CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN NOVELISTS

The preceding chapters point out in conclusive terms that in the context of general opportunities available in society, women remain underprivileged when compared to men. Their options are few and stereotyped and their potential curbed. It is in the context of an inegalitarian social structure, based on gender discriminations and inequalities that the growth and development of a new genre of literature will be examined.

The Indian English novel was a new phenomenon at the turn of the nineteenth century—a phenomenon which refers to Indian literary consciousness expressed in the English Language medium. Before examining the position of women with reference to this genre, it is important to take into account the beginnings of the genre and subsequent co-relatives which, point to the marginalization of women in the process of novel writing as also in the field of publishing. This marginalization is reflected in most literary historical accounts of the rise of the Indian English novel against the background of colonialism and post colonialism.

Social Cultural Determinants

With diverse influences filtering into Indian Society as part of territorial and economic interventions from different
countries, Indian people were exposed to various patterns of culture, which gradually made inroads into the life styles and modes of thought, of especially, upper sections of the Indian people. During the latter part of the eighteenth century, 1746-1794, the Royal Society of Asian Studies was set up through the offices of Sir William Jones, member of the English Supreme Court. Subsequently initiative was taken to study various aspects of Indian Culture and Literature which brought about an interaction between Western and Indian Scholars creating an interest in Western Literature and Culture. Owing to the cloistered and confined state of women this interest was restricted to male scholars of the upper echelon. However, it took another half a century before the English language became a medium of expression.

Knowledge and use of English Language as a medium for self expression, articulation and further instruction became an elitist male prerogative. It is for this reason, that accounts of early Indian English work, seldom have any women figuring in them. The aims of the new education system as defined by T.B. Macaulay were "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect". The aims of the new education system were in evidence when apart from a class tilt in the emerging bureaucracy there was a class well as a
sexist bias in the creative work which emerged on the Indian Literary scene. The most significant development of the period was manifest in the growing body of Indian English Literature in which the novel became the most dominant form of literary expression. Before the novel could lend itself as a literary mode to women, it worked along a course which made it at first, a bi-lingual mode of expression, sensitive to social processes and development and expressing a stand, overtly or in subtle ways through the characters and their interactive dialogues or introspections.

However, before a creative medium like the novel could gain ground, English as a medium of expression and English as prose had to be popularized so as to establish the language as functional and dynamic.

It is therefore, not incidental that the first writer of English prose and English books had also established the first indigenous press in India in 1821. His aim was to propagate the enlightening ideas to which he had been exposed through his encounters with English Philosophy and Literature. Rammohan Roy's papers presented in English were categorized as important historical documents because they pioneered the use of English by an eminent Indian writer, and were thus regarded as models of English journalism. Rammohan Roy's papers and articles, published in the Indian newspapers, promoted in due course, the formation of a special version of English as it is called in

330
India, Indian English and in which subsequent development of Indian English Prose, took place.

Here it is significant to note Rammohan Roy's contribution to the cause of women's rights. In one of his earliest writings in English, Roy brought out a brochure entitled, "Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females, According to the Hindu Law of Inheritance", reflecting a concern for the downtrodden status of women in the Indian society. Such measures helped a great deal in raising women's consciousness about their rights as also their self view. Though direct benefits of western education were as yet remote, and even out of reach, information and knowledge of English began to disseminate through male family members to the female kin.

Gradually the English Language attained greater significance as the means of knowledge of advanced social thought of the west. Recognizing, characteristics of the Indian intelligentsia of the first half of the twentieth century, Rabindra Nath Tagore wrote: "Thus their scope being strictly limited, the educated of those days had recourse to the English language and literature.3 Evidently the gains made through the skills of English Language extended to a familiarization with Literature, which gradually exercised enough influence to generate creative work with a typically Indian consciousness in English medium. The impact of English Literature on the Indians was not limited only to the use of the language but it also added
new horizons to an understanding of Society established through different insights and perspectives of inter human relations. The result was a new via media of self expression and access to a set of new premises and rationale used for explanation. In this context, Rabindra Nath Tagore observes, "Glancing back at the period of which I tell, it strikes me that we had gained more of stimulation than of nourishment out of English literature. 4

People inclined to literary work were attracted towards English prose and especially poetry, because they expressed a freedom both in content and form, facilitating the manifestation of every creative individual, according for the impact which English Literature exercised on the national literature of India. At a time when the knowledge of English Language and culture only determined the standard of modernity, specially favourable conditions were created for the rise of a unique form of Indian literature which had its first stirrings in poetic expressions but developed a more definite form through the novel. K.R. Srinivas Ieyngar compares Indian Literature in English to a tree, "That has sprung upon hospitable soil from a seed that a random breeze had brought from afar". 5

However, the early period of Indian English creativity was marked by a dualism, a revolt which only men of the time were capable of undertaking. The familiarity with the English Language and the necessary degree of freedom to be able to express was nowhere within the reach of women until Sarojini
Naidu, 1879-1949, by virtue of her position in an elite family and access to higher education used the language for creative expression which in turn was well received by critics and those in the mainstream of socio political life of the period.

A quality that marked the early work of Indian English literature was the desire for freedom generated perhaps from a sense of social responsibility and sensitivity to authoritarian oppression. Works like Neel Darpan\(^6\) carved a distinctive place when translated into English. Such work which attained literary value was alien to the consciousness and experience of women exposed to western education, because of their confined and over protected life styles. Indian English literature in its period of development was by and large, a male dominated area with women having only an indirect access to it, through what they read once their knowledge of English language was established. However, it is pertinent to point out here that the process of 'Englishization' of Literary awareness and creativity was not something radical to the Indian Society. It was in fact, a part of the process of syncretism by which cultural contact at different periods, has led to a sense of awareness of new forms, introduction of new literary genres and content. Kachru points, "An innovation of this type may be externally or internally motivated. The terms 'external' and 'internal' are used in the sense of 'foreign' and 'native'."\(^7\) Studies of syncretism have indicated that women are among the later ones to be inducted in the creative process and also among a smaller number,
comparatively. Explaining the outcome of sycretism, Kachru states. "The eventual effect on the taboo process also led to self awareness and cultural awareness in Indian literary traditions. Persianization came with Islam and the resultant active Islamization was seen as a threat to traditional Indian values and religions. Soon the contact with Islam manifested itself in unique inwardness in literature, the development of the Bhakti Movement. However, the contact with English took a rather different turn". 8

A number of perspectives have been put forward in the context of examining the process of Englishization. This thesis is based on the premise that availability of a new medium of self expression, led to the development of a new genre which however, slow in its impact on the Indian society elicited a distinct involvement of women and this in turn lent it with a potential which is being continuously explored and experimented with.

One of the most representative views regarding Englishization is projected by Chatterji who states, "Contact with the European spirit through English Literature brought in a real Indian Renaissance and gave a new course to the literature in Modern Indian Languages. Actually, contact with English led to a two way look, "inward" and "outward" two position which were articulated and withstood opposition in the orientalist/accidentalist controversy concerning the introduction of English in India as a language of education in the 1830's". 9
Once contact with English was institutionalized, it initiated an 'outwardness' in an ideological sense. The exposure also led to encouragement of women to participate in the process of education gaining insights into a liberalism which served the cause of women during the 40's of the twentieth century when impetus from Gandhian ideology furthered a greater awareness among women. In this context Halliday observes "The function of English as it was understood then, contributed to a fresh conceptualization of various types, including secularization of the tradition, democratization, humanism and so on. 10 The function of English, and the socio cultural implications of such a function raise several questions especially regarding the growth of a new genre and the position of women vis-a-vis this genre.

Kachru has also pointed to the expansive and integrative effect of English. He says, "It expanded the thematic range of literature and influenced the treatment of literary themes and forms. In other words the area strata of India in a trimodel sense (Literary, linguistic and socio linguistic) have been sharpened by the contact of India's cultures, languages and literatures with English". 11

In India, literary creativity with reference to English shows in two ways; First in the development of a nativized literary tradition in English literature, termed Indian English Literature, and in Englishizing the local literary tradition.
"The nativization of English actually is an attempt to make English a part of local literary and cultural repertoires".12

One of the most important socio literary functions of English has been the integrative role it continues to perform. Other vital roles as discerned by Kachru, which have had a highly significant place are: an instrument of cultural awakening in a culturally pluralistic context; and a resource for self introspection and self awakening. The latter factors have been of special significance in the context of women writers in English. The search for an identity has been an association, with the techniques of introspection through symbols and metaphors. Books on India in the early twentieth century elicited response from Indian English writers establishing a more Indian identity. For instance Katherine Mayo's Mother India, 1927, described by Mahatma Gandhi as a drain inspector's report, served to draw out defence treatises in the form of Unhappy India, 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai and Uncle Sam, 1929, by K.L. Gauba. Here the use of English for an interactive and integrative function evolved and continued.

