2.1. A Brief Survey of Indian English Fiction in the 1980’s:

Though, English is spoken hardly by one percent of the population, it has now acquired immense prestige and percent in the country, a far cry from the days of Ram Manohar Lohia’s anti-English agitation. This is what has made our writers of the present generation to aspire to conquer English. This is what has tempted Jon Mee to assert confidently;

The English language has a privileged place in Indian culture. It is the language of the former colonizer and remains an elite language, the language of the getting on, the language of business, the language identified, above all, with modernity. [37]

Indian Literature written in English or Indian English Literature as it is called now was born when India was forcibly brought under the British yoke. Its growth should have become stunted after the British left India. What has happened, however, is contrary to the expectations of the nativists; Indian English Literature is flourishing more and more and is likely to do so in the foreseeable future. English is now not looked on as a colonial legacy and a sign of slavery but an instrument of progress and prosperity.

The decade wise study of the Indian English Novel has in fact been a significant development in recent available criticism. In order to examine the traits of the 1990s novel, one has to necessarily return to the 1980s, albeit briefly, because of the many structural similarities. What stands out in the 1980s novel then is that it is characterized by the realization that the individual has to play an important role in history. A majority of the novels of the decade reflect an urgency to rewrite received Indian history and expose the untruths of political versions; this is almost an obsessive theme of the 1980s and mirrors the felt pain that the impositions of emergency between 1975 and 1977 had
given to the writers of the times. The postmodern technique of double readings and writing against the grain gets a free play in the novels of the 1980s, particularly since it enables novelists to challenge and re-write received truths. Best known among 1980s Indian English novelists are Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Deshpande, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Nayantara Sahgal, Arun Joshi, Vikram Seth, kamla Markandaya, Anita Desai, Namita Gokhle etc.

Its messiah seems to have been Salman Rushdie. The appearance of *Midnight’s Children* in 1981 brought about a renaissance in Indian Writing in English, which has outdone that of the 1930s. The appearance of a certain post-modern playfulness, the turn of history, a new exuberance of language, the reinvention of allegory, the sexual frankness, even the prominent references to Bollywood, all seem to owe something to Rushdie’s novel. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* [1981] which won the coveted booker prize and a clutch of highly complementary reviews. A different type of novel had indeed spawned in the 1980s and critics were quick to note it. The first of such critical reflections was published in a critical anthology titled *The New Indian Novel in English: A Study of the 1980s* [kirpal 1990].

Amitav Ghosh, a novelist, full of promise potentiality and magnificent achievement. His important novels include *The Circle of Reason* [1986], *Shadow Line* [1988], *In An Antique Land* [1992], *The Calcutta Chromosome* [1996] and *The Glass Palace* [2000]. Ghosh has employed the technique of Magic Realism plus Fantasy and carried forward the Rushdie tradition. Using this technique, Ghosh has tried to present a vision of life that is based on contemporary reality and it is in this sense that he comes closer to Shashi Tharoor. As M. K. Naik and Shyamala Narayan have rightly observed:

This dichotomy is illustrated in two well-known novels of this period: *The Circle of Reason* [1986], the first novel by Amitav Ghosh [b. 1956]. And Shashi Tharoor’s [b. 1956], *The Great Indian Novel* [1989], also a first
novel Ghosh’s protagonist is a Bengali orphan called ‘Alu’ [potato] because his head is shaped like one. His real name is “Nachiketa,” which reminds us of the enterprising young boy in Katha Upanishad, who pursues the god of Death, importuning him to reveal to him the secret of existence. Alu is forced to run away from his village, because he is falsely accused of being a terrorist. His peregrinations take him to the Middle East, moving as he does from al-Ghazira, a small Persian Gulf town to Cairo, the Sahara and finally Algeria. [46]

Amitav Ghosh shot into fame with the publication of his first novel, *The Circle of Reason* in 1986. Apart from his Bengali background, his knowledge of Bangladesh, London, and Middle-East helped him to give a realistic touch to his novels. The places in his novels are not imaginary lands but places that can be located on the maps of the world. The novel has three stories woven around three characters. First Section, ‘satwa’ [‘Reason’] revolves around Balaram, the second section, ‘Rajas’ [‘passion’] revolves around Zindi and the third section, ‘Tamas’ [‘Death’] centers around Mrs Verma. It is due to Mrs Verma that Kulfi gets a proper funeral, defying rational skepticism. Finally, Alu, Zindi and Jyoti Das, the police officer leaves for their destination with hope.

His second novel, *The Shadow Lines* for which he got the Sahitya Akademi Award for the year 1989, is a good example of ‘Magical Realism.’ The theme of the novel is restricted to the people of a very small cross section of an upper middleclass Bengali family. The orthodox Bengali family is depicted at three stages-before partition, after partition, and in recent times. The first part of the novel “Going away” deals with the family’s exit from Dhaka during the riot ridden days of the partition and the second part, ‘Home coming’ deals with the Grandmother’s futile attempt to rescue her only living uncle ‘Jethamosai’ from their ancestral home surrounded by Muslim refugees who would become violent at times. Ghosh’s originality lies in his depiction of communal strife in Calcutta and Bangladesh. He seems to
say that there is a very marginal difference between fiction and reality. 
The suggestion is that there is a ‘shadow line’ between reality and 
imagination. And ‘reality’ is multifaceted.

If the major themes of Ghosh’s first two novels *The Circle of 
Reason* and *The Shadow Lines* are Nationalism, Political freedom and 
International relations, the themes of his third novel, *In An Antique 
Land* relate to religion, its meaning and practice, various religious 
traditions and inter-continental cultural intermingling. The scholar 
protagonist gathers a lot of information about various cultural ethics 
and practices. He brings out parallels among Hindu, Muslim and 
Jewish cultures. It is a story about Egypt told by a man who came from 
India, Another antique land. S. Sengupta has given a brilliant 
exposition of the novel in the following paragraphs:

The book has two sets of characters, the one belonging to 
history that Ghosh pursues indefatigably as a student of social 
antropology, and the other belonging to the present whom the narrator 
encounters and around whom he builds his fictional world. Ghosh’s 
achievement, like that of any gifted historical novelist, lies in his ability 
to extract from actual events a set of characters whose fictional identity 
is camouflaged by the plausible interaction with their environment and 
by their ability to appeal to the reader. Unifying the two sets is the 
thread of historicity a Post-Colonialist’s interpretation of the events 
encompassing eight centuries starting with the twelfth and ending with 
the operational Desert Storm.

The main characters in the pre-colonial world are Abraham Ben 
Yiju, a Tunisian Jewish Merchant who came to India via Egypt and 
Aden, and his slave bomma who is from Tulunad of ancient India. 
Through these characters Ghosh portrays a world where man lived in 
harmony with man, where the gulf existing between people of different 
races and different cultures became meaningless as they met over the 
draw bridge of humanity. The pages devoted to that world spill over
with light and colour-ordinary people bustle around laughing, talking and doing the most ordinary things. The main characters easily relate to this environment. It is a world of happy people, a world with no racial conflict, no feeling of alienation or hopelessness.

If in the main plot of Abraham Ben Yiju and his slave the journey is towards the humane aspects of civilization, the journey in the sub-plot seems to be in the opposite direction towards guns and bombs and tanks of Western Imperialism Powers which spell ruin for all the world, especially for so many Egyptians stranded in Iraq during the Operation Desert Storm. It was these colonizers who erected the man-made barriers and introduced the deep schism between Hindus and Muslims based on such inessential customs as the burning of the dead, the absence of circumcision in boys and clitoridectomy in girls. This was the modern age they ushered in where brother betrays brother for thirty pieces of silver, cherished codes of ethics are compromised and commitments to larger causes are drowned under waves of cupidity. Ghosh writes about cunning and egotism and betrayal. But on a profounder level he also writes about the eternal yearning in man to go back to an idyllic world – a world that existed, for example, eight centuries ago. [Pathak 5 - 7]

Normally, Indian English novelists bring different languages into comic collision, testing the limits of communication between them, celebrating India’s linguistic diversity, and taking over the English Language to meet the requirements of an Indian context, a perspective which receives perhaps its most explicit statement on the often quoted opening page of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s English, August: An Indian Story [EAAIS] [1988]: “amazing mix ....... hazaar fucked. Urdu and American ..... I’m sure nowhere else could language be mixed and spoken with such ease” [EAAIS 1], nevertheless, this kind of reshaping of the language is not entirely without its anxieties. In English, August, for instance, the promise of a novel written in a new kind of desi English rather fizzes out in favour of a continual self-conscious questioning of its own linguistic boundaries. The hero, Agastya, like his career as an employee of the Indian Administrative
Service, that is confronted with a variety of views on the role of English in India when he finds himself a member of the college-educated elite cast adrift on a posting to small-town India. One view he encounters is that India’s writers in English are hopelessly alienated from the national culture, full with one mixed up culture and writing about another, what kind of audience they are aiming at. From this kind of perspective, there really are no universal stories; because each language is an entire culture. Besides, great literature has to have its regional tang.

New novelists of the 1980s, such as Chatterjee [b 1959], have tried to demonstrate that, on the contrary, the Indian ‘tang’ is not a pure essence but the masala mix of a culture that has always been able to appropriate influences from outside the sub-continent. From this point of view, English is implicated in the polyphony of Indian Languages, its colonial authority relativized by entering into the complexity that it describes. Yet, translations between the languages that participate in this polyphony are not likely to be an easy process of matching like to like. Hierarchies exists that structure the relationship between India’s languages.

In this way, Upamanyu Chatterjee sought into prominence with the publication of his first novel, English August: an Indian Story [1988]. Subsequently he published two more books, The Last Burden [1993] and The Mammaries of the Welfare State [2000].

