Chapter-1

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Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. In recent years it “has attracted widespread interest, both in India and abroad.”\(^1\) It is now recognized that Indian English literature is not only part of Commonwealth literature, but also occupies a “great significance in the World literature.”\(^2\)

Today, a number of Indian writers in English have contributed substantially to modern English literature. Ram Mohan Roy who heralded the Indian Renaissance and Macaulay who recommended English language education in India were probably aware of what was in store for the Indians in terms of literary awareness. Today it “has won for itself international acclaim and distinction.”\(^3\)

Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in the context of our time, and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks:

…one of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling, the novel as we know today was an importation from the West.\(^4\)

It was in Bengal that a literary renaissance first manifested itself, but almost immediately afterwards its traces could be seen in Madras, Bombay and
other parts of India. The first Indian English novel was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s Raj Mohan’s Wife (1864). It is different from his Bengali novels such as Durgesh Nandini or Kopal Kandla. In fact, it paved the way for Anand Math (1884), Indian’s first political novel which gave the Indians their national anthem, “Vande Mataram”. Then came Manoj Basu’s Jaljangle in the form of English translation as The Forest Goddess by Barindra Nath Bose.

The novels published from the eighteen sixties up to the end of the nineteenth century were written by writers belonging to the presidencies of Bengal and Madras. Most of these novels are on social and few on historical issues, and for their models they drew upon eighteenth and nineteenth century British fiction, especially that of Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Walter Scott.

Novels published between 1864 and 1900 include Ram Krishna Punt’s The Bay of Bengal (1866), Anand Prasad Dutt’s The Indolence (1878), Shoshee Chunder Dutt’s The Young Zamindar (1883), Trailokya Das’s Hirimba’s Wedding (1884), Krupabai Satthianandan’s Kamala: A Story of Hindu Child Wife (1894) and Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life (1895), Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s Bijoy Chand: An Indian Tale (1888) and Lt. Suresh Biswas: His Life and Adventures (1900) and Yogendra Nath Chattopadhyaya’s The Girl and Her Tutor (1891).

The twentieth century began with novelists of more substantial output. Romesh Chandra Dutt translated two of his own Bengali novels into English: The Lake of Palms: A Study of Indian Domestic Life (1902) and The Slave Girl of Agra, an Indian Historical Romance (1909). The first, a realistic novel, seems to have been written with the aim of social reform with its theme being widow remarriage, while the latter is set in the Mughal period.

Sarath Kumar Ghosh and another Bengali novelist, wrote Verdict of Gods (1905) and The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna (1909). A. Madhaviah and T. Ramakrishna Pillai, belonging to Madras presidency were two important
contemporaries of these Bengali novelists. Madhavia wrote *Satyananda* (1909), *Thrillai Govindan* (1916), *Clarinda* (1915), *Nanda, the Pariah Who Overcame Caste* (1923) and *Lt. Panju-A Modern Indian* (1924). T. Ramakrishna Pillai wrote *Padmini* (1903) and *A Dive for Death* (1911).

Another Indian English novelist of prominence was a Punjabi writer Jogendra Singh. His fictional work includes: *Nur Jahan*, The Romance of an Indian Queen (1909), a historical novel: *Nasrin, An Indian Medley* (1911), a realistic novel depicting the fall of aristocratic life in North India, *Kamala* (1925) and *Kamni* (1931), dealing with social themes. The first three were published in London and the last in Lahore.


The Gandhian whirlwind blew across the country during 1920-1947. Under the dynamic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi established political notions started vanishing from the scene and in turn new ideas and methods appeared, not only in the political field but in almost every walk of Indian life. The inevitable impact of the Gandhian movement on Indian English literature was the sudden flowering of realistic novels during the nineteen thirties. Novelists turned their attention away from the past to concentrate on contemporary issues. In their novels prevailing social and political problems that Indians found themselves in were given prominence. The nation-wide movement of Gandhi not only inspired Indian English novelists but also provided them with some of their prominent themes, such as the struggle for freedom, the East-West encounter, the communal problem and the miserable condition of the untouchables, the landless poor, the downtrodden, the economically exploited and the oppressed.
The impact of the far-reaching change on the Indian social and political scene caused by the Gandhian movement can be perceived in K. S. Venkatramani’s *Murugan, The Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan, The Patriot: A Novel of New India in the Making* (1932). The former reflects Gandhian economics while the latter reflects his politics. Then came A. S. P. Ayyer, whose novels like *Baladiya* (1930) and *Three Men of Destiny* (1939), although untouched by the twentieth century models and set in ancient Indian history, are Gandhian in spirit.

These novelists and their novels paved the way for the great trinity: Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao whose emergence was the most remarkable event in the realm of Indian English fiction. They were the harbingers of the true Indo-English novel. These novelists began writing around the mid 1930s. Bhabani Bhattacharya was also a contemporary of these novelists by birth, but he started writing fiction just after Indian independence.

The writing of these novelists moved the Indian English novel in the right direction. They discovered a whole new world in Indo-English fiction, and the Indian novel owes much to their efforts for gaining solid ground and achieving an identity of its own. They defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate, and brought the Indo-Anglian novel within hailing distance of the latest novels of the West. They established the suppositions, the manner, the concept of character, and the nature of the themes which were to give the Indian novel its particular distinctiveness. They “laid the foundation for the genuine Indo-Anglian novel, each imparting to the Indian experience a dimension of individuality based of their particular approach to content and form.”

