-laws and the routine marital life. In such a scenario it is the political upheaval of the Ram Janmabhumi Babri Masjid movement that serves as a turning point in Astha's life. Her talents as a writer and narrator are recognized by Aijaz who asks her to write the script for the school theatre. Their nascent friendship is cruelly brought to an end when Aijaz perishes tragically, burnt to death by a Hindu mob in the wake of the Hindu-Muslim clashes over the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya where he had gone to work as a social activist.

After Aijaz's ghastly death, Astha comes out of her cocoon and actively participates in rallies against communalism and has the courage to go against
her husband's disapproval- "I have decided to go to Ayodhya", she said (188)."
She starts painting with enthusiasm and depicts her messages of peace and secularism in her portraits that sell in high price.

The plot takes another twist when in Ayodhya Astha first encounters Pipeelika Khan, a woman qualified in sociology and economics and who turns out to be Aijaz's widow, having boldly married him across the religious divide. Against all social norms, the friendship between the two women develops into a fully intimate same-sex relationship, clandestine but marked by a deep affection. The intimacy and comfort she receives from this affair, contrasts strongly with the distance she feels in her rigidly defined role as wife and mother. The relationship reaches its most intense point when Astha and Pipee tour South India together, but finally it breaks up with Pipee leaving for the US to study for a doctorate and Astha, left with an emotional vacuum, was "stretched thin, thin across the globe" (307).

In this well researched novel, Manju Kapur uses the historical events of Ayodhya as the backdrop for the life-stories of Astha and Pipee. Throughout, Kapur's delicate writing delineates the human relations and their social context with great sensibility. *A Married Woman* has transcended the temporal because it gives new insights to the silent desires and emotions of women in our patriarchal society.

Manju Kapur's *Home* (2006), begins with a sort of prologue to the joint-family tradition of our society and this sums up its ethos:

The Banwari Lal family belonged to a class whose skills had been honed over generations to ensure prosperity in the market-place. Their marriages augmented, their habits
conserved. From an early age children were trained to
maintain the foundation on which these homes rested. (1)

In an interview with Ira Pande, Kapur said that she tries to explore in all her
novels the space that women occupy in domestic relationships. (3) Through
many twists and turns Kapur surveys this space in *Home* and reveals the myriad
issues that are deep-rooted within the family—revolt against the age-old tradition,
the search for selfhood, woman’s rights and the politics of marriage.

Set in Delhi’s Karol Bagh, this novel presents a simple story of the “Banwari
Lal joint-family” running a business in cloth marketing. The Banwarilals have a
fancy garments showroom selling bridal and other products in the bazaar of Karol
Bagh, Delhi’s chief shopping destination for middle-class Indians. The story sets
in motion when Sona comes to the shop and Yashpal, the eldest son of the
patriarch, Lala Banwari Lal, falls in love with her. Thus in the very first chapter,
Kapur draws us into the lives of two sisters, Sona and Rupa— the first attractive
and the other merely plain-looking. Much to the displeasure of her mother-in-law
because she could not bring a huge dowry with her, the fairer Sona is married to
the Banwarilal family while the unlucky Rupa is attached to a junior government
officer. Though the newly married Sona basks in the love of her husband, she
remains childless for the first ten years of her marriage in spite of her fasting and
praying. Though rich, having a house which is properly her own, Sona suffers
humiliation from all corners—mostly from her in-laws who always made her “feel
bad” (25). The story thus winds along, narrating the ups and downs of the
Banwari Lal business and family. Yashpal’s brother marries, and his wife dutifully
produces two sons in quick succession, while Sona is only able to conceive ten
years later. When she finally does conceive, her mother-in-law (known only as “Maji”, never by name—an indication of her status as nothing more significant than the patriarch’s wife) promptly starts doting on her which in turn creates a bridge between Sana and Rupa (who all these years had been her sister’s confidant in gossip about the mother-in-law). Rupa begins to feel a dividing border between her more “fortunate” sister and herself (35). Kapur observes these little details skillfully with a hope to touch the hearts of the readers. Sana finally gives birth to a cute and fair daughter, Nisha, and a year later, a “dark and plain-featured” (49) boy, Raju. Meanwhile, Rupa accepts her lot of being childless and with the help of Yashpal starts a pickles business that flourishes well.

