CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present work attempts a brief comparative study of the works of two representative writers hailing from two different states of India-Bengal and Kerala. The similarities and contrasts between these two writers - Rabindranath Tagore, a phenomenal genius in the history of Bengali Literature and M.T. Vasudevan Nair, a Contemporary writer of Permanent value in Malayalam Literature - provide an interesting study of the meeting of two strong minds and culture. There are differences in family background, mental make-up and traditions between these two writers, but both can be placed under the same romantic umbrella.

Rabindranath Tagore is the first Indian who has gained a place in the literary scene of the world for modern India. Tagore is a poet, novelist, shortstory writer, dramatist, social reformer, artist, musician, painter, an educationist and a practical idealist, who has turned his dreams into reality at Shanthiniketan. His literary output is enormous. This great man represents all that is best in Indian thought and culture.

Born on May 7, 1861, in Calcutta as the son of Maharishi Debendranath Tagore, a Bengali Land owner, Tagore devoted much of his life to education, religion and peace. Tagore was brought up in an atmosphere of culture and religion. His father and grandfather were eminent men of learning. Tagore managed his father's estate. He founded a magazine and aroused the spirit of nationalism among Indians.
Tagore was convinced of the need of education for his people and founded his famous school, Shanthiniketan, which later became Viswabharathri University. He felt that common speech should be the foundation of all good writing. He wanted to free his people from the narrow mindedness of Bengali society. He made good use of English in his writings after he attained the age of fifty. Two years later, he visited England and Europe to collect money through lectures for his college. He also visited China, Japan and Persia. In Europe, he received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. He used this money for the development of his school. In 1915, he was knighted by the king of England. He firmly believed that the east and the west would have something to exchange with each other for their mutual advantage. He has been truly called the Mediator between east and west.

Tagore died on August 7, 1941, at the age of eighty. The world lost a charming poet and a man of fine character, who left a void not to be filled. Such a man comes to a nation only once in many centuries.

Born in Kudalur in Ponnani district in Kerala, on July 15, 1933, as the son of T. Narayanan Nair and Ammaluamma, M.T. Vasudevan Nair became popular as a teacher, editor, writer and film director. His famous writings include Kalam (Time), Mani (Mist), Nalukettu (The Legacy), Asuravithu (The Demon seed), Vilapa Yatra (Sad procession), Pathiravum Pākal Velichavum (Midnight and daylight), Randamoozham (The Second turn), Vanaprastham, "Arabiponnu" (Arabian gold), "Olavum Theravum" (wave and shore), "Varikuzhi", "Bandhanam" (Bondage), "Swaragam Thurakunna"
Samayam" (Time for heaven to open), "Ninde Ormakku" (In your memory), "Veyilum Nilavum" (Sunlight and Moonlight), Kalivedu (Play house) and "Vedanayude Pokal". He won Jnana Peedam award in 1996.

Both the writers, Rabindranath Tagore and M.T. Vasudevan Nair, are ardent lovers of nature and rural life. Tagore’s love of the quiet, rural Bengal is sincere and intense. He loves river Padma that sweeps the shores of Bengal, serenely and calmly. Similarly, M.T. Vasudevan Nair loves the beautiful countryside of Kerala, with its green paddy fields, rivers, streams and small villages, sheltered by bamboo and mango groves. Beautiful descriptions of rivers Nila and Bharatha are strewn over his short stories and novels. Both the writers value rustic life more than urban living.

Intimacy, affection and relationship between members of a family occupy great importance in the writings of both the writers. Generally their stories show an extreme sensitivity to the pressures of common living in Hindu joint family. Indictment of social orthodoxy is prevalent in the stories of Tagore and M.T. Vasudevan Nair. Both are writers of diverse modes and tones. They can be tender and indulgent too.