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) has been the most prolific of the trio. His contribution to Indian English fiction of social realism is incontrovertibly great. His *Untouchable* (1935) depicts the story of the low caste boy, Bakha. It is basically a tragic drama of the individual caught in the net of the age-old caste system. In *Coolie* (1936) he presents a poverty-stricken protagonist, Munoo. Both novels are:
“a plea for downtrodden, the poor and the outcast, who face economic hardship and emotional humiliation in a rigid social structure”

His *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) depicts the story of a middle-aged peasant, Ganger, from a village in Punjab.


Anand's novels portray vividly the wretched condition of Indian rural society. He is one who “believes that literature must serve society, solve their problems and guide them” Through his novels he says that poverty, class, caste system and other widespread evils of society are like a poison that inflicts society and makes it sordid and inhuman. He is considered the Indian version of Charles Dickens as far as the treatment of social themes is concerned.

R. K. Narayan (1906-2001), one of the most prolific of Indian novelists in English, is a product of the South Indian Hindu middle class family. He remained aloof from contemporary socio-political issues and explored the South Indian middle class milieu in his fiction. He is a writer with full commitment to Hindu ideas. He created an imaginary small town named Malgudi and depicted middle class life in that town in almost all his works.

Before independence Narayan produced *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938) and *The English Teacher* (1946). His fictional art seems to reach maturity in his novels which appeared after
Narayan is known for his works on the economic and social aspects of Indian society, including The Guide (1958) and Man Eater of Malgudi (1962). His other novels include Waiting for Mahatma (1955), dealing with the Gandhian freedom struggle, The Vendor of Sweets (1967), and The Painter of Signs (1976).

In his nineties Narayan added four more novels to his corpus with A Tiger for Malgudi (1983), Talkative Man (1983), The World of Nagraj (1990) and Grandmother’s Tale (1992). Narayan succeeded in universalizing his Malgudi, though a local town, as Hardy universalized his ‘Wessex’. The inhabitants of Malgudi - although they may have their local identity - are essentially human beings having kinship with all humanity. In his novels we meet college boys, teachers, guides, tourists, municipal members, and taxi drivers of Malgudi, but through the provincial themes he forges a universal vision. He “peoples his novels with caricatures rather than characters.”

Raja Rao (1908-2006), whose “advent on the literary scene has been described as the appearance of a new star shining bright” is the youngest of the great trio. He is not a prolific writer like R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand who have to their credit a dozen novels each and numerous short stories. Even so, he is one of the most significant writers of modern India. At the time of writing he has published five novels, Kanthapura (1938), The Serpent and the Rope (1960), The Cat and Shakespeare (1965), Comrade Kirillov (1976) and The Chessmaster and His Moves (1988).

Kanthapura is perhaps the finest representation of the Gandhian whirlwind in Indian English fiction. It is the story of a village with that name. It presents the Gandhian ideology of non-violence and abolition of untouchability. Like its spirit, the form and style of Kanthapura also follow the Indian tradition.

The Serpent and the Rope, winner of the Sahitya Academy Award in 1963, “is considered a landmark in Indian-English fiction” its form showing a successful orchestration of Indian and Western methods. The Cat and the Shakespeare, a metaphysical comedy, is an example of philosophical fiction. The Chessmaster
and His Moves is characterized by an array of meaningful symbols. Here “The Chessmaster” himself and “his moves” are what He makes man do. Raja Rao’s place in the realm of Indian English fiction is safe as the most Indian of novelists in English, as stylist, symbolist, myth-maker, the finest painter of the East-West encounter and a philosophical novelist.

During the period of the major trio, Anand, Narayan and Rao, who produced epoch-making pieces of Indian English fiction writing, many other novelists were active and a considerable number of novels were produced. Many of these novelists, being Muslims, depicted in their works life in Muslim households. These novels are Ahmed Ali’s *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) and *Ocean of Night* (1964), Iqbalunnisa Hussain’s *Purdah and Polygamy: Life in an Indian Muslim Household* (1944), Humayun Kabir’s *Men and River* (1945), a novel based on a folk tale, Amir Ali’s *Conflict* (1947), *Via Geneva* (1967) and *Assignment in Kashmir* (1973), K. A. Abbas’s *Tomorrow is Ours: A Novel of the India of Today* (1943) and *Inquilab: A Novel of the Indian Revolution* (1955).

Among others who deserve mention are: Dhan Gopal Mukherji’s four novels: *Kari, The Elephant* (1922), *Hari, the Jungle Lad* (1924), *The Chief of the Herd* (1929), and *Ghond, the Hunter* (1929). C. S. Rau’s *The Confessions of a Bogus Patriot* (1923), Ram Narain’s *Tigress of the Herem* (1930), V. V. Chintamani’s *Vedantam or the Clash of Traditions* (1938), Shankar Ram’s *Love of Dust* (1938), D. F. Karaka’s *Just Flesh* (1941), *There Lay the City* (1942) and *We Never Die* (1944), C. N. Zutshi’s *Motherland* (1944), Purushottamdas Tricumdas’s *Living Mask* (1947).