A.R. Desai, in his account of modern education, likewise stresses that one of the greatest advantages was that it gave access to modern English literature. "It was the literature of the British nation, the first modern nation in history which vanquished and overthrew medievalism as early as the end of the eighteenth century. In the struggle against medievalism, it laid
the foundation of modern democratic, scientific and rationalist culture". Stressing the specific contribution of English literature towards promoting a nationalist consciousness, Desai too fails to make a mention of the marginalization of women in this context. Women, who formed a major support group for the nationalist movement were non existent where their contribution to the world of Letters of the time was concerned. This may be attributed to the fact that the pioneers in almost every field were English educated men and recognition was denied to women. This disbalance between the contributions and achievements of men and women reflects a trend prevalent in society at large. Desai observes, "In spite of the growth of a modern intelligentsia and an educated middle class, an overwhelming portion of the Indian people, however, remained illiterate". Women, too by virtue of their sex and social norms remained a part of the large majority of the deprived lot. The novel which emerged as a new genre in the literary history of India reflected a distinct class and sex bias, which was reflected in literary work constituting mainly the efforts of men (social reformers) in redeeming the position of women and expressed their own experience in this endeavour. The movements to self emancipation launched by women became follow ups. It has been observed, "Though they were the enlightened individuals of the male section who launched initial efforts to abolish laws and customs which suppressed womanhood, in course of time, the victims of those injustices bestirred themselves and organized the movement for their emancipation
under their own leadership. They built up their women's organization and created a platform for agitation for the redress of their disabilities." 16 It was at this juncture, when women began to express themselves, at first, through their own gatherings that they gradually took to creative forms of self expression through a medium and genre which seemed to be most conducive and appropriate at the time. However, the first few women who became noticed by the general public for their literary achievements had their roots in the elite of the society.

The removal of the disabilities of the Indian Women and their freedom from various forms of oppression was a prolonged process, orthodox social and psychological attitudes were arrayed against it. Women began to view themselves as prisoners of barbarous customs. "There the woman lay, condemned to a lifelong prison, her naturally keen sense dulled through inaction, without light of knowledge illumining her vision, steeped in ignorance and prejudice, groping in the dark, a martyr to the conventions of the society in which she had been born". 17 Such descriptions exposed the degraded status to which women had been reduced. Efforts were gradually initiated by women reformers, mostly aristocratic women like the highnesses of Bhopal who set examples of shunning the purdah and enrolling for higher education.

"The movement for the progressive realization of the democratic principle of equal rights of men in all spheres of social advance were an attack not only on the foreign rule but
also on much of the undemocratic legacy of pre British India. It was an attack upon the subordination of the individual to caste laws and taboos, the exclusion of women from rights enjoyed by men and others".18

The rise of the novel paralleled among other things an awareness of the rights of women and the indictment of age old customs.

Equal rights of women to education and culture was recognized almost universally. Education spread, rapidly and more and more among women almost like the mimetic process. One could extend the theory of sanskritization to the process of western education among women when one class or category of women aspired to be like the other because of the mobility acquired through a familiarity with English. "There was a time when the education of girls had not only no supporters, but open enemies in India. Female education has by now gone through all the stages of total apathy, ridicule, criticism and acceptance. It may now be safely stated that anywhere in India, the need for the education of girls as much as of boys is recognized as a cardinal need, the sine quo non of notional progress".19 An exposure to English writings, especially poetry and novel urged educated women to use the medium of English for creative expression. While English learning was pioneered by men, the consciousness of such a learning when felt and expressed by women, provided the motivation and use of such a facility.
Western education was also responsible for such public statements, which elevated the self worth of women. "Good sense must govern the relations between the two sexes. There should be no barrier erected between them. Their mutual behaviour should be natural and spontaneous. This equation of sexual relations which was often spoken of sought representation in the work of women but only in limited, questionable ways. This could be explained by the fact that women's own experience in society regarding interaction of sexes was almost unreal and where it existed, it was curtailed. Most enlightened men voiced their defence of the rights of women by denouncing seclusion of women as this cost them, their intellectual development. This was even more prevalent among muslim women among whom seclusion was enforced even more rigidly. Yet even within the restricted life styles, some women did assert their intellectual and creative faculties but the instances were so few and far between that they never figured in generalized statements of the ability of women.

As a precursor to the advent of novel writing, journalism and the press in India in the nineteenth century played a positive role. The publishers, roused by a sense of competition, placed the pages of their newspapers at the disposal of political figures and writers for publishing any material from political articles to literary and artistic pieces and reviews. Essays, biographical articles and sketches of writers appeared as an introduction to literary prose in English.
Henry Derozio, 1809-1831, Kashiprasad Ghose, 1809-1873, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, 1827-1873, were pioneers in the field of Indian English writing which used English classical and Romantic poets as their models. Following the English translation of Neel Darpan, the first Indian English novel Raimohan's wife, 1864 by Bankim Chatterjee appeared on the scene, 1938-1894. Chatterji, described as the first democrat writer for placing the novel firmly as part of the Indian literary scene. Chatterjee was also the first novelist to depict women in flesh and blood rather than in sterile Petrarchan images which elevated women to embodiments of virtues.

Two main features which distinguished the first English novel in India were related to its exposure of selfishness involved in the zamindari system and a distinct departure from the traditional image of the Indian woman. Chaterjee represented the easy bi-lingualism which became a legacy for later writers. He wrote in both Bengali and English. The gradual emergence of Indian English as a medium for expression and representation may be attributed to the precursors.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was the period of wide expansion of English press in other parts of India as well. In Bengal as well as in the rest of India, prose contributed a great deal to the rise of struggle for national liberation. This was significant even for the Southern regions of the country. By the turn of the twentieth century English education and
English world of letters had carved a definite niche for itself to be further consolidated with time. However, analyzing the situation retrospectively, a distinct feature was the conspicuous absence of women from the literary scene of the time. One of the earliest women writers Toru Dutt, 1856-1877, and her sister Aru delved in English verse but that was only after a brief but intense period of education in France and England. During her lifetime Toru Dutt was engaged in translating French lyrics into English. Her Ancient Ballads and legends of Hindustan, 1882 appeared posthumously and put her on par with other writers of her time. But her work, though intense was spread over a brief span. However, she represented the earliest India. English contribution by a woman. Rabindranath Tagore, 1861-1941 reflected and represented a versatility which gave Indian English literature a distinct place in the world of letters. This recognition became universal when the Nobel prize for literature was conferred upon him in 1913. This also gave further impetus to the development and spread of writings in English. Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) had a definite influence on subsequent women writers, not only because of her skill in poetic renderings but also because of the active role she played in the politics of nationalism. Her poetry reflects a fusion of the real and the ideal - an attempt which takes on various aspects in the work of later women novelists.

Like the scene of Indian English poetry, fiction writing also seemed to show that women in this field were few and far
between when compared to men. Srinivas Iyengar states, "Although fiction by Indians in English - either in the original or as translated from the original Bengali or some other Indian Language - has been appearing since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it was only during the 1920's and 1930's that Anglo Indian fiction definitely came on its own. K.S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Ananad, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, S. Nagarajan, Shankar Ram, Jogendra Singh, Dhan Gopal Mukherji, A.S.P. Ayyar, Ahmad Ali, D.F. Karaka - showed that it was possible to essay English fiction on Indian themes".20 A detailed survey of early novelists indicates again a conspicuous absence of women. Among the new arrivals, besides Khushwant Singh, Sudhir Ghose, B. Rajan, two women who are mentioned are Kamala Markandaya and Santha Rama Rau. Mention is also made of Nayantara Sahgal, again an isolated reference in the midst of a gallery of male novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya and Anand Lall".21

Through the decade of the fifties, most novels reflected social change and critique of systems that their authors witnessed. The few women writers who merited the attention of publishers and critics reflected a similar consciousness, though there was a distinct trend towards depicting the East-West Contact both in negative and positive terms in the writings of women.
What emerges as a distinctive feature of the Indian English novel is that unlike poetry, which had a regional and class base the novel had a more broad based origin and regional variation.

Stephen Hemenway in his two-volume survey of the novel of India has a chapter only on Kamala Markandaya as one of the women novelists, even through the survey covers writers up to the 60's. Referring also to the dominance of East West contact, Hemenway observes, "Anglo Indian novelists tend to focus pessimistically on the difficulties and irreconcilable aspects of the East West conflict and on the baneful influence of India on Westerners unaccustomed to her ways. Indo Anglian novelist are more hopeful and more eager to analyze and Indianize both the good and the bad, the amusing and terrifying, aspects of East West encounters".22 The elaboration of East West encounters has led many a novelist to impose a dichotomous view of women associating the modern type with 'bad' and the traditional type with 'good'. This trend has been noticed also in the work of women writers like Kamala Markandaya23 whose consciousness was determined by the male view point. This could be juxtaposed with the writings of Amrita Pritam, whose original work in Punjabi showed an anguish specific to women in a male dominated society. The English translations in fact, reveal a consistent motif of female privations, and at the same time an attempt at facing life with all its complexities and with all one's strength.
In its early stages, the Indian novel was associated also with a philosophical orientation to spiritualism. Raj Rao (1909) again a male, explained his views of the novel identifying it with a Sadhana – an act which had male connotations. The ability to detach oneself from day to day demands and delve into a creative process requiring the controlled restraint of a spiritualist – a requirement almost alien to the life styles of women. However, Raja Rao’s depiction of women characters reflects a traditionalism which keeps women silent over matters of emotions and sentiments. For them, the male, i.e. the husband is the Lord in whose servitude they are expected to derive their satisfaction. Over time, as more women took to the art of fiction, this male point of view persisted but through the use of introspection, novelists were able to depict another version—the version of the mind.