Psychological realism is a common link between the two writers. Loneliness of the human heart, mental conflict, happiness, sorrows and disappointments are all realistically brought out in their short stories and novels. Tagore writes of heroines, who are young, illiterate and voiceless in the rigid family structure of the Hindu social system and yet display qualities of intelligence, imagination and persistence. The women characters in M.T. Vasudevan Nair’s stories are very strong, intelligent and mature.
Both the successful writers employ lively and poetic language. Both are poets at heart even when they write prose. They can understand human nature deeply. They prove that literature need not depend on myth, legend and history for its sources, but can find its subject among the most common and insignificant people and their daily lives. Like Tagore, M.T. Vasudevan Nair is at his best as a short story writer. Every short story contains enough observations to fill a novel. There is an urgency about Tagore's stories that show that Tagore cannot stop and linger; he needs to rush on; the rivers of Bengal seem to have entered his narratives and lent them momentum. The short stories and novels of these two writers are packed and compressed with episodes taken from everyday lives. In their writings, there is lucidity and depth of feeling.

An attempt is made in this chapter to trace the growth of Indian literature, beginning from the Vedas, Upanishads, Panchatantra and Puranas and how these became the inspiration for the evolution of to the origin of Indian novels and short stories. A brief survey of Bengali modern prose fiction. A brief survey of Modern Indian literature and a short history of Malayalam literature are also covered. The writing in English, Bengali Renaissance and Malayalam origin, growth and spread of Indian writing in English, where Rabindranath literature are also covered. The chapter highlights Tagore and M.T. Vasudevan Nair as products of the modern era.

A survey of the panoramic history of Indian literature from the Rig Veda right down to modern times reveal a running thread of continuity against a background of continuous change. The regional languages of India grow freely and independently through the centuries, taking what they like
from Sanskrit, Persian and English. But still, there is an underlying unity of inspiration, design, theme, image and symbol between these languages. A survey of these developments would prove that Indian literature is one though it is written in many languages.

The modern Indian languages fall into two distinct groups - those descended from Sanskrit and Prakrits and current in North India and the Deccan and those descended from the languages forming an independent Dravidian group and current in south India. Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam are the Dravidian or South Indian languages. Assamese, Bengali, Gujarathi, Kashmiri, Hindi, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi and Urdu are descended from Sanskrit.

The modern Indian literature, whether in the south or in the north, seems to have followed a common line of development. Medieval India witnessed an extensive movement in all the languages amounting to a religious revival.

The history of ancient Indian literature falls into two main periods - Vedic period and Sanskrit period. Vedas are undoubtedly the oldest writing in the world. The oldest and the most important of the four Vedas, Rig Veda, Consists of lyrics mainly in praise of different Gods. Rig Veda must have been composed before 3000 BC. The ancient specimens in Rig Veda are acknowledged as the earliest surviving literary document of Indo-European speech.
The earliest literary documents of India were religious compositions handed down at first by word of mouth only. They were eventually assembled and written down. These were passed on from generation to generation by professional reciters. Later, they were written down as Vedic texts. The language of the most ancient documents is an archaic Sanskrit known as vedic Sanskrit.

The Aryan conquest brought Sanskrit to India, three or four thousand years ago. Sanskrit is the classical language of the Indians. For Hindus, it is also the language of their scriptures. Among Indian languages, Sanskrit occupies a unique place as the parent of most Indian languages. As the strength and source of inspiration to all these languages, it has held its sway over a period of more than three thousand years.

In turning from Vedic to Sanskrit period, we are confronted with a literature, which is essentially different from that of earlier age. This is known as Epic age, which is said to be from 1,000 BC to 600 BC. The Epic is contained in the enormously extensive literature of the Puranas. The process of the composition of the epic, Ramayana, might have gone on around 1,500 BC and that of Mahabharatha around 1,000 BC. These epics have assumed their present forms by AD third or fourth century.

Of the two epics, Mahabharata consisting of one hundred thousand verses, is older in both inspiration and style. Ramayana is shorter and it
consists of twenty four thousand couplets.

In the epics, we have also long stories which are regarded as epics within epics by modern writers. Such are the Upakhyanas of Rsyasrnga in the Ramayana and of Nala, Sakunthala etc in the Mahabharata.