The story that started with the tale of Sana and Rupa continues with the growing up of Nisha—her studying of English Literature, falling in love, forcefully standing up to her conservative family, despairing at being jilted by the lover and finally her marriage to another person become central to the concern of the readers. When Nisha falls in love with the boy while studying in the university, he is considered too far beneath the Banwarilals—both in status and caste. Her family pays him off (215) and he leaves without much grumbling. Nisha falls into acute depression, which is followed by her severe skin-disease. She visits doctors but to no avail. Meanwhile, the sons belonging to the second generation marry. The joint family expands with the inclusion of the new daughters-in-law and the children that follow inevitably. But Nisha has to wait her lot. Ultimately, she starts her own business (as a stop-gap arrangement) and does remarkably well. With her marriage, finally, to a man whose first wife died in a road accident, she has to give up her business much against her will. The story, which runs
almost uniformly without much twists and turns, finally ends with the picture of
Nisha sitting with her children glowing with inner satisfaction-

Ten months after Nisha's marriage, twins were born.
One girl, one boy. Her duty was over—God had been
kind, however hard it was to believe.... She quickly
adjusted her palla and looked up. Surrounding her were
friends, relatives, husband, babies. All mine, she
thought, all mine. (336-37)

*Home* quite fascinatingly portrays the destructive limitations of Indian family
values which throttles the individual growth. Bearing semblance to some extent to
all time favourites like *Sense and Sensibility* and *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the
theme of *Home* essentially depicts the “family-life”with all its power-struggles.

The thematic study of Arundhati Roy's and Manju Kapur's fiction reveals
that both these women writers have depicted contemporary society in a realistic
way. Socio-political problems of contemporary life are portrayed in terms of
individual's quest for identity and freedom to seek one's pleasure against the
norms laid down by society. What is added to issues like gender, race and class
is sexuality. Both the novelists gave freedom to their female protagonists to fulfill
their love and sex the way they like (including practicing lesbianism). No wonder
their fiction becomes female centered and revolting.

Anjana Appachana is a novelist of Indian origin who lives in the United
States. She has a novel titled *Listening Now*. Her first novel, *Listening Now*, was
published by Random House in 1997. In it, six women tell the story of two lovers,
Padma and Karan, spanning sixteen years. The novel is set in Bangalore, Delhi
and Lucknow. The sustained and emotional intensity of this 500-page novel and
the profusion of dramatic moments sweep the reader off his feet by their very
abundance. The number of narrators who unfold the story are as many as six-each person bringing a different perspective on the core events that span some 16 years and about which each one has only partial knowledge. The narrators are all women—mothers, daughters, sisters, friends—who have listened to each other carefully, shared laughter, swapped memories and fears, who can sense even the colours of each other's darkest secrets. While trying to come to grips with the protagonist Padma's story each narrator also reveals a complex world of her own, permeated with desires, adjustments and a quiet despair.

Kiran Desai's first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, was published in 1998 and won instant acclaim. It was awarded the 'Betty Trask Award'. The plot is set in the Indian village of Shahkot (state of Punjab) and follows the exploits of a young man trying to avoid the responsibilities of adult life. The central character of the novel, Sampath Chawla, is incapable of organizing his thoughts and his life within the confines of the bureaucratic wheel, and he fails at everything he attempts. Finally, he escapes from his work and his oppressive family to live in a guava tree. Here he spends his life snoozing, musing and eating the exotic meals cooked by his mother. When asked in an interview about how such a plot developed in her novel, she explained:

