CHAPTER I
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INTRODUCTION

In the legend of existence, a human being may be considered as the paramount achievement of creation. He is considered to be supreme of all living beings owing to his intelligent quotient, and he stands unexcelled with his innovative techniques and styles. The added charm to his personality is not a single day evolution but a process of continual trials and achievements. Achievements are viable only and if only there is a mobile process either in concrete or in abstract stature. A perfect blend of both can give a human a humane and radical outlook through which the entire universe can be viewed as the macroscopic animation of the microscopic oneness. The awareness of this basic principle, which is the essential core of this research project, is imparted through literature imbued with aesthetic, ethical, or ecclesiastical appeal.

Literature is the treasure-house of knowledge which brings forth the ideals of life through its various genres. It enchants, entralls, excites, and enlightens. Literature manifests the manifold features of the universe with its immense variety. It has the capacity of moving human hearts and minds simultaneously thus re-modifying even history. Its outpour varies as per the demand of the situation. It awakens the aesthetic sense which is in deep slumber in most of the human hearts. The pre-ordained ideals of humanity are appraised. The unfathomed human psyche is ventured into. It spreads the aroma of personal, cultural, and national history. Though replete with streaks of spontaneous versification and personal memoirs, it aims at human perfection. It unravels the lofty principles of life lying intact within nature. Thus, its variety ranges from simple
to complex themes kindling the innate emotions of humanity. Its aesthetic excellence is captured by William Cuthbert Faulkner quoted by James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate in *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926 – 1962* thus:

> The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life. Since man is mortal, the only immortal possible for him is to leave something behind that is immortal since it will always move. (253)

As rivers glide on to meet in the mighty ocean, so do the literatures of various nations to make the treasury of world literature a marvellous accumulation of exuberant arts. One of the significant contributors is the Latin American literature whose works of art are standing examples of its exalting artistic strength.

Latin American countries were once the colonies of Spain and Portugal, and they comprise part of North America, South America, and the Caribbean islands. The discovery of America kindled the interest of the Spanish and the Portuguese enabling numerous invasions and settlements. Matthew Restall in the *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* explains the merit of Hernan Cortes, Francisco Pizarro, and Christopher Columbus in establishing the Spanish Empire in the Americas thus:

> In a sense, the reputations of Columbus, Cortez, and Pizarro are justified. One discovered the Americas for early-modern Europeans, the other two led the initial expeditions that discovered and partially destroyed the two
major empires that existed in the Americas in the early sixteenth century (the Mexica or the Aztec, and the Inca). (4)

The newly discovered areas, which opened up wider scopes and fortunes, were fondly addressed as the New World. Its origin dates back to the sixteenth century, the time of the Conquistadores. In 1494, the two great maritime powers of that time, Spain and Portugal, signed the Treaty of Tordelsilhas thus deciding that all new lands discovered in the west should be an exclusive duopoly between them. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, they conquered Central and South America and divided them into colonies. The Spaniards had to fight ferociously with the indigenous civilizations of South America. The Chibehas of Colombia, the Quechuas of Peru, and the Aymaras of Bolivia were the three important Indian sects in addition to the Moche and Inca civilizations. John Charles Chasteen, the editor of *The Contemporary History of Latin America*, observes thus:

> The highlands of Mexico and Peru became centers of Spanish colonization not only because of their rich mines but also because of the large populations of highland Indians already accustomed to laboring for imperial masters before the arrival of the Spanish. (2)

During the colonial era, African Negroes were brought to some areas of South America for cheap labour. Roman Catholicism and writing system were imposed on them.

In due course, the Spaniards and the native people of South America interbred thereby resulting in the Mestizo class. Mestizos were equally ill-treated as were the natives, and the native artworks were destroyed since they were accused as pagan idols. After a span of three centuries, the Spanish colonies won their independence in the
beginning of the nineteenth century. Simon Bolivar and Jose de San Martin led the South American wars of independence. Despite the attempt of Bolivar to keep the Spanish-speaking parts politically unified, they rapidly became independent not only from Spain but from one another as well. The South American continent, after being the platform of the Cold War in the late twentieth century, breathed the breeze of democratization soon (Wikipedia, 2008). Nearly half of the people in Brazil speak Portuguese and in all other countries Spanish is the most important language. It is stated in the Wikipedia article “History of South America” that, “With the founding of the Union of South American Nations, South America has started down the road of economic integration with plans for political integration in the European Union style” (2008). The commotion created by external and internal wars never inhibited the growth of literature. Starting steadily, literature progressed towards the pinnacle of glory.

