CHAPTER – I
Introduction to the development of Indian fiction in
English, Indian writers and Anita Desai Works

GROWTH OF NOVEL IN INDIAN LITERARY SCENE

In England, the novel established itself as a distinct genre with the works of Daniel Defoe and Richardson in the eighteenth century. Alongside the development of realism in the novel, the exotic and the adventurous continued to be popular. The novelist’s tradition does not consist of rules but of certain assumptions about the handling of imagined reality. The element of realism helped in differentiating the eighteenth century fiction from the earlier fiction. The one common feature that binds the works of Richardson, Defoe and Fielding, is the quality of realism. Modern English writers of fiction preserve to maintain the startling element which is an aspect of realism. They have endeavored to view life realistically, to investigate and explore the secret of the mind, thus proving that the function of a novelist is the revelation of hidden life.

The reality of a novel thrives in a complex society with a complex social structure. It deals more with the hero or any important character, refusing to accept the norms of idealistic behavior imposed by
the epic or romance. Impressionism is another important aspect of modernism. It centers around the mental life of the chief characters rather than on the reality around them. The thematic core of this aspect, to a great extent, is available in their novels and modern writers of fiction and non-fiction do not conform to the traditional pattern of writing the fiction and nonfiction.

It is quite worthwhile to note that the British impact on India has in due course given rise to various planes to many things among which the most significant seems to be an impressive mass of writing in English, that could be termed as Indo-English Literature. The English writers, who were fascinated and captivated by the Indian way of life and their culture, depicted these salient features in their literary creations. At the same time, they carefully kept a distance in their attempt to make India the setting of their writings. A chronological survey of literature will reveal the fact that English writers since the time of Chaucer have made vague reference to India in their works. But Indo-Anglian Literature inspired by Englishmen set its roots firmly only with the advent of Sir William Jones towards the close of the eighteenth century.
But quite deceptively the beginning itself proved to be the end as well. This was because of the outcome of obsession of the Indo-Anglians by their sense of the racial superiority and their abrupt reluctance to the fusion of the two cultures. In accordance with it the dawn of Indian independence paved the way for a set-back of Indo-Anglian Literature which lost its distinctive status in spite of the fact that several books have been still written by the Englishman with a more or less recognizable Indian background. Inspired by the Indo-Anglian Literature, Indian erudite too began exposing their literary talent as a consequence of which we have in the second place literature created by Indians in English. In this regard the credit goes to Raja Ram Roy who was the first Indo-Anglian writer of prose. Undoubtedly, he was a master of lucid English prose.

Maugham is one of the prominent novelists and short story writers of the twentieth century. *The Moon and Six Pence*, *Of Human Bondage*, *Cakes and Ale* and *The Razor’s Edge* are his masterpieces. He was a versatile writer and at home in serious and comic themes alike. But one can see his deep concern with the human condition from the recurrence of certain themes in his short stories. Loneliness is a significant theme, which finds a parallel in many of Maugham’s novels. His semi autobiographical novel, *Of Human Bondage* (1915) describes
the painful reality of (Philip Carey) the cripple, who carried through life of feeling of sentences friendless and longing for friends, but perversely compounding his alienation by his own aloofness.

James Joyce is one of the greatest novelist of the twentieth century. He is the main exponent of the stream of consciousness novel and his *Ulysses* (1922) is the finest example of the use of this technique in modern fiction. *Dubliners* (1914), *A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man* (1910) and *Fennegan’s Wake* (1939) are his important works. In *Ulysses*, the stream of consciousness technique finds its best exposition. The novel is set in Dublin and seeks to represent and reconstruct life in all its sordid realism. Virginia Woolf is remembered for the gracious and charming circle the Bloomsbury group in twentieth century and also belongs to school of stream of consciousness novelists. She has courage to free from tradition and then to give a new direction, new form and a new spiritual awareness, to English novel.

Her novel, *Mrs.Dalloway* (1925), is like *Ulysses* to which it is compared, records the events that occur on one particular Wednesday. The particular heroine Clarissa Dalloway is always busy in preparing for a party. Mrs.Woolf proved that conventional methods were unsuitable
for her novel and this makes her interior monologue all the more interesting.