After gaining independence India had many challenges to face and many changes came over Indian life. Complications took place in social, political, economic and cultural spheres but India handled them thoughtfully and adequately and progressed step by step. The fact of being independent and having its own identity spurred Indian English writing. It provided the writer with self-confidence, broadened his vision and sharpened his self-examining faculty. As a
result of these developments important gains were registered, especially in fiction, poetry and criticism. Fiction, already well established, grew in both variety and stature.

The convention of social realism in Indian English fiction, established by Mulk Raj Anand, went on flourishing during the nineteen fifties and early sixties through Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar and Khushwant Singh. While Sudhin Ghosh, G. V. Desai and Anantanarayanan, though with natural individual variation, enlivened the trend of the experimental novel, oriented by Raja Rao in his *Kanthapura*. In addition, the fictional works of B. Rajan present the combined effect of realism and fantasy.

Bhabani Bhattacharya’s fiction bore social purpose, as he believes that the “novel must have a social purpose” but he occasionally succeeded in achieving a vivid interpretation of life. In his first novel *So Many Hungers* (1947), Bhattacharya, dealing with the theme of exploitation on the political, economic and social ground, takes the Quit India movement and the Bengal famine of the early nineteen forties as its background. It continued the tradition of social realism stressing, like Anand, the necessity of social purpose in fiction.

In *Music for Mohini* (1952) Bhattacharya tries to connect our age-old vision of life with the new semi-western attitude. In *He Who Rides the Tiger* (1952) he forms an intricate criss-cross of themes such as appearance and reality, the “haves” and the “have-nots” and religious hypocrisy. His *Goddess Named Gold* (1960) is a good example of allegorical writing. In *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) he used symbolism against the background of the Chinese invasion of 1962. In *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978) he deals with the theme of the East-West encounter. Bhattacharya’s contribution to Indian English fiction is noteworthy. He is “the only Indo-Anglian writer whose work has been translated into over two dozen foreign languages.”
Manohar Malgonkar, one of the popular Indo-English novelists of the modern era started his career after independence with the publication of *Distant Drum* (1960). He is an artist of the first order. He excels in literary sensibility and critical maturity; he “subtly makes a landmark as a historical novelist.” Though a realist, unlike Bhatthacharya, Malgaonkar holds the opinion that art has no other purpose to serve than pure entertainment. Even so, his major preoccupation seems to be the role of history in individual and social life in India.

*Distant Drum* is a documentary of army life in its various aspects and a celebration of army code as developed by the Britishers in the army. *Combat of Shadows* (1962) derives its title and epigraph from the Bhagvad Gita. *The Princess* (1963), no doubt Malgaonkar’s best novel, is also a successful political novel. It reveals the bright side of the princely world. The setting of *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) is Partition while the Ramayana is the source of its title and epigraph. The *Devil's Wind* (1972) deals with the great Revolt of 1857. His novels after 1980 include *Bandicoot Run* (1982), *The Garland Keepers* (1987) and *Cactus Country* (1992), all containing spy stories in the center.

Khushwant Singh came into the limelight as a crude realist with the publication of his *Train to Pakistan* (1956). In this novel he depicts the impact of Partition on a small village on the India-Pakistan border. His second novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) shows an ironic picture of a Sikh joint family symbolizing different Indian reactions to the freedom movement of the nineteen forties. Later novels include *Delhi* (1990), and The Company of Women* (1999). His crude realism finds a place in each of his novels.

Another novelist of the period is J. Menon Marath whose realism is deeply rooted in his native land Kerala, as Khushwant Singh’s in the Punjab. He wrote *Wound of Spring* (1960), *The Sale of an Island* (1968) and *Janu* (1988). Bhalachandra Rajan presents a blend of realism and fantasy, the two conspicuous strains in the Indian English fiction of the nineteen fifties and sixties. Unlike his contemporaries, Rajan’s realism is less social than psychological in his first novel.
The Dark Dancer (1959). His second novel Too Long in the West (1961) is a comic extravaganza.

Another novelist, Sudhindra Nath Ghosh, adopts the ancient native tradition of story-telling to express the Indian ethos in all of his four novels: And Gazelles Leaping (1949), Cradle of the Clouds (1951), The Vermilion Boat (1953) and The Fame of the Forest (1955). G. V. Desani’s All About H. Hatters (1948) was a daring step on the ground of the Indian English experimental novel. In presenting the story of the hero’s search for a viable philosophy of living, his quest for understanding the meaning of life, Desani blends Indian and Western narrative forms.

An important feature of this period was the growth of Indian women novelists writing in English. Their appearance added a new dimension to Indian English novel. It is only after India gained freedom that they have begun enriching Indian English fiction. The dominant figures were Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai.