Latin American literature refers to the literature of the Spanish and Portuguese speaking people of North America, South America, and the Caribbean islands. Right from its origin in the sixteenth century, the history of Latin American literature may be categorized into four main periods; the Colonial Period, the Independence Period, the Period of Consolidation, and the Period since the Twentieth Century (Robb, 2008). It is generally considered that the most advanced Pre-Colombian civilizations too lacked written mode of presentation, and their literary tradition was exclusively oral. The native people of the New World had their own forms of artistic expressions let through hymns, prayers, and myths. The credit of being the first literary activity of the Latin American literature goes to the ballads which were sung by the sailors of Christopher Columbus on the Hispaniola Island. The narrative poems with eight-syllable lines were composed and
sung in all the settlements of the New World. A sophisticated written form followed soon after imitating the Italian metres and matters in the Viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru. These vice-regal capitals, the budding centres of European culture, were modelled upon the European courts, and there was an upheaval of literary resurgence throughout the colonial period. Literary activities like public recitations, poetic contests, and literary gatherings were conducted. The Spanish empire began to converge more on written documents with the invention of printing press (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2008).

The establishment of colleges and universities was a hallmark achievement in the history of colonial era. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article “Latin American Literature” states:

> The creation of a native elite, able to write and imbued with Western culture, was crucial to the empire’s functioning, so colleges and universities were founded: a college in Mexico in 1536, a university in 1538 in Hispaniola, and a university in Lima in 1551. For learning purposes, large numbers of *Cartillas*, or alphabet cards, were shipped from Spain. (1)

Mexico City became a cultural centre with poets born in Spain; Guttierre de Cetina, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza and prose writers like Mateo Aleman. The first renowned Mexican-born poet was Francisco de Terrazas who was attuned to the style of Francesca Petrarch in presenting his sonnets. But the fervent disposition of the sixteenth century was the chronicles of conquests and the prose works which served a didactic purpose. Of all the literary outputs which centred on the conquest of the New World, *La Aracuna*
(1569-89; *The Araucaniad*) of Alonso de Ercilla y Zunings was considered the best. The work was applauded not only for its authenticity and its exact portrayal of the *Araucanians* but also for the poet’s poetic genius. Other noteworthy contributors were the historians like Dernal Diaz Del Castilla and Bartolome de Las Cascas. The plays like *El Judico Final* (*The Last Judgment*) initiated the process of religious conversions.

J.W.R. James Willis Robb comments on the growth of Mexico City by the turn of seventeenth century in his article “Latin American Literature” as follows:

Mexico (now Mexico City) and Lima, the capitals of the vice-royalties of New Spain and Peru, respectively became the centres of all intellectual activity in the 17th century. City life, a splendid replica of that of Spain, became a routine of erudition, ceremony and artificiality. The creoles often outstripped the Spaniards in acceptance of the baroque styles then current in Europe. (2008)

Garcilasco de la Vega El Inca had the privilege of being the first true Latin American writer owing to his mixed heritage, his father being a Spanish conquistador and his mother, an Inca woman of noble lineage. *Los Comentaries Reales de los Incas* (1609; *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*) was his masterpiece. As the chronicles developed on one side, new styles and techniques were adopted on the other side. The first authentic artistic style called Baroque arose distinctively in colonial Latin America which was termed as *Barroco de Indias* or ‘Baroque of the Indies’. The Baroque poetry was laden with sarcastic tone and satires. Some of the major practitioners were Mateo Rosas de Oquendo, Juan Del Valle y Cavides, and Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz. Juana was one of the
major contributors to the enrichment of Latin American literature, and her reputation rested on various genres like poetry, prose, and drama. “The Respuesta a Sor Fitolea” (1691; “Answer to Sor Fotolea” included in Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz: Poems, 1985) was an exemplification of her feminist consciousness which voiced women’s participation in intellectual activities.