In *To The Lighthouse* (1927) Virginia Woolf again abandoned traditional narrative methods. In this, she sought to explore the quality of human relationship and the complex emotions that are involved. Thus she presents with instances of human consciousness that all add up to the order already created. Creating kind of sequence, as one experience succeeds another, the readers are, therefore, allowed an in-depth study of characters in the novel. (Mrs.Ramsay and Mr.Ramsay and their children and Lily Briscoe). The reader finally comes to understand that human life has no continuing stability. Woolf states in her essay *Modern Fiction* that Life is not series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; but is luminous halo, a semitransparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. The novel in her hands is not just entertainment or propaganda or the vehicle of some fixed ideas or theories or a social document but a voyage of exploration to find out how life is lived and how it can be rendered as it is actually lived without distortion. By showing men and women, in all sorts of combinations, she explores the truth about life.
In American literary tradition, many writers made their mark in the twentieth century literature with new techniques and themes in their writings. Hemingway, Flannery O Connor, Miller, O Neil, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker are few of them. Flannery O Connor is a major writer who is greatly influenced by Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. The lacerating satire, the grotesque characters, and the shocking plots are all the measure of the abnormality of the predominantly materialistic and irreligious society. O Connor’s stories highlight a disrupted world of the existentially estranged and indicate through marked irony and in direction, a way of overcoming the estrangement.

**UNIVERSITIES ROLE IN INDIAN WRITINGS IN ENGLISH**

The establishment of universities of Bombay, Kolkatta and Madras in 1857 provided ample scope for the new generations in the field of literature who were fascinated by the mighty harmony of Milton and repeated the style of Edmund Burke. The Indo-Anglian Literature writers were over-whelmed by warm welcome given to his work and there arouse a fast growing audience to appreciate their work. In fact, Journalism in English quenched the thirst for knowledge of many young men who had their appreciation of poetry.
Eventually poetry too had her votaries. Among these arrays of poets, Michael Madhusudhan Dutt stands supreme with a remarkably high rank. The poets who began their literary career were invariably the pioneers but they confined themselves to mere imitation. They happened to be the practitioners who tried in vain to affect a marriage between Indian thoughts and feeling and English forms. The astonishment of the literary world that last three decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the splendid flowing of a new renaissance.

**INDIAN ANGLIAN FICTION**

The novel has become the most dominant form of literature in the sense that it is more widely read than the other forms of literature, as it deals with the art of everyday life. It maintains its high literary status by providing a matchless and easily comprehensible illusion of reality and by imaginatively manipulating man’s experience of the momentous present and resourceful past. The novel in the modern period inevitably reflects the author’s confrontation with life and cultural values. In such an age, the novel as a work of art reflects the fragmented nature of the world’s structure. Most of the existential problems of life are taken up by
the experimental modern novelists like Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

The Indian novel in English came into being with its encounter with the west. The colonial rule left a powerful impact upon the Indian mind and brought about a tremendous change in its institutional values and systems. The last decade of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century saw novel, the main concern of which was propaganda or social document.

These novels were partly socialistic and partly reformative in tone. *The Hindu Wife* by Raj Laxmi Devi, *Vasudeva Sastri* by Raja Ram Iyer, *Thillai Govindan* by A. Madaviah, *Sunbabies* by Cornelius Sorabjee, conform to the idea that the function of fiction was to reform society through propagation of their ideals.

The Indian writings in English would have become invariably insignificant but for the works of Aru Dutt and Toru Dutt, who gave a perfect molding and achieved a truly significant chapter of fulfillment. In fact, both Aru and Toru are the inheritors of unfulfilled renown. Yet they proved the fact that they inculcated in their works a rare promise and no mean achievement. It was in 1876, they contributed their English renderings of French lyric of Romantic school with the title *A Sheaf*
Gleaned in French Fields. Toru’s Ancient Ballads and legends appeared in 1882. It is quite interesting to note that the Indian fiction in English is marked by certain characteristic features of its own.

The first Indian Fiction in English entitled Raja Mohan’s Wife made a dramatic entry in the late sixties i.e.1864, in spite if the fact that the Indian writers began to write poetry in English. Long before the publication of Macaulay’s minutes on English education in India, but as a matter of fact, the novel not withstanding its latest art surpassed in excellence by making of poetry both in the quality and quantity, consequently a great interest was evinced in Indian fiction in English.