Shashi Tharoor is a major novelist in the post-1980 period with three novels such as The Great Indian Novel [1989], Show Business [1994] and Riot [2001] to his credit. Shashi Tharoor in his The Great Indian Novel [1989] uses traditional Indian history forms for the purposes of historical narration. He is another international Indian who went on from St. Stephen’s to a career with the United Nations. His novel adopts the story of the Mahabharata to an allegory of modern Indian history. The Great Indian Novel takes an irreverent view of the
development of modern India which is in tune with the scepticism of many recent historical novels similarly he shows few qualms about taking on one of the great epic for such purposes. Rather than simply placing material in traditional forms that would be in danger of reproducing the kind of Orientalism that has always defined India in terms of the glories of an unchanging past, novelists of this period have been much more willing to rewrite the genres of Indian literary tradition.

While trying to yoke the National Myth to contemporary reality, Tharoor is conscious of being accused of erring against proportion, a charge often made against the eighteenth century writes. Thus, there comes the apologetic note about the title of the novel:

A hasty note of disclaimer is due to those readers who may feel, justifiably, that the work that follows is neither great, nor authentically Indian, nor even much of a novel. The Great Indian Novel takes its title not from the author’s estimate of its contents but in defence to its primary source of inspiration, the ancient epic, The Mahabharata. In Sanskrit maha means great and Bharata means India.

The Great Indian Novel is a satirical portrayal of the political history of modern India from colonial era to the nineteen eighties when Indira Gandhi came back to power with a thumping majority after the Emergency debacle. With the progress of the novel, one finds Ved Vyasa [V.V] telling Ganapati about a number of subjects relevant to modern India in a jocular and hilarious manner. It seems as if Indian history is re-written from a different perspective.

Vikram Seth created history in more than one way. He is the first Indian English novelist to write a novel titled The Golden Gate [1986] is verse, for which he won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the year 1988. Again, he is the first Indian English novelist to get a fabulous amount of rupees two crores as advance for his epoch-making
novel *A suitable Boy* [1993] [I should hasten to add that money is not the criteria for judging the excellence of a work of art]. *The Golden Gate* heralded a new era in Indian English fiction. John Hollander calls it:

> a brilliantly fashioned tale of life among a number of Bayaree ‘yappies’ and that it is never anything less than quaintly and most unqualifiedly marvelous. [*The New Republic* 195:2, 32]

This novel reminds us of Byron’s *Don Juan* or Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*. Susan Sontag compares *The Golden Gate* to Eugene Onegin in its “particular mix of wit, sagacity and rue,” and praises *The Golden Gate* as a thrilling, subtle literary achievement” [*American Poetry Review* No./ Dec. 1986: 37-46]. H.H. Anniah Gowda was full of praise for Vikram Seth, when he says that,

> Vikram Seth has earned a place in the realms of gold. On reading *The Golden Gate* one tends to endorse the author’s exclamation, ‘How marvelously quaint. [*The Literary Half-Yearly* 29:1, 1998:34]

This novel is written in mellifluous sonnets and is devoid of oriental characters. It contains 594 stanzas, with a stanza each for Acknowledgments, Dedication, Table of Contents and A Note About the Author. It deals with the longing for love, affection and sense of belonging on the part of John, the Silicon Valley executive. Most of the characters experience loneliness in life and hence they search for meaning and emotional fulfillment. The happy ending of the novel, therefore, seems to be contrived.

Apart from the new generation of writers writing in the nineteenth eighties, we have old generation of writers who have also written during period. For example, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Arun Joshi, and Shiv K. Kumar have published excellent novels in the post-1980 era.
R.K. Narayan has published four novels during the post-1980 period: The Tiger for Malgudi [1983], Talkative Man [1983], The World of Nagaraj [1990] and Grandmother’s Tale [1992]. Of these novels, only one-time is The Tiger for Malgudi is a major novel.

Mulk Raj Anand published three novels during the post-1980 eras. They are, The Bubble [1984], Little plays of Mahatma Gandhi [1991] and Nine Moods of Bharata: Novel of a Pilgrimage [1998]. Of the three novels only The Bubble to some extend repeats the success of Anand’s earlier works like Seven Summers and Morning Face.

Shiv K. Kumar made his mark as a novelist with the publication of his first novel, The Bone’s prayer in 1979. Subsequently, he published three more novels titled, Nude Before God [1983], A River With three Banks [1998] and Infatuation [2001]. Kumar’s art of writing fiction is influenced by Joseph Conrad. He chooses his characters from among the people whom he knows and only charges 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. That keeps me going; the characters are alive. I don’t do it all the time. But it is said even of Tolstoy that for secondary characters he used the original names in the final version. Suresh Gupta is a real person I knew. He was a lecturer in History in Chandigarh when I was a lecturer in English there. The locale is Chandigarh. Similarly, a critic asked me how much of myself I have included in Nude Before God. I told him he could not catch me, for I had written the letter to explain everything. [237]

A River With Three Banks deals with violence—the communal holocaust that followed the partition of India in 1947. As in E.M. Forster’s A Passage to India, so in Kumar’s A River With Three Banks,
characters from three religions: Hinduism, Islam and Christianity that are portrayed with insight and precision.

Arun Joshi won Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel *The Last Labyrinth* for the year 1982. Two of his five novels were published in the post-1980 periods: *The Last Labyrinth* in 1981 and *The City and the River* in 1990. He is different from other Indian English novelists in his approach to life. What really sets him apart from others is his existential vision and attitude to human existence on earth. Exploration of the possibility of human achievement and search for identity forced him to lead a life of exile. Life and death are not mere binary opposites for him. He takes death not as a closer of life but a sad reminder of the inadequacies of it. Since death renders all human efforts futile, we have no other alternative than to turn to God for solace. Joshi believes that there is always a time in one’s life when one turns to the Divine and ‘becomes an instrument of God.’ The all-pervading presence of God is the conviction of his life and it is this conviction that binds his novels together. It is in this context; G.S. Amur makes a valid observation:

Joshi’s vision of the modern world and man’s place in it is Manichean and his heroes though rooted in the industrial civilisation have always been at odds with it. It is for this reason that the action of his novels takes the form of a search for an alternative. His novels take us to the heart of darkness – one of his most favourite metaphors is the labyrinth–but he is not a prophet of despair. All his novels hold out promise of regeneration and redemption. [154]

The symbolic representation of the river in *The City and The River* suggests that the river is the source of life as she is the source of humanity and God is the ultimate Truth and ‘His is the Will.’ Having realized the importance of God in one’s life, Joshi says that, “the question in one’s life is not of success or failure, but of trying.”

Having discussed the major works in Indian English fiction written by men, I should now turn to Indian English fiction written by
women in the postmodern period. Important women novelists who published their works in the postmodern period are Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, and Kamala Markandaya. All these writers wrote different kinds of novels though some of them use common method of writing fiction – that is, by inducting eroticism into their novels. The women novelists deal with the themes of love, marriage, loneliness and search for identity.

Kamala Markandaya published only one novel titled, _Pleasure City_ [1982] after 1980. The novel is about the impact of the multinational corporation on villages. M.K. Naik and Shyamala A. Narayan have given an outline of the novel in the following words:

The cultural confrontation here is not the usual east verses west, it is tradition and modernity. An efficient multinational corporation comes to a sleepy fishing village on the Coromandal coast to build a holiday resort, Shalimar, the pleasure city; and the villagers, struggling at subsistence level, cannot resist the regular income offered by jobs in it. Markandaya gives a vivid picture of a fisherman’s family: the old father, his elder son who scorns education, and Rikki, his adopted son, the hero of the novel, who has been educated by missionaries. Toby Tully, the manager, is descended from the Copelands and Tully’s administrators under the Raj [Copeland was the sympathetic British official in The Golden Honeycomb, 1977]. The minor characters too, such as Ranji, the young army officer proud of independent India, are vividly sketched; though Kamala Markandaya’s infelicitous choice of names persists. [76-77]

Anita Desai published a number of novels such as _Clear Light of Day_ [1980], _The Village by the Sea: an Indian family story_ [1982], _In Custody_ [1984], _Baumgartner’s Bombay_ [1988], _Journey to Ithaca_ [1995] and _Fasting, Feasting_ [1999] in the last two decades of the twentieth century. _Clear Light of Day_ is about two sisters, Bimla and Tara. The novel begins with Tara’s visit to Old Delhi, their ancient family home and ends with the departure of her family [i.e. her
husband and children]. William Walsh gives an exposition of the Novel in the following words:

On the face of it Clear Light of Day is a delicate domestic study of the younger members of an interesting but not outstanding middle-class family. They are observed with sympathy and insight and their development is related in a poetic idiom charged with feeling and richly strewn with revealing analogies which make ordinary family life both dramatic and significant. The novel displays a high degree of professional competence and it combines this skill with something more important, a creative idea. The initiating and sustaining conception has to do with the human experience which is both physical and spiritual, of an inner and an outer life. It has its origin in our physical and biological life in which space and distance society and tradition have imposed rituals of control, of which the most intimate are one’s house and its surroundings, like the shabby house and unkempt garden which establish the limits of safety for Bim, Raja, Tara and Baba. Raja and Tara escape – as they see it – or desert as the others see it – the inner family space for an alien external life, Raja absolutely to become a rich Muslim’s son-in-law and then as a fake Urdu poet, and Tara to marry a diplomat and to live the strange deracinated diplomatic life. Baba, at the other extreme from Raja, suffers from some genetic defect which makes it impossible for him to leave the nest. He never achieves that degree of autonomy that would enable him to work out a tolerable or even a tentative relationship between inner and outer worlds. The only one of the children who manages a scratchy uneven balance between the two is Bim, the surrogate mother of the handicapped Baba, the effective College lecturer, the chief if strained and worn prop of the family. [114-15]