I started with a very small idea, really. I'd read a story in *The Times* of India and heard about a character from many people, a man who was a very famous hermit in India who really did climb up a tree, who lived in a tree for many, many years, until he died. ..So I began to wonder what it was about someone like this who would do something as extreme as to spend his life in a tree. So it started really with that character, and then the story built up around it.
Desai's next novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) won the 2006 Man Booker Prize and 2007 National Book Critics' Circle Fiction Award (USA). The story revolves around the inhabitants of a town in the north-eastern Himalayas. It is a novel that sprawls across two continents. Set in 1980s India, the novel focuses on Jemubhai, a former judge, his teenage granddaughter Sai and their cook – who live in a rapidly deteriorating house in the north-east Indian town of Kalimpong. The novel also features Sai's neighbours including the Anglophiles Noni and Lola, and Sai's Nepalese maths tutor Gyan, with whom Sai falls in love. Running parallel with the story set in India we also follow the vicissitudes of the cook's son Biju as he struggles to realise the American Dream as an immigrant in New York. *The Inheritance of Loss* sets these characters against the political turmoil of the Himalayan region. The Gorkha National Liberation Front is fighting for independence, which results in neighbour turning against neighbour. Biju's experiences as an Indian immigrant in the United States provide a contrast to the slow westernization of rural India. Amidst these global themes, the novel provides a personal insight into the past and present life of each character, and in particular how their individual pasts dictate their present and future. Like its predecessor, this book abounds in rich, sensual descriptions. These can be sublimely beautiful, such as in the images of the flourishing of nature at the local convent in spring: "Huge, spread-open Easter lilies were sticky with spilling antlers; insects chased each other madly through the sky, zip zip; and amorous butterflies, cucumber green, tumbled past the jeep windows into the deep marine valleys" (282). This interweaving of micro and macro themes, expressed in rich
and eloquent prose, enables readers to understand the desolate lives of these characters against a wider social, economic and political backdrop. The Inheritance of Loss is ultimately an exploration of how multiculturalism and the meeting of the East and West brings change, but not always progress because we are all bound by our past. As the author stated:

The characters of my story are entirely fictional, but these journeys (of her grandparents) as well as my own provided insight into what it means to travel between East and West and it is this I wanted to capture. The fact that I live this particular life is no accident. It was my inheritance. (www.bookbrowse.com)

Desai describes The Inheritance of Loss as a book that, 'tries to capture what it means to live between East and West and what it means to be an immigrant,' and, 'what happens when a Western element is introduced into a country that is not of the West'. Desai aims to describe, 'what happens when you take people from a poor country and place them in a wealthy one. How does the imbalance between these two worlds change a person's thinking and feeling? How do these changes manifest themselves in a personal sphere, a political sphere, over time?' (http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0599/desai/interview.html).

A new trend in novel writing is set by the younger generation of writers and mention may be made of two popular writers- Chetan Bhagat and Rana Dasgupta. Five Point Someone – What not to do at IIT! is a 2004 novel written by Chetan Bhagat, an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad. This was his debut novel. The novel is set in the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, the time period being
1991 to 1995. It is about the adventures of three mechanical engineering students, Hari Kumar (the narrator), Ryan Oberoi, and Alok Gupta, who fail to cope with the grading system of the IITs. *Five Point Someone* and *One Night At the Call Centre*—have both been record best-sellers, making him a cult figure of sorts among youngsters. Given the growing appeal of his books among youngsters, Bollywood is taking to Chetan like never before. While his *One Night At the Call Centre* is being adapted into a film called *Hello* directed by Atul Agnihotri, his *Five Point Someone* has been made into an Aamir Khan starrer, *3 Idiots*. In an interview Chetan pointed out the interesting aspect of his writing:

> My writing skills are okay, but I always have a good story to tell that deals with reality – things that happen in our day-to-day existence. I am not judgmental, my characters in the book are not perfect, and they do falter. Pre-marital sex, tiff with the boss, job issues – all these things happen, I talked candidly about it when no one was speaking.