INDIAN AUTHORS AND THEIR ENGLISH NOVELS

The Indian novel upto 1920 remained mediocre, absurdly romantic and technically faculty. The Freedom movement of Mahatma Gandhi evoked the feelings of all. The writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao appeared on the literary scene. It was during this period that Indian fiction discovered some of its most significant themes such as the problems and plight of the poor of India. After the Second World War, the women novelists of quality have began enriching the field of fiction. Toru Dutt can be the first Indian novelist. Her Bianca
(1878) was published posthumously. This serialized novel is mainly autobiographical. The Indian novelists have proved their merit by winning, in competition with writers, whose mother tongue is English, several major literary awards, prizes and distinctions. To note only the most outstanding of these, two new novelists have won the Booker Prize, supposedly the British equivalent of the Nobel Prize. Salman Rushdie for *Midnight Children* in 1981 (in 1993 this was adjudged the best novel to have won the Booker Prize) and Arundhati Roy for *The God of Small Things* in 1997. R.P. Jhabvala too had won the Booker prize in 1975, but she belonged to an earlier generation.

Miss Sarabji’s *Love and Life Behind The Purdah* and S.B. Bannerjee’s *Tales Of Bengal* are highly expressive of the glaring development of Indian Novels in English. The Indian Novels seem to have attained maturity and perfection by all means with the publication of Mulk Raj Anand’s *Coolie* and *Untouchable* and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*.

Mulk Raj Anand feels that the duty of the writer is to throw light of the evils done by men towards his fellowmen. He wants to create an awareness of evil in the society. He gives pictures of ill treatment and
pathetic life of coolies in *Two Leaves and A Bud*. Anand’s *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *The Big Heart* present the humanistic faith and compassion of the writers. R.K.Narayanan depicts human life in all authenticity, honesty, and straightforwardness with an enlivening and refreshing humor. He is one of the few writers in India who takes his craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, perusing with the sense of dedication what may often seem to be the mirage of technical perfection. Narayan develops an awareness of human nature and life. He has written novels of different types of political, regional, domestic and monetary interest.

Raja Rao’s novels aiming at the theme of search for truth, explain the traditional Hindu view of life, which was revealed in his master piece *The Serpent and Rope*. As an admirer and child of Gandhian age his characters try to convert human life for a larger and greater one of being.

*Kanthapura* is an exemplary one for his exercise. Consequently today the Indian Novelists writing in English make a formidable number one cannot deny the fact that their contributions have enriched the Indian literary area in English to a great extent. The novelists in India whether write in English or in any regional language have become invariably a
part of his own cultural pattern that he could inevitably reflect that true Indian image. Manohar Malgonkar, Khuaja Abbas and Khuswant Singh have dealt with more serious themes. Their novels have a historical background. The meaninglessness of the bloodshed during the partition is realistically rendered.

Historically, India has her own cultural identity and this Indian consciousness is reflected in the works of the Indo-Anglican writers. They made an attempt to inculcate this consciousness in the minds of the Indian and the other people as well. As a result of this the Indian Novelist faces the problem of giving artistic expression to the advantages of economic changes and the industrialization on the community on class structure and above all family ties. The still water of Indian nationalism with its myriad traditions and cultures were stirred by the stone of western culture which put a girdle upon all aspects of life there by reshuffling the entire system of penetration deep from the urban rural side.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar says,
National Movements, Industrial growth, Egalitarian protest and social reforms as well as political ideologies are directly dealt with or indirectly suggested or reflected in Indian fiction in English as a major source for a systematic study of culture contact and cultural change (Indian Writing In English, 17).

The post-second world war era paved the way for a considerable rise to the number of novelists especially by women novelists of quality that enriched the Indian fiction with the delineation of characters representing the contemporary society. In these women novelists, Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Jhabvala stand supreme in their character delineation and plot construction apart from faithful portrayal of Indian Society, the whims and fancies of the individual and weaknesses and foibles on Indian Society.

Kamala Markandaya is feminine and stands unique in her sincere exposition of the crises of the domestic ties where most of the families in the Indian setting or pitiable victims. She presents a cross section of the Indian society. Their novels explore comprehensively the social changes of India. Her are usually compared with the novels of Pearl S.Buck. On the other hand Ruth Prawar Jhabavala confines herself to a mere imitator of society. She too excels in portraying the crises in life but she confines
to city life and customs. One could visualize a sense of detachment passing through the spine of her novels.