Another notable writer of this era was Luis de Gongora y Argote who was hailed for his poetic revolution. His poetry was syntactically complex, difficult, loaded with mythological allusions and daring ventures crossing the limits of the language. As a result, there evolved Gongorismo, a poetical movement, which tinted the poetry through the seventeenth century and also the eighteenth century. The war of Spanish succession (1701-14) culminated in the replacement of the Habsburg dynasty by the Bourbon dynasty. This event paved the way for the flow of French Classicism into the colonies. The liberation doctrines of Enlightenment were spread throughout. New literary centres arose during the era - Quito in Ecuador, Bogotá in Colombia, Caracas in Venezuela and Buenos Aires in the south. These centres grew enormously competing with the old vice-regal capitals in literary activities and publication. Contacts were widened challenging the intellectual monopoly of the mother country. Historiographies developed in line with the literary tradition. Epic poetries bloomed. Latin American novels up surged during the eighteenth century. Some of the major writers of this era were Jose Gumilla, Fernando de Orbea, and Rafael Landivar (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008).

The first quarter of the nineteenth century marked The Independence Period of Latin American literature. Thirst for independence drew a flood of patriotic writings, excessively in poetry. The first Spanish American novel Periquillo Sarniento (1816; The
*Itching Parrot,* 1942) written by Jose Joaquin Fernandez de Lizardi appeared with veiled criticisms of society. Politics and literature were intertwined. Some of the major writers were Jose Joaquin Olmedo, Andres Bello, and Jose Mario de Heredia y Campuzano. Heredia’s poetry foreshadowed the elevation of romanticism.

The Period of Consolidation followed in which the classical forms of the eighteenth century gave way to romantic principles. The new Latin American republics’ literature was tinged more with the spirit of France than Spain but blended the former with their native styles. The works of the earlier decades sparkled with Neo-Classical spirit but soon the shift to romantic preference for national themes, human humours, and local landscapes was pellucid. The Argentine Esteban Echeverria returned home in 1830s after proclaiming himself as an ardent promoter of democracy and romantic literature. In 1837, *Association de Mayo* or ‘May Association’ was founded by him which was a group of liberal intellectuals who were zealous in rejuvenating national literature reflecting their culture and society. Gaucho literature prospered in Argentina which colourfully portrayed the Argentine pampas, plains, natural sceneries, and nomadic gauchos who were the Argentine Cowboys. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Jose Hernandez were the major contributors of this genre. The Caribbean counterpart of this literature was the Cuban anti-slavery novel which pictured the torments and toils of the African slaves. *Cecilia Valdes* (1882; *Angel’s Hills: A Novel of Cuban Customs*) written by Cirilo Villaverde was the masterpiece of this group of novels. The novel’s romantic and realistic presentation produced a new genre called the *Caudro de Costumbres* or ‘Sketch of Local Customs’.
Novels were fast developing during this period. The era had recognized outstanding romantic realists like Ignacio Altamirano and naturalistic novelists like the Argentine Eugenio Cambaceres who mirrored the influence of the experimental novels. The essay also became a powerful medium for optimistic thinkers, particularly journalists whose thought process extended to various arenas of politics, education, society, and philosophy. Ecuadorian Juan Montalvo, Eugenio Maria de Hostos, and Ricardo Palmo were some of the prominent artists (Robb, 2008). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a new literary movement called *Modernismo* or ‘Modernism’ swept through Latin America. The leader of this movement was the Nicaraguan Ruben Dario who was steeped in French Parnassian and symbolist poetry. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article observes further:

In that spirit Dario chose “Modernism” as the name for his movement. This meant writing poetry of uncompromising aesthetic beauty and discarding the sentimentality and the rhetoric of Romanticism, which in Spanish had not yielded great poetic works. Dario experimented with metrics, with the accentuation of verse, with the inner rhythm of prose, with rhyme, and with asymmetrical stanzas to create a sonorous, musical language. His themes were often erotic, in daring decadent fashion. Exoticism, particularly “Oriental” subjects and objects obsessed him. (12)