Referring to the distinct barriers between male and female characters, Raj Rao explains, "There is a difference between a man and a woman. A man, particularly the South Indian is a very austere person. We are not very sentimental". Social types, situations and norms took on literary forms, which reinforced through reflection and illustration social ideals or rather the typical. However, in an interview with Rangra, Raja Rao demolishes the theory of sexism with regard to the creative process of negating the observation that male writers are not able to do justice to their female characters as they depict them.
from the male point of view. He believes, "In the creative process when one goes beyond one's body and beyond one's mind, one is neither male nor female."25

It is also significant to note that an intensive study based on interviews of writers, incorporates, of the thirty five writers in fifteen languages, only four women writers who have been covered.

An important revelation regarding the difference in male female view points is brought out through an interview with Popati Hiranandani, 1924 writing in Sindhi and English. She states, "It is true that a male writer cannot fully understand a woman. Hence he cannot do full justice to his women characters because he measures a woman from a man's angle only. It is also true that woman is the greatest enemy of woman, the reason being that a woman's life has not been allowed to develop. If a daughter in-law is tortured by her mother in law, she in turn should not trouble her own daughter-in-law, when she herself becomes the mother in law. But this doesn't happen. She repeats the behaviour she had received from her mother in law".26 Highlighting another, aspect of the problem, Hiranandani says, "A male writer makes a mistake when he depicts a woman. For example, sex is very important for a man. It is the highest kind of joy and happiness for him. But for a woman it is not so. A man can enjoy the body of a woman even if he doesn't love her. But for a woman it is entirely different. A boy forgets his
duties towards his mother as soon as he marries, while a girl cannot forget her mother. As soon as a wife dies, a husband can forget her and marry another woman. But a woman cannot forget her husband even if she has been married to him for a few months only. A woman cannot detach herself easily while a man can renounce his wife and children and become a Sadhu. The male writers cannot understand this basic difference between a man and a woman. He thinks only of what is possible or easy for a man to do or what a man likes to do. But an act or deed or behaviour which comes naturally to man can be very difficult for a woman. A man is not capable of understanding a woman fully. At least a woman writer cannot do this kind of injustice to her women characters". 27

Rangra's work has elucidated different perspectives of male and female writers regarding depiction of women and also the meager number of women writers when compared to the proportion of male writers. However, what emerges as a typical representation of the Indian society through the woman is their unquestioning place in a close knit family tradition which stands out in sharp contrast to the western society. Commenting on the state of the third world fiction and focusing on the Indian English novel, Viney Kirpal states, "On the whole, however, unlike his African and West Indian counterpart, the Indian writer in English and in the regional languages has not concerned himself with the colonial experience as a major force that has shaped the national
Commenting on the political attitude of even leading writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Anita Desai, Viney Kirpal states, "Though leading writers like Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan have shown a general awareness of political events in the 1920s and 1930s and of the onset of corruption and failure in Independent India, such awareness has been incidental to their work and has not comprised the core of their fiction. In the India they depict, nothing has gone wrong because in the ultimate sense the socially or politically turbulent is only a temporal ephemeral manifestation of the Real. Some themes are based on the exploration of the psychological states of the mind, and others have evolved out of the Indian confusion over the unresolvable conflict between tradition and modernity. Themes revolving around the social milieu, harping on the urban Indian woman, industrialization and poverty have also evolved through the Indian English novel. A common trait of the third world fiction is also the gradual, rather absurd entry of women writers in the world of letters".  

Most early surveys of Indian writings in English can be distinguished by the dearth of material on women writers. There is also little or no attempt, at any comparison between female and male literatures. However, what has emerged as a characteristic trait is the greater emphasis on the Indian
freedom movement and the partition in the writings of men and
delineation of the psyche of women vis-a-vis their immediate
surroundings, as a part of writings by women. This indicates
that the wider external social processes seem to be remote to the
'mental horizons as also to the interest of women. They are
cconcerned with social events only when there is a direct bearing
through these events on their personal more commonly, family
lives and household units. Amongst the later writers, men and
women novelists seems to be having distinct concerns and
involvements. R.K. Dhawan's 30 analysis of some new writers,
namely Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal and Salman Rushdie
illustrates the male concern with socio political movement, their
culmination in new nation states and a general commentary on the
breakdown of social commitment overridden by vested interests.
While Dhawan has made no mention of women writers as part of this
analysis, later studies refer to women's concern through their
characters with their traditional situations, personal longings
and social pressures.

Indian English Novel and the Male/Female Dichotomy

Looking at the general trend that emerged between the 30's
and 80's one can divide women and men novelists on the basis of
distinct themes, into different spheres of concern. The
differences can be explained from the point of view of different
associations, which in turn determine the creative expressions of
writers. However, this does not imply that women's writing is
devoid of historiocity. A delineation of characters and depiction of situations through families contain reflections of the period in which the work has been shaped. Consequently, the theme of tradition versus modernity as manifest in the personalities of women characters has emerged as a specific trend in the work of women writers. Yet, women writers are less of historical novelists than the male novelists in the context of Indian English writings. Thus, if writers like Chaman Nahal and Khushwant Singh can be classified as historical novelists who have documented specific events and incidents which formed a part of major socio-political forces affecting and moulding the future of the country, no such class of women writers seems to have emerged so far. History does not intrude upon the day to day lives of characters who people the novels written by women. There is another world which lives on and which is sustained by the women for whom the immediate is real and the ultimate. Commenting on the scene, Dhawan writes, "Many Indo English novelists have turned to the past as much to trace the deepening mood of nationalism as to cherish the memories of bygone days. A close study of the contemporary novel reveals the writer's preoccupation with our historic past and the unabated interest of the readers in the novels that depict the past or that treat some event of national importance that has had wide repercussions". However, such a survey, has excluded women writers.
The analysis of the Indian English novel undertaken by Meenakshi Mukherjee serves as a more comprehensive account because it includes in a more definite way, women characters and women writers who were a part of the literary landscape, which saw the growth of the novel in English. Mukherjee's analysis gains in significance also because it categorically defines the phenomenon of the English novel as an inherent feature of the Indian socio-cultural context rather than an import from the west. By placing the novel, as part of the tradition of Indian Literature, the Indian English novel is seen as bearing the stamp of an Indian consciousness, more so, because the language in which it has developed cuts across narrow regional, linguistic barriers. Mukherjee claims that the Indian novel in English is Pan-Indian in the sense that it has reached different parts of the society if not different levels of society. The importance of the novel as Mukherjee perceives, is that it gives artistic form to the relationship of man and society and that it was conspicuously absent until the 1920s. "One of the reasons for this absence may be found in the fact that the novel as an art form came to India with the British and it was new in every Indian Literature even though it must be said that the 'Indo Anglian novel came into existence long after the novel had become an established genre in other Indian languages. The delay in the development of prose fiction in Indian Literature has often been related to the late emergence of the historical sense among
Since the 1920s the Indian novel may be divided into three large stages: 1) Historical Romance, 2) Social or Political Realism, 3) Psychological novels showing an introspective concern with the individual. As the novel matured and established itself, "The Indo Anglian novelist no longer seems interested in simply documenting or hopefully improving the country, but in trying to depict the individual's groping towards self realization". It was perhaps this aspect of individual groping towards self realization that created a new place for women writers as also a new category of distressed, doubting characters together with a new technique - namely the technique of introspection for delving into the mind. Fictional psychological exercises have contributed significantly in throwing light on the relation between women and various social institutions, like the family, religion and above all her status in society. However, the perspective of women vis-a-vis society was endowed with the traditional Indian perspective rather than the western perspective with a wholly different emphasis on women's contribution to society. This difference is explained by Mukherjee. "If the social and literary conditions which gave rise to the novel in the Indian languages also brought forth the Indian novel in English, and the parallel trends can be observed in the Indo Anglian novel as well as in the novels of the regional languages, then we must regard Indo Anglian fiction as a branch of Indian fiction rather than of English fiction. Furthermore, if the Indo Anglian novel is firmly rooted in the
social and cultural ethos of the India, then Indian Anglian fiction has claims to be considered independently of the great tradition of the English novel. 36

The Indian English novel has carved for itself unlimited scope, reflecting Indian English urban culture and metropolitan situations. The novel thus confirms the multicultural ethos of the Indian society. Sensitive to social change, the novel reflects variations in traditional set ups like the joint family and the emergence of the urban woman. The novel also reflects man woman relationships without distortions or intrusions from the western images of such relationships. The search for marital bliss is more important as a theme than romantic love. Similarly infatuation and later marital relationships are subordinate to arranged marriages which are accepted as an inevitable and ultimately the most important phase of life. A good marriage is considered generally by all as an achievement to be lauded. Striving for this ultimate bliss constitutes an important dimension or rather the central force of the novel.

The Indian English novel can therefore be identified, as a work which builds upon day to day social activities and even when they are concerned with wider uses of national importance its concern with the daily strivings of a pluralistic society is heightened sharply. This is brought out even more vividly in the work of women writers. There is also a tendency to concentrate on the so called encounter between East and West, not only at the
level of people but also at the level of ideas. The classical ideas prevalent in society are manifested in the novel but gradually lose their hold, except in the representation of ideal women personalities re-enacting the suffering, sacrificing role of Sita or Savitri. The latter figures infuse the novel with popular images providing the necessary moral force for a society to thrive on.