Kamala Markandaya, one of the most outstanding and eminent Indo-Anglian novelists, shows a broad range and rich variety of setting, characters, and theme. Her first novel Nectar in a Sieve (1954), a tragedy engineered by economics, is a woeful tale of the trials and tribulations of a peasant couple, Nathan and Rukmani, of a South Indian Village. Her second novel, Some Inner Fury (1957), is primarily a political novel dealing with the straining of human relationships in the wake of Quit India Movement. A Silence of Desire (1961) depicts the conflict between Indian spiritual faith and modernism born of India’s contact with the West. Possession (1963) seems to be a continuation of A Silence of Desire, dealing with the conflict between Indian spiritualism and Western materialism. Two of her later novels, A Handful of Rice (1966) and Two Virgins (1973), however, covertly show how the modernism brought in by the Western influence inspires the protagonists to revolt against their traditional environment and seek their fulfillment by shaping their careers independently.
In *The Coffer Dams* (1969) Markandaya deals with the theme of the East-West encounter from a different angle by presenting the conflict between technological power and the forces of nature symbolized by a turbulent South Indian river. She exposes a new dimension of the theme of East-West confrontation in *The Nowhere Man* (1972), where she reveals the predicament of Indian immigrants in England. For the first time she tries her pen at historical fiction with the publication of *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), a chronicle of three generations of the princely family of Devpur. Her next novel was *Pleasure City* (1982). In all her novels Markandaya has treated the theme of East-West confrontation more comprehensively than any other Indian English Novelist.


Nayantara Sahgal, whose forte is politics, is the leading practitioner of the political novel in India. She writes simple prosaic tales about politicians and bureaucrats. In addition to the obvious political theme Sahgal shows her preoccupation with the modern Indian woman’s search for sexual freedom and self-realization. Her novels include *A Time to be Happy* (1958), *This Time of Morning* (1968), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977), *Rich Like Us* (1985), *Plans for Departure* (1985) and *Mistaken Identity* (1988). In all her novels the political turmoil of the outside world and the private torment of individuals are woven together.
After the 1960s Indian English fiction, like its Western counterpart, shifted its focus from the public to the private sphere. The mass destruction caused by nuclear weapons in World War-II brought unrest and anxiety all over the world. The situation gave rise to psychological disorders and loss of moral values, and profoundly disturbed man’s mental peace and harmony. World literature, responding to the new era, started to deal with the different gloomy faces of modern society.

Indian novelists could not remain aloof from these currents and henceforth they were not exclusively concerned with the exploration and interpretation of a social milieu, but dealt with new subjects of human existence and man’s quest for self in all its complicated situations. This shift of focus in Indian English fiction becomes clearer particularly with Anita Desai and Arun Joshi who explore the agonized existence of modern man in their writing which “changed the face of Indian English novel.”

Anita Desai, one of the literary luminaries of contemporary Indian fiction writing in English, is the most prominent among the Indian English novelists who have tried to portray the tragedy of human souls trapped in the circumstances of life. She “is more interested in the interior landscape of the mind than in political and social realities”. In her novels, Indian English fiction has acquired a depth which it seldom had before. She is more interested in the evaluation of the interior landscape of the human mind than in depicting the practical and social realities of life.

The combined influence of the great philosophers of the West and the fast-changing elements in the social structure of India had a great impact on Desai. She makes each work a haunting exploration of the psychic self. Her work is executed so thoroughly that her treatment gets the look of a philosophical system, a system which has been familiar to the world in the form of existentialism. The main point of concern in her novels is the loneliness of individual life. Through her novels, *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965) and *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971)
she has added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian woman novelist in English fiction.

*Cry, the Peacock*, her first novel, is a highly impressionistic account of the incompatible marital life of Maya, a hypersensitive woman who causes her detached and indifferent husband, Gautama's death, by pushing him from a roof, because he stands between her and a particularly beautiful moonrise. The cry of the peacock symbolizes the elusive equipoise to which she aspires.

In *Voices in the City*, the Maya-Gautam tragedy is re-enacted in Monisha-Jiban marriage and Desai captures eloquently the voices of the spiritual quest of three young people who are sensitive, educated and excessively self-conscious, but plagued by the absence of goals in their life in the city of Calcutta.

Her Akademi Award winning novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975) deals with Sita’s awareness of a basic dichotomy in the urban milieu, between compassion and the odour of death and destruction, and her resultant urge to free herself from the entire civilization and reach affirmation. It “depicts the inner-outer world of its protagonist Sita and her fatigue for life.” In *Clear Light of Day* (1980) she draws an ironic parallel between the freedom of the country and Raja’s and Bhim’s own personal freedom. Her other works, *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *In Custody* (1984) and *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) also deal with similar existential questions tormenting the individuals. She is a dominant figure in the twentieth century Indo-Anglian fiction.

By the end of the nineteen sixties and the early seventies some fresh faces appeared of the Indian English fictional scene, the most prominent of them were Chaman Nahal and Arun Joshi.

Arun Joshi (1939-1993), Like Anita Desai, has recorded modern man’s traumas and agonies in his novels with rare competence and gravity.
“It is with the novels of Arun Joshi and Anita Desai that a new era in the Indo-English fiction began and also witnessed a change in the treatment of themes”\(^{16}\)

His emphasis is on the individual psyche of the protagonist throughout his five novels. His technique of introspection intensified by self-mockery opens a new dimension in the art of Indian English fiction. It is because of his novel approach, his psychological understanding of the inner conflict of human beings and his philosophical existential vision, that one is drawn into his writing. Joshi recognizes a reality beyond the mere phenomenal world, a reality which only an artist could imagine and capture by giving a consistent form to the shapeless face of human existence.