Dario’s fellow modernists include Jose Marti, Julian Del Cascal, Jose Asuncion Silva, and Amado Nervo. Many modernists were poets, but there were a considerable number of prose writers too.
The contemporary Latin American Literature since the 1920s is resplendent with invincible literary achievements due to the flow of innovative canons and techniques into various genres. Many authors were analogues with the European trends such as Cubism, Expressionism, Surrealism, and *Ultraismo*, the name for various experimental tendencies in Spanish literature. The important artistic movement next to modernism was the *Vanguarda* or ‘Avant-garde’. Though this movement reflected several European trends, the chief influence was Surrealism. Due to this, many new styles were tried in the field of literature along with fine-arts like paintings. On the whole, the movement had initiated a radical search for new themes, daring ventures, and dazzling confrontational principles. All genres were conflated in implicating these techniques but the first and quick absorber was poetry. The turn of the twentieth century saw numerous outstanding poets like Pablo Neruda, German Pardo Garcia, and Nicolas Guillen.

The Chilean Gabriela Mistral was the first Latin American Nobel Laureate (1945). The credit next went to the Chilean Pablo Neruda in the year 1971. The 1990 Nobel Prize winner was the Mexican Octavio Paz who was one of the prominent post-world war II Latin American writers. Apart from these towering personalities, there arose an introspective group of writers who mused over the themes of love, solitude, and death. The meritorious writers were Jaime Torres Bodet, Jose Gorestiza, and Carlos Pellicer. Drama had a parallel growth with other genres and it featured the cultural life of the Latin American cities. The experimental restoration was highlighted by the *Teatro de Ulises* (1928) and *Taetro de Orientation* (1932) in Mexico actuated by Xavier Villaurrutia, Salvador Novo, and Celestino Gorostiza. Chile, Puerto, Rico, and Peru evinced the vibrant activities of the dramatic field. The essay of the post-modern era was adhering to
the changing tendencies of profound thoughts; national feelings, soul-searching process, and numerous universal themes, were presented in various intellectual dimensions. Jose Vosconcelos, Alfonso Reyes, and German Arcenigas were a few of the intellectuals.

Fiction was the last of all genres to arrive at the avant-garde movement. The novels written during the Mexican Revolution (1910-20) were considered to be the first modern novels. In line with the traits of the avant-garde, grew a parallel tradition led by Jorge Luis Borges. He began to experiment with apocryphal attributions. The avant-garde had also coloured the Latin American life with the African artistic lineage and indigenous tradition which eventually led to the evolution of Mexican mural paintings and native story-telling. The avant-garde merged with regionalism resulting in Magic Realism (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008). Along with the economic boom of the Post World-War II Latin America, came a significant literary Boom. It evidenced the authors crossing boundaries, both in tradition and language, and often mixed different styles of writing. The Latin American writers were influenced by the European authors, and their contribution to the literary world was replete with European techniques and styles (bookrags.com., 2008). Also the works were tended to move away from Modernism and were pre-occupied with their current problems. The website bookrags.com observes in its pages dedicated to the history of “Latin American Literature” thus:

Instead literary works focused on the problems and injustices that people were suffering across Latin America. Political turmoil in Latin American countries such as Cuba at this time influenced the literary boom as well. Some works anticipated an end to the prosperity that was occurring, even predicted old problems would resurface in near future. Some historians
believe that great authors emerge when a country is about to undergo a historical transformation. Their works foreshadowed the events to come in the future of Latin America, with the 1970s and 1980s full of dictatorships, economic turmoil and dirty wars. (2008)

Some novels of the literary boom were *El adelph* (1949) by Jose Lezama and *Cien anos de Soledad* (1967) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Some of the major writers of other genres were Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, and Jose Hernandez. The novelists Miguel Angel Asturias of Guatemala and Gabriel Garcia Marquez of Colombia received Nobel prizes in 1967 and 1982 respectively.