Ever since the appearance of the first significant novel in 1927, *Murugan the Tiller* by K.S. Venkataramani, the tradition of the Indian English fiction was firmly established. Moreover, another 40 years elapsed before women came upon the scene in recognizable ways i.e. recognized by literary critics and historians. Between 1920 and 1950 the novel developed various themes ranging from the nationalist movement (Raja Rao) to depiction of the contemporary (R.K. Narayan) and the changing joint family, as well as a new consciousness (Attia Hosain, Nayantara Sahgal).

Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* and Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken column* stand out among the novels upto the 50's because they represent for the first time the direct, personalized involvement and reaction of young girls to the forces outside their domesticated, shattered lives. Sentimentality and light romance characterize other fictional work of women as is reflected in Zeenat Futehally's *Zohra*, 1951. The feeling of marital incompatibility reflected by women
characters gains predominance especially in the work of women. This could be explained by the fact the women have a lesser degree of choice where marriage is concerned, even though the social norm of arranged marriages applies to men of the society as well. Novels of the three decades during which the genre consolidated itself, showed trends differentiating women's fiction from men's. Incompatibility, frustration and early, compelled marriages emerge as some of the main concerns of women writers. Marriage is discerned not only as a common thematic motif but also investigated in most novels, becomes a solution to personal dilemmas, however, transient or partially fulfilling. The first novels of women writers of the 50's show this trend e.g. Nayantara Sahgal, *A time to be Happy*, 1957 Santha Rama Rau, *Remember the House*, 1956 Kamala Markandaya. *Some Inner Fire*, 1957 Attia Hosain, *Sunlight on a Broken column* 1961 Zeenat Futehally, *Zohra*, 1951 Anita Desai, *Cry the Peacock*, 1963 Bharati Mukherjee, *Tiger's Daughter*, 1971.

The 50's onwards showed a gradual shift in the concerns of the novel, brought about specifically by women writers whose perspectives were determined by their being women in a society where they were regarded as embodiments of cherished values. The panorama dwindled from the national canvas to situations where communication and relationships, engendered dilemmas and worked towards either resolving or yielding to such dilemmas. Women writers were able to give the novel a distinct character even
though the novel as an expression of social realism remained limited in its achievements. Generalizing this characteristic Mukherjee states, "In spite of the fact, that some Anglo Indian Novelists are still attempting to recapture a recent historical past, the majority of writers since 1950 have turned inwards to more private and personal concerns". The development of the novel in India signifies an awareness of a new form of creative expression, the significance of which lies in the fact that it provides vast potential for the exploration of social relationships, social change and the psyche of the individual. A point to note is the different spheres carved out by men and women fiction writers, in terms of theme and technique. A fact brought to light through retrospect examination of earlier work is the neglect by most literary historians of women writers, who wrote but remained either unpublished or unnoticed.

In an account of Indian literature and society, Motilal Jotwani points to the development of Indian English fiction as an integrated whole, showing essentially the one Indian mind, regardless of the languages used "delineating throughout the length and breadth of the country the same set of primordial images and archetypal patterns of the Indian consciousness." Like earlier critics Jotwani too places Indian English fiction as part of the Indian tradition of the novel. The importance of the novel lies in its ability to represent interactions from various perspectives, creating a sustainable interdependence between literature and society. The essential almost inextricable link
between the novel and society is explained by Bhagwat Goyal, "All great fiction is an artistic and imaginative reconstruction of social and human reality. But there is no one to one relationship between a novel and a society - of which it is a product. The relationship between the two is rather complex and dialectical. A novel is really neither a sociological tract nor a pure work of art". The social value of fiction lies in the fact that it establishes a trend or a direction which is indicative of the state of society not perhaps as a whole but at various levels. Basing this view on George Orwell's perspective, Goyal forward the significant role that fiction performs in a society. "The artist always has a desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the type of society that they should strive after No book is genuinely free of political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude". Pointing to the roots of any literature and especially to the genre of the novel, Leo Lowenthal states how the artist reacts to society in a particular manner, "Precisely, because literature presents the whole man in depth, the artist tends to justify or defy society rather than be its passive chronicler". Thus, if the writer is not playing the partial role of a sociologist or historian, he/she is essentially a constructor or a demolisher, magnifying or closing in upon definite situations or psychological conditions, whether of the individual or the collective. What makes the Indian English
novel more than a genre, rather a symbol of consciousness is the fact that it is rooted in social reality, S.C. Harrex has summarized the various trends, discerned in different novels, highlighting manifold aspects of Indian social reality.

1 Protest, Reform and Proletarian Progressivism:

a) The exposure and censure of social evils like poverty, the economic and moral inequities of the caste system and untouchability, dehumanizing superstition, and the corruption and parasitism of such exploiter groups as imperialists, capitalists, money lenders, landlords, black marketeers and bogus gurus;

b) The vision of a human society, socialist utopianism and a call to the intellectuals and repressed class to unite, revolt and liberate the underprivileged.

2) India's Modern Destiny

a) The revolutionary - nationalist struggle for Independence, Gandhian Non violence and moral force, Nehru's scientific humanism, random terrorism, the growth of a modern historical sense;

b) the catastrophe of Hindu Muslim discord and the tragedy of partition;

c) The emergence of the new India, urban and political life in the post independence era, India's relations with her territorial neighbours.
3 Social Change and Cultural Transformation

a) Peripheral and dynamic effects of progress on the village;
b) The breakdown of the feudal structure and the large joint family, nostalgic reminiscence, the passing of the Princes, conflict between ancestral orthodoxy and rebellious individualism, tenacity of family codes of loyalty and duty, ideals of self denial opposed to youthful self-expression, the generation gap in the context of the arranged marriage, romantic love and feminine emancipation;
c) The search for synthesis (fusion of modern and traditional values) social experiments in liberal humanism, the industrial revolution);
d) Contemporary alienation and existentialism the intellectual divided between tradition and modernity, the moral or spiritual incompatibility of personal integrity and social values, introspective despair and existential torment.

4 Regional and Communal Identities

a) The village and the peasantry - the struggle against natural calamity, the agrarian culture, traditional mores and folklore, the tyranny and charm of custom;
b) Social and regional patterns, the ethnic divisions in Indian society, comedy of manners, the complexity of inter regional communications, the sense of place and local duty, and the moral disruption caused by loss of identification.
The East West Encounter

Culture shocks and contracts, Hindu Metaphysics and western pragmatism, racial tension and colonial conflict, European and Indian expatriatism, the ambiguity of identity, the Anglo Indian dilemma, readjustment problems of the ‘England returned’, the quest for inter cultural understanding, different concepts of freedom and happiness and the effect of western values on Indian social relations and codes.

Questioning Affirmation of Tradition

The living vitality of religious myth and social symbols, the aesthetic and ascetic approaches to life, the operations of dharma, Karma and Moksha, involvement and renunciation illusion and reality, the Brahmanic consciousness, the psychology of faith, the ideal to the guru, and the pilgrimage of Ganga and God.

Harrex's useful summary of various themes and trends discerned in the Indian English novel points to the extensive panorama which the novel has included. However, like most critics he has placed women and male writers in one category without pointing to concerns exclusive to women. The concern with intra family relationships extending to accounts of relationship between individuals and society or rather highlighting relationships on a broader canvas can be discerned more easily in the novels of women. Thus women characters in the
work of women reflect their and others' situations in the confines of a household and become the vehicles for commentary on universal matters outside the home, largely through a sum total of their responses and tragic sufferings. The larger national events become remote and almost non existent for the day to day struggle in which women are engaged. The novels of women especially depict the momentous quality of what seems to be the most trifling of events.

Elaborating upon the inherent characteristics of the Indian English novels Amalendu Bose states "We find that Indian writers in English live in multilingual areas although they have their own mother tongues. This fact inevitably qualifies their English". What distinguishes Indian fiction in English is the local consciousness, coloured by a medium which adds various other cultural dimensions. However, by 1979 a consensus had emerged regarding the end of controversy over the alien identity of Indian English writings as Kamta Charan Srivastava points out. "The problem of identity of Indian English is one of those problems which is more specious than real". This is illustrated by the fact that Indian English fiction both through its typical style and theme is considered to be pan Indian in its cultural representation.

The specific importance of the Indian English novel is related to its aesthetic function of unfolding the "self's emergence as a historical entity and demonstrating that art has a
dual connection with self and society. First, the self must define and unfold its existence in the form of fiction, and then relate its multiple relationship with the autonomy of art and fragmentation of the social order specially after the second world war and India's independence". An important prerequisite to meaningful fiction is defining the self or rather the relation of the self with the creative work. This underlines the emergence of a heightened consciousness which is manifested through the work. Shahane explains "A novelist as artist always aims at creating a new order in his fiction which in my view, emerges from an aesthetically designed conjunction between self and history. He will of course, promote and project his personal vision of the world. But this cannot be isolated from his historical consciousness which is implicit in this aesthetic conjunction between self and contemporary history".

Differences between male and women writers' thematic concerns is also a reflection of their respective consciousness and self perception. The consciousness of contemporary history is limited to the directions in which the immediate household moves or poses problems. The quest for identity brings out quite importantly the common consciousness of fiction writers be they male or female.