*In Custody* portrays the character of Deven, a temporary lecturer in Hindi in a private college nearly forty miles from Delhi. His pathetic life both at home and in the college makes him a pitiable character. He is also not above blame for he ill-treats his wife and children. This novel is a realistic portrayal of the life of Deven who is ‘more sinned against than sinning.’
Baumgartner’s Bombay depicts the plights of Hugo Baumgartner who remained a wandering Jew all his life. He had no sense of belonging to anywhere or anyone, and finally died a tragic death. The quest for identity is the main theme of the novel. The protagonist’s early life in pre-war Berlin and then, in India [i.e., in Calcutta and Bombay], where he lived for fifty years, could not solve the problem of his identity. In India he was called a, “Firangee foreigner.” Ramesh K. Srivastava makes an apt observation on the novel in the following words:

With the advantage of a German mother, a Bengali father and having lived both in Germany and in India, Anita Desai naturally feels at home in depicting scenes and characters both German and Indian with equal felicity. What is common for Baumgartner in Germany and in India are the same sort of violence, lawlessness, inhumanity, tyranny and fanaticism. By making Baumgartner experience the same sort of things in both the countries, Anita Desai lends to the novel a universal significance. [University News 119]

Anita Desai’s insight into human nature, and portrayal of characters particularly women characters and above all, command of language make her novels immensely readable.

Nayantara Sahgal’s Rich Like Us [1985], Plans for Departure [1985] and Mistaken Identity [1988] are novels about history, nationalism and above all, contemporary life. Sahgal won the Sahitya Akademi Award for Rich Like Us for the year 1986. This novel is written against the backdrop of Emergency declared in 1975. The political theme is implicit in it. Sonali Ranade, an I.A.S. Officer in the Ministry of Industries was punished with demotion as she refused to sanction a ‘preposterous’ foreign collaboration project. Sahgal depicts how all norms of life were flouted during Emergency. Political theme is only one aspect of the novel. I concur with M.K. Naik when he says,
The other dominant theme is the presentation of different facets of feminine experience, both oriental and occidental. The Indian women suffer in different ways at the hands of men. Sonali sees the young Marxist she once loved while at Oxford dwindling into an ambitious bureaucrat who becomes a willing tool in the hands of politicians, until a fall from grace brings retribution and self-recognition. Mona, the wife of Ram and the mother of his only son, finds herself discarded when her husband brings home Rose, an English girl, as his second wife. Nishi, daughter of a middle-class shopkeeper watches helplessly as her good-for-nothing husband, who is the son of a prosperous businessman, allows his father’s garment-business go to ruins. And in the memoir of her grandfather, Sonali reads the gruesome account of how her great-grandmother was forced to commit sati by her relations after her husband’s death.

Of the Western women, Rose, who falls in love with Ram and comes away with him to India, even when she knows that he is already married and has a son, is disillusioned when she discovers the gulf between her own cockney, working-class ways and Ram’s life of refinement and culture. In the end, she is murdered by her stepson, as his father is reduced to a vegetable existence after a paralytic stroke. Rose, the working-class woman is well contrasted with Marcella, the upper middle-class lady, who is Ram’s next flame, while Minnie is the typical British colonial wife and the picture of her set is pure Kipling.

The two worlds of public events and private experience impinge constantly upon each other in the narrative, since Sonali, the protagonist acts and suffer in both and this endows the novel with a firm structural unity. The irony in the title is plain. The phrase, ‘Rich like us’ is used in the very first chapter by Neuman, who has business dealings with Ram. It voices the American belief that if only Indians followed American ways, they would be ‘rich like us’ [14]. But, in the end, Sonali, who decides to devote herself to a study of the seventeenth century in India, realizes that her country is rich in a far different way-rich in its cultural heritage and that ‘immersed in the past,’ she can at the same time and actually as a result of this, prepare for the future. It is reassuring for her to realize that “I was young and alive, with my own century stretched out before me, waiting to be lived.” [Indian Literature 121 30-31]
Plans for Departure examine Indo-British relationship in artistic terms and Mistaken Identity is about Bhushan Singh, who returned home unsuccessfully from U.S.A. These two novels are nowhere near Rich Like Us in social commitment and do not have much contemporary relevance.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the most accomplished women novelists of postmodern period. Her novels are titled The Dark Holds No Terrors [1980], If I Die Today [1982], Come Up and Be Dead [1983], Roots and Shadows [1983], That Long Silence [1988], The Binding Vine [1993] and Small Remedies [2000]. She won the Sahitya Akademi Award for That Long Silence for the year 1990. This is one of the most outstanding novels in our time. The theme of That Long Silence is simple. Jaya the heroine of the novel recalls her married life with nostalgia. She was married to Mohan and lived with him at different places till he went away from her to clear himself of the charge of business malpractice. She bore him two children and the third child was aborted. She recalled her relationship with innumerable relatives and friends with compassion and understanding. She tried to come to terms with herself by trying to write about herself and her family and was determined to break a ‘Long Silence.’ The novel ends with the return of her son, Rahul, the promise of Mohan ‘to return’ on Friday morning and Jaya changing the idea of their marriage and learning the truth that ‘Life has always to be made possible.’ Behind this simple story of the novel lies the ground swell of frustration in married life of the protagonist, who failed to be closer to her husband mentally. She suffered from isolation. Despite her marriage to Mohan and subsequently becoming a mother of two children, she was lonely. Her husband could not understand her feelings as a result of which she was torn from within. Shashi Deshpande uses a beautiful image to describe Jaya’s married life:

A pair of bullocks yoked together . . . a clever phrase, but can it substitute for the reality? A man and a woman
married for seventeen years. A couple with two children. A family somewhat like the one caught and preserved for posterity by the advertising visuals I so loved. But the reality was only this. We were two persons. A man. A woman. [8]

To an Indian reader the image of a pair of bullocks yoked together suggests a world of meanings. It means that the bullocks so yoked shared the burden between themselves but no one knows whether they love each other or not. The image of the beasts performing the duty mechanically undermines the husband-wife relationship, who are united in marriage for love and not for leading a mechanical life terminating in mutual hatred and distrust. Jaya resents the role assigned to a wife in our country, who is called upon to stay at home, look after the babies and keep out of the rest of the world. She could not continue her writing as Mohan discouraged her. “I gave up my writing because of you,” she said to Mohan. She was deeply distressed to know that the writer in her could not come to light because of her husband. She says:

I had known then that it hadn’t mattered to Mohan that I had written a good story, a story about a couple, a man who could not reach out to his wife except through her body. For Mohan it had mattered that people might think the couple was us, that the man him. To Mohan, I had been no writer, only as exhibitionist [144].

She did not take a risk to annoy Mohan lest that should break her marriage. She says ironically:

Perhaps, if Mohan had been angry, if he had shouted and raged at me, if he had forbidden me to write, perhaps I would have fought him and gone on. But he had only shown me his hurt. And I had not been able to counter that. I had relinquished them instead, all those stories that had been taking shape to me because I had been scared-scared of hurting Mohan, scared to jeopardizing the only career I had.[144]
She was fed up with the routine work like changing the sheets, scrubbing bathrooms and cleaning the fridge, and so on.

_That Longs Silence_ depicts the plight of an educated Indian woman of our time. The significance of the novel depends on how far the reader is able to realize the situation and go along with the author in finding out the meaning. In a way, the protagonist, Jaya, is any modern woman who resents her husband’s callousness and becomes the victim of circumstances. By implication the character of Jaya represents modern woman’s ambivalent attitude to married life. Shashi Deshpande hints at the modern woman’s refusal to comply with the wishes of the husband. The reader is free to interpret the heroine as a woman who failed her husband or otherwise. Alternatively, he may also take her as a representative woman of the contemporary society who is all set to revolt against the husband. Jaya is both an individual and a type, and the reader is free to take her in any manner he likes.

In this way, what stands out in the 1980s novel then is that it is characterized by the realization that the individual has to play an important role in history. A majority of the novels of the decade reflect an urgency to rewrite received Indian history and expose the untruths of political versions; this is almost an obsessive theme of the 1980s and mirrors the felt pain that the impositions of emergency between 1975 and 1977 had given to the writers of the times. The postmodern technique of double readings and writing against the grain gets a free play in the novels of the 1980s, particularly since it enables novelists to challenge and re-write received truths.

**2.2. INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL IN THE NINETIES:**

The ever-increasing acceptability of English in India has synchronized with last two decades of the century just gone by. We must make a special mention of the nineteen which unlike the naughty
nineties in English literature is a period of vibrant vitality and uninhibited creativity, a period of what Paul Jay calls “the remarkable explosion of English literature produced outside Britain and the United States” [33].

The nineteen nineties are also a significant period for the Indian novel written in English. This period saw some of the writers making a successful debut in creative writing as novelists and winning prestigious international awards like Booker Prize and Commonwealth Writers Prize. This period witnessed further consolidation of the ground won by the novel at the cost of other genres. More than the eighties, it is in the nineties that readers and critics paid their undivided attention to the Indian novel written in English. Referring to this Nanavati and Kar remark: “It is perhaps the only form of writing that instantly acquires a world-wide visibility as it is created” [14]. Not only in India but all over the world, the novel is more read, more appreciated and even more marketed than poetry, “its traditional rival”. Significantly enough, at various conferences of Indian Association for Studies in contemporary Literature, held in various universities of India, the majority of papers submitted were about the Indian English novel, especially the novel in the nineties.