Ramayana and Mahabharata are the inexhaustible mines from which Indian writers have chosen their material for ages. The Origin of some of the fables and moral apologues, which later became famous, can be traced back to Mahabharata. The Origin of the Indian short story lies in the moral apologise and fables. Historically, the Indian fable dates back to atleast three thousand years. It had reached its maturity before the time of Aesop in the sixth century BC.

Upanishads represent a new religion which aim to mingle the individual soul with the world soul through correct knowledge and thus release man from mundane existence. The nature of the world soul is the essential theme of Upanishads. Upanishads take us to the very core of Hinduism. They impart knowledge about the philosophical speculations of classical India. They also reflect the values of the past. The earliest examples of Indian short stories go back to Vedas and Upanishads.

The Chief sources of Indian fables and moral tales are to be found in the Buddhist Jatakas and Panchatantra. Vedas, Upanishads, Epics and Puranas are active sources of inspiration to a large number of people in life and in letters even today. They contain in them the quintessence of Hindu view of life.
The first great Indian novel is Banabhatta's *Kadambari*. K. Krishnamoorthy, in *Makings of the Indian Novel* writes: "*Kadambari* is the essential novel protean in its form, content and significance. It remains a prototype of the essentials of the art of narrative fiction and reveal characteristics that continue to be the mainstay of that form - western or eastern, ancient or modern on which the novel as a literary form is based" (13).

*Kadambari* narrates the story of love and friendship; of beauty that disturbs the lives of men and fill their hearts with deep longings that cannot be fulfilled without suffering. It is a story covering not only many years but also successive incarnations.

The story begins when a dark damsel with a parrot is ushered into the royal court of Shudraka. The parrot *hails* the monarch in a beautiful verse. The monarch becomes curious about the parrot and wishes to know more about the extraordinary bird. The parrot narrates its antecedents so far as it knows. It was fostered by its aged father. It escaped and fell into the clutches of a hunter. The parrot was picked up and brought to the hermitage of Jabali, who recognised it and narrated to his disciples its earlier history. The bird now proceeds to recount what it had heard there from Jabali. Reminded of its earlier births, the parrot resumes its tale.

The novel as literary genre is new to India. The novel has taken root in India only during a period of a little more than a century. The western impact on Indian culture, during the latter half of the nineteenth century
resulted in the development of formally written prose in the regional languages. Christian missionaries had translated Bible into the living languages of India with the help of Indian scholars. The prose medium, thus brought into currency, came to be used for official purposes, petitions, records, journalism and for the translation of Sanskrit classics into the spoken languages of the people. This was followed by the translation of Western classics, including novels. The next development was the composition of original works under the inspiration of Western models.

It was in Bengal that the literary renaissance first manifested itself. The real beginnings were with the work of the great Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. He published his first work in English, *Raimohan’s Wife*, in 1864. Bankim is regarded as the literary dictator of reascent Bengal and he is the master of the romantic and the historical novel. *Anandmath*, published in 1882, is Bankim’s best known novel. The vicissitudes of the Bengali novel foreshadow more or less the vicissitudes of the novel in India. Today many novels in distinct languages and literatures flourish on the Indian literary scene and most of these are distributed on a broadly regional basis.

The origin of the novel, both in the west and the east, can be traced back to a distant past. India had a richer potential for the novel form than the west. This is due to the gift of Indians for story-telling which dates back to the age of *Rig Veda* and *Upanishads*.

There were cycles of stories in both prose and verse in the first millennium after Christ. The Thirty two stories of the throne, relating to king
Vikramaditya and Somadeva's *Katha sarithasagara* (Ocean of stories) are perhaps the most reputed in sanskrit as well as regional languages. This was followed by the Jataka Tales, which narrate the successive births of Buddha. These stories reflect a lot of contemporary social reality. Dandin's *Dasakumararachita* narrates the adventures of ten princes in which the day-to-day life of the people figures prominently and shows the merits of what is now known as the psychological novel.