The last two decades of the twentieth century was termed as the Post-Boom period in which the prominent writers of the previous decades continued to publish their works of artistic merit with few or no young rivals. A remarkable literary quality was that the writers ventured beyond their countries’ boundaries to find historical themes. Another striking feature of this period was that it was endowed with a host of prolific women writers like Isabel Allende, Luisa Valenzuela, and Diamela Eltit. The turn of twenty first century evidenced the markings of the post-modern tradition also, though the line between modernism and post-modernism was not clear. On the whole, the daring enterprises of the Latin American writers continue to enrich and enliven literature. The canons of literature are flavoured by the candour of the artists resulting in astounding literary outputs.

A glimpse of such literary history may not always be the only lay out of the entire tradition. The origin of literature trails to time immemorial if oral literature and other arts
encompassing literary tradition are taken into account. The art of story-telling is in the psychic residue of the people which may be proved from the tales of ancient oral literature and modern fiction. The novel is thus an embodiment of classical and contemporary features. The true end of any art is to stimulate the expected emotions in the readers. If all the genres of literature are measured with this parameter, the novel might fit best of all. It is more intimate with the readers than any other genres. David Herbert Lawrence in his “Why the Novel Matters?” comments on the novel as:

The novel is the one bright book of life. They are only tremulations on the ether. But the novel as a tremulation can make the whole man alive tremble. Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science, or any other book – tremulation can do. (289)

The novels appeal intellectually, emotionally, and morally. They promise variety in structure, theme, plot, character, and presentation. Along with these varieties, it preserves universality. The seeds of the novel were sowed in the eleventh century in the Icelandic prose sagas. The medieval romances and ballads also had an impact in the growth of the novel. In Europe, the Spaniard Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra wrote perhaps the first influential novel Don Quixote (1605) though his first attempt in fiction was a pastoral novel, La Galatea (1585). Earlier works written in Asia like the Chinese Romance of the Three Kingdoms and the Japanese Tale of Genji by Lady Murasaki could also be considered as novels (jahsonic.com., 2007). Early novels in Europe were not recognized since they seemed simple and unimportant. The growth of the novel began a few centuries back and its contribution was at once immense. Various forms like the realistic
novel, epistolary novel, picaresque novel, and psychological novel evolved. The contribution of Latin Americans to this fabulous field is profound.

The late eighteenth century saw the emergence of this new genre in Latin American literature. The early novels were grained with Neo-Classical conviction that a reformation of society could be ensued only by a combination of intellectual individual choice and state regulations. Francisco Jairer Eugenio de Santa Cruz y Espljo was a writer of mixed heritage, his father being a Quechua and mother, a Spanish woman. He was influenced by the works of Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith, and Voltaire. He had the Neo-Classical spirit and was active in economic society. He founded Quito’s first Newspaper *Primicies de la Cultura de Quito (Seedlings of Civilization in Quito)* in 1792. He wrote satirical novels like *El Nuevo Luciano de Quito* (1779; *The New Lucian of Quito*) followed by its sequel *La Ciencia blanchardina* (1780; *Blancardian Science*). These novels cast a sarcastic eye on the schoolman’s educational programme. He was strongly after cultural reforms and his satirical manuscripts were circulated widely. Along with novels, he penned treatises on medical, religious, and legal matters. His reformative ideas were imbibed in his novels (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2008).

Francisco was followed by the Peruvian Pablo Antonio Jose de Olavide y Jauregui both in ideals and genre. He was after enlightened reformation and worked on immigration and economic projects. But he was harassed for his unorthodox religious principles as a result of which he took refuge in France. He inscribed his views on the melancholic tale, *El Evangelio en Triunfo; O, Historio de un Filosefo Desenganado* (1797; *The Gospel in Triumph; Or, History of an Undeceived Philosopher*). His
Paulina (1828), Sabina (1828), and other sentimental novels were influenced by Samuel Richardson and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. His didactic principles were transparent in all the novels. Perquillo Sarnieto (1816; The Itching Parrot, 1942) by the Mexican author Jose Joaquin Fernand de Lizardi depicted the effects and defects of colonial life through the adventurous journey of a roguish protagonist. The novel carried a tinge of criticism on the contemporary society (Wikipedia, 2008).