The novelists of this decade, especially the new and young ones, are marked out by their obsession with their own generation and contemporaneity. There might be some who might be interested in the contestatory site of history and nation but they are clearly outnumbered and obscured by those who have felt experiences of their own generation to draw on for creative writing. Such writers as Raj Kamal Jha, Pankaj Mishra, Githa Harihara and Vikram Chandra are interested in the time present and not the time past, in multiculturalism and not cultural nationalism, in elitism and not populism. That many of them are governed by what Harsh Trivedi calls the “St. Stephen Factor” and are based abroad, reveals their “in the sea of life enisled” existence. Arundhati Roy, Pankaj Mishra and Raj Kamal Jha about
them as Alan Sealy puts it “We do not write but are written” [37]. In other words, it is not the writer who chooses the language, it the language that chooses the writer.

A peculiar about Indian novel written in English is its diasporic nature. This trend gets strengthened and confirmed in the nineties. Many novelists like Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, and Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Gita Mehta and Amit Chaudhari are exploring the life in this country from afar.

Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy* [1993] deals with a simple theme, the quest for a suitable boy for Lata, the younger daughter of Rupa Mehra, Lata is a nineteen-year attractive girl, who has passed just her graduation. She has three suitors- Kabir Durrani, Amit Chatterjee, and Haresh Khanna from among who she has to choose her life partner. Seth meticulously writes about these three suitors and Lata’s affairs with each one of them, so that they can be judged objectively and the final choice can be made.. I concur with Jon Mee’s analysis of *A Suitable Boy* made in the following lines:

Seth’s novel is set in the early 1950s, formative years of the Nehru period with the passing of the Zamindari legislation and the first election of the post-independence era looming. For all its copious realism, it is difficult not to see this novel too as an allegory of national development. The novel is based on a romance plot, the choice of a suitable boy for the heroine Lata Mehra; but although she shows signs of independence, the novel is ultimately one of conformity and what it represents as the inevitability of bourgeois life. The man Lata chooses is neither the son of the Calcutta’s high society, nor the Muslim boy whose friendship scandalizes Lata’s mother, but Haresh Khanna of Prahapore, a man who is foreign returned but from a British technical college rather than the kind of elite institution which brings with it the spectre of the loss of caste. Haresh would seem to represent Seth’s idea of properly bourgeois man emerging from religious superstition and social snobbery. In this respect, Seth’s novel is very much an enlightenment history [Chakrabarty, 1995]. Typically of
such histories of progress, along with its sense of the inevitability of a particular kind of national development – for Haresh’s success is surely intended as a parable for the times – comes nostalgia for a feudal world of Urdu literature and country entertainments. A suitable Boy would seem to affirm the idea that the destiny of middle-class India lies in casting aside an obstructive concern with traditional identities in pursuit of secularism in its liberal economic mode. With such confidence about the future of the nation, what is to be left behind can be romanticized in nostalgia for a world that it views as inevitably lost. [Nanavati and Kar 47-48]

Seth’s third novel, *An Equal Music* was published in 1999. In the authorial note included in the novel, Seth states:

Music to me is dearer even than speech. When I realized that I would be writing about it I was gripped by anxiety. Only slowly did I reconcile myself to the thought of it [1999]. It may be mentioned here that music is also the theme of two other contemporary Indian English novels—that is, Rushdie’s *Ground Beneath Her Feet* [1999] and Shashi Deshpande’s *Small Remedies* [2000].

The title, *An Equal Music* is taken from John Donne’s Sermon describing life after death. In heaven there will be, “no sun nor darkness nor dazzling but one equal light, no noise nor silence, but one equal music.” Regarding the epigraph John Carey writes:

But an epigraph might have been taken from another great English poet, Tennyson: ‘Deep as first love, and wild with all regret.’ Seth’s story of love and loss can hold its own the vicinity of that marvelous line [The Sunday Times 2 April 1999].

The story of the novel opens in London with an upcoming musician, Michael Holme, a 35-year violinist from Rochdale playing with the Maggiore Quartet and giving music lessons to a group of not-so-enthusiastic pupils with one of whom he is carrying on a desultory affair. The novel has a turbulent love story full of passion and pathos. Seth has successfully integrated this love story with the story of music.
and music lessons. The novelist seems to say that music can alleviate
the sufferings in life caused by the unfulfilled love. Hence, ending of
the novel kindles a hope in human heart:

> Music, such music, is a sufficient gift. Why ask for
> happiness; why hope not to grieve? It is enough, it is to
> be blessed enough, to live from day to day and to hear
> such music- not too much, or the soul could not sustain
> it-- from time to time. [AEM 381]

Others who like Arundhati Roy, Githa Hariharan and raj Kamal
Jha have so for not left for Britain, America and Canada, are based in
the metropolis, Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi and so on and grapple with its
life in their works. Their metropolitanism as well as their diasporic
nature relates them to global culture, the ideal held high today.

Globalization is admirable, we ourselves have the ideal of, the world as
one family, but it becomes questionable when it leads to the
colonization of “other” and to what Giles Gunn terms, “the
homogenization of culture, and the expansion of western” [19]. The
type of globalization that is being thrust on India is tantalizing but
disastrous and yet our writers have not been able to keep themselves
away from it. We can take an example. Incest is not a rare thing in
India or for that matter in the world. However, raj Kamal Jha and
Arundhati Roy’s treatment of it in their respective novel has something
outré and outlandish about it. It appears that with some exceptions our
novelist writing in English have just been dipping their feet into the
stream of life rather than plunging deep into it.

The Indian novel in English has been dogged by the question of
the authenticity of its Indianness right from the beginning. It has
become particularly pertinent in the nineties with the onslaught of
globalization and metropolitanism. The question is a vexed one and
fraught with complications. The basic question is: where does this
Indianness lie in? Does it lie in such issues as feminism, existential
agonies of the individual, search for identity, post colonialism and
postmodernism or other isms, universal in nature but specific to India, like casteism, regionalism, communalism, nepotism and so on. It is difficult to answer this and yet we would be tempted to say “no”. though it appears to be simplistic, it is safer to assume that Indianness lies more in the soul of the country than in its body and the soul of the country lies in its thoughts, aesthetics, philosophy, sciences and technology, its way of living in entirety and totality, in a word, its entire culture from the ancient times to the present day. We would like to assert in the words of K.R. Srinivas Iyengar that “the Indians of Indian writing consists in the writer’s intense awareness of his entire culture” [8].

Now what our novelists of the nineties, especially the new ones, do is just to encompass metropolitanism, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism in their works. Their gaze, however, is confined to metropolis, particularly Mumbai and Kolkata, and the surging waves of life beyond them are beyond their ken. Even while narratizing life of the metropolis, and its wondrous dailyness, they appear to invite the suspicion of hype and exhibitionism. Everyone knows that people do have sexual perversities but the types of ones to be found in the novels of khushwant Singh and Shobha De are nothing but blue-film montage.

Shobha De is known for her erotic novels. Erotica apart, her novels have immense literary values in terms of the experimentation in the use of language and creation of an Indian English idiom. Two of her novels, *Sisters* [1992] and *Snapshots* have contemporary relevance.

The theme of sisters makes an interesting reading. Mikki [Mallika], the protagonist returned home following the deaths of her parents in an air-crash. Seth Hiralal and his wife [Mikki’s parents] were survived by their only daughter and heir to their vast property. Mikki returned home and oversaw their funeral and took charge of Hiralal Industries. Seth Hiralal had sired another daughter, named Alisha by his concubine, Leelaben. This secret was known to
Ramanbhai, a trusted employee of the Seth. Alisha was splitting venom on Mikki for not being able to get the social sanction as Seth’s daughter. She was outraged by the obituary column that Seth was “Survived by his only child, a daughter, Mallika, studying in the US” and decided to take on the step-sister one day. Ramanbhai was running with the deer and haunting with the hound by trying to be closer both to Mikki and Alisha. He had an axe to grind. Being educated and liberated young women without any legitimate guardian to look after her, Mikki attended many parties and came in contact with many young as well as not so young persons. Many young men were interested in her. Navin, her friend, Shanay, her distant relative [Anjanaben’s son] and industrialist, Binny Malhotra were interested in her. After rejecting Shanay, Mikki got engaged to Navin. Binny made all tricks possible to win over her. As ill luck would have it the precarious financial position drove Mikki to ask for a loan from Navin before marriage. Navin’s mother turned it down and Mikki reacted quickly by breaking the engagement. Binny took advantage of the situation and lured away Mikki by giving costly presents and promising financial help. Binny being an elderly person and a past master in the art of love making lured Mikki to his bed and forced her to marry him. Mikki married him much against the wishes of her well-wishers and came to grief soon. Binny showed his true colour after marriage and Mikki willy-nilly became a domestic woman. Binny continued to sleep with women of his choice and Mikki got the shock of her life to know that he had a concubine named Urmı and two children by her – a son and a daughter Mikki was beaten and forced to leave the house by Binny. She came back to her parent’s place and decided to take Alisha’s help. Alisha was in no mood to oblige her. Alisha like Mikki was a free bird. She had affairs with Navin and Dr. Kurien. She was almost dead when she attempted suicide but was luckily survived by the nourishment of Dr. Kurien and Mikki, who gave blood for her. This incident brought them closer and they stayed together. Binny died in a road accident and Mikki felt very sad. She
Mikki couldn’t wait to get out of that place. She was booked on the evening flight. As she looked at the largest coffin, she imagined Binny lying inside with a sneer on his face, laughing at the grotesquerie of life, laughter. She thought of happier times and her expression automatically softened. Suddenly it dawned on her that she didn’t resent anything about him at all. Not even his brutality towards her. Perhaps that’s what they call ‘true love,’ she thought wryly, a soft smile on her face. She looked at the other coffins and found herself feeling strangely happy for Urmi and her children. They were all together at last. Something they couldn’t be when they were alive. Mikki shut her eyes and fell into a light reverie induced by the heady smell of spider lilies, roses and incense combined with the insistent beat of tiny cymbals as the priest droned on… Mikki had a beautiful vision of Binny, dressed in his sharpest suit, ascending heavenwards, floating up like he was in a gently rising hot-air balloon. He was acknowledging the crowd gathered for his funeral with a jaunty wave of his hand, his lips twisted… she thought she saw his family- his real family – Urmi and her kids, floating happily around him, also waving and showering flower petals on everybody, Mikki felt a few descend on her shoulder …and then she jerked out of her trance as she realized the coffins were being lifted up and the people had begun throwing rose petals at the departing procession. Mikki watched as the
men moved gracefully away, their white kurtas and
dhotis standing out starkly against the bright green of the
grass. It was just too beautiful. And she was glad to
Binny. He would have approved…. [174-75]

Shobha De’s use of language and creation of new idioms by
acclimatizing idioms from Indian language to English language, adds
to the charm of the novel. The narrative holds our breath for sensuous
opulence and subtlety of variation and the result is that the novel
becomes a ‘best seller.’

