Indian English literature, be it prose, poetry, drama or fiction, has been setting its own trends, adding new dimensions to the literary context. Indian writers have planted new seeds in the garden of English Literature with new experiments both in linguistic and thematic concerns and contributed considerably to the vast treasure of English literature. Even while treading the path of the conventional English literary trends, Indian writers have often branched off introducing new elements portraying the Indian scene.

The Indian English novel has been in existence for a little more than a century now. In its earlier phases it successfully attempted to restore national pride and respect and to bridge the gap between the east and the west. Subsequently the Indian English novelists have been focusing on identifying the common human experiences which has resulted in a larger readership as the general reader is able to place himself in the portrayed situation.

One such experience is associated with life in higher education centers. With the widespread education drive in the last few decades, a large number of people have made an entry into various campuses. Their day-to-day experience has been the theme of various forms of campus literature. The turn of the previous century has witnessed the publication of a number of novels sharing the experience of the campus dwellers, giving rise to a new genre named ‘Campus Novels’. The
present study is an attempt to validate the existence and establishment of this emerging genre called 'The Indian English Campus Novels'. As such, novels exhibit a blend of recognizably Indian sensibility with a universal mark of form, substance and expression, the evolving genre needs to be examined in the light of both Indian and universal conventions.

Categorizing literary works into various genres and subgenres is an age old practice. Having divided the world into court, city and country, Hobbes then found corresponding three kinds of poetry - heroic, scommatic and the pastoral. Prior to this, the division was made on still broader terms.

At the time when scholars like Aristotle, thought of setting a standard set of norms as guidelines to the writer, it was quite rigid. The opening sentence of Aristotle’s *Poetics* declares the central aim of classical genre criticism. “I propose to treat of poetry in itself and of its various kinds, noting the essential quality of each.” He tried to distinguish the text based on three criteria viz. the medium, the object and the manner or mode of presentation. A poet who wanted to write an epic had to be well-versed with the meter required for it, and had to think of a topic/plot, that would suit the prerequisite of the royal theme required for an epic. However, the modern genre theories do not advocate or ‘prescribe’ the rules for writers; rather, they ‘describe’ the conventions followed based on the extant literary works.
It is very common for an observant reader to distinguish or compare the literary works he/she reads with his/her earlier experience of reading other similar works and that helps such readers/critics to place the works under different categories. This exercise of categorising has given rise to ‘genre’. If genre is a ‘mode’, or a ‘kind’ or a ‘category’, this categorizing can be made based on various parameters such as structure, theme, form and even subject matter. A form based genre can be further divided based on the subject matter giving rise to one more sub-genre. For instance, novels are now divided into categories like political, historical, psychological and social.

It is quite likely that authors generally have a genre, a mode or a kind or a tradition in their mind when they write. “A genre is an extended convention or set of conventions working together to establish the formal nature of whole work and to distinguish it as a particular kind of literary work”. The role of genre is vital in framing the author’s choices and reader’s responses. As a genre is a pattern accepted by the writer and understood by the reader, the writers strive to follow this as an inevitable tool in order to convey and communicate their intentions better. “A system of genre is the product of classification and classification is always a strategy of control”. This classification also directs the people as to what they should think and mean. “As an instrument of control, a genre limits meanings. But for those who write or read text within a genre, it enables a specific plenitude of meanings”. The writer has realised that “genres exist in people’s brain as dispositions to certain kinds of patterned behavior”.

3
While the writers are writing their works as a conscious exercise and so deliberately choose the pattern or genre that can best express their thoughts, any discerning reader aware of the genres would be able to identify which genre the book belongs to. "Genre is a set of expectations between the reader and the text......a set of instructions about the type of coherence one is to look for and the ways in which sequences are to be read."\(^5\)

A general reader, it is true, may not always know which subgenre a book he is reading belongs to. But such a knowledge would definitely help him understand it better, enable him to sense the implied and hidden meanings. The known features or expectations of a work we are reading contribute to effective reading, providing a more complete experience of the reading. Therefore even though it appears “pointless to classify and label texts ......it is virtually impossible to read a given new text without bringing to it a particular set of expectations”.\(^6\) In fact “all understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre bound”.\(^7\) Both the ordinary reader and the writer definitely benefit from this act of identifying a piece of work as of a particular genre. Apart from this “the genre is also the critic’s heuristic tool, his chosen or defined way of persuading his audience to see the literary text in all its previously inexplicable and literary fullness and then to relate this text to those that are similar or more precisely, to those that may be explained. ......Genre is our most reasoned way of talking about and valuing the literary text”.\(^8\)
It is through language that we generally communicate. As Jonathan Culler asserts, "a genre … is a conventional function of language, a particular relation to the world which serves as norm or expectation to guide the reader in his encounter with the text" and it is this set of 'norms' and 'expectations' that gives the work a framework and every time a reader picks up a book to read, he can only read it "with or against other texts" and gradually, he notices the "salient features and gives them a structure" and these expectations can become operative if the genre establishes "a contract between the writer and the reader so as to make certain relevant expectations operative and thus to permit both compliance with and deviation from accepted modes of intelligibility".