R.S. Pathak observes, "The search for one's identity is found to be a common and recurrent theme in Indo English fiction. It has taken two main directions Philosophical and
Both directions are given ample attention in most work. The consciousness of a new morality vis-à-vis man woman relationships is also discernible at first in the writings of Mulk Raj Anand and gradually with strong overtones in the writing of Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai.

Apart from the pioneers of Indian English novel, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, later novelists like Arun Joshi, Bharati Mukherjee, Chaman Nahal, M.V. Rama Sarma, Michael Chacko Daniels, Anita Desai, Nergis Dalal, Veena Paintal demonstrate a growing thematic and technical maturity. According to Madhusudan Prasad, "These novelists evince an intensely felt Indian sensibility and a new consciousness, offering remarkable interpretations of imperishable Indian values as well as highlighting our cultural heritage sometimes in sharp contrast with western values." It was the expression of a typical Indianness - a sum total of general social values which transcended regionalism that distinguished writings in English. Moreover, women writers of the seventies, and eighties, Nergis Dalal Raji Narasimhan, Raj Gill, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande, have taken up themes based on the position of women, their urges and limitations. Thus through those novelists a whole new dimension is added to Indian English fiction, reflecting a feminist consciousness and conflicting with feminine values idealized by society. Marriage remains the prime preoccupation but education and the desire for
the development of individual faculties emerge as motivations and the process of their sublimation or subordination reflects an ongoing personal struggle of some protagonists of these novels. More than dealing with the sufferings of women, these writers are concerned with the psychological dimensions of being female in the Indian society. Similarly Veena Paintal shows her concern for the status of women in India by throwing light on the educated Indian woman and the contradictions that are an inherent part of her situation. By presenting the upper and middle class educated women, Veena Paintal reveals the isolation and helplessness of so-called liberated women, who are victims of social custom.

A survey of English writings by Indian reflects a growing maturity of style reflecting varying thematic concerns and diverging into distinct categories. Women novelists and their specific concerns and social norms, results into a distinct class of writing. What is worth noting is the way in which a few women novelists made a mark for themselves only from the late fifties onwards. As part of her assessment of problems facing women writers in India, Anita Desai states, "While considering the several historical and sociological factors responsible for the insufficiencies, both qualitative and quantitative in women's literature, some of the factors are a low rate of literacy, the lack of a literary tradition and an accompanying lack of the critical faculty". The analysis points to the circular interdependent, causes for the dearth of both women writers and
readers. Desai places the situation against the context of the Indian family background and maintains, "Only the present generation of women, indeed a privileged few within it enjoy privacy and solitude, which are conditions necessary to literary creativity. However, given favourable conditions, women can render their sentiments in fictional form while deriving their material from social and personal experiences since literature can't be torn away from the fabric of life as though it were a decoration or an excrescence - it is woven into it inextricably". In a review of Anita Desai's work, Malashri Lal points, "Desai's statement that Indian women novelists are still exploring their feminine identity and trying to establish it as something worth possessing, not only emphasizes the present preoccupation of the writers but also sees this as a continuous review of femininity in its social context". With the development of the novel by women writers, femininity became an important issue as also a theme. The dialectics of feminism gradually take from theory the thoughts of and interactions between women characters and their social situations. The opposition between the demands of a family and an individual is recognized in the context of an Indian woman's adult life but dangerous speculations about choosing one or the other are brushed aside by an acceptance of the inevitable chronology of life cycles. There is a distinct motif of compromise between tradition and activism, domesticity and singleness and this motif sets apart the work by women writers. Significantly, this is
also accompanied by a search of the self through, introspection, myth, image and symbol. Another account of the development of the novel, tends to evaluate it through a western perspective. According to Paniker, the Indian novel - in the western sense of the term i.e. Monodirectional narrative prose - is about a hundred and twenty years old. In the nineteenth century Indian novel, the influence of western models is very clear not only in narratology, but in the understanding of characters, in the motivation for action and in the use of varieties of prose. A certain kind of readership had been created as a result of introducing English education. The puranic narrative mode was thus discarded in the print medium literature of fiction and new narrative modes were explored, for which models could easily be found in English literary classics. Paniker's rationale places the Indian English novel in the somewhat discredited lot associating it with "mildewed growth" in contrast to the concept of a 'seed' or a 'plant' which has taken root and is here to stay according to the assessments of Srinivas Iyengar and Meenakshi Mukherjee. Shyamala Narayan observes, "It would not be far off the mark to say that most of the significant Indian English novels appeared since the nineteen fifties." 

As a genre the Indian English novel was already established during the thirties of the 20th century and it was immediately confronted with complicated problems: to reproduce life objectively, to portray reality in the context of certain
historical period, and reveal the psychology of human personality." \(^5\) Little noticed by most western literary critics, K.S. Venkataramani (1891) is by some standards considered to be pioneer in the field of Indian English novel through his sketches of Indian life and a rejection of western culture. "His prose of the twenties, combining in itself the traits of romanticism and enlightened realism, was the sole precursor of the realistic Indian novel in English." \(^6\) Realism became a significant aspect of the novel as developed by the writers of the 30's onwards. The theme of incompatibility in marriage developed as part of the trend of social realism especially in the fiction of Anita Desai. However, writers may be classified into three categories - those writing in reaction to the partition and its aftermath, those writings either as migrants or from abroad on account of brief sojourn and those who belong to the second generation of writers since the independence and with this generation, the novel has become both a reflector of social realism as also a tool for psychological investigation. Commenting on the development of the novel, Kripalani point out, "Having inherited from the west new forms and genres, Indian English novel has remained mostly Indian in essence in content as well as in style. The specific characteristic of the present genre consists of the fact that the English language is only the outer cover of expression and the literary philosophy and evocative system remain essentially Indian. What distinguishes it especially is that it is usually faithful to the ideals of humanism." \(^6\) In the course of its
development the novel used British traditions, without, however, alienating itself from the Indian tradition of novel writing. According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, "Literature written in English tends to emerge from one economic class in India, and mostly from the urban centres because fluency and proficiency in the language as the result of a relatively expensive and exclusive education available only in the big cities". Another observation points out that in the decade, of the 1980's half a dozen new English writers have emerged from the same school and college. This underlines the narrow segment in which the new class of Indian English writers has its base. Writers in the Indian languages on the other hand have wider range both in terms of class and geography. It is still possible for a Hindi writer to emerge from a small district town in Uttar Pradesh, or a Malayalam writer to be a primary school teacher in a village or a foot soldier in the army. English writing in India, specially to day tends to be much more global than local in its sensibility, although paradoxically the possibility of having a readership outside the national boundary also makes these texts more conscience of their Indianness. "There is this anxiety of Indianness which is a characteristic feature of Indian writing in English".

After establishing its identify the Indian English novel over the years become a popular mode of the creative expression for women writers. By the 80's besides increasing work produced by women it has been pointed out,"what is significant is the
qualitative shift that has taken place. What we understand is not merely that more is being written and published, but that what women are saying is gradually changing the way society has been accustomed to thinking of them. Gradually, they are being seen not as objects forever, but as subjects with a voice. What women are saying and writing now has a clear political intent: to intervene directly in the process of message making. No longer is their writing content with having a presence, it has to be seen to be making a difference. Variation in the themes taken up by women coincide with their own position and perspective in society. Tharu and Lalitha, through their research on women's writing in thirteen languages dating from 600 B.C. to the present trace an association between what women are saying to their social perspective. "If one were to look at this writing as it relates to the mainstream, one would see that women respond to the dominant mode - ideological or literary - from complexly constituted and decentred positions within it. As such what one might profitably look for are not ways in which their writing reinforces or colludes with the mainstream, but for those gestures of defiance or subversion that are implicit in them." Tharu and Lalitha explain the importance of examining the context in which women wrote and the conditions under which they were read and received. What emerges as a significant trait of their work is how these writers have interrogated the norms in their most radical utterances. Taken collectively, most women's work of shows an important facet of women's writings, namely the
social perspective which makes it rise above the margins of creative fiction, conveying a message. Menon further points out how women have created what is now a genre of writing, vigorous in itself and in dynamic relationship to the women’s movement, a genre which has developed today not only in terms of content and character but also in market terms, considering that many larger publishers are actively seeking them. 66 Western theorists have specifically elaborated on the contribution of women to the genre of fiction, in contrast to the attitude of women’s writings in India. Josephine Dononvan refers to numerous critics and literary historians who have noted a connection between the emergence of the novel as a genre and the establishment of capitalism as the dominant economic system in Western Europe. Scholars and theorists, "have recognized the connection between the ‘rise’ of the novel and the entrance of large number of women into the field of literary production for the first time in history. That association was so strong in the early years of the genre that the novel was thought to be a female thing." 67

Some important male scholars ignore women’s connection to the development of the genre, by falling into sexist thinking, which defines the novel as a "fallen epic", as Donovan points out. Donovan establishes essential linkages between the development of the novel and the association of women with it. The situation in India indicates how different stages and trends in the development of the Indian English novel relate to the role
of women. Donovan explains, "Certainly, a number of elements other than economic also contributed to women's linkages with the early novel. The fact that the novel was the first literary form that did not require extensive classical training, from which women had been barred for centuries; the complex transition towards an empiricist epistemology that occurred during the seventeenth century; the growing acceptance of the plain style, in prose: all such factors facilitated the emergence of writers who, like most women, were not formally educated. In addition the novel was in its beginnings very close to non literary generally unpublished forms such as the letter, the diary and the family biography in which women historically had some practice".68

Donovan also points to the historical grounding in which women have developed a perspective or a standpoint from which to criticize the dominant ethos. "Moreover, the nature of the genre made it more accessible and pliant for the expression of women".69 Women's role within the family unit as also the family economy provided them with a specific perspective where novel writing was concerned. While this is true of the western society, Indian English women novelists underwent a different experience. However, like their western counterpart, women novelists were able to focus on the psychological and emotional realm of personal relations. For women within the family, 'work' and 'life' merged with one another and consequently this determined their perspective steering it away from that of men,
whose experience had different roots. In this matter, Donovan explains, "A dialectical connection appears to exist between bourgeoisie women's economic decline and their gravitation to literary production. Where they had lost power in the economic, social and political realm, women sought it in the imaginary."