Joshi’s place among the major Indian English novelists of the twentieth century is undisputed. He was exceptionally perceptive as a creative artist, but his premature demise in 1993 cut short his promising literary career. He could contribute to Indian English literature only five novels and a few short stories. His novels are: *The Foreigner* (1968), *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971), *The Apprentice* (1974), *The Last Labyrinth* (1981), *The City and the River* (1990) and a collection of short stories, *The Survivor* (1975). There is also a work of biography entitled *Lala Shri Ram: A Study in Entrepreneurship in Industrial Management* (1975), which is more in the nature of domestic eulogy. He won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his fourth novel *The Last Labyrinth* in 1982. It was very unfortunate that a man of such amazing abilities died of cardiac arrest in April 1993 at the age of fifty four in New Delhi.

Among Joshi’s contemporaries, Chaman Nahal is an important novelist. His most outstanding work before the eighties was *Azadi* (1975), one of the most prominent novels on the theme of Partition. His other novels before the eighties comprise *My True Faces* (1973), *Into Another Dawn* (1977) and *The English

After 1980 began the period of so-called “new” fiction. In this period a breed of new novelists emerged. It includes Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Deshpande, Shashi Tharoor, Shobha De, Amitav Ghose, Amit Choudhary, and Arundhati Roy.

Shashi Deshpande is the novelist with the most sustained achievement, having published eight novels. She seems to grapple with the identity crisis of the contemporary women in her works. Her important novels include The Dark Holds No Terrors (1980), If I Die Today (1982), A Matter of Times (1996) and Small Remedies (2000).


(1996). But De’s novels, though selling like hot cakes in India and abroad, would seem to belong less to serious literature than to pulp writing.

Another writer of immense worth is Arundhati Roy. She won the Booker Prize for her maiden novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997). It is a tale of shock and horror with theme of death and decay. In it Roy reveals immorality in public life, too, which is rocked by party politics and selfish motives.

The Indian English novel has passed through a tough time. There was a time when Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* was left untouched by British publishers before being recommended by E. M. Foster to Lawrence and Wishart to accept it. The same happened with R. K. Narayan whose *Swami and Friends* had to wait for Graham Greene’s recommendation. But today the case is different. Indian English literature is now readily accepted abroad. In fact Indian English novelists have elevated themselves by overtaking novelists whose mother-tongue is English in the race to win major literary awards. Although Indian English literature struggled hard to gain its establishment, the recent acclaim won by Vikram Seth (*A Suitable Boy*) and Arundhati Roy (*The God of Small Things*) has put it in the global spotlight.

Indisputably, the Indian English novel has gained a unique viability, vibrancy and vitality, attracting a remarkably wide readership and universal acclaim, to which the new novelists have made a positive contribution.

The Indo-English fiction has so many novelists but very few sympathetic critics. Meenakshi Mukherji expresses her sympathy to conclude her *Twice Born Fiction* with a comment:

Indo-English fiction, which has served for so long as a file or document of sociology of anthropology or educational theory must now be regarded as literature and evaluated as such. That is the service
it requires from critics, and this study is modest essay in this direction.\textsuperscript{17}

K.R.S. Iyengar is also a sympathetic critic. In fact, the sympathetic and generous views and considerations shown by Iyengar to the Indo-English fiction is a matter of concern from other critics such as David McCutchion. McCutchion is very harsh towards the Indo-English novelists. His analysis of the Indo-English fiction is that in the novels moods are invoked of sadness and fantasy.

Murli Das Melwani is one of such harsh critic. He says that an Indo-English novelist is always in search of subjects and critics. According to him, none seems to have grappled yet with the new and exciting India of the fifties, sixties and seventies. M.K. Naik is a midway between the sympathizers and the bitter critics of the Indo-English fiction. He says that the trends in recent fiction unmistakably indicate how the new novelists are trying to tread fresh paths and this is the surest sign of the continued vitality of an art though actual achievement is naturally determined by many factors including genius.

Paul Verghese, a Marxist critic, appreciates Indo-Anglian novels for opting "Humanism" and "hunger" as their themes. Chalapati Rai is very caustic when he remarks that writing is close to life, but the Indo-Anglians here have little to do with life. Uma Parameswaran, who criticized Indo-English fiction earlier in pessimistic tone (around 1976), now appreciates Salman Rushdie for \textit{Midnights Children} in 1981. Saros Cowsjee, Kirpal, R.K. Dhawan, William Walsh, P.S. Sundaram, R.S.Singh, Balram Das Gupta, Harish Razda, E.J. Kalinnikova, R.S.Pathak, R.K.Songh, K.K.Sharma and others are among sympathetic critics.

As the researcher is to analyze the history portrayed in Khushwant Singh’s novels, it will not be inappropriate on the researcher’s part to project some light on the origin of historical fiction.
For ordinary men, the term history means a history of a country, primarily its political history, which deals with the names of kings and monarchs and the details pertaining to ‘who succeeded whom and how’ at a particular point of time. In more recent times, it is understood to engage with constitutional changes and the power politics behind them. However, it is difficult to define and describe the nature and subject of history in order to get a comprehensive idea of any particular period of time, it is necessary to take into account religions, inventions, warfare, expansion of trade and other cultural and economical activities.

Juliet Gardiner describes it as “an unending dialogue between the present and the past.” Arthur Marwick shows three levels of history in his work; first, it can connote the entire human past as it actually happened. Secondly, history connotes man’s attempt to describe and interpret to the past. This is the sense, which comes nearer to the original Greek meaning “inquiry”. The third meaning indicates the systematic study of history, history as a scientific discipline.”