The title, structure or form of the work would enable the reader to get a deeper and varied meaning; so also examining a piece of literature placing under a genre or subgenre can help the reader with better understanding, improved analysis and so a proper rating. This has been, as every student of literature knows, brilliantly demonstrated by I A Richards in his Practical Criticism.

What Henri Bonnet in his Dichotomy of Artistic Genres observes about arts is also true of literature - "The concept of genre is of great importance in the arts. As long as there is no distinction between the fundamental genres, there will be complete confusion in the field of aesthetics". This kind of examination, simply put, is an attempt to fit the piece of work in a system or in the absence of a pre-existing system an alert reader's mind works out a mechanism to trace the similarities among a set of literary works and this working often leads to the
evolution of a new system, that best fits all of them to be placed in a single group.

In the context of 'descriptive' criticism as against 'prescriptive' criticism of the past, defining a genre is a challenging task as one is at a dilemma whether to define the group first or classify the works first. Here the critic uses genre to propose his hypothesis and check if it is 'verifiable' or at least 'refutable'. Often the later additions necessitate modifications, if not alterations, to the definitions.

"A good writer partly conforms to the genre as it exists and partly stretches it" once he is aware of the fact that "the genre is a class whose extension is open and whose intention is provisional and partial". Modern genre theory, descriptive as it is, never "limits the number of possible kinds and doesn't prescribe rules to authors. It supposes that traditional kinds may be mixed and produce a new kind ...... instead of emphasizing the distinction between kind and kind it is interested in finding the common denominator of a kind, its shared literary devices and literary purposes". Mixing of genres, according to Ralph Cohen "is a new way of thinking".

As E. D. Hirsch in his *Validity in Interpretation* rightly brings in the analogy of Picasso using a toy car to represent the head of a baboon to create a new car baboon and not a car and a baboon or the instance of the word 'hello' used after picking up a telephone is no longer just a salutation, but a way to 'assimilate the telephone response to a salutation'. This kind of 'metaphorical leap' made through 'amalgamation' or 'extension' could result in the evolution of a literary
genre. Thus a writer not only extends existing convention but combines old
corner system in a new way.\textsuperscript{17}

With every new text that is added, the existing theory or the rule gets altered,
even if it is very slight, "continually founding and altering the horizons"\textsuperscript{18}
making the "rules of the game varied, extended, corrected as also transformed,
crossed out or simply reproduced".\textsuperscript{19}

Even in following the existing norm the creative genius of the writer cannot help
bringing out something distinct and unique from the others. This simultaneous
existence of commonality and the differences makes the generic study a
significant way of interpretation of the text. "If each piece of writing were
different from all others there would be no basis for theorizing or even for
communication."\textsuperscript{20} This creative genius is analysed and criticized by the
brilliance of the critic as "all works of literature are similar to each other in many
ways and that it depends on the critic's point of view which similarities he
should consider important enough for generic distinctions".\textsuperscript{21}

As Jonathan Culler in his \textit{Structuralist Poetics} notes, "a genre is not simply a
taxonomic class, it must attempt to explain what features are constitutive of
functional categories which have governed the reading and writing of
literature".\textsuperscript{22} And this explanation, no doubt, is based on the individual's
perception because "there are no pure genres but only intermediary forms,
ambiguous categories. Where does a genre begin and where does it end? The
genius combines all the genres. Each genre can comprise in various proportions all possible forms of self imitation, inspired from all situations and experiences of life. Hence precise classifications are not only absurd but also impossible.23

The parameter that is used to analyse a text may vary giving rise to a new literary genre. Just as the role of an individual can be multifaceted at any given time, a novel can simultaneously be classed under different categories: this is when a novel can be named a comedy considering its style, biography looking at its theme, or even an epistolary one by its technique. Novels with more than one plot, each plot complementing the other, ultimately contributing to the intended message, are not hard to find. A historical novel elaborating on the story of a family, a political novel with the minor details of the protagonist’s personal life, are common themes to find, as in Collector’s Wife by Mitra Phukan, where the life of Rukmini, the protagonist, runs almost parallelly with the riot hit Assam, while she being a Lecturer, enough details of he college also is depicted staking its claim to be considered also as a campus novel.