Thus there prevails a rationale for a distinctive slant to women's writings, distinguishing them as a class to be treated on its own terms. An important achievement of women writing is that they have succeeded in staging a wholly new kind of reading, denoting the emergence of another kind of identification in the reading and writing world. The work also reflects the social organization of communication which takes on differing forms and styles vis-a-vis men and women, focusing upon aspects of conversation like swearing, politeness and talkativeness. By its essential nature, the novel has lent itself suitably for revealing a certain problematic of life through an individual or individuals — a process which has been explored consciously or unconsciously by women writers. As such Indian women writers have contributed to the construction of forms that are tuned to the sensibilities of a category of people in strictly defined role sets. The narration in these representative forms becomes discourse, establishing a particular stance. However, in terms of representing the ideal feminine type, women novelists, have not shown any significant deviation from the traditional idealized attributes to women. Qualities of beauty, good sense combined with chastity and modesty are generally upheld as the
ultimate qualifications. The dominant ideological picture of women which informs most of the work by women is drawn from largely middle class ideals. There is little overt criticism of males and by and large there emerges a definite and strong approval of adjustment of women to sets of circumstances and depiction. Referring to the portrayal of women in the English novel, Stone observes, "By the end of the eighteenth century a consensus was emerging about the ideal education for women of the landed classes and for the higher ranks of the bourgeoisie. She was neither the frivolous, party going, neglectful mother and possibly adulteress wife of the Aristocracy, nor the middle class intellectual blue stocking who challenged and threatened men on their own ground of the classics. She was a well informed and motivated woman with the educational training and the internalized desire to devote her life partly to pleasing her husband and providing him with friendship and intelligent companionship partly to the efficient supervision of the servants and domestic arrangements; and partly to educating her children in ways appropriate for their future". 72

In the context of the Indian English women's novel a similar dimension has been discerned especially in the early novels which were directly influenced by the East West Contact. There is a typical latent anxiety which marks the psychology and consequently the actions of women who silently, introspectively question women's relation and degree of integration with the
larger whole, be it the family or the society. Exemplary female characters figuring in the novel usually represent the ideal produced by members of those classes. It is significant that almost all the paragons of womanhood, play little or no part in the world of work, and typically, make no contribution to household economy, especially in the urban settings. Marriage emerges as a core activity which also indicts trends of social mobility and the value ascribed to women from various classes. Traits of passivity, acceptance and adjustment, highlighted through women characters, tend also to maintain the status quo. However, since the novelist is essentially linked with the portrayal of particular people in particular circumstances, this provides the novelist with an opportunity to represent divergent perspectives. Yet, because the novel even in India is seen as the major cultural product associated with the westernized educated middle class, it tends to be informed with particularistic values. The gradual focus on the individual, as part of one of the tenets of the novel as a genre provided women writers with a means to delve into the psyche of women in various circumstances, thereby, as Watt explains, helped in "The production of what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experiences of the individual."

Didacticism and education as twin functions of the novel served to structure role models through example and the mirroring of realism always showed life subservient to moral life. The orientation of the novels, i.e. the kinds of problems they raise
and the way in which these problems are tackled reflect the social complexion of both the readers and the writers. The early novels written by women display a subjectivity which is typical of this genre in its incipient stages. This subjectivity conveys a representative translation of social realism. Psychological insight, self knowledge and detailed recording of conversations highlighting social events and situations have proved to be important functions of the novel. It becomes possible for a social historian to gain insights into the contemporary scene through the subjectivity of the characters and their interactions. Attitudes to one another and general social issues, especially those prevalent at the time, serve as significant indicators and tools of analysis of events. Dialogues and interactions between characters positioned variously within a common environment bring forth different perspectives. The novel through women writers has sought ways for achieving social integration or otherwise, adopting a critical viewpoint vis-a-vis patterns of integration. Ways in which novelists work out conflicts, both inner and outer, among the character are also pointers to the factors of stability or instability in a given society. Moral tenets defining and guiding social behaviour are put to test through the interplay and polarization of good and bad or moral and immoral individuals. A criticism or assessment and exposure of existing
institutional and social practices presents itself either overtly or covertly through women's work. A discerning feature that has emerged gradually characterizing women's writings is the emphasis on individualism and discourse on the suppression of a woman's individuality especially. Criticism of the position of women has also served as a means of consciousness raising, while on another level women's work also tends to reinforce stereotyped qualities attributed to women. For instance, the qualities attributed to the 'good' woman include obedience loyalty, philanthropy etc., besides which she constitutes a powerful moral force, yet her role is one of supporting the major male characters. Besides, this, depending on her moral and social status, she is rewarded with a suitable partner, and where appropriate is allowed to achieve upward social mobility. There also tends to emerge a degree of homogeneity in the content of novels of women, illustrating perhaps, the common social origins of writers and also the readers to whom they are catering.

Any understanding of the relation between the novel women and society would involve a study of the socio historical background of the work, i.e. an understanding of the text necessarily involves an understanding of the context, in order to develop an all encompassing view of the interdependence of social factors and a specific category of exponents of creative activity, in this case, women and the novel. While according Literature a dominant place as a medium for reflecting culture,
C.S. Lakshmi analyzes the portrayal of Women in Tamil Literature and how the literary representations speak in their real social position. "an attitude of pity, condensation, indulgence, indifference, neglect and mock exaltation is suggested when one analyzes Tamil proverbs and well known literary works".74 The glory of womanhood was reflected in the two most precious stages - i.e. wifehood and motherhood. The stereotyped images of women portrayed in Literature had their source in the cultural mythical epics and romances popular in society, maintaining a consistency and continuity through folk tales, dance and drama. As a result accounts of social reform in the novels written by women are limited or peripheral, scarcely affecting the lives of women in any direct way. This situation reflects the experience of women in the society as also social attitudes to women, brought out through the perspective and actions depicted by the novel. As part of the interviews conducted by Lakshmi, most women revealed that social reforms affecting the status of women were merely token concessions - in fact they were aimed at improving the lot of women to the extent that they could perform their delineated roles better. This aspect is likewise emphasized in the portrayal of the new, modern women in the early novels written by women. "It was made very clear that the object of female education was not to train them for clerical service or to help them to obtain independent means of livelihood the object was to make them good and efficient wives".75 The general attitude to the education of women was that education must be based on a
woman's role of mother and a wife. The arguments on what languages to teach them, likewise, was based on protecting them from too much learning which would expose too much of the world to them. As such, the vernacular language was stressed. A correspondent to Dravida Patrika wrote that learning English would make them read English books, and know about the liberty enjoyed by women there. This, he warned, will be the ruin of the families here. Hence it is important to note that even at the end of the forties, a woman's magazine for women, was emphasizing the importance of a woman remaining a woman and hence a different kind of education was sought for her.