Indian novel in English is now one and a half centuries old. The novel as a form of literature is the outcome of the exposure of English-educated Indians to western literature. Long narratives in prose existed in sanskrit and even some of the Indian Language literatures. There were tales, romances, fables, allegories, parables etc; but the novel had its beginning only in the middle of the nineteenth century. Thus the nineteenth century is a significant period in the history of India in many ways. Historians aptly name it as the age of Indian renaissance.

The beginning of the twentieth Century witnessed the birth of modern novel in Indian fiction. This was an achievement brought about by the work of Rabindranath Tagore and heralded by his novel *Binodini*.

The short story has flourished in India. The major reason is the influence of the great western short story writers of the nineteenth century on Indian writers. The comparative ease with which short prose pieces in Indian languages and in English can be published and distributed is another reason. In no other branch of creative or literary activity has the feel of the Indian scene been so effectively captured.
In India, the short story is a literary genre of recent origin. It originated in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Its development in its present form is largely a result of the impact of western thought and ideas. Like the civilisation of India itself, Indian literature reflects a diversity of races, cultures & religions; yet, within this diversity exists a unified harmony that retains its own very special imprint. It is important to remember that Indian literature is multilingual.

The impact of the Renaissance was felt in each state in India in its own way. Bengal experienced this impact in a special way. Colleges imparting new education were established in Calcutta. As the metropolis of the British in India, Calcutta felt the impact of the west intensely. Many orientalists began their study of sanskrit in Calcutta. Many prophets - Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda had arisen there giving utterance and direction to some significant phases of the Renaissance. Tagore's own father, Maharishi Debendranath Tagore, was one of the founders of Brahmo samaj. Literature connected with renaissance had already commenced its career in Bengal when Tagore began to write. It was this fortunate circumstance combined with Tagore's genius that made him the literary spokesman of Indian Renaissance par excellence.

In Indian short stories, Manmohan Saksena writes: "The short story in India is both ancient and modern. It is ancient because it was born before literature itself. It is modern, because in its present form it derives mainly from new conditions and social urges and above all, because it bears on it the heavy impress of the west" (5).
The origin of Indian short stories can be traced back to Vedas and Upanishads. Some of the fables and moral aphorisms, which later became famous, can be traced back to the Mahabharata. It is in the moral aphorism and fable that the origins of Indian short story lie.

Historically, Indian fable originated three thousand years ago. Before the time of Aesop, which was the sixth century BC, it had reached its maturity. The chief sources of Indian fables and moral tales are to be found in Buddhist Jatakas and Panchatantra.

Story telling was not mere amusement for the Indian writer. It was an art followed with the seriousness and persistence with which a lover courted his mistress. He had to do so because he lived on the patronage of a prince or a noble. It was this whole-hearted devotion to his art that later gave rise to the professional story-teller.

Writing of short stories in India took a firmer shape after the First World War and with the beginning of non-cooperation movement. In this regard, the influence of Sarat Chandra and Rabindranath Tagore cannot be overestimated. Even today Sarat Chandra remains the first and the greatest of modern Indian short story writers. Following their examples, short story writers sprang up in all provincial languages. Short story is a unique medium for the intimate close-up and the oddities and slants of life. Therefore short story has a great future in India.

A writer's influence is connected with the literary climate of his
age. Tagore was extremely fortunate in his age. Tagore was born at the dawn of the great Indian literary renaissance. The renaissance was the combined result of its eager response to the impact of the west and of its passionate interest in a revival of ancient Indian thought and literature through modern methods of study. Renaissance is one of the richest and the most important epochs in the life of Indians.

Bengali Renaissance began with Toru Dutt and reached its peak with Tagore. Bengali Renaissance is a very note worthy trend in the history of India's letters. From Rammohan Roy onwards Bengal gave birth to a remarkable series of religious thinkers, social reformers, philosophers and educationists, who created modern literature. Tagore is its greatest literary pioneer. Tagore has left his stamp in all branches of literature - essays, novels, short stories, plays, poems and songs.