Shobha Dey’s Snapshots [1995] is about six women who
belong to the upper class society. The blurb of the book unfolds the
story:

As the wine and conversation begin to flow at a reunion
between six women, who were friends at school,
memories start to surface – some happy, others bitter
sweet and a few that are downright poisonous… forced to
confront dark secrets that they thought lay buried deep in
the past, the women begin to turn against one another and
the mood of the party turns nightmarish…

The world of Snapshots is a world of women where women
begin to look at things from their point of view. They literally and
metaphorically play with men and sometimes are played with by men.
The novel depicts the love-play between men and women in great
details. ‘Morality’ is a dirty word for the characters in the novel, for
they believe in enjoyment of life, throwing the norms of the society out
of window.

Six school mates–Aparna, Swati, Reema, Surekha, Rashmi and
Noor–assemble at Reema’s house on the occasion of Swati’s return
from the States. They go down the memory lane and ruminate over the
past escapades. The theme of the novel makes an interesting reading.
Swati wants her old friends to assemble in Reema’s house years after
they left their school and college. She tells Aparna plainly:
Why can’t you just accept that I wanted to meet everybody? No tricks, no motives. It’s been years. Besides, if I’d phoned just you, you wouldn’t have come. Admit it. The truth is I organized this tamasha only to be able to meet you again. [Snapshots 181]

The novel begins with Aparna’s going to Goa with Prem for a holiday. After they make love. Aparna remembers her ex-husband, Rohit and feels the difference. She gets a letter from Reema asking her to come to her [the latter’s] house. Surekha, Rashmi and Noor are also invited to meet Swati. Since they are going to meet after years, Swati suggests that they should “bring Snapshots. Albums, Old Photographs, New Photographs, Mementos of their innocent past” [13]. They all talk freely about their past as well as present love-affairs-pre-and post-marital relationships with men of their choice.

Within the framework of her novels, Shobha De depicts the breaking up of the institution of marriage. The new concept of marriage envisages complete sexual freedom with no notion of fidelity. In such a situation men and women merely become partners in love. Economic freedom, promiscuity and uncontrolled passion resulting from ‘the lust of the blood’ make most men and women vulnerable and the resultant frustration in life engulfs them. Shobha De 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 a 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.

It is not the question of sexual frankness and we are not shy of sex. Consider khajuraho and even kalidas’s description of the breasts of the goddess Parvati in Kumarsambhavam. But what we get out of it is aesthetic like Vikram Chandra and Shashi Tharoor have tries to
reinvent the ancient myths in the context of modern times. The entry of the gods Ganesha, Hanuman and Yama into Red Earth and pouring Rain is half parodic in a postmodernist way [Are we postmodern?]. But does it serve any purpose. This kind of trend can be seen earlier in Shashi Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel where he uses the tale of Mahabharata to make his narration of contemporary India. His use of allegory, however, lacks depth and intensity, the things which touch the heart. This “yoking of myth to history”, as the writer himself calls it, is a forced one and results “into an unequivocal parody intended to entertain the consumerist international readers” [Tripathi V 116]. In spite of piling up of realistic details writers like Pankaj Mishra, Amit Chaudhari and Upamanyu Chatterjee, just scrape the outer surface of the seething and teeming, multidimensional and mystifying reality that India is, reality that baffles the foreigners and makes Indians feel at home.

The Indian English novel of the nineteen nineties carries the label of post colonialism and flaunts it consciously. It is along with postmodernism the latest thing, every contemporary novel today, if it aspires to any greatness, has to be considered either in the terms of post colonialism or postmodernism. Let us first take post colonialism, a term which is not easy to define, which as Margaret Drabble puts it, is “replete with contradictions and conundrums” [774]. All the same, it can be largely assumed that the main thrust of post colonialism is resistance to the hegemony of western discourses and the formation of western discourses and the formation of postcolonial [say post-independence] subject. There has been postcoloniality in India even before independence [consider Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore] and coloniality even after we have become postcolonial [consider the advances made towards globalization and continuation of Eurocentric/American perspectives]. Our novelists, most of them hybrid subjects, may have attempted to address the question of “history, identity, culture, sex, gender and language” [ibid.774]
differently but in the main they have not been able to manoeuvre the Western literary and cultural discourses. The very fact that the authenticity of the Indianness of these novelists has been called into question makes their postcoloniality suspect. They appear to be selling India to the West and highlighting those aspects which are bizarre, are too visible, but not her essential attributes. So the remarks of Nayantara Sahgal about postcoloniality appear to be rather apt.

First we were colonials, and now we seem to be post-colonials. So is the colonial new Anno Domini from which events are to be everlastingly measured? My own awareness as a writer reaches back to 10 thousand B.C. at the end of which measureless time the British come, and stayed and left. And now they are gone, and their residue is simply one more layer added to the layer upon layer of Indian consciousness. Just one more. [8]

Postmodernism is another label stuck to our novels of this decade. In fact, it is not only the nineties that have been described by the term Postmodernism. Rushdie and his tribe have all been grouped under this rubric. Postmodernism are a number of things including postcolonialism and yet it has no distinct identity. Since its first use in the late 1960s and 1960s, it “has acquired and amoebic range of attributes and meanings” [Brooker P 175]. All the same by and large, the postmodernist literature tends to be “non-traditional and against authority and signification” [Cuddon 690], experimental in technique and fragmentary in structure. By this definition the nineties are postmodernist like the preceding decade. The grand narrative old writer has been subverted and the deconstructionist narrative strategies of Rushdie and his followers have become the norm. Though some of the old novelists pursuing the old traditional path have also survived in this decade, those who appear to be haloed are some young novelists of the nineties like raj Kamal Jha, Pankaj Mishra and Arundhati Roy.

Arundhati Roy created history by Winning Booker Prize for her novel The God of small Things for the year 1997. She is the first Indian
English novelist to win this coveted award [I don’t consider Rushdie as an Indian English writer, he is only of Indian origin and can best be described as Anglo-American Indian writer, if such a nomenclature is at all possible]. Since her novel has been acclaimed as an outstanding novel in the whole range of Indian English fiction, I would like to make an elaborate discussion of it in an objective manner.

The plot of the novel is complex and it moves both ways – backward and forward-and thereby makes the narration difficult and complicated. Thematically it centers round Ammu, her two children Raphel and Esthappen, her parents, brother, Chacko and his wife, Margaret and daughter, Sophie Mol and above all, Amu’s low caste lover, Velutha, the paravan. The novel opens with Raphel’s coming back to Ayemenem after a failed marriage, to see Estha, her twin brother [‘they were two-egg twins,’ ‘dizygotic’] who was sent to his father after Sophie Mol’s funeral and now returned to their native place after twenty-three years. The whole family has been personalized in retrospection. The twins [Estha and Raphel] lived with their divorced mother, Ammu and their blind maternal grandmother, Mammachy and their maternal uncle Chacko, once a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford and lecturer in Madras Christian College, who helped his mother to run their paradise pickle business, and their maternal grandfather’s youngest sister, Baby Kochamma. Chacko was married to an English Woman, Margaret [who divorced him and married Joe] and had a daughter, Sophie Mol who died later by drowning.

Ammu’s love for Velutha forms the core of the novel and makes the novelist’s preference crystal clear. The traditional society was not only conservative but authoritarian for it laid down who should love whom. It happened long ago and it is against this concept that the novelist protests vehemently. The right to love a man of her choice, is a woman’s birth right and it should not be scuttled in the name of religion, caste, colour and class. It is in this sense that the novel could be read as a feminist novel or a post-colonial novel for both feminism
and post-colonialism aim at destroying the old power structure. Roy wants to break this age old tradition to uphold the right of a woman to marry a man of her choice. Thus, she says:

…It could be argued that it actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendancy, before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin’s conquest of Calicut. Before three purple-road Syrian Bishops murdered by the Portuguese were found floating in the sea, with coiled sea serpents ridding on their chests and oysters knotted in their tangled beards. It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a tea bag. That it really began in the days when the love laws were made. The laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much. [TGOST 33]

‘Things can change in a day’ is used as a kind of refrain in the novel. It suggests that Roy is determined to break the tradition. Who’s The God of small Things? Is it Velutha, the paravan, the maker of fine things with his superb sense of detail? Who could be having been? We are told:

The God of Loss? The God of Small Things? The God of Goose Bumps and Sudden Smiles? Of Sourmetal Smells like steel bus-rails and the smell of the bus conductor’s hands from holding them? [Ibid. 217]

As if in a dream sequence, Ammu went with a cheerful man who had only one are and could do only one thing at a time. If he held her, he could not kiss her. If he kissed her, he could not see her. If he saw her, he could not feel her. The liberation from old bondage and tradition needs not only courage but a new language. Arundhati Roy describes Ammu’s [a high caste Syrian Christian woman] love for Velutha, [a Paravan, a low caste man] in poetic prose.