D.B. Macaulay, however, treats history differently. He holds that history falls alternately under the sole an absolute dominion of both, reason and imagination. It is sometimes fiction and sometimes theory.

The earliest historical materials or inspirations were devoted chiefly to glorification of the kings, military, victories and monarchical achievements. More often than not, myths, folk tales and panegyric songs preoccupied the historical narrations of ancient times. A few important happenings were carried as “the tales of grandmothers,” been handed down from generation to generation. Yet other accounts, creatively recorded in more organized way turned out to be epics. Interestingly, some of the scholars have argued that the Iliad and the Odyssey are products of a non-literate culture which were transcribed when the Greeks adapted a writing system. Further still, many scholars contented that Homer was, in fact, to poets, may be more, who compose the epics over a space of time. Putting aside the controversy regarding Homer, it is pertinent to note that the two epics offer an impressive account of the events, which are important from the
historic point of view of their time, and are useful sources of history as any of their counterparts.

The earliest and the simplest form of a more authentic kind of historical account consist of dynastic list, which are found at ancient Sumer and Egypt. After that, the very first objective account of history is of the Persian war, in the fifth century B.C. by Herodotus. Then onwards history was discovered from folk tales and myths as the latter were considered to be opposite to the “truth” and “fact”. The changed concept of history proposed that history is based on the fact, is liner an objective and deals with materials very different from fiction. However, the idea of historical progress is one of the contributions of the Bible. The Bible is not only the basis of western literature and culture, it has also influenced the concept of human history.\(^{23}\) To the Greeks, the Romans, and the Chinese, history was mainly a series of related developments containing practical and moral lessons for later ages. But the Bible is unique in its depiction of history as the handwriting of God and its conviction that the events of history express the divine plan for the world with the definite beginning, middle and end.\(^{24}\) The Christian conception of history after the fall as a record of human striving towards a goal of divinely ordained perfection underlines the modern belief in material progress. However, the religions view gradually gave way to the secular, social and political influences during the later centuries. Moreover, the subject of history, according to the popular belief, is the life of nations. Yet to describe more precisely, the life of a single nation would appear to be impossible. It would not be in congruous here to review the term “nation as a signifier”. The term, in its narrowest sense, connotes the territory or country itself. It also implies “a body of people, associated with the particular territory that is sufficiently conscious of his unity to seek or to possess a government peculiarly its own.\(^{25}\) A nation can be, above all, taken as a destiny, representing an earlier conquest wielding hegemony over the others, for a specific period of time. According to the theorists like Ernest Renan and Homi Bhabha amongst others, “grouping of provinces affected by a destiny, by its wars, its marriages and its treaties ends with the destiny which had
established it. The issue of narrating the nation can be linked with its people, their lives, beliefs, and inter-communal relations to take a recourse to Renan.

A nation is a sole, spiritual principle; two things constitute the soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memory…the other is present day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate, the value of heritage that one has received in an undivided from…..The nation like the individual is the culminating of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice and devotion.”

It must, therefore, be admitted that a nation can exist without a dynastic principle not surprisingly the historians of the earlier days unable to grapple with the changing meaning of “nation” had followed an unvarying method; they simply wrote of the parts played by the individual who held the power and allowed the role of humanity to find its place in literature. It is also very likely on the part of the historiographers to omit certain significant but politically less important events.

Historians often miss the circumstances that influence the morals and manners of people, the transition of communities and silent revolutions, as they are not acquired by armies or enacted by Governments. The literary writers on the other hand, try to find out such gaps in history and fill these gaps with lively events, engulfed by literary imaginations. Obviously, history has always been history what is narrated depends on “who” narrates and “why”. The revolt of 1857, for instance, can be an illustration in sight. Will Durant, in this context observes, “this is what the English called the Sepoy Mutiny, and what the Hindus called the War of Independence.”
It is not possible to trace back the origin of a historical novel. But with the publication of *Ivanho* by Walter Scott, in the 19th century, historical fiction came into lime light. By the turn of the century, the world literature was enriched by two classical historical novels, Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Pasternak's *Dr.Zivago*. The former presents a complete tableau of Russian society during the wars from 1805 to 1815. The canvas of the novel covers the area from salons of St.Peters Burg to the camps of war - from Moscow to the moffusils. The undeniable series of incidents, portraits and reflections unfold the true picture of contemporary Russia. Vicomte De Vogue has remarked that it is mandatory for those who wish to write a history of Russia to read first Tolstoy's account of the country in the novel. Otherwise, it is likely that only a hollow and dead work would be produced. Since then, Charles Dickens, Eric Maria Marques, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Herman Wouk, J. C. Farrell, John Dos Passos among the others have used history as source materials in their novels in as varied ways as they themselves.

One of the reasons of widespread popularity of historical novels was that it dealt with emotions besides the historical realities of the age. Descartes thinks, 'the delicacy of fictional enlivens the mind.' He believes:

> fiction makes us imagine a number of events as possible which are really impossible, and even the most faithful histories, if they do not alter or embroider things to make them more worth reading, almost always omit the meanest and least illustrious circumstances, so that the reminder is distorted.