Bengali belongs to the eastern most branch, called Aryan or Indo-Iranian of the Indo-European family of languages. Bengali literature is divided into three phases - the Early, the Middle and the Modern according to time and to distinctive linguistic and literary features. Bharat Chandra and Ram prasad flourished during the end of the middle phase in the 18th century, at the time of the battle of plassey. Till then, the traditional narrative verse had prospered under the patronage of the Nawab and the Zamindars. After the battle of Plassey, this came to an abrupt end. The easy going life of the rich, educated and cultured people around the courts were replaced by the busy and active life of the people who became rich by serving the British or by trading with them. These new Patrons of literature had no time to listen to
long narrative poems like those of the middle period. As a result, the old
tradition of poetry disappeared. A century later, Bengali youth began to receive English education and came under the influence of western thought and culture. Thus modern Bengali literature came into being.

The first notable name in Modern Bengali literature is that of Iswar Gupta, who appeared as a poet in the second decade of nineteenth century. He edited a weekly paper named "Sambad Prabhakar" one of the earliest periodicals in Bengali. The first writings of Bankim Chatterjee, Dinabandhu Mitra and Manomohan Basu were published in "Sambad Prabhakar". The British missionaries set up a printing press in serampore. They began to employ pundits for translating Bible and for writing Bengali textbooks for British civilians. A notable prose writer was Bhabani charan Bandopadhaya, a contemporary of Rajaram Mohan Roy. The next important name in prose literature is that of Pearychand Mitra, who wrote the famous Alaler Gharer Dulal. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya was the first architect of modern Bengali novel. His book Kamalakanta was a great success. Bengali attained an earlier flowering of the novel than several other languages. Bengali experienced the golden period of Renaissance during the day of Bankim Chandra and Tagore. We now come to Rabindranath Tagore whose genius reached out to every branch of literature, including poetry, drama, shortstory, novel and essay. Tagore possessed a great fund of wit and humour so that he was able to enliven even his serious writings with witty comments and humorous analogies.

Kerala is an ancient land in India with a history of many centuries.
Kerala is referred to in Ramayana and Mahabharata. Kerala is one of the many states of Indian Republic. Even as early as third millennium BC, foreigners traded in spices with Kerala. In the days of King Solomon, the ships of Tarshish used to visit this region to get ivory and peacocks. In the early centuries of Christian era, Romans were attracted by its pepper produce. Thus Kerala has been well-known from very ancient times and it attracted foreigners from various far-off places. With the arrival of Portuguese in AD 1498 followed by Dutch, their influence was felt in the internal affairs of certain parts of the country. The attainment of independence initiated the move towards the political integration of Kerala. Malayalam is the mother tongue of Keralites. The word 'Malayalam' is a combination of 2 words, "mala" meaning "mountain" and "alam" meaning the land or locality which lies alongside the mountain. The course of the evolution of Malayalam was conditioned by its close acquaintance with Sanskrit. This led to the translation of many Puranas and classics. The first major works to be produced in Malayalam are adaptations from Sanskrit. Ramachaittam, the works of Kannassans, Krishnagatha, Ramayana and Mahabharata of Ezhuthachan have all drawn much from original Puranas. The Bhagavadgita translated by one of the kannassans is the oldest translation in Malayalam. While the deep influence of Sanskrit goes to the very foundation of the language, that of English is seen only in the superstructure, mainly in the areas of modern literature.

The traditional oral narrative in Malayalam dates back to the earliest period of the known history of Kerala. In many Sanskrit plays, there
is the role of Vidushaka, similar to that of court jester in Elizabethan drama. Later, chakyar took up this role. He narrated episodes in the main story and also brought in other stories. He could turn his narrative into a string of short stories or prolong one of these stories for hours or days. Thus the oral narrative can easily achieve the length of a novel.

Another kind of oral narrative is called koothu. Here the chakyar narrates any one episode from Puranas. Members of the audience can also be mildly made fun of. Harikatha, which employs songs along with narration, is yet another kind of popular oral narration. Tullal must be mentioned, which is rendering of a verse narrative by a performer who recites the lines musically to the accompaniment of drums. Kunchan Namboodiripad, a well known poet, has won international reputation.