From the three genres mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, have emerged innumerable new genres and sub genres time to time as the complexity and diversity of literature expanded. One such emergence during the 20th century is Campus Novel. While it is possible to categorically identify and classify a text, based on its structure, form or time of publication, it is not so when it comes to thematic identification. The term ‘Campus Novel’ or ‘University novel’ basically refers to that class of novels which deal with issues relating to higher
education context. The main action generally is set in and around the campus of a university or college. Here, higher education is supposed to be treated with seriousness and the main characters are generally drawn from among the students, or faculty or administrative set up of the campus.

Chris Baldick in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines Campus Novels as “usually satirical or comic in which the action is set within enclosed world of university (or similar set of learning) and highlights follies of academic life.” If a historical novel can glorify the past or deify the heroes or a political novel can uphold a principle or an ideology why not a campus novel reveal the better part of the campus also. One wishes that the campus novelists choose also to present a multidimensional view of the university campuses. It is true that the above definition too, just like all other definitions of campus novels, is descriptive, which is derived from the reading of representative novels of the genre and obviously presents what is found in such novels. As David Lodge, the author of some very popular campus novels, reasons it out, “the high ideals of the university as an institution, the pursuit of knowledge and truth are set against the actual behavior and motivations of the people who work in them, who are only human and subject to the same ignoble desires and selfish ambitions as anybody else. The contrast is perhaps more ironic, more marked than it would be in any other professional milieu.”

A campus novel, therefore, can be one which ‘incorporates an institution of higher learning as a crucial part of its total setting and ......includes among its
principal characters graduate or undergraduate students, faculty members, administration and/or other academic personnel". Discussing the features and origin of campus novels, David Lodge also points out that "the campus novel is typically focused on humanities rather than the sciences ....... . There is invariably an element of artifice and literary self consciousness in the genre, of which Shakespeare's courtly campus play, *Love's Labour Lost* was a distant precursor". It is true that writers like Hawthorne, Thackeray and others episodically explored the tranquil academic groves of the 19th century. But practically full length campus novels emerged from 1950 onwards with the publication of Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academy* and Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* While McCarthy was more mildly though chiding rather than condemning style, Amis's *Lucky Jim* that is even today considered a trend setting novel, is characterized by a comic mode, soft satire exposing the eccentricities and foibles of the intellectuals. These were followed in the later years by Vladimir Nabokov, Malcolm Bradbury, and David Lodge, prominent among others.

However, the Indian English Campus Novel has established itself after 1990's, though the first of its kind was brought out in 1982 with Prema Nandakumar's *Atom and the Serpent*. P M Nityanandan's *Long Long Days* though written earlier in 1962 came to light only when campus novels in India emerged as a distinct genre.
In the light of hundreds of campus novels of different qualities with various purposes published all over the world, one feels like agreeing with A. S. Byatt who dislikes Lucky Jim seeing it as anti-intellectual and wonders why the campus novel has to consist of farce.

Most of the Indian campus novels, fortunately, do not seem to have taken Lucky Jim for a model. Of course a better fortune is yet to dawn upon the arena of Indian Campus novel to make this genre – which is closely connected with the area where the minds are to expand – an intellectually stimulating, academically motivating and socially inspiring one. Pursuit of truth and knowledge being the ultimate target of the higher education centers, one expects these novels to serve as a revelation to the giver and an inspiration to the takers.

Literature is said to be a reflection of life; a representation of life; a verisimilitude of life. If so, a campus novel, whether with or without the novelist’s intention and conscious efforts, does make an impact on – both academic and general readers. While a common reader may use it as a window that opens out into the higher education arena for him to get a glimpse of, an academic reader may look for look-alikes as compared to his own experiences. That is to say, the purpose of the novel for a reader is twofold – one is to bridge the gap between the academic and the outside world and the other is to act as an introspective tool for the academic reader. William G Tierney asserts “...the purpose in reading academic fiction has less to do with proving or disproving the truth of a text; instead, the novel might be thought of as a way to help academics
think about how academic life has been structured, defined, and interpreted in order to create constructive change”. 27

Though comparatively very small in number, Indian campus novels are not just an extended from of European or American campus novels because the very structure and functioning of our campuses radically differ from those in the USA, Canada or England. The cultural differences too matter. The Indian sensibilities and Indian way of working are so different from the western that our writers neither find it feasible nor necessary to follow their footsteps. For instance, protecting one’s tenure through academic achievements, publication and even manipulation become a major academic issue in the USA. Also, the kind of academic freedom and teacher-student relationship prevalent there are not generally found here. Indian campus life has a distinctly unique and wide dimension to it in terms of context as well as characters.