[Rana Dasgupta](http://spicezee.zeenews.com/articles/story21936.htm) (1971-) is a British-Indian novelist and essayist. His first novel, *Tokyo Cancelled* (2005), is an examination of the forces and experiences of globalization. A la *Canterbury Tales*, thirteen passengers stuck overnight in an airport tell thirteen stories from different cities in the world, stories that resemble contemporary fairytale, mythic and surreal. The tales add up to a broad exploration of 21st century forms of life, which includes billionaires, film stars, migrant labourers, illegal immigrants and sailors. *Tokyo Cancelled* was shortlisted for the 2005 John Llewellyn Rhys Prize.
In the concluding part of this chapter I would like to make a brief mention of Shashi Deshpande and her fiction. It is important to note that Indian English women novelists write from the Margin and not from the Centre. That is because originally writings were done by men and literature had patriarchal bias. When women started writing, they were categorized separately- not as the 'norm' but the 'other'. Initially women were marginalized but we would do well to remember that they were not marginals. Shashi Deshpande, the acclaimed writer and winner of the Sahitya Akademy Award, renders most poignantly the wider issues of life in all her novels. Starting her writing career in the 1970s, she has twenty-three books to her credit- ten novels, eight volumes of short stories, four books for children, and one collection of essays. Her novels are- *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1989), *The Binding Vine* (1992), *A Matter of Time* (1996), *Small Remedies* (2000), *Moving On* (2004), *In the Country of Deceit* (2008). Of these ten novels, two (*If I Die Today* and *Come Up and Be Dead*) are crime fiction, which the author herself regrets. "My failure with the two crime novels I tried my hand at, still weighs on me", *(Writing From the Margin 28)* says Deshpande and therefore, they are left outside the purview of this dissertation.

While exploring the theme of a woman's journey of self-discovery, she gives the readers novels that speak about the myriad feelings of love and death, the pain associated with death, the fleeting nature of time and its healing effect. The story lines are generally simple, not burdened with many twists and turns and rendered with a voice of authenticity. In recognition of her major contribution to Indian English fiction, she was honoured with the Sahitya Akademy Award in the year 1990. The rare insights and finesse in her fictions and the undaunted spirit of the
writer in her make for the artistry in her works. Her writing career thus reveals an unending process of problemmatizing life’s conflicts and negotiations. Her novels are open-ended and this perception of viewing human life without any definite closures concretizes major themes of her fictions which primarily focus on man-woman relationship, desires and passions, sexualities, gender bias, rebellion and protest. With these recurring themes Deshpande creates a space, a site for contestation of ideologies from where various voices find utterance breaking the long silence of ages. Implicit in these is the author's critique of the widely contested site of socio-cultural life in modern urban and postcolonial India. In many interviews as well as in her book of critical essays *Writing from the Margin* the novelist has repeatedly observed that she faces a two-way marginalization. First, being a woman writer and second, because of the language in which she chooses to write. As for the first point raised, Women’s writing has become a separate category and women writers are always bracketed with other women writers and never with writers in general. Deshpande laments that women's writing is most of the times labeled as “domestic literature” or “kitchen literature”. She raises such vital questions in her essay “Writing from the Margin” as whether writing by women is for women alone or whether women’s writing is a separate genre, separate from men’s. Regarding the second category of marginalization, the Indian regional writers (called Bhasha writers, a term coined by G. N. Devy in *After Amnesia*) accuse Indian English writers of lacking in authenticity. To Deshpande, English is one of our “bhashas”. In an essay, “An open letter to some fellow-writers”, Deshpande points out that the charge that thinking, or writing in English prevents the Indian writers to penetrate the psyche of the people, is weird. She argues that a language can never close the doors on imagination or
feeling. In her thought provoking essay, “Of Concerns, Of Anxieties”, Deshpande writes that her writing originated from her suppressed feelings about what it is to be a woman in our society, her experience of the difficulty of playing the different roles enjoined on her by the society. It evolved out of her consciousness of the conflict between her idea of herself as a human being and the idea that society has of her as a woman. She adds that by being a feminist, she believes that the female of the species has the same right to be born and survive and to fulfill herself and shape her life according to her needs and the potential that lies within her, as the male has. Being a feminist does not require one to give up family life or to hate men. As she rightly points out, the greatest revolutions can take place in the mind. It is not necessary to walk out, to commit adultery, to divorce, to show defiance or a rejection of tradition. Her heroines never shrug off their familial roles but try to make these comfortable. Though Deshpande has reiterated that though she is a feminist in life her writing is not feminist, her protagonists stand up to her own convictions on feminism to some extent.