Kayavar (coir), first published in 1978, is Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's most ambitious work of fiction. The novel covers more than a century and the narrative structure is close to that of an epic, dealing with what has been handed down from the past through various oral traditions.

Among the novelists of contemporary fiction in Malayalam, M.T. Vasudevan Nair occupies a position of permanent value. M.T. Vasudevan Nair has attained immense fame in Malayalam literature. His novels have the fundamental greatness of artistic merit and historical eminence.

In the middle of the twentieth century, Malayalam novel grew into maturity and reached out to distant frontiers hitherto unexplored in the
other languages. Socio-economic conditions were battered after the second world war. This war was followed by the era of psychological depression that descended on Indian literary scene after attaining independence. In this background, a different generation of young writers suddenly emerged. M.T. Vasudevan Nair is foremost among these writers. The earlier period spanned by two decades and bracketed by the thirties and the sixties was christened by historians as the Golden Age of novel writing in Malayalam. This period ushered in the titan in the realm-towering figures like Kesava Dev, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Vaikom Mohammed Basheer, S.K. Pottekkat and P.C. Kuttikrishnan alias Uroob. They sowed the seeds of great tradition in Malayalam novels. It was M.T. Vasudevan Nair who took over from his great predecessors and started a new trial, thus marking a new turning point in the history of Malayalam fiction.

Malayalam Literature, like the other regional Indian literatures, was passing through the various stages of its integration with world literature. The imprint of modernity borne by world literature in twentieth century is the tendency of inward turning as Leon Edel maintains in the psychological novel. We had to wait till the sixties just to see the glimmering of psychological modernism in Malayalam novel. This was introduced into Malayalam novel by M.T. Vasudevan Nair. Here lies the first claim to the basic greatness of his art. He gave limpid form to the elusive private dreams and intimate personal sorrows of alienated souls, stalking the corridors of life in solitude, like Govindan kutty, the protagonist in the novel Asuravithu (The word literally means demonseed, with the lexical meaning, a bad child). He represents the process of dehumanization of human being that is slowly overtaking India.
The technique employed by M.T. Vasudevan Nair is an introversion, which indulges in deep psychological probings of his characters. In the earlier period, the focus of the writers was on society and action. Now importance is given to the individual mind, which is torn between, vague forebodings and feelings of futility and frustration. A haunting enchantment radiates over the world created by M.T. Vasudevan Nair in his earlier & less mature novels like Nalukettu (The Legacy) and in his later and more ripened novels, Mani (Mist) and Kalam (Time). The effect is intensified by the poetic nature of his style. His language is tinged with lyrical poetry.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair's contributions as a short story writer are also memorable. M.T. Vasudevan Nair is perhaps the most popular living short story writer of the present times. In this context, a brief history of Malayalam short story is traced.

The short story is a well-developed branch in Malayalam literature. It shows greater development than the novel. It was inspired by western models. The early short stories in Malayalam imitated the works of American authors like Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. Nalukettu (Four stories) of Oduvil Kunju Krishna Menon is among the earliest collections in Malayalam. The famous contemporary writers include Lalitambika Antarjanam, Kesavadev, Vaikom Mohamed Basheer, S.K. Pottekkat, P.C. Kuttikrishnan, who wrote under the pen name Uroob and M.T. Vasudevan Nair. The short story is flourishing very fast. It is undoubtedly one of the most developing forms in contemporary Malayalam literature.
Malayalam short story celebrated its centenary in 1991. During these hundred years of its dynamic existence, it has passed through several phases in terms of theme and idiom, structure and ideology.

Short story in Malayalam entered the new introspective phase by the middle of the twentieth century when the influence of the progressive movements began to wane. The movement became divided chiefly due to the narrow sectarian dogmatic attitude of some of its leaders. They insisted that literature should serve the changing strategic interests of the communist organisation. Most of the writers, who believed in the relative autonomy of literature, refused to obey. These leaders preferred to follow the models set by the two great Malayalam fiction writers of Kerala’s renaissance, Uroob and Basheer. They were influenced by the writing of Henry James, James Joyce and Virginia woolf. The profound impact of Freud pushed them deeper into an exploration of inner rather than outer realities of life. The accent of short stories has changed with the times.