The works of Ruth Prawar Jhabwalla abound in themes exploiting the clash between traditional codes and modern aspirations. Indian novels in English have to their credit enormous themes all focusing on the life style, culture and domestic complexities of men representing all strata of the society, along with political crises in lieu of freedom struggle. Nayantara Sahgal wrote novels that contain political overtones. Her works give an account of what happens in the corridors of power, in the drawing rooms of politically important people or in the lobbies of parliament.

Santa Rama Rao and Attia Hussain have tried to portray the various facts of Indian life with a wide range of themes like India’s struggle for Independence, the British regime, caste system, feudalistic corruption and exploitation, the orthodox upper class and the clash of generations. But few have been the novels that portray the psychic elements involved in these themes.

The use of stream of consciousness technique figure prominently in Indian fiction of the 1960’s. Novelists like G.V.Desani, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Arun Joshi explore the many aspects of
the inner life of man. H.M. Williams asserts that “Markandaya and Desai….. exploring the anguish of the human and personal in modern society” (Sabir, 12). Anita Desai has added “a new dimension to the achievement of India women writers in English fiction” and also “her forte …. Is the exploration of sensibility” (Srinivasa Iyengar, 464).

K.B.Vaid commenting on the themes of Indian Novelists says,

portrayal of hunger and diseases, portrayal of widespread social evils and tensions examinations of the survivals of the past, explorations of the hybrid culture of the education Indian middle classes, analysis of the innumerable dislocations and conflicts in a tradition ridden society under the impact of an incipient halfhearted industrialization. (*The Illustrated Weekly, 113*)

India Struggle for freedom forms the theme of many novels in Indian fiction. K.S.Venkata Ramani’s *Kandan The Patriot* and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* are the two earliest novels which portray the Indian Scenario of freedom struggle in an elaborate manner apart from good with compact plots. *Kanthapura* marks a definite stage in the formation of an Indian style of writing in English. This novel gains significance because of the exposition of experiences of three planes – the political,
the religious, and the social - all invariably fused into a complete whole. There is yet another theme that is to be noted. The confrontation of the East and West is a Theme carefully dealt with by Raja Rao and Kamala Markandaya in their novels. The experience of isolation, of alienation and self-exile, the estrangement is shared by the protagonists of most of the contemporary realistic novels.

This aspect has been dealt with by novelists like Kamala Markandaya (*Nowhere Man*) Raja Rao (*Serpant And The Rope*) Arun Joshi (*The Foreigner*). All these have been successfully adopted by Anita Desai too in her novels. Eschewing the literary affectations that found in the works of her contemporaries, Anita Desai endeavored to cultivate an individual style which is vigorous, vital and suited to her subject matter.

Meenakshi Mukerjee remarks aptly that the women novelists independence is found to be tied India’s Independence. The women novelists were concerned with the interaction of traditional values and modern trends in Indian life. The themes like poverty, squalor, oppression and human suffering evils of the unjust social system in India were preferred by them. Fiction writing by women novelists in India attained maturity with the works of Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer,
Jhabwalla, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Santa Rama Rao and Attia Hussain.

The East West Confrontation delineates the Heros and Heroines of their novels as the representatives of the personages drenched into crises. The above mentioned aspects of Indian fiction in English, its themes, essential Indianess, and its English have led to the emergence of a national character suiting the contemporary social and political scenes. But now, on the other hand we find an apparent diversion or rather deviation towards the themes of literary interest. The first significant fact is that the number of Indian English novels published during the last two decades of 20th century easily surpasses the total output for any corresponding earlier period and quantity does guarantee quality, increasing recognition for the novelists.

ROLE OF ANITA DESAI IN INDIAN NOVELS IN ENGLISH

It is surprising that no Indian critic published any critical work on ‘coming of age’ of Indian English novels, as Kiran Desai, daughter of Anita Desai, won the Booker award recently. Anita Desai’s novels are self-expressive of the fact that the younger novelists are aware of this problem. Arun Joshi and Nayantara are other novelists who stand along with Anita Desai. While Sagal has to his credit only political novels
others like Joshi and Anita Desai have dealt with the themes of loneliness and estrangement in many of their novels. The theme of ‘Estrangement’ is dealt not only by the Indian writers, but also by American novelists like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Henry James, Ernest Hemmingway, William Faulkner and Saul Bellow to embrace larger realities and to explore the mysteries from the labyrinths of human psyche in the society.