F. J. Tickner opines that the historical novel "must conform to fact by a reasonable show of historical accuracy. The actual personages who appear in its pages must resemble, more or less closely, the real persons of history; the fictitious characters must behave, more or less, as if they had been living at the
Avron Fleishman opines that a historical novelist like the historian is “a recoverer of what actually happened in the past.”

It is essential to capture the spirit of the past and turn it into living documents on the part of the author. Leo Tolstoy believes:

As long as histories are written of individuals only of Caesars, Alexanders, Luthers, Woltaires and so forth who have taken part in given events, and not histories of all persons without exceptions who have participated in them, no description of the movements of humanity will be possible without the conception of some such force as compels men to direct their activities to a common end.

On the other hand, history, for R.G.Collingwood, is both, recovery and self definition. Douglas Archibald, while referring to this argument, assert that the historian does not bury himself in the past but reenacts it with a clear and animating sense of his presentness, wherein the assumption and perception of past and present are set in interaction and lead to mutual illumination and definition. Archibald, following Bats, further asserts that the sense of a large finish past can be rescued only by the interpretative imagination that meditates on it.

Thus, the author while dealing with the historical events, attempts to deduce some truth from recreation of particular event/s. In order to do so, his perception of the past must be impregnated by the historical sense as it involves to use T.S.Eliots terms, “perception not only of the pastness of the past but of its presence…”

Thus, historians and the writers of the fiction, both attempt to create the possibilities of “understanding”. White claims in this regard that historiography is a poetic construct and as such is neither scientific nor objective. “History”, he
contends, “is a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse.” It suggests that fiction is not only a representation of social reality, but also a necessary functional part of social control and also an important tool of social change.

M.C.Lemon believes that history is essentially concerned with the past. It deals with the matters not present to us and which we can not know “immediately” in order to approach his primary material, the historian is engaged into two different mental activities-inferring and proving the knowledge of past. Since the former uses imagination and latter required the use of logic, both fail to meet the standards of impartiality and objectivity to which most historians are supposed to committed. It implies that no historian approaches his material arbitrarily as to use White term, “the facts do not speak for themselves but the historian speaks for them.” According to him:

“novelist might be dealing with only imaginary events where as historians are dealing with real ones, but the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality cable of serving as the object of representation is a poetic process”

Moreover, the historians have always concerns themselves with events, and as it in an ascriptive way. They require explanation and have to be narrated. 

In this way, historiography narrative characteristically puts the distinction between history and fiction under apprehension and articulates historiographical issues in narrative forms. It questions the capacity of history to reveal absolute truths. Jacques Ehrman, in this regards, reaches an extreme formulation, “history and literature have no existence in and of themselves. It is we who constitute them as the objects of our understating.” Although, White puts it differently, to him, “what distinguish ‘historical’ from ‘fictional’ stories is first and foremost their
contents, rather than their forms. The story told in the narrative, he further propounds, "is a ‘mimesis of the story lived in some region of historical reality, and in so far as it is an accurate imitation it is to be considered a truthful account thereof." \(^{45}\)

Historical fiction, viewed in this light, has greater capacity to reveal truth of its time which could not be learnt otherwise. History-fiction overlaps have, thus, undergone a considerable change and can, if not replaced, definitely supplement each other.

With changed outlook and success and popularity of the historical fiction, a great number of writers may use history by incorporating social, cultural, political events, of their interest into the fictional frame of history. The changed historical scenario also played a major role. The world witnessed rapid changes in the declining decades of the nineteenth century and at the turning of the subsequent century. The great revolution of France, which is described as the meanest, cruelest and bloodiest inhuman history, revolutions in Russia and China, the rise and collapse of Fascism and the two world wars stirred the imagination of writers leading to origin of rich body of historical fiction.

Some of the novels written by Khushwant Singh can be called Political novels as well. Hence it will be interesting to know about political novel which is the sub genre of historical novel.

The history of literature, right from the ancient epics to the modern novel, shows that all literary creations are inherently ideological and in that sense social and political. None can deny the affiliations of \textit{Ramayana, Mahabharata, Iliad, Odyssey and Paradise Lost} with the politics of their times. The gradual displacement of religion as the organizing principle of life and society by politics, especially in the west, made the writers admit politics as one of the constituents of their imaginative contemplation. Yet the shape and nature of the political novel in the west has not fully crystallized. Even opinions on the issue and extent of
assimilation and affiliation of art and artists to politics and political ideologies remained divided. R.B. Heilman is of opinion that ....

"If one proposes that it is the business or nature of literature to engage in dissent (or, for that matter, assent), one is trying to make it, over into journalism, propaganda, topical pleading". 46

On the other hand, Robert B. Downs disapproves of the view that books are ineffective objects, and regards them as....

"...frequently dynamic, vital things, capable of changing the entire direction of events-sometimes for good, sometimes for ill."47

David McLellan criticizes even the very attitude and concept of neutrality. In this regard, he says that it is as elastic a concept as to include a wide variety of optional norms like political setting, ideas, figures, theory of public or governmental conduct, policy priorities, national events, ideological affiliations or discontent making for emphasis in the novel. The kind of politics one confronts emerges out of the interaction of men, ideas and events specific to the country.