Indu, the heroine of the novel Roots and Shadows (1983) rebels against the social norms and marries a man of her own choice against the wishes of her family. But she is soon disillusioned and returns to her parents’ house in a state of confusion. Here, she analyzes her relationship with her husband dispassionately and by the end of the novel emerges as a confident woman who will now continue her married life without compromising on her principles or her individuality. She is finally able to discover her roots as an independent woman. The novelist says that a lifetime of introspection went into the making of That Long Silence (1989) and it is the most autobiographical of all her writings, though not in personal details but in the thoughts and ideas. The novel has wide-ranging
dimensions and raises questions about the process of self-revelation, the search for meaning of our life. In the Dadar flat, Jaya finds a new meaning of her life through her self introspection. She finally resolves to speak to her husband on equal terms- to break that long silence. The Dark Holds No Terror (1990) portrays most realistically the dilemma of the protagonist, Saru, -as a daughter, wife, mother and above all as a human being. With her growing recognition as a well known lady doctor, her marriage begins to crumble. Sexually abused and humiliated by her own husband, the disillusioned Saru faces a number of questions in her mind that have no ready-made answers. Finally, Saru is reconciled to the fact that life must be faced and finds her real self that had been lost amidst many fragmented selves. Saru's journey is a journey from self-alienation to self identification, from negation to assertion. In the next novel, The Binding Vine, published in 1992, Mira's poems brings about a change in the protagonist's approach to life. In the webs of loss and despair she sees the glimmerings of hope, compassion and love. Urmila is seen, at the end of the novel, recollecting the bonds of love that provide the springs of life. A Matter of Time (1996) traces Sumi's quest for an identity after Gopal leaves her. Modern and liberal in outlook, she defies the outdated social opinion and orthodox treatment of a woman subjected to desertion by her husband. She is able to find her real self, assert her independence and do the many things that she had always wanted to do in life. As all other protagonists of Deshpande's novels, Madhu, the heroine of Small Remedies (2000) too realizes that life has always to be made possible. Through self-introspection she moves from a state of confusion to self-realization. In Deshpande's latest novel, Moving On (2004), the narrator is Jiji (Manjari) - a widowed woman who moves in to her parental house
to care for her ailing father. Discovering her father's diary after his death, she sets out to evaluate her life retrospectively - in view of Baba's revelations that show past events in a new light. While the retrospection reveals her picturesque past, her present depicts an uncertainty. Manjari, as a “new woman” shows patience, courage and an enviable spirit to face life as it comes on her way. Deshpande shows in *Moving On* how to move on, how to make the most of one's life. Her latest novel, *In the Country of Deceit*, depicts how Devayani breaks the norms of behaviour that society thrusts on women to ultimately find for herself a new way of life which makes her complete as a woman. Saru, Jaya, Indu, Urmila, Sumi, Manjari and Devayani gradually undergo a process of introspection and self-analysis to realize their place and role in the family. These women overcome their vulnerability in love through education and professional competence. As D. Maya rightly observes,

> The female voice is quite audible in Shashi Deshpande’s novels which can be described as her stories. As the central narrative voices her women characters compel our attention to the ‘long silences’ and ‘absences’ that go unnoticed in a male-oriented society. In her novels *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *That Long Silence* (1988), *The Binding Vine* (1993), *A Matter of Time* (1996), she spells out the problems of women against the matrix of Indian middleclass families. There is a loud critique of the patriarchal ideology which ignores women’s aspirations for individuality beyond the confines of home and family. (96)
In all her novels Deshpande makes strong statements on the status of contemporary Indian women in their resistances and submissions to the dictates of phallocentrism. Thus her works have an appeal for almost all generations of readers. The themes treated by writers grow old, lose their topicality, and cease to interest the readers. But the real works of art do not die or lose their poetic value because they transcend time. Deshpande's novels certainly belong to the latter category. Under this backdrop I would like to study her novels in the following chapters and show how the concept of "writing from the margin" becomes elusive by subverting the phallocentric canon.
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