As much research has already been taken up especially on American campus novels the observations made by the scholars are worth mentioning here. Irony, satire and farce are the most common features observed. Psychologically underdeveloped, one-dimensional, mostly caricature description of the characters set in loosely knit episodic plots strive to enliven the story, often in vain. While lack of profound thought or message is a common feature, the novels generally are made hilarious and sarcastic by exaggerating. However, most of the Indian campus novels do not feature all these qualities.
Compared to the publication of more than 60 novels in America between 1960-1970 or more than 240 during 1900-1960, the number of campus novels published in India is much less. The fact that even with a very small number of about less than 50 they do exhibit essentially distinct features with a typical Indian sensibility, has proved the need to consider the study of Indian English Campus Novel as a separate field, which hitherto is almost an untrodden discipline.

Academic novel, University novel, College novel and campus novel are terms used almost synonymously. David Lodge differentiates between ‘Campus novel’ and ‘Varsity novel’, the latter being set at Oxbridge and usually among students rather than teachers. He claims Kingsley Amis’s Lucky Jim as the first British campus novel and a template. But still his own novels rise much above Lucky Jim in content, depiction and more importantly in the message that is imparted and in its purpose. However, the term ‘Campus novel’ is preferred with reference to the kind of study intended in this thesis. While ‘Academic’ restricts itself to the purely academic issues in the higher education set-up, it can even extend to off-the-campus expansion of the same issue; whereas ‘Campus novel’ can be an account of all that happens on the campus and has little to do with what happens outside, unless it has a direct bearing on the campus life. ‘Campus’, which originates as an American expression refers to the area on which higher education centers comprising classrooms, research centers/labs and other necessary buildings like libraries, administrative office, canteens, hostels,
staff quarters and other academically supportive components are situated. Anita Desai’s *In Custody* in this sense can be categorized, if at all, as an academic novel and not a campus one. *Five Point Someone* a multidimensional diary of a student in an IIT campus reveals a lot of academic and non-academic issues and experiences of three representative students. Ryan’s amorous adventure with the professor’s daughter, his coming to street in professor’s shirt and bumping into the same professor has little to do directly with the academic issues. However, this is essentially a campus experience.

A campus, as a whole, comprises basically of three components viz students, faculty and the administrative set-up. As such, the three processes - teaching-learning, research and maintenance (governance) are the everyday matter of any campus. A campus novel, thus essentially deals with any one or a combination of these issues. These issues or points of view, taken one at a time – which generally happens in a campus novel – hardly offers the comprehensive picture of a campus. Unlike a political or a historical novel one campus novel seldom depicts an all-sided picture of a campus in action. This makes the study of at least a few representative novels dealing with all these areas imperative to understand the genre.

This study, ‘Indian English Campus Novels : A Study in Genre’ is an attempt to establish an evolving subgenre called ‘Indian English Campus Novel’ . The main trait for consideration is to check whether the novel has any campus issues – academic, administrative or student-teacher relationship and the like – as its
central theme. The study also tries to observe the nature of characterising campus personalities — faculty/students — as the protagonists, and of other minor characters as a characteristic feature. In brief, the novels that try to throw some insight into teaching-learning experience of the teacher or the taught, or the problems encountered in the process or issues related to research, assimilation of wisdom through the pursuit of knowledge revealed through typical experiences of the campus dwellers are considered for the study.

The present chapter, apart from establishing the frame of reference of the thesis, traces the emergence and evolution of the genre called 'campus novel'. A working definition that is framed, guides the further study and the general features of global campus novels at large discussed here helps to focus on the campus novels in the Indian literary context as a separate genre.

A close observation of Indian English campus novels published so far has revealed that the novels can be divided into three basic categories namely faculty oriented, student oriented, and others which are either mixed or only partially dealing with campus issues/experiences. The three subsequent chapters offer a detailed analysis of such representative novels falling under the said categories respectively.