A survey of the beginnings of the Indian novel in English shows that the novelists largely wrote either romances like Bianca and Kamala, or sociological novels like The Garden Keepers and The Cage of Gold, or historical novels like The Fatal Garland and Shivaji, or at best novels dealing with east-west encounter like Hindupore or The Prince of Destiny. It is only after the nationalistic stirrings gained momentum in India that the novel changed its direction and attention from romances, history, sociology and culture to politics revealing a new kind and pattern of awareness and relationship of the individual with the specific of the milieu.
It is not the fact that all the novels and novelists turned political but the impact of the political upheaval was so great that even a novelist of such intense sociological concern as R.K. Narayan and one of deep metaphysical concern like Raja Rao could not but help writing at least one political novel each. The progress of the Indian English novel reveals the way the national struggle for independence in its various aspects and stages impinged upon the imagination of the writers to produce a new genre called the political novel.

The definition of the political novel begins a variety of interpretations. While The Oxford English Dictionary describes, the political novel as no more than “a fictitious political narrative, a novel about imaginary politicians” Morris Edmund Speare explains it in more exhaustively as follows:

"What is a political Novel? It is a work of prose fiction leans rather to 'ideas' than to 'emotions'; which deals with the machinery of law making or with a theory about public conduct than with the merits of any given piece of legislation and where the main purpose of the writer is partly propagation, public reform, or exposition of the lives of personages who maintain government, or of the forces which constitute government."

But H.A.L. Fisher simplifies it to say that the political novel...

"...concerns itself with men and women engaged in contemporary political life and discussing contemporary political ideas."

Joseph L. Blotner makes it very specific by adding that…
"...a political novel is ... a book which directly describes, interprets or analyses political phenomena."\(^{51}\)

But from Irving Howe point of view, political novel means:

"...a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting."\(^{52}\)

He further goes on to add that it may be so in the mind of the major characters:

"...so that there is to be observed in their behaviour, and they are themselves aware of, some coherent political loyalty or ideological affiliation. They now think in terms of supporting or opposing society as such; they rally to one or another embattled segment of society; and they do so in the name of, and under prompting from, an ideology."\(^{53}\)

All these statements point more towards the content of the political novel than its form. In other words, they do not reckon the aesthetic input but the thematic preoccupation. It is only Blotner who adds 'interpretation' and 'analysis' of the political phenomenon to the thematic concerns. But even he does not specify the nature and form of the process applied to interpretation and analysis from the stand point of aesthetic structure and form of such a type of novel. The process may even be human in a general way without being political. That is emphasizing the socio-human repercussions of the political. Even the test of 'the political' lies in its socio-human ends than its theoretical formulations. All political programmes generate their reactions in the lives of the people, who ultimately fashion the course of future politics in their human way. That is why Stephen Spender states that...
"...the writer who refuses to recognize the political nature of the age must to some extent be refusing to deal with an experience in which he himself is involved."\textsuperscript{54}

All these considerations prove that one way or the other the writer and politics are intertwined with one another in their interaction with the public, without being emphatic or dogmatic about commitments. Wolfgang Iser holds that...

"...unlike philosophies or ideologies, literature does not make its selections and its decision explicit. Instead its selections or records the signals of external reality in such a way that the reader himself is to find the motives underlying the questions, and in doing so he participates in producing the meanings."\textsuperscript{55}

George Orwell too believes that...

"...politicians and artists do not go well together. The goal of a politician is always limited, partial, short-term, oversimplified. It has to be, to have any hope of realization. As a principle of action, it cannot afford to consider its own imperfections and the possible virtues of its opponents. It cannot afford to dwell on the pathos and the tragedy of all human endeavors. In short, it must exclude the very things that are valuable to art."\textsuperscript{56}

Novel cannot be fully political unless it becomes the handmaid of socialist realism intending to change the very structure of both consciousness and art
ending in a kind of autocratic formalism. Such a kind of political novel will be more programmatic than creative surrendering artistic freedom in the process and bargain. The extent of the politicality of a novel therefore must be measured from its artistic necessity and synthesis in the creative process of the product. For literature is not reducible to, or simply derivative of another order. Nor can its process be genetically conditioned. But, as suggested by Alan Swingewood:

"genuine creative literature, while not escaping ideological influences, will strive to criticize the existing order, to transcend its immediately given forms."57

All these statements, so diametrically opposite in their stands towards the definition of the genre, seem to cancel one another, leading to a belief that novel can neither escape being political nor be fully political. It is basically given to depicting man's struggle at assimilating the discordant strands and notes of its milieu into an aesthetic whole. Politics is part of man's history and it is men who make history. It, therefore, remains to be the privilege of the writer as man to decide upon the extent to which he may participate or stay away from the political goings on around him. Should the political atmosphere and milieu be so intense and touching the core of personal and collective life the writer perhaps may not look for escape routes to his autonomy except through sharing in the upheaval. The history of fiction in all countries shows the same route and direction. Indian fiction in English specially, is no exception to this tendency. It picks up the strands necessary for its needs from the contexts of the available socio-political history and movements of its times for creative expression either in the urgency of their origin or in retrospect; The Indian political novel in English took its roots only with the upsurge of nationalism and revolt against the foreign rule.
References

2. Ibid. p.5


22. Ibid., p.7

23. Ibid., pp.152-153

24. Ibid., p.153


27. Ibid., p.19.

36. Ibid., p. 467
41. Ibid., p.125
45. Ibid., p. 106.
53. Ibid., p. 19.