She went to him and laid the length of her body against his. He just stood there. He didn’t touch her. He was
shivering. Partly with cold. Partly terror. Partly aching desire. Despite his fear his body was prepared to take the bait. It wanted her. Urgently, his wetness wet her. She put her arms around him. He tried to be rational: What’s the worst thing that can happen? I could lose everything. My job. My family. My livelihood. Everything. She could hear the wild hammering of his heart. She held him till it calmed down. Somewhat. She unbuttoned her shirt. They stood there skin to skin. Her brownness against his blackness. Her softness against his hardness. Her nut-brown breast (that wouldn’t support a toothbrush) against his smooth ebony chest. She smelled the river on him. His particular Paravan smell that so disgusted Baby Kochamma. Ammu put out her tongue and tasted it, in the hollow of his throat. On the lobe of his ear. She pulled his head down towards her and kissed his mouth. A cloudy kiss. A kiss that demanded a kiss-back. He kissed her back. First cautiously. Then urgently. Slowly his arms came up behind her. He stroked her back. Very gently. She could feel the skin on his palms. Rough, Calloused. Sandpaper. He was careful not to hurt her. She could feel how soft she felt to him. She could feel herself through him. Her skin. The way her body existed only where he touched her. The rest of her was smoke. She felt him shudder against her. His hands were on her haunches (that could support a whole array of toothbrushes), pulling her hips against his, to let her know much he wanted her. [ibid. 334-5]

Arundhati Roy can be credited with creating a new idiom and phrases like ‘biological father,’ ‘dia-able age,’ ‘Sea-secrets,’ ‘re-Returned,’ ‘Non-elect,’ ‘death coiled like an angry spring,’ ‘touchables,’ ‘Rice-Christians,’ ‘clean children, like a packet of peppermints’ ‘as lonely as a wolf,’ etc.

Besides, taking up cudgel for women’s right to property and to choose their lovers, the novel also makes references to communist movement in Kerala and allusions to the Mahabharata. This can be taken as a representative postcolonial novel for it seeks to restructure the power center by giving right to women to lives in their own way, and fashions a new language for fiction by creating a new Indian English idiom.
We also have women writers like Manju kapur, Githa Hariharan and the center and decentered patriarchal authority. Last but not least we have minority writers like Dina Mehta, Rohinton Mistry and Boman Desai who have introduced a new tone into the literary discourse.

As Peter Brooker points out postmodernism is used as a way of periodising [usually postwar] developments in “capitalist economies and societies” as well as a description of the development across or within the arts [ibid.176], though both may not always synchronize with each other, they usually go together. The irony in India is that though our economics and societies are far from being modern, we are still among the third world countries, our intellectuals and writers have turned postmodernist. To say that postmodernism is a self–parodying anachronism confined to academia will not be a truism;

It is ironic that the label “post–modern” is increasingly being applied hegemonically to the culture and texts outside Europe, assimilating post-colonial works whose political orientations and experimental formulations have been deliberately designed to counteract such European appropriation. [Tiffin 170]

Even feminism anti–authoritarianism and minorityism do not signify here the same as they do in the west.so, though claimed to be their own by feminist thinkers, Nayantara Sahgal had to deny that she is one at least in the western signification of the term. Suppression of the women is not embedded either in our culture or in our way of life. Still if there is exploitation, it is due to our social and economic backwardness. Similarly “dalits” here have no affinity with the blacks and natives in the west. Our ideal is to make all happy, our ideal of treating the poor and the disinherited of the earth can be found in our epics Mahabharat and Ramayan. Many of the dalits today belonged to the ruling class in the past. Their present status is again due to their social and economic backwardness. Again, our culture is assimilative.
It is difficult to say definitively who is in the minority and who is in the majority. The issue of the minorities and the dalits is purely a political issue raised by our following of the western discourse. India is a mystery which cannot be explored in the terms of the discursive practices of the west. This is, however, the mistake that our novelists, most of whom have been either educated abroad or are living abroad, are committing. They are like six blind men of the folktale describing what an elephant really is.

If the novelties of the nineties are pre-eminently postmodernist in one respect, it is in the matter of narration. Everything in our times becomes narration whether history, fiction or reality. In shadow lines of Amitav Ghosh, Tridib states: “They all lived in stories, because stories are all there to live in, it was just a question of which one you really choose….” [182].

This new historicist [post-structuralist] attitude towards history/realty runs through in the works of many a novelist of this period like Mukul Kesavan’s *Looking Through Glass* [1995], Vikram Chandra’s *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* [1992], Githa Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night* [1992] for them reality is not situate in the objective description and analysis but in narratives which themselves are situate in specific cultural discourse they often take recourse to magic realism, disorientation of time and space and fractured structure. This puts the closer to postmodernists of the West rather than those who are interested in the authentic narrative of India as a nation. For example:

Vikram Chandra who won Commonwealth prize for his book short stories, titled, *Love and Longing in Bombay*, has a brilliant novel, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* [1995] to his credit. The novel is a combination of history and myth, with the digressions of the epic. As the blurb of the book puts it:
In Vikram Chandra’s astonishing first novel, the gods: Hanuman, Ganesh and Yama descend on a house in an Indian City to vie for the soul of a wounded monkey. A bargain is struck: the monkey must tell a story, and if he can keep his audience entertained, he shall live. The result is Red Earth and Pouring Rain, a tale of nineteenth century India: of Sanjay, a poet, and Sikander, a warrior of hoof beats thundering through the streets of Calcutta and the birth of a luminous child; of great wars and love affairs and a city gone” mad with poetry.” And woven into this tapestry of stories is a second, totally modern narrative, the adventures of young Indian Criss-crossing America is a car with his friends, and his eventual return to his homeland.

It is a novel in which gods and human are depicted as characters along with a monkey who was a Brahmin boy in his previous life. The characters include Hindu gods- Hanuman, Ganesh and Yama – and historical personages like de Boigne, head of Scindia’s artillery, George Thomas and Begum Samru, both reputed adventurers, and it is they who participate in the fantastic events in the novel. Jon Mee’s analysis of the novel is given in the following paragraph:

The story of Red Earth and Pouring Rain revolves around the fate of Sanjay, reincarnated as a monkey that Abhay shoots for stealing his new jeans from the washing line. When Yama, god of death, enters the story to claim the dying monkey, Ganesh intervenes with a deal. If Sanjay can tell his story and keep everyone entertained, then he will be saved. His story begins in the period when mercenaries and princes, along with the East India Company, were fighting over the remains of the Mughal Empire. Chandra’s fictional characters mix not only with gods, but also historical figures like Begum Samroo and James Skinner. History in the novel becomes ‘The Big Indian Life,’ but he warns, “Do not think that this story is untrue, because it is itihasa, thus it was.” In the novels of Rushdie, Sealy, Ghosh and Kesavan, this idea is made the Centre of a political inquiry into the ownership of stories, an aspect of the new historical novel which seems absent from Chandra’s sense of history as ‘Leela, the great cosmic play.’ ........ The crowds who gather to listen remain as fascinated by this tale drawn from an entirely
different mythology, a road movie which takes them across desert skies and into the big city of Houston, as by Sanjay’s story of fantastic deeds from India’s past. Western modernity is in this way reproduced not as the privileged sphere of truth and reason, but as the site of another mythology which is just as enticing as India’s own—a perspective Chandra’s novel share with Sealy’s travelogue, FromYukon to Yucatan [Nanavati and Kar 46-47]


The Magic Realism technique may give the novelist the widest possible scope for the exercise of imagination, but in that process, he always stands in danger of losing his hold on the structural values of fiction. This is what happens in *Beethoven Among the Cows* [1994] by Rukun Advani [b. 1955]. The eight chapters of the book are actually so many separate short stories linked together loosely by the two protagonists who are twins, and all the events are seen through their consciousness. ...... The comedy operates at various levels, the most notable of which is the stylistic one. Advani makes deft use of parody, caricature, witty allusion and word-play. The character of Professor Lavatri All-theor, “the Moby Dick of the American Academy” is of topical interest, as a caricature of a well-known modern Indian critic long settled in the U.S.A. we are told that in her Women’s Movement. “Lit.crit” becomes “Lit.Clit.” in the absence of a hard, central core; however, Beethoven Among the Cows remains a charismatic chaos of a book. [50]

About The Narrator, they have this to say:
Embarking on a fantasy is like riding a tiger, you can’t dismount without being doomed; The Narrator [1995] by Makarand Paranjape [b. 1960] demonstrates this truth. The narrative opens promisingly, with the protagonist, a University Lecturer in English undergoing a most curious experience: there is a sudden emanation from his mouth, which soon assumes a transparent human shape. It is probably his own uninhibited self. He calls it ‘Baddy’ [suggesting both “buddy” and “Biddy” – a short form of “Libido”]. It is soon transmogrified into Badri[nath], a self-made businessman who proposes that the narrator and he should author a film script together. After this, the story of the film, the doings of the narrator and the going on of Baddy get mixed up until one is left wondering which is the text and which are subtexts. [ibid. 51-52]

The postmodernist narrative is self-reflective and self-conscious and self-referential. This self-reflexivity did not emerge out of the blue in the nineties: it was already there in the eighties in Rushdie and others. It certainly is a distinguishing feature of the English novel and can be noticed in such contemporary writer as Samuel Beckett, Alain Robbe-Grillet and John Fowles. Among the Indian writer whose narratives are met fictional are Amitav Ghosh, Raj Kamal Jha, Githa Hariharan and Makarand Paranjape, to name a few.