Writers like T.Padmanabhan and M.T. Vasudevan Nair turned their attention from the outer drama of events to the inner drama of minds. M.T.Vasudevan Nair explored the inner world of the human beings, living in his village, a world of discontentment, repression, of desire for revenge and anger. He was confused by the contrast between the city and the countryside. Many of his Characters are uprooted young men forced to come to the city in search of employment or fortune. They suffer from disgust, self-contempt and nostalgia. These angry young men burn with resentment and despair. They become solitary and disillusioned and are changed into social outcasts. They are in search of an identity.
Malayalam short stories acquired a pan-Indian character in M.T. Vasudevan Nair's stories. This was to become a major characteristic that differentiates Malayalam short stories from those in other languages. The focus of attention is shifted from social to the individual, from event to character, from behaviour to psyche and from action to contemplation.

Short stories are no more tales of external events told by an author. They are revelations of an inner drama, written in the form of soliloquies and streams of consciousness. The story element became secondary. The exploration into the mind of the characters gained more importance. Time was no longer the historical time, but the internal psychological one. Space too was no more external. The story was enacted in the inner courtyard of the mind. Solitude, alienation and the loss of identity become central themes of short stories. Death also became a dominant theme in the short story. Short story was no longer the description of an event, but a metaphor that captured a state of mind. The present phase of short story in Malayalam has been called anti-modernist and post modernist by writers and critics, though both the terms appear inadequate to qualify the range and variety of contemporary short story in the language.

Short stories have become very popular in the present day. It remains the most vibrant form of creative writing in Malayalam. Most of the writers including Jnanpith laureates like Thakazhi Sivasankarapillai and M.T. Vasudevan Nair have contributed valuable short stories to Malayalam Literature.
M.T., as he is popularly known, is a rebel without being a Marxist. He writes mainly about lonely souls distanced from the turmoil of politics and social unrest. He writes in a magical prose, with an unfailing eye for graphic details.

After tracing a brief history of Bengali literature and Malayalam literature, the writer wishes to give an introduction to Indian writing in English, where Tagore occupies a Prominent Place. Indian literature comprises several literatures - Assamese, Bengali, Gujarathi, Hindi, Kashmiri, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit etc. Indian writing in English is one of the voices in which India speaks. It is a new voice Indians are writing in English for communicating with one another and with the outside world.

Indian writing in English has achieved a new power and range. It has developed into a distinctive literature: "a tree that has sprung up on hospitable soil from a seed that a random breeze had brought from afar" (K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar 15).

It is apt to trace the beginnings of Indian writing in English. Compared to older literatures, Indian writing in English is of recent origin. Therefore its beginnings can be traced with reasonable certitude. According to French literary Historian, M.Taine, literature is the creation of three factors: the race, milieu, the moment. As regards Indian writing in English, the race is the mixed Indian race, a resultant of invasions, conquests and occupations,
extending over a period of four or five thousand years; the milieu is the variegated Indian subcontinent and the moment is the meeting of west and India. With the fall of Mughal empire, there was utter chaos in India. The Nawabs and Rajas fought with each other. As a result India, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, presented the spectacle of decay and misery. All intellectual activities came to a standstill. By the end of the eighteenth century, India became a literary waste land.

The Battle of Plassey was fought in 1757. Clive declined the responsibility of Diwani or revenue administration. In 1772, the East India Company took over. The East India company was a trading corporation. Its servants in India were mercenaries and adventurers. India had become self-divided and the series of disasters on the political and economic fronts completed the national catastrophe. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Britain or the East India Company, was more or less master of the situation in India.