The Caribbean counterpart of gaucho literature instigated the Cuban anti-slavery novel which sketched the mental and physical traumas of the African slaves. Getrudis Gomez de Avellaneda wrote Sab (1841; Sab: An Autobiography) which was about a house slave who loved his white mistress. Anselmo Suarez y Romero wrote his famous Francisco (1839). The most significant work of this time was Cecilia Valdes (1882; Angel’s Hill: A Novel of Cuban Customs) by the Cuban novelist Cirilo Villaverde. It was perhaps the best Latin American novel in the nineteenth century. The novel gave voice against slavery and painted vividly the Cuban life under the clutch of Spain. The novel was romantic in spirit and realistic in trait. This new combination gave birth to a new sub-genre called the Cuadro de Costumbres or ‘Sketch of Local Customs’. Villaverde’s novel influenced the other novelists to the extent of naming their novels after the name of Villaverde’s women protagonists; Maria (1867; Maria; A South American Romance) by Jorge Isaacs of Colombia, and Amalia (1851-55; Amalia: A Romance of the Argentines). Maria was a lyric tale of doomed love on an old plantation, and it was considered to be the Hispanic masterpiece among romantic novels (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008). Michael D. Harkavy comments in The New Webster’s International Encyclopedia as, “…The Noble-Savage theme was popular
among the romantics who felt that the Indians were superior to the corrupt Europeans” (623). The renowned romantic realist of Mexico was Ignacio Altanirano. Eugenio Cambaceres of Argentina was strongly enthralled by the experimental novels of the French author Emile Zola and wrote *Sin Rumbo* (*Without Direction*, 1885).

Modernism which favoured peace, prosperity, political and economic integration of Latin American republics left its imprints on the major novelists like Manuel Diaz Rodriguez, and Enrique Larreta (Robb, 2008). Many writers bypassed modernism and wrote on regional, social, and historical themes producing realistic and gaucho novels. J.W.R. James Willis Robb observes thus:

Since 1900, the Latin American Novel in Spanish had developed in three broad phases: first a strong connection on local people, lands and problems in recent fiction; then psychological and imaginative fiction with urban and cosmopolitan settings; and finally an adoption of contemporary literary techniques, leading to a greatly increased recognition in the international world of letters. (2008)

The novels written during the Mexican Revolution (1910-20) was a channel for the bubbling emotions of the artists. The novels lined up with the conventional rules but at the same time unveiled the mask of the world to reveal its true harsh nature of cruelty, deceptiveness, and non-sentimentality, and the characters were the executors of the will of superior forces. This was exemplified in the best known Mexican Novel *Los de Abajo* (1915; *The Underdogs*) by Marino Azuela. While Mexican writers were obsessed with the themes, events, features, and results of Mexican Revolution, the rest of Latin
American writers probed into a sub-genre called *novellas de la tierra* or *novella Criollista*, which means ‘Novels of Local Colour’ or ‘Regionalist Novels.’ These novels acclaimed international reputation and evaluation. The three best outputs of this tradition were *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926) by the Argentine Ricardo Guiraldes, *Dona Barbara* (1929) by the Venezuelan Romula Gallegos, and *La Voragine* (1924; *The Vortex*) by the Colombian Jose Eustasio Rivera (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2008). All these three had a rural background and presented man’s struggle to design nature for suiting his purpose. The novels of Latin America were replete with local customs and practices, reflecting the cultural heritage of their nations. There came powerful novels with ever-living characters. They depicted cattle ranching, rubber prospects, man against nature, civilization against barbarism, virtue against vice, and natural forces.