LIFE AND WORKS OF ANITA DESAI

Anita Desai is a women novelist of great repute and provides an interesting study into the female psyche. Among the later women novelists she occupies an important place since she shows a preoccupation with the form of the novel and its narrative technique. There is a shift of emphasis in her novels from outer realities and hence she has been compared to psychological novelists like Virginia Woolf. She has fourteen books to her credit that included ten novels, two collections of short stories and two books for children.

The plight of Indian women, which is still a matter of tears, has always been a subject of absorbing interest whether in an early writer like Toru Dutt or a later writer like Anita Desai. Evaluating the recent Indo- Anglian Fiction, M.L.Malhotra, rightly points out that, Narayanas,
Kamalas and Malgonkars are all right. But without Bhabni, Anita, Nayantara and Arun joshi our fictional scene would not be interesting but anemic and undistinguished (*The Banasthali Patrika*, 23-24). It would be relevant to discuss briefly the life and works of Anita Desai. Anita Desai was born in Missouri on 24th June 1937, to a Bengali father and German mother. Desai’s father was an engineer and his family hailed from East Bengal, now called Bangladesh, born and brought up in India. After the Second World War and with the partition of India in 1947, both her parents decided to make Delhi their home. Her dual heritage, both racial and cultural, has had a strong impact on her life and has also influenced her writing at the thematic as well as stylistic level.

She began writing fiction at the age of seven and published small pieces in children’s magazines. She was educated at Queen Mary’s school first and at Miranda house later. She took her B.A. degree in English literature in Delhi University in 1957. Anita Desai got married to Ashwin Desai. She has four children. She has been living in various cities, Kolkatta, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Delhi and Pune. The life of people in these cities finds expression in her novels. Desai’s characters cannot be dubbed as escapists, for they usually discharged the duties allotted to them effectively but resent the circumstances in which they have to operate. Unlike most of the Indo- Anglian novelists, Anita Desai
has achieved something unique of portraying each of her individuals as an unsolved mystery.

Anita Desai wrote her first novel *Cry, The Peacock* in 1963 which was considered by the literally world to be a poetic piece of great lyric quality. Her other novels are *Voices In The City*(1965), *Bye Bye Black Bird*(1971), *Where Shall We Goes This Summer*( 1975), *Fire On The Mountain*(1977), *Clear Light Day*( 1984) and *Baumgartner’s Bombay* (1988). She has also written some short stories, some of which are published in *Games At Twilight And Other Stories.* Her *Cry, The Peacock* was regarded by Meena Belliappa as a remarkable attempt to fuse fantasy with perpetual experience. “*Anita Desai deals with the inner world of sensibility of her protagonists rather than the outer world of action*” (*Anita Desai : A study on fiction*, 2).

Professor K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar says, that her strength lies in “the exploration of sensibility, the particular kind of modern Indian sensibility that is ill at ease among the barbarians and the philistines, the anarchists(IWE, 464). The novels of Rushdie, Roy, Anita Desai and others have also been translated into numerous European languages, thus setting the seal on their standing in the world of letters today. Surely,
there could not have been a collective will to condescension on such a large scale, in so many countries, at the same time.

Anita Desai brings to bear upon her works an essential contemporary, urban ethos. Her focus is on individuals hypersensitive, lonely, alienated people, estrangement, incarcerated in their private worlds and private traumas. She herself has said, “I am not in the least but interested is society seen as a mass. All that one can do is write about a few individuals… only the individuals, the solitary being, is of true interest” (13).

1.7 MAJOR THEMES OF ANITA DESAI

Cry, The Peacock tells the story of Maya’s married life with Gautama. There is lack of emotional communication between the wife who is a highly sensitive creature with poetic imagination and neurotic sensibility. Her husband is a pragmatic, and unimaginative and an unsentimental person. Gautama is really a father surrogate to Maya. An Albino astrologer predicted in her childhood days that four years after her marriage one of them would die. This prophesies causes an obsession in her mind. Eventually, Maya kills Gautama by pushing him from the parapet and then she also commits suicide.
Anita Desai’s *Bye - Bye Black Bird* depicts the predicament in which the Indian immigrants are placed. Der comes England for higher studies. There he stays with Adit and Sara and he is distressed to see the utter humiliation with which the Indian are treated with. Der becomes a changed man and he has developed charm for the new country. Adit feels home-sick latter and leaves for India with his English wife, Sarah.