The very title of Makarand Paranjape’s novel The Narrator: a Novel [1995] is symptomatic of this kind of fiction. Not only the novel encompasses multiple narratives written within a single narrative which are self-referent but it makes a claim that this kind of functionality is primarily Indian. Badri, the narrator states:

Indian stories are very conscious of their narrativity. This is because there is an underlying conception of what a story is. A narrative, for us Indians, is a structure which does not imitate life but which itself is alive and autonomous. [274]

Amitav Ghosh blends historicity and metafiction in his The Calcutta Chromosome [1956] for example; Amitav Ghosh pleads for the emancipation of women. He makes Mangala, a sweeper-woman the
protagonist of the novel. He highlights women’s problems and carves out a rightful place for them in the society. I concur with M. Adhikari when she makes a pertinent point on the novel in the following words:

In a revolutionary move, all the female characters of the novel remain unattached. Marriage is no longer an institution of paramount importance for woman. They lead ‘single’ but successful lives and no aspersions are cast on their ‘singleness.’ These women are not enamoured of the ideology of ‘blissful marriage.’ There is no reference to Mangala’s family; the Countess and Mrs. Aratounian die enjoying their spinsterhood; Urmila has a family consisting of father, mother and brothers but she always remains an outsider, the death of Sonali’s boyfriend, Romen Haldar, kills her dreams of domesticity for good; Tara and Maria, in New York, lead isolated lives; and Urmila’s sexual desires roused by Murugan are drastically crushed by Murugan’s admission that once he too had been a syphilis patient [183]. It seems that in no way is patriarchal system able to undermine their confidence that has been additionally encouraged by their economic self-sufficiency. They have been vested with power to lead individual and independent lives that can ensure a continuation of their mission. Women as “victims of economic scarcity” do not exist in the world of the Calcutta Chromosome. Although in actual life autonomy of thought and action is seldom granted to women and they remain trapped in the enclosure of patriarchy, the ideologies of marriage and economic dependence in the context of daily existence are deliberately disregarded in Ghosh’s novel. [Pathak 197-98]

Raj Kamal Jha’s *The blue Bed Spread* again is a metanarrative about his intimate interpersonal relationship between the siblings. The self-reflexivity of the narrative in this novel as well as in Githa Hariharan’s *When Dreams Travel* is self-evident and does not need any special emphasis.

In such way in spite of all the problematic, the nineteen nineties are an important decade in the history of the Indian novel written in English. It is marked by prolificity, vitality and flexibility. Its achievement in creative writing especially in the novel has been able to
compete with best in the West and bag prestigious international awards in spite of all its inadequacies. It has shown that the novel is still rated higher and betters that other genres and that it alone has the capability to survive in the new century of information technology and radical developments in science and industry.

2.3. A Brief Survey of New Generation Indian English Novel:

Awareness of a new generation, radically different in thought and attitudes from that of the preceding one, is the hallmark of the Indian English novel that appeared at the turn of the century [1998-2000], namely Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* [1998], R.K Jha’s *The Blue Bedspread* [1999], Pankaj Mishra’s *The Romantics* [2000], and Sunny Singh’s *Nani’s Book of Suicide* [2000]. These novelties of the late nineties are different from those of the eighties like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Deshpande, Upamanyu Chatterjee etc. in respect of their central concern, i.e. the problematics of the teenage youth, mainly the socio-cultural one. *Difficult Daughters* characteristically opens with the frank declaration of the narrator daughter, “the one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother” [Kapur Manju 1].

Similarly, Samar, the protagonist of The Romantics admits that though he has great reverence and awe for the ancient Brahminic traditions and practices of his family, “But at the same time I could feel my own life has drifted apart from them; it had attached itself to another constellation of desires and reverences.”

The narrator of R.K. Jha’s *The Blue Bedspread* expresses his determination to be different from his difficult and dictatorial father who had been a careless and indifferent husband. Sammy, the narrator of Nani’s *Book of Suicide*, makes frantic efforts to escape from the dark forces of which her Nani is an embodiment; Nani represents the age-
old mores and traditions of the Hindus. Sunny becomes Sammy after undergoing ‘western incarnation’, gets transformed into a diametrically opposite self. Her effort to be liberated from the terrible weight of traditions and family honour is futile: “Unrelenting in the face of my pleas, my defiance, my hatred for her, she follows me, seeking me over the continents. She had her brand of gnarled wizened harpies” [TBB 2].

New generation Indian English novelists are products of a sharply changing society that is undergoing marked transformation under the impact of media, cyber culture and raging globalization. Their novels are characterized by uninhibited narrative with no holds barred about sex, incest and registered strong antagonism to the socio-cultural mores and religious beliefs of the earlier generation. Excepting Manju kapur, the novelists are in their twenties and project the dilemma and expectation of the Indian youth—the relationship with parents, job crisis, cultural alienation, representing a generation in flux and unattached.

R.K Jha’s *The Blue Bedspread* possesses some of the major feature of the post-modernist fiction, viz. use of dream and fantasy, fractured narrative, multiple endings and self-reflexiveness. At the center of the novel is the childhood fantasy indulged in by the narrator and his elder sister with the help of the blue bed-spread during their childhood. Sitting on the bed and covering themselves with the bed spared. They imagined the blue color of the bed spared as the canopy of the blue sky, the light penetrating it made shimmering star like designs on the cover, the discolored Patches looked like floating clouds. The narrator and his sister played a ‘secret game’ of incestuous pleasure and fear under the blue bedspread which later on is used to cover the sister’s new born child.

The narrator of the novel is a middle-aged extremely diffident man who has forgotten his name. The narrative is a combination of fantasy and stream-of-consciousness method is which bits of past
surface either in the form of a straight line or a circle. The narrative is shaped out in a bizarre geometrical pattern. The locale is Calcutta, a city that breeds and promotes loneliness the narratives center, The Blue Bedspread is the metaphor of unrestricted imagination and freedom. The novel is a series of trips to the past organized non-chronologically, starting from the narrator’s childhood to his lonely middle-age. It begins with the narrator’s trip to the nursing home to identify and collect the baby as telephonically requested by the police officer Mr. Chatterjee. It is followed by a still life picture of his father. Then it moves to parents teachers meeting where the narrator seven years old is accompanied by his father. Next scene “one rupee” describes his severe father who beats up the sister for a fault committed by the narrator. Next scene is the visit to the maternal grandfather. The garden scene comes thereafter describes his father beating fantasy of ideal conjugal love. The narrative continually shuttles succession of short scene of his sister’s elopement, the pigeon lover, the domestic help Bhavani the narrator’s love affair, Durga Puja etc. In the opening of the novel, the narrator addressing the baby, say: “I shall retell some stories, the ones your mother told me, even those which she said not in words, but in gestures and glances” [TBB 6].

The stories come up as the doors of his memory opens:

We shall visit all these places, I shall hold your hand; open all the rooms that need to be opened, word by word, sentence by sentence. I shall keep some rooms closed until we are more ready, open others just a chink so that you take a peep. And at times, without opening a door at all, we shall imagine what lies inside. Like the murder, the screaming, a red handkerchief floating down, just as in the movies. [TBB 6]

The narrator is unwilling to remain trapped in the unpleasant past full of violence inflicted by his unfeeling and cruel father. Only fantasy can fill up the lacunae in reality and give life and purpose to the narrative. The narrator feels the need to “twist a few things to get it
[narrative] right” [ibid. 66]. Past, present and future keep on mingling regularly; they are arranged horizontally instead of vertically. The father is the subject of ‘my prose” [ibid. 63]. The narrator wants to ask his father, “why, he failed as a father and how could so much hatred and pain have gracefully co-existed with so much love and joy” [ibid. 63]. The narrators’ memory operates by fits and starts. He keeps on “twisting facts and fleshing out fiction” in his story [ibid. 47]. The scene entitled “Street Crossing” provides an exquisitely drawn picture of the silent agony, loneliness and pathos of a solitary city man and his dreamy life. Hence fantasy becomes an imperative in his life. Reality is formidable, only dream and fantasy can help to sustain life. This explains why the narrator gives an alternative ending to his sister’s married life that in reality pushed down her bossing husband from the balcony causing his death. The section titled “Straight Line” is a self-reflexive one about narrative strategy. Three scenes from the past are placed in a straight line – the white washbasin, the black iron hook, and the brown hinges of the bedroom door. The story centers round these objects and the persons associated with them which make up the narrator’s past in ‘arcs and triangles”. The novel is described as a “brown leather bag with zips, long and short, opening and closing several pockets, big, and small” [156]. The bag is used as a metaphor for narrative technique. This metaphor is not as effective as SalmanRushdie’s “perforated sheet” since it does not refer to the vision or theme. Reality is countered by fantasy, the mayhem at Sarajevo by the American dream. The final scene of the novel is like the ending of Golding’s Darkness Visible, a pure fantasy located in the Eden Gardens. The last declaration of the narrator, “I am the father of my sisters child” is emblematic of the narrative technique since it is broken into eight parts - ‘I’, ‘am’, ‘the’, ‘father’, ‘of’, ‘my’, ‘sister’s’, ‘child’. This corresponds to the eight main stories that constitute the novel as also the eight pigeons in flight. The narrator stammers. He cannot say sentence in one go. The halted splintered narrative is effective of his defective speech act.
While this first novel by R.K. Jha is a bold attempt, one cannot resist the temptation to ask whether the same story could not be effectively told in a traditional manner. However, one positive suggestion this technique provides relates to the way human memory functions. The Blue Bedspread is indeed a powerful memory novel, despite the fact that there is rather a much overt use of technique.

Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* is again a family story at the core of which is the deviation of Virmati, the difficult daughter, from family code of conduct and traditional sexual norms. The time frame is from the thirties to the present—India’s freedom struggle and women emancipation simultaneously moving forward Virmati’s illicit relationship with a married professor of English in Punjab, her throes and trials and her unflinching faith in this kind of love is retold by her daughter who has decided not to be like her mother. The novel is a traditional linear narrative, representational in character. It begins with a funeral scene—the narrator watching the cremation of her mother at Manikarnika ghat at Varanasi. From this end the narrative moves to the beginning. As the eldest daughter of a joint business family located at Amritsar in Punjab of the pre-partition India, Virmati is burdened with the task of looking after her horde of brothers and sister, her mother Kasturi producing litter every year. Meeting her cousin Swarnalata, a teacher in Lahore Govt. College, inspires her to go for higher educations for which she persuades her parents to break her marriage engagement. As she comes into contact with the foreign educated English professor Harish, she starts deviating from the fixed norms of the traditional Hindu orthodox society. This affair brings a new thrill in her life for which she is ready to sacrifice everything after undergoing an abortion she joins as a teacher in National Women’s College at Nahan, a college newly founded to meet the need for women’s education.

*Difficult Daughters* is the story of three daughters’ belongings to three generations – the grandmother Kasturi, her daughter Virmati
and Virmati’s daughter, the narrator. It is only Virmati who is the difficult daughter in the prosperous merchant family of Lala Diwan Chand. While in the generation of Kasturi, women’s role was confined to child bearing and kitchen work, the generation of Virmati took some bold and radical steps in joining the political movement for India’s freedom, asserted the need for women’s education and independence. As a non-chalant representative of the middle generation, Virmati breakaway from the tradition bound limits of Indian women. After forcing Harish to marry her, she finds her status as a second wife problematic owing to the antagonism of family members. She remains a social misfit as contemporary social ethos does not yet approve of such an alliance. Virmati is the emblem of the new woman of the forties who wanted to walk hand in hand with men. She rejects the kind of life led by her mother, fights for women’s independence and a respectable social status.

The story is set around India’s partition the theme of partitions operates at two levels in the novel. Virmati creates lines of partition in her parental family as well as in the family of husband. She painfully realizes that independence and partition are mutually generative. Kasturi bursts out at her, “you’ve destroyed our family, you badmash, you Randi” [104]. She remains an outsider, an untouchable. The novelist very well combines the story of India’s partition and the family partition. The narrator tries to be free from the haunting figure of her mother, “Do not haunt me anymore”. [259]

Sammy, the narrator of Nani’s Book of Suicide [NBOS] is similarly troubled by a haunting figure here it is her grandmother. It is again a family story where memory dominates. The novel records the memories of Sammy’s childhood years spent with her maternal grandmother at Banaras. Sammy sharp memories of associations with her chase her throughout the world. Nani [Abha] is a glowing figure, a magician who wields her uncanny charm and mesmerizes people with her glowing eyes. She is the emblem of the traditional sense of honor,
courage and sacrifice and the narrator associates her with a number of Indian mythical and legendary figures like Suniti, Draupadi, Kunti. Other female characters are modern prototypes of Kunti, Sita, and Padmini etc. The narrator frames a mythic network in order to provide depth to a contemporary story like Shashi Tharoor in the great Indian novel. But Sunny Singh draws heavily on legend too. All the figures opted for death or suicide in order to save others. Suniti, Dhruva’s mother, is a modern version of Savitri, who saves the life of a village boy mutter. The British army hanged Abhimanyu, Abha’s brother, when he was twelve years old; the historical figure Panna who sacrificed her son in order to save the life of the prince: all these archetypal Hindu characters have their prototypes in the novel. Sammy believes that all the values and ideals of her Nani lead to self-destruction:

   Just think of Nani’s handbook of suicides. Give up what you love and you’ll be a hero. Die for some value philosophy and your place in history is certain. All of Nani’s heroes end up dead… some burn on communal pyres for honour. Others chop off their own heads to save their beloved. Even the ones who fight to live finally swallow poison. [NBOS 178]

Sammy is aware that she “has inherited the legacy of self-destruction from Nani” [ibid.].

Even after undergoing “western incarnation” the narrator fails to disinherit her past despite her determined efforts. At every situation and experimental level she realizes that she is inextricably linked with the Indian mythical / legendary women whose stories she told during her childhood by her Nani. Padmini, Kunti, Draupadi, Sita, Savitri are constituent aspects of her collective consciousness and the novel is cauterized accordingly. The fleeing Sammy travels across the globe but her Nani keeps on holding sway over her life and dreams. The frail but courageous Nani is a haunting witch for Sammy. Thus being chained to her past, the narrator explores the cultural identity of Indian woman
integrating in the narrative a rich fund of feeling rendered myths with the story of family and modern India. The novel ends with Sammy’s determination as modern Sita not to return to her lover.

Sunny Singh does not indulge in unnecessary narratives gaucherie or complicated technique. It is a straightforward narrative, spontaneous in its inscriptions of myths, smooth in its flow, marked by vivid scenes from India’s past intertwined with the contemporary event. Sunny Singh like Shashi Tharoor registers the eternal presence of the past makes a creative use of the myths legend and traditions. Sammy’s return to India after the ‘insanity of past’ [236] takes possession of her, is the culmination of her persistent effort to understand and regain her identify made possible through narrative.

New generation Indian English novels concentrate on the problems of contemporary youth emotional, cultural, and familial and assess the present situations by looking back at the past. Pankaj Mishra The Romantics [2000], a youth centered novel, focuses in a major way on such problems, particularly of university student who have romantic dreams about their life and career which get smashed owing to harsh reality of contemporary India. The novel deals with the university life of the eighties and nineties–students unrest the confused ideology of the youth, their aspirations and frustrations–and gradually settles on the drifting bohemians, Indian and western, and underlines how the romantic idea of life gets deflated. Summer the protagonist of the novel comes into contact with a number of Indian and western youth – anand, Rajesh, Vijay, Mark, Miss West, Debbie , Catherine who propelled by the romantic idea quest for the fulfillment of their dreams. All are rolling stones in search of an alternative life to be released from either bourgeois society [Catherine], to escape from life of luxury and comfort in order to experience surfing and pain [mark], to get converted to Buddhism in order to find peace [Debbie]. Samar meets these western drifters at a musical evening at Miss West’s. Miss West herself is trying to escape from her tanged past, her affair with a
married man named Christopher. All these characters are engaged in passing through a perpetual journeying through the world.

*The Romantics* is primarily about the inner turmoil of the youth forced to adjust in an ever-changing world. Moreover, it is a story of delusion, of the harsh facts of life faced by the young generation. Samar, the narrator character, tries to free himself from the tangled roots of his Brahmanic past, “the well-worn Hindu grooves”. Unlike his father, Samar grew up on Tin comics, Enid Blyton and cricket and got his early education in Christian run school. After doing his graduation from Allahabad university, he shifts to Varanasi in order to prepare for civil services examination. In Varanasi he comes into contact with a number of university students like Rajesh, Vinay, etc. who are also in a nebulous state of mind. Rajesh turns out to be a criminal.

The novel deals mainly with Samar’s relationship with drifters from the west, particularly the French beauty Catherine with whom he develops a tender love relationship. Catherine’s boyfriend Anand plans to shift to France and earn from Sitar-recitals there. His dream too would remain unfulfilled. Catherine caught between Samar Anand would be in a mess and finally return back to France. The purity and innocence of Samar – Catherine relationship has been touchingly rendered. Reality does not accommodate such romantic dreams; it counters delusion with drudgery and disillusion. Samar finally lands up as a school teacher at Dharamashala. There is no escape from isolation and fallen dreams at Dharamashala, Samar realizes:

I still sensed something raw and incoherent within my own personality, and I remained vulnerable to those large vague longings, the urge to throw oneself into a grand and noble venture, into whatever could give coherence and shape to my own life…I was more conscious than ever of how absurdly romantic and incongruous these longings were for me.[229-230]
Samar’s return to Varanasi underlines the end of his romantic dreams.

_The Romantics_ is not a novel about east-west encounter but about the frustration of the new-age global youth who get lost on the labyrinths of life owing to their romantic illusions. Countering the dreamy longings of the youth, the novel is written in simple, unpoetic representational style. At places, however, the prose is clumsy, insipid and bland. While the novel gives an authentic picture of the topography and the life of Varanasi. It unreasonably highlights the negative aspects of the university life which is rather unwarranted. It is difficult to his voluntary oversight of the virtues of the great academic institutions. However, the Romantics as an Indian version of Flaubert’s _Sentimental Journey_ have much to recommend though it gives a selective picture of the youth of modern generation.

In such a way, ‘The New Generation Indian English novel’ is a Post-Rushdian phenomenon. It makes a diversion from the weird and technique conscious fiction of the tradition set by Rushdie. It is free from the craze for modernity and novelty and concern with national character and destiny. Rather it is about reality, the roots of Indian psyche, family–centered life, generation gap, to be precise, about the problems faced by the youth and the irreparable partitions that have taken place in their consciousness. Every generation has its own dilemmas and pitfalls, so has the contemporary youth. The new generations English novel is on the whole representational in style, and registers a revival of the traditional narrative manner and explores the significant role tradition plays in gaining psychic stability. It is healthy sign that Indian English novel is returning to the mainstream of the Indian narrative.