Out of just a handful of faculty oriented novels produced so far five representative novels are considered for a detailed study and analysis. Each of the five novels taken up here are quite unique in terms of setting, style and the
message. Prema Nandakumar’s *Atom and the Serpent – A novel of Campus life in India Today* (1982), the first of its kind in India, gives an account of the protagonist Dr. Vatsa’s 5-day visit to a typical provincial campus where he stays as a guest lecturer. During this brief interlude of Vatsa, the writer takes us through both the good and the evil compelling the protagonist and the academic readers to do some soul searching. *Miracles Happen* (D R Sharma, 1985) set in a fictitious campus of Manasa Devi exposes the campus politics and reveals the fate of the victims of such politics. Centred around the life and tenure of a timid Vice-Chancellor Om Prakash Handa, who is but a pawn in the hands of his wife Rukmini and others, the story quite incredibly brings in the element of miracle. Mr. Deepak Chawla, an English teacher and narrator of the story, with a couple of like-minded persons strives to transform the Manasa Devi campus to its earlier days of glory. *Campus* (K.L. Kamal, 2002) is almost identical in theme with *Miracles Happen*. *The Drunk Tantra* by Ranga Rao (1994) seems to have drawn its inspiration from works like *Lucky Jim*, the supposedly model campus novel. Narrated partly by the author narrator and partly by the newly appointed lecturer Mohana, typically features the episodic plot and caricature characterization. Himself a teacher, Ranga Rao holds a sharp mirror to the role of irresponsibility of the faculty for the rot that is set in in the colleges. Satire and sarcasm dominate the novel exposing the lot of higher education centers in India. The latest in the category, *In Times of Siege* by Gita Hariharan (2003) is set in an Open University campus. While the other four novels deal with internal politics of the campus, among the teaching and the administrative staff, etc.
Hariharan exposes the dirty hand of politics, in the name of various forums and associations, crushing the basic intention of education. Prof. Shiv Murthy's helplessness to justify his stand represents the lack of freedom of an educator.

Each novel here is analysed separately as the treatment of the theme, the style and the purpose seem to differ considerably. Nevertheless, whatever similitude present have been considered and discussed.

The second set of novels discussed in the third chapter is grouped under student oriented novels. P. M. Nityanandan’s *Long Long Days* published way back in 1960, compared to the novels of this decade, is quite different. The novel pictures the comedy of varsity life with Wodehousian humour. The annual cricket match, an English lecture, a play, student union election campaign, examination, graduation, farewell...... each of them is let loose for lack of existence of a binding story to hold them all together. It is rather an account of the events of a typical college verbally depicted in a comic way than a sequential story with any plot.

Later novels in this group published after a long gap include *Five Point Someone* by Chetan Bhagat (2004), *Mediocre But Arrogant* by Abhijit Bhaduri(2005), *Above Average* by Amitabha Bhagachi (2007) and a host of others during 2007 and 2008. These novels exhibit a set of common features like teachers as seen from students’ point of view, the casual approach of the students to studies and the usual pranks played in or outside the campus.
Apart from these clearly distinguished campus novels, there are a few novels which give a more than one-sided picture of a campus and the others which partially deal with campus life while the central theme could be different. The fourth chapter attempts to assemble such novels to check for campus elements and quite interestingly finds that such novels often give a better picture of a campus than those generally considered campus novels. *Bachelor of Arts,* (R K Narayan, 1937) *Too High for Rivalry* (Muriel Wasi, 1967) *The Higher Education of Geethika Mehendiratta* (Anuradha Marwah Roy, 1993) *The Collector’s Wife* (Mitra Phukan, 2005) *No Onions Nor Garlic* (Srividya Natarajan, 2006) are some of the novels dealt with in this group.

The final chapter is an attempt to validate the usefulness and the purpose of campus novels for the campus dwellers and general readers. It is strongly felt that the campus novelists do have a responsibility towards the academic set up and the public as it is one of the links between these two entities. The researcher feels that the novelist needs to be conscious of the kind of impact that his /her novel can make on the readers.
1. As quoted in Fiction as Genre, *When is Something Fiction?*, Thomas J Roberts, Southern Illinois Univ. Press p 74
3. Ibid. p 22
5. Jonathan Culler, Towards a Theory of Non-Genre Literature, 1975, p 255
8. Ibid. p 25
10. Ibid. p 139
11. Ibid. p 147
19. Ibid., p 88
23 Adrian Marino, “A Definition of Literary Genre”, Theories of Literary Genres, Ed. Joseph P Strelka p 53

24 As quoted by Aida Edemariam in Who’s Afraid of the Campus Novel, The Guardian, Saturday, 2nd Oct, 2004

25 Siegfried Mews, The Professor’s Novel: David Lodge’s Small World, MLN, 1989, April p 104