Desai’s *Where Shall We Go This Summer* is a study of marital discard between sita a sensitive emotional middle aged women, a mother of four children and her husband Raman, a successful business man, practical, realistic, matter of fact, a person having a rather pragmatic view about life. Sita is reluctant to deliver the fifth Child. She wants to create the miracle of not giving Birth to her child in this violence – torn world. She goes to the island of Mamoru where she feels alienated.

Anita Desai’s next novel *Fire On The Mountain* deals with the loneliness and isolation as well as the reluctant Angust and agony in the life of Nanda Kaul. Anita Desai’s clear light of day tells the Tale of Two Brothers and tow sisters who lived in a house in old Delhi. Bim and Tara are the sisters whose mother is a diabetic and their brothers are raja
and Baba who are mentally retarded. Tara goes abroad after her marriage with Bakul. She returns to India for the marriage of Raja’s daughter Moyne. In the past Bim and Raja were attached to each other. Later on they are estranged. Tara is shocked to see the change between Bim and Raja. Afterwards she realizes that she was narrow minded in her love and forgives all like many other literary artist Anita Desai is only analyzing the human situations, the gulf between man the world he is living in. She analyses the absurdity of the situation in which man is situated. As a great humanist she held that “Literature should deal with more enduring matters, less temporary and less temporal than politics” (Sathyanarain Singh, Kakatiya Journal, 13).

The purpose of the writing is to discover, underline and convey the significance of things. She chooses characters that are peculiar and eccentric rather than common. The minor and incidental characters are picked up by her real life. The major characters are not from real life. “they are entirely imaginary are an amalgamation of several different characters” (Kakatiya Journal, 18). Anita Desai’s female protagonists are sensitive and solitary to the point of being neurotic. Maya in Cry, The Peacock Monisha in Voices In The City, Sita in Where Shall We Go.
This Summer, Nanda Kaul in Fire On The Mountain and Bim in Clear Light Of Day belong to this category. Not only do her novels expound the theme of alienation but even most of her short stories like GAMES AT TWILIGHT and PRIVATE TUITION by Mr.Bose echo the novelistic theme of the alienated mood and self estrangement. Most of the central figures in her short stories are self alienated persons who are caught against the crisis of a changing society.

Anita Desai uses the technique of flashback and stream of consciousness in sum of her novels. Cry, The Peacock is replete with poetic passages and flash back. In Voices In The City, she evokes sights, sounds and smells of the city Kolkatta with the help of appropriate words, symbols and apt images. In Clear Light Of Day she has skillfully woven the past and present.

Her novels are certainly reflective of social realities, but she does not dwell like Anand on social issues. She dives deep into the forces that condition the growth of a female in the patriarchal, partrilineal, male – dominated Indian family, the feminine psyche and feminism. She
observes social realities from a psychological perspective, without posing as a social reformer or a moralist or a feminist. Desai’s novels are studies of the inner life of characters. As she creates a small milieu, the focus of her narrative becomes precise and clear. Anita Desai’s talent lies in describing in graphical detail the minute things that are usually left unnoticed. She employs a variety of techniques to show the fear, anxiety and neurosis with which her sensitive young women are seized. She employs the technique of “Fugue”, the morbid fears, by which a person feels constantly threatened.

Most of her characters try to preserve their independence and think that by getting themselves alienated they will achieve their goal namely, the discovery of their identities. It is this nostalgia for independence that turns them into rebels. Brijraj Singh aptly compares novel to “an extended piece of music, subtle, sensitive sensuous in its line and melody but also complex and richly integrated in its total effects” (The Fiction Of Anita Desai, 43) Anita Desai talks about the human relationships particularly the need for mutual communication.

Another theme dealt with by Anita Desai is the search for values. Anita desai’s treatment of emotional life of characters in her novels
makes her the foremost writer in Indian Fiction in English. As a novelist Anita Desai’s distinguishing qualities are many, the chief being the subordination of the background to the characters and the deft handing of language, imagery and syntax in order to convey an intimate expression of the inner world of her characters.