Indian women's identification with educated women of a western model was a struggle in itself. Consequently, their effort at acquiring the skills of English Language could be translated as a significant shift in the social process. The ground covered by women in achieving English education was spearheaded in isolated struggles, before women could make their mark in the world of letters. However, it must be remembered that those who gained access to English Education and the world of letters were proportionately limited and exclusive. Ironically though such women were granted greater privileges in terms of movement away from cloistered lives, yet their work developed the introspective style which revealed more about the psyche of the individual woman than a survey or social account of the contemporary scene. However, this fact itself is Indicative of the role and degree of involvement of women in more general
social processes. Representations of social milieu reflect also the limited social reforms advocated and enacted by social reform leaders. Muthulakshmi Reddi, at the forefront of reforms for women points out, "Hence, a total change was not in their minds while advocating reforms. The dominant group comprised rich women who were against any change in social attitudes. There were others who did not believe in just talking. Only thing that bound them was the love for the nation. They agreed on the fact that prostitution must end and women must be educated. Since this was agreed to the disagreements regarding social change did not come up. The rich women and a few others felt that higher education was unnecessary for women and that home life was the best education. They wanted home science to be taught in college. Thus, the direction of the movement for change got blurred and by the end of the forties, the notion of helping women through charity - through Homes. Orphanage and destitute houses - seemed to be the only alternative to even partially examining the social status of women". The divided view on the need for women's education is reflected frequently through discourse in the various novels and the general depiction of women and their activities support the view on limited education for women in accordance with their delineated activity and function within the domestic sphere. Though accounts of Gandhi's Political activities and ideology do not elicit as much attention as that from male authors, yet Gandhi's views on women had a direct interplay with women's ideas about themselves. Reddi
points out, "Gandhi, in spite of his fervent appeal to women to get out of the Kitchen, was not himself going beyond a point. He was asking them to look back on the glorious Hindu Past where Sitas were great women". Such an ideology was significant in promoting not only feminine stereotypes but also had a direct impact on limiting the spheres of activity and mental horizons of women. This went a long way in making women accept the separate worlds for men and women. However, there was a slow yet growing consciousness among women towards a rejection of their dedication and an expressed need for respect as human beings. According to Reddi, "Just as there were boards saying, "Do not spit," there ought to be boards saying, "Don't snigger at women". The activities of women's associations and individual activists promoted the cause of women to the extent that in Tamil Nadu, during the fifties, the percentage of working women increased, and correspondingly the literacy rate among women in urban areas gradually increased, yet their role in decision making processes within and outside the household is overshadowed completely by male counterparts. A lack of freedom in taking decisions reflects itself in the literary representations of women, who as characters are merely on the sidelines of all major decisions. This may be explained by the fact the despite the widening of activities for women, this has not been accompanied by a widening of the base of women's existence. "The new roles have led not to the disappearance or transformation of old roles but have only been additional facets of the old roles." It was generally felt
that women should be viewed not just as employees but also as housewives and that social efforts should be directed towards enabling them to discharge their dual roles of home maker and wage earner equitably. Home making is thus seen as an essential part of a women's role and this attitude is reflected both by the writers and the characters of the novels. In the course of the freedom struggle Gandhi's ideals for women were reinforced in various forms of expression. Activities were limited to social work, teaching and healing because these conformed to the projected social values which sought an eradication of social evils especially those which dehumanized women, without however, affecting the traditional stability characterizing the Indian society. The stress on family duties unwavered, regardless of the prevailing ideology. The situation has been summed up appropriately by C.S. Lakshmi, "The women's movement of the fifties and thereafter was not a swift winged bird. It wanted its cage to be more beautiful and bigger. Little more space to fly around and if the cage itself were hung in a free place all the better. The gentle bird invariably returned. Along with all the turbulence of those years, it is this picture of the cage returning bird that essentially defines the social image and status of women in fiction". In her analysis of Tamil Women's writings, Lakshmi points to the rebellious form of fiction, which was used somewhat as a platform to make pronouncements on social problems. The hierarchical difference between men and women is consistently projected through image and moralizing. The images
are an important indication of how women are perceived. Fragile images reflecting the transitory status of women which formed the stock social images of women in a pervasive way, found expression also in the English novels written by women. This substantiates the fact that despite exposure to westernized role models and ideology, women's consciousness remained essentially rooted in traditional institutions and norms into which they were socialized. Wherever, characters try to transcend the limits imposed on their movement, they confront confusion, isolated reversals or alienation. The different involvements of men and women as portrayed by the novels seem to suggest that the society is divided into two categories - mind and body - with man representing the mind and woman, the body. At the same time, what gained popularity was also the delineation of what Lakshmi describes as an enlarged version of the male imagination of the 'modern woman', who now stood by her husband fighting for the freedom of the country. However, the modern woman was basically a symbol of traditional qualities reinforced with a greater vigour. The modern woman was conceived as the universal mother with the fire of chastity and nectar of love. In the wake of equality and other demands, the Shakti, Kali and universal mother images get invoked and become reference pivots. The image of the new woman in fiction is in continuation of the early images of woman as being goddess-like, educated, intelligent and home loving. The term home does not necessarily mean the four walls of a home alone but symbolizes values that emerge from a
culture that confines women to the homes. Thus, the juxtaposition between the 'jean clad' image and the 'sari clad' image of the Indian woman finds a popular representation for it creates conflicts which eventually get resolved in favour of the cultural values sanctifying the domestic unit, upheld by society. Despite this, there is overt and covert questioning of these very cultural values which obstruct and limit choices of a woman, in a world dominated by men. The cruelty of child marriage and discrimination against widows does find criticism and articulation, through characters who are themselves victims of such social circumstances. Various versions of women ranging from the spiritual to the assertive find detailed expression in women's writings each with distinct characteristics, yet lived into wifehood and motherhood for her social definition. However, the "new woman" who seems to have entered the literary scenario of the fifties has two distinct aspects. The male writers have projected this woman for qualities which produce titillation whereas women writers have used them as spokespersons of distinct attitude reflecting the writer's own perspective and position and bringing into focus prevailing social currents which reflect a convergence of tradition and the character's own reasoning in an effort to resolve conflicts. However, the Home and all that goes with it emerges as the priority for most women characters. Within the home, the family as a system, has been the theme around which majority of novels are centred. Most of the writings carried out by women were spare time efforts and
consequently they reflect much of what the writers have themselves been directly concerned with. Even though there are portrayals of the inherent exploitation of women within the family, the general tendency has been to deal with women as the central element of the family, a constant adjusting element acting as fodder to perpetuate the family system. This ideology and the fact of women writer's own central position within the family system go a long way in conditioning and shaping the themes and styles adopted by them. A commonplace theme emphasizes in various ways not only the importance of marriage but also the importance of remaining married and strengthening the family system, despite various drawbacks, since home is an essential need for a woman and consequently for the society. If male writers generally take the family system for granted, women writers, suggest through their portrayals the need for humanizing the family system. The contribution made by most women writers to the development of the English novel is significant in more than one way because it reflects a particular kind of expression from which arises a definite statement on society and its institutions. The writing of women reflects significantly the responses of women to socio historical development as they affect them directly or indirectly as also ways in which everyday life involves and affects their psyche.
Women's Writings and the Novel

Developments in literary forms suggest a changing society and the relationship between fiction and women is indicative of important changes. However, a study of the novel and women can scarcely be complete if one does not take into account the expressions of women through poetry and discourse, over centuries as established by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, "We have attempted to make available for English Language readers in India and around the world a group of works that together will illuminate the conditions in which women wrote; bring more significant women's writing to light; help us re-evaluate writers who were reasonably well known but had been misunderstood or dismissed; give us a sense of the themes and literary modes women drew on and made use of; and help us capture what is at stake in the practices of self or agency and of narrative that emerge at the contested margins of patriarchy, empire and nation." The attempt led to the discovery of writings by women who remained either unpublished or were misrepresented or misjudged. The discovery and analysis of these writings suggest also the tradition of women's writings and their neglect by literary historians. The perspective of early writings pointed to a heightened consciousness of and forthrightness of expression in content and form. What distinguished the fiction of later nineteenth century onwards was the new sense of respectability born out of social reform movements, western cult
institutionalized through English education and the Victorian image of women, a trend which found earlier writings, especially of Thanavur Kingdom, written by Muddupalani, as bawdy and unladylike since it projected sensuality from a woman's, in this case, Radha's point of view rather than Krishna in the Legend of Radha Krishna. "The sculpting of the new respectability was one of the major tasks taken on by the social reform movement, which set out to transform a traditional society into a modern one. Artists such as Muddupalani, who have been acceptable figures in royal courts came to be regarded as debauched and their art as corrupting." A similar process of class differentiation, on the basis of (among other things) redefined sexual mores for women had taken place in Europe during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the new bourgeoisie inscribed its identity on the bodies and souls of women and the proper lady was born. The political and ideological shifts affected through the reign of Queen Victoria as empress along with the restructuring of Indian writings through oriental studies contributed to the early character of women's fiction in India. The analysis of women's writings in order to gain a more realistic picture of women shows the extent to which women's consciousness had internalized prevailing male biases. However, the rediscovery of women's texts by feminist critics pointed to significant deviation from stereotypes projected both by male and female authors. "Literary texts commonly cast women in sexually defined roles. Women were mothers, good submissive wives or bad
dominating ones, seductresses, betrayers, prim single women, or
the inspiration for male artists. In Fergusan’s scheme of
things, these were clearly regarded as false images of women. 86
"Women Becoming" illustrates through fictional accounts by women
writers of women’s working lives, their relationships with one
another, their struggles and aspirations - reflecting, portrayals
of women less stereotypical than those presented by male writers.
The distinct identity of women’s writings is substantiated by
Ellen Mores who argues, "Women’s writing was actually a rapid and
powerful undercurrent, distinct from, but hardly subordinate to,
the mainstream. Women writers read each other’s books and even
kept up an international correspondence. Their writings,
therefore, drew upon women’s experience but also on a literary
subculture of women writers that the mainstream was hardly aware
of." 86 Gynocriticism has developed an understanding of the
process involved in women’s writing showing how it has moved from
initiation, protest, to self-definition by reconstructing,
constructing and deconstructing the images of women as they are
presented through literature. The task of undertaking a study
of women’s work substantiates the assumption forwarded by
literary critics that "literary texts, express the author’s
experience and reveal the truth about his or her world, and as
they do so, they provide us with access to the universal
dimensions of human nature. In this context, feminist critics
read women’s writing as a transparent expression of women’s
authentic experience to the stereotypes of mainstream literature,
often spoken of as 'male' literature, which is regarded simply as distorting the reality of women's lives". The study of women's fiction will throw light on the manifold dimensions of what these writers have imbibed through their exposure to English literature and culture, their own position vis-a-vis this culture as also their responses to social reform ideologies and the ways in which they affected women. If as Tharu and Lalita point out, that women are writing in the context of the images built up by male writers, the study discerns the extent to which such images are acceptable and the bearing they have upon the lot of women. The early novels are distinguished by the predominance of feminine images and European drawing rooms symbolizing the differential status of men and women. The shift was made articulate by the protest against the claustrophobia generated through a culture of female confinement, which had as its reference point the European lady characterized by her delicacy and dependence on servants. Thus gradual awareness of her individuality and personality as a female, not merely the 'other' is projected through the novels of the seventies and eighties, when the urban woman was exposed to a number of alternatives through which she sought a redefinition. Through unself-conscious consciousness raising achieved by women's writing, there emerged, a critique of culture as it has existed for centuries. Through Feminist retrieving rediscovering and interpreting women's writings what has emerged in a very definite way is the understanding of "Real". Tharu and Lalita explain,
"In gynocriticism, the real is clearly invested with an oppositional force and with the sense of a knowledge preserved in the face of opposition, and is contrasted with "unreal" or "untrue" portrayals of women in the work of most male writers. The idea of the 'real', therefore, carries the impress of a truth that emerges as the shackles of prejudice or false consciousness - are thrown off".93