In 1813, the commercial monopoly of the company was ended. The British in India assumed educative and civilising functions as well. Missionaries were permitted to enter the country freely and a token grant of one lakh rupees per year was made for education. Only oriental learning was to be promoted. Meanwhile the influence of many forces at work began to be felt. The missionaries had established printing process in different parts of the country. Books in the vernacular and also in English were coming out since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Dictionaries, grammar and
translations were among the first fruits of such missionary enterprise.

The printing press led to the newspapers and India's first newspaper, Hickey's Bengal Gazette, came out in 1780 and others followed in due course. Private schools imparting English education and colleges imparting western education were flourishing and the demand was for more and more.

Ram Mohan Roy wanted English and more Englishmen in India. Macaulay wished to make Indians good English Scholars. Lord William Bentinck resolved to promote European literature and science among the natives of India. He asserted that all funds appropriated for the purpose of education should be utilised for English education alone. Bengal came under the fascination for English. The demand for English books came more from Indians than from Englishmen in India.

The introduction of western culture, the study of English literature and the adoption of western scientific techniques paved the way for a new awareness among Indians with a sense of urgency and an alertness in thought and action. The long dormant intellectual and critical impulse was quickened into sudden life. The reawakening Indian spirit went forth to meet the violent challenge of the values of modern science and civilization of the west.

Indo-Anglian literature was born during this moment. This occurred as naturally as leaves grew upon a tree. At first Indians learnt to
read and speak and comprehend English and they soon started writing also. Indian writing in English was one of the manifestations of the new creative urge in India. This is often referred to as the literary renaissance in India. The exhausted native soil received the new rich fertilizer from the west and out of this fruitful union, a new literature was born. Bengali led the way followed by literature of other languages.

The renaissance in Modern Indian literature began with Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Born in a village named Radhanagore in Bengal on May 22, 1772, he died at Bristol on September 27, 1833. He acted as a bridge between India and England. He was a great humanitarian ans social reformer. He was the founder of Brahmo samaj. He wished to unify India through the common worship of one God. He can be regarded as the first of the Indian masters of English prose. The publication of Ram Mohan Roy's work on sati in 1818, paved the way for a favourable climate to Indo - English writing. After this publication, enterprising Indians started writing in English. Tagore's grand father, known as prince Dwarakanath, was one of the staunchest supporters of Ram Mohan Roy in his crusade for the spread of western education.

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The missionaries carried on a ceaseless war against Hinduism. Converts became westernised in every way. They despised everything Indian. Raja Ram Mohan Roy studied Vadas and Upanishads. Many Gods were mentioned, but transcending them all was Brahman. He held counsel with a
few select friends on the perennial truths of all religions and thus Brahmo Samaj was founded in 1828. His work was continued by prince Dwarakanath Tagore and his son Maharishi Debendranath Tagore. A great event in the history of Brahmo Samaj was the meeting of Debendranath and Keshub chunder sen in 1857. The two worked together for the next ten years. The Brahmo samaj became a power in Bengal, the meeting point of both religious and cultural renaissance. Dr. Krishnanand Joshi writes in studies in Indo- Anglian Literature:

A man of genius is as much moulded by the age he lives in, as he, in his turn shapes the times. Tagore lived in times when the forces of the Indian Renaissance were asserting themselves in all directions. Tagore, one of the finest products of that period, could not keep his eyes shut to the cross - currents of the times. His novels are the imaginative reconstructions of reality.... (83)

Rabindranath Tagore and M.T. Vasudevan Nair are, first and foremost, creative writers. A comparative study can be sustained only at the level of ideas or themes, stated or implicit in the works of these two writers. No single formula can account for the variety, the restles probing and perpetual experimenting that are the characteristic features of their creative minds. They are the products of the modern era.

For the sake of convenience, this work has been divided into
three parts:

The first part treats the similar themes and ideas reflected in the creative writings of both the writers. The second part deals with the contrasts in the depiction and presentation of their ideas. The third part concentrates on the inherent genius of Tagore and M.T. Vasudevan Nair. A true evaluation and assessment of these writers is portrayed in the chapters included in this thesis.