**THEME OF ALIENATION AND ISOLATION**

From time immemorial the renowned philosophers on the study of humanism had shown an uncommon interest and an absolute dedication to the affairs of men and women. It is an unequivocal maim and a widely acknowledge concept that the human being is the concrete centre and the pivotal stronghold of all activities researches, productions and truths material and spiritual. Estrangement may reveal at a situation where an individual is alienated from society, leading to loss of communication. This results in neurotic behavior of the individual, when they faces with certain problems confronting them.

This will be expressed in corresponding emotional experiences, viz feelings of isolation, solitude, rejection, loss of one’s ago etc. In the psychological plane, the notion of Estrangement should not be confused with the estrangement of personality in an antagonistic society. In the social plan or as a social process, it is characterized by the
transformation of man’s activity and also of man’s properties and capabilities into something independent and dominant over the person in question. According to concepts of social psychology alienation is used to characterize interpersonal relations in which the individual is set off against individuals, groups and the whole of society to come to experience degree isolation.

On violation of the values conditioning the joint activities in a group of society and by the resultant loss of the feeling of solidarity, the individual perceives the other group members as alien and hostile to him/her. Sigmund Freud used the concept to explain the pathological development of a personality in culture alien and hostile to man’s natural character. Again this results in the neurotic loss of one’s individuality, i.e., depersonalization. So Freud, is of the opinion that unconsciousness is the decisive factor in individual behavior.

This finally leads to antagonism between the individual and the social environment. So when the individual’s openness to the future disappears he/she begins to feel him/her self-abandoned. The inner world narrows his development potentialities, which remain beyond the horizon of vision dragging to neurosis. For Marx, estrangement was
man’s dehumanized state and his estrangement from other fellowmen from the product of his own labor.

The psychological phenomenon reflects the conflicts and hostility which is seemingly directed towards the outer world. Man becomes alien to his own self. He gets estranged from someone or something with which he is attached or identified – his family, his group, his society and also his self. Estrangement is one of the central themes of existential humanists. Existentialism awakens us to the intransigence and hostile reality around. These pose a challenge to tradition. Existential humanists glorify man’s inevitable revolt against reality, but not the assured outcome, if any of such revolt. For the gulf between the individual and the world around him/her is the main cause of absurdity.

ESTRANGEMENT AND ISOLATION IN INDO – ANGLIAN NOVELS

It is obvious that the Indo – Anglian fiction has turned inward in exploring the theme of estrangement among Indo-Anglian novelists; the theme has been handled by Mulk Raj Anand and Kamala Markandaya and had been extensively dealt with by Anita Desai and Arun Joshi. These writers have been turning inwards and the theme is a kind of intensely personal confrontation psyche, apart from open, frontal confrontation between persons and forces. As a matter of fact most of
the women characters in the novels are married women and have families and still they feel alienated and yearn for deeper contacts. Lonely souls they are, what happens to them on the external plane partly suggests the inward toil.

The above mentioned features of Alienation and isolation are found in Anita Desai’s novels *Cry, The Peacock*, *Voices In The City*, *Bye Bye Blackbird*, *Where shall we go this summer*, *Clear Light Day* and *Fire on the Mountain*. These six novels become particularly interesting in view of the fact that in the novels, the shifts of emphases is from the outer realities or social realism to the inner mind and the psychic tensions, with a marked predilection to experiment with the novel as an art form and with the point of view or perspectives.

So, the researcher has chosen Anita Desai’s Novels *Cry, The Peacock*, *Voices In The City*, *Bye Bye Blackbird*, *Where shall we go this summer*, *Clear Light Day* and *Fire on the Mountain* for the research. The study aims at an analysis of Anita Desai’s handling of the theme of ‘Alienation and isolation in the above said novels.

This research work is divided into five chapters. The first chapter discusses the development of Indian fiction in English and Indian
writers. This is also an introductory chapter for Anita Desai and her works. The second Chapter discusses with the theme of Alienation and isolation in her novels, *Cry The Peacock and Voices in the City*. The third Chapter discusses with the theme of Alienation and isolation in her novels, *Bye-Bye Blackbird* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer*. The fourth Chapter discusses with the theme of Alienation and isolation in her novels *Clear Light Day and Fire on the Mountain*. The fifth chapter is a concluding chapter discusses the findings of the previous chapters. This chapter followed by bibliography and appendices comprises the details of paper published by the researcher.