The analysis of women's fiction enables, therefore, an additional perhaps a more real view of the relationship between women and the social institutions which impinge upon their day to day existence as also their psychological responses to an all pervasive patriarchy. However, this does not imply that women writers occupy an oppositional or antagonistic position to the prevailing ideology and therein lies, their significance but rather because of their world view as women. Tharu and Lalitha argued, "Women writers may not be example from the ideologies that shape their world, but it does not follow, as some critics have argues, that there is no sense in which women's writing can be regarded as different or as warranting separate attention. Women articulate and respond to ideologies from complexly constituted and decentred positions within them. Familiar ideologies for instance, clearly constitute male and female subjectivities in different ways, as do ideologies of nation or empire.... (Through women's writings)... We might learn to read them not for the moments in which they collude with or reinforce dominant ideologies of gender, class, nation or empire, but for
the gestures of defiance or subversion implicit in them". Thus, research in women’s writings is not to initiate a process of segregating literature on gender basis but rather to trace and establish specific subjectivities which construct subsequent angles to a given social reality. However, "any critique of patriarchy should also take into account, the fact that patriarchies are formed through historical processes and structured by other dominant ideologies of colonialism of class and of caste, which they in turn structure." To go by Mill’s social theories, the most telling index of the level of civilization a society has arrived at is the status it accorded its women. "Among rude people, the women are generally degraded, among civilized people they are exalted". If one were to impose such a view on Indian society, it would imply that it was only women of the Vedic society who enjoyed a high status in terms of availing of the given opportunities, yet there emerged evidence pointing to the paucity of women writing in the classical languages like sanskrit since that was the language in which upper caste men were trained. Women wrote mainly in Prakrit — the language of the common people and their work reflects a folk tradition stance in opposition to the dominant ideology, "because it drew its vitality from day to day life and the spoken language which presented the multifaceted and non stagnant aspects of life, different from what was reflected in the stagnant water of the Lord’s private well". That relatively larger number of women who expressed their creativity through the
Bhakti movement reflects the everyday concerns that women were associated with and how such concerns could as well form the stuff from which literature can be made, besides the fact that patriarchal control was radically questioned, since so many women left their domestic lives to become bhaktas. Creative expression for women through overt or covert modes could be interpreted to represent a distinct attitude embodying a voice which has been and continues to be a form also of questioning and reflection, having important implications, vis-a-vis the systems to which they were continually are expected to conform. The prose of Pandita Ramabai Saraswati (1858-1922) precursor of Indian Women's writings in English shows the critical awareness of women's position and a heightened sensitivity to the social customs and practices of which women were greater victims because of inherent gender discriminations. Similarly Correlia Sorabji's (1866-1954) writings reflect specific criticism of the politics of her times, "including the involvement of women in the nationalist movement. One of the most significant work establishing a tradition of feminist Indian English writing, was the "Sultan's Dream", which signified a Woman's view of the male dominated world. In this utopian fantasy, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossai (1880-1932) projected a world, which when controlled by women would be free from war and crime and to ensure that, men would be kept confined, while women freed, from the 'Zanana' go about managing social affairs. The following excerpt highlights a woman's perspective, "We have no hand or voice in the management
of our social affairs. In India man is lord and master. he has
taken to himself all powers and privileges and shut up the women
in the Zanana". 98 The protagonist divested of her confines feels
uncomfortable at walking unveiled on the streets. However, she
is reassured, "you need not be afraid of coming across a man
here. This is ladyland, free from sin and harm" 99 ... (since the
men are where they belong in the Mardana). The fantasy may be
translated as a woman writer's representation of rebellion
against social customs enabling men a life of greater
independence which takes on the form of license to willful
behaviour. Though the position of women vis-a-vis writings in
English has yet to be clearly defined since their work scarcely
received adequate attention overshadowed as it was by men writers
of their times, yet a distinct feature of their creative thought
represents an insight into ongoing social processes from a point
of view which is essentially female.

The importance of gaining a more holistic knowledge of
society through women's contributions to the world of letters
can hardly be undermined. The world of Indian English fiction
which created an impressive niche for itself has gained from the
retrospective dialogues with the self of various women characters
with whom women readers find it easy to empathize whereas they
are able to project another dimension of social reality to the
male readers. The psychological renderings of women's
personalities provide also a new study of women as individuals
desirous of socially egalitarian systems for a more dignified survival. The novel offers a broad canvas for action and interaction held by narrative and provides social possibilities from women's point of view. The desire to turn against the system manifests itself as will be analyzed in the subsequent chapter. Evidently the contemporary novels of women in English have emerged from a tradition of women's writing distinguished by its engagement in negotiation, debate and protest, invariably in areas that concern or are closely related to what it means to be a woman. These texts address real tasks in a real world, and are therefore documents of historical struggles over the making of citizen selves and nation worlds.

Novels of women, thus reflect a cultural imagery alive with paradoxical social and self perceptions of women, as also their typical forms of narration and articulation. The feminist interpretation has been instrumental in highlighting its importance. "The close relationship between literary and social structures of consciousness and the fact that feminism is a political movement working for basic changes in contemporary societies means that no one critical approach is adequate for its purposes. Feminist criticism is pluralistic ... and the feminist critic tries to re value literary texts in terms of her own ideologies (and) awareness of gender difference".10 The exercise of analyzing women's writings specifically, the novel is to undertake an exercise for creating methodology and insights into the relation between women and society, women and men as
also women's own consciousness operating under constraints of socio cultural marginalization. With the emergence and recognition of women novelists, it is possible to trace an established female literary tradition, addressing itself to women readers and providing specific interaction between women readers and women writers on the level of what has been termed as the "Social Imaginary". 

REFERENCES


2 Sent to London with the great mission of an emissary, Rammohan Roy participated in the discussion on the question of removal of the charter of the East India company through his paper, "The Juridical system of India, "The Tax system of India and the living condition of India" 1834.

3 Rabindranath Tagore : Crisis in Civilization, Calcutta, 1941. Pp 1-2


6 Deenabandhu Mitra : Neel Darpan, Calcutta 1856, Translated into English "Indigo Planting mirror" by Madhusudan Dutt, 1861.

7 Braj B Kachru : Cultural contact and literary creativity and literary relations of East and West - Selected Essays (ed). John Toyama, Holland, University of Languages Press, 1990. P 196

8 Ibid. P 197


14 A. R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1948, Pp 159-160

15 Ibid P 164

16 Ibid Pp 274-275

17 Ibid. P 275

18 Ibid. P 276


25 Ibid. P 116

26 Ibid. P 229

27 Ibid. P 230

29 Ibid


35 Ibid. P 18

36 Ibid. P 23

37 Ibid.

38 Meenakshi Mukherjee: East West Encounter. Ibid. P 79


47 Ibid. P x


50 Nayantara Sahgal : This Time of Morning, Bombay, Jaico, 1965


54 Ibid. P 56


57 Ibid. P ix


60 Ibid. P 73


62 Meenakshi Mukherjee, : Indian English, Economic and Political Weekly, Nov. 27,1993

63 Ibid. P 136

397
Ritu Menon: "No looking Back": The Hindustan Times, Sunday, 6.3.1994


Ibid


Ibid. P 449


Muthulakshmi Reddi: Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

Ibid

Ibid


Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Santha Rama Rau.


84 Ibid. P 14
86 Ellen Mores, Literary Women: The great writers (New York: Doubleday, 1976.) P xv
89 Nayantara Sahgal (1927).
90 Attia Hossain (1938).
91 Anita Desai (1912).
93 Ibid. P 35
94 Ibid. P 47
95 Sourced from J.S. Mill. The History of British India, Delhi, Associated Publishing House, 1972.
98 Ibid. P 342
99 Ibid
100 Lola Chatterji: Women, Image, Text, Feminist Readings of Literary texts, Trianka, New Delhi, 1986. P 2