The avant-garde narrative forms were so slow in taking up fiction and a parallel tradition similar to the characteristics of the avant-garde emerged mostly in Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, its leader being Jorge Luis Borges. When the regionalists ventured into reality, Borges looked into the books of Western tradition. He experimented with the gaucho novels replacing Greek and Biblical myths with the protagonists developed from the apocryphal references and sources. He made tales of adventurous criminal protagonists. Borge’s collection of tales was *Ficciones* (1944), a classical contribution to the literary world. Some of his tales were scathing attack on the trends of regionalism (*bookrags.com.*, 2008). By 1944, regionalism began to retreat and the avant-garde began to reiterate. It imprinted the native and African artistic tradition on Latin American literature. As a result many novels flew in depicting the brutal oppression of the native Indians and Africans. The merge of the avant-garde and regionalism brought
forth the fanciful sub-genre called Magic Realism. In the 1940s, the Cuban novelist and
musicologist Alejo Carpentier coined the term *lo real maravilloso* or ‘Marvellous
Realism’. Along with Juan Rulfo of Mexico and the Guatemalan Miguel Angel Asturias,
Carpentier was considered as a precursor of the Boom and its hallmark style of Magic
Realism. Asturias’s *El Señor Presidente* (1946; *The President*) and Carpentier’s *El
Reino de este Mundo* (1949; *The Kingdom of this World*) employed techniques of this
new trend blending natural and supernatural elements in a realistic way (*Encyclopaedia
Britannica*, 2008).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the years of so-called Boom of the Latin American
novel, there came an incessant flow of novels with varied themes and techniques;
psychological novel, novel of absurdity, metaphysical tale, sophisticated detective stories,
science-fiction, and novel of magical dimension enriched Latin American literature.
Notable Boom writers were Garcia Marquez of Colombia, Julio Cortazar Onetti of
Uruguay, Jose Donoso of Chile, and Jose Lezama Lima and Guillemero Cabera Infante
of Cuba. These writers adopted the style and techniques of their contemporary European
and American novelists, James Augustine Aloysius Joyce, William Cuthbert Faulkner,
Marcel Proust, and Ernest Miller Hemingway. The element which was often infrequent
till then, that is humour, appeared in the works of Garcia Marquez, Cortazar, and
Caberera Infante. Also sexual themes were dealt with frankly breaking the taboo (Robb,
2008). Juan Rulfo, a Mexican, could be perhaps the first magical realist. His novel *Pedro
Paramo* (1955) was a masterpiece, and it was the story of a chieftain who gave the price
of many lives for his overvaulting ambition. The story was narrated by multiple
characters, some of them who speak from their graves. It was like a miniature Inferno.
Garcia’s *Cien Anos de Soledad* (1967) was a sweeping success, and it was hailed as the hallmark presentation of magical realism. Though Latin America was commercially successful during this era, the works of this period depreciated modernization that was on stream. Literary works centred on the problems and injustices faced by the people across Latin America. Alok Bhalla observes in *Latin American Writers* thus; “One could, perhaps, read the novel as simultaneously a nostalgia for paradise and a meditation on the history of cruelty, lust, egotism, greed and fear which have made our return back to splendour almost impossible” (88).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Post-Boom period, the major novelists continued to dominate the literary scene with their newly published works of considerable merit. The authors like Fuentes and Vargas Llosa looked beyond their mother land in search of historical themes. A tremendous literary development during this time was the rise of a host of excellent women writers who were mostly novelists. Isabel Allende of Chile, Luisa Valenzuela of Argentina, Diamela Eltit of Chile with Puerto Ricans Ana Lydia Vega and Rosarie Ferv were a few of the established women novelists (*Wikipedia*, 2008).

In the present context, the novelists of Latin American literature surpass precincts in the optimistic sense thereby winning name and fame. Their works are acclaimed all over the world, and they are estimated highly for their valuable presentation and valid themes. Their approach and appeal are universal that the literary world applauds their boundless merits. Along with the current techniques, some writers renew the old techniques to suit the modern trend and thought. The picaresque novel is one among the sub-genres of fiction which demand much attention and attraction. Dating from its origin, many writers continue to write the picaresque novels.
The sub-genres of novel promote variety. Of them, the one which promises interest along with variety is the picaresque novel. The word *picaresque* is derived from the Spanish *picaresca* which persisted as a precise genre with a particular form and technique in Spanish literature. In it, the word *picaro* refers to a rogue or scoundrel who earns his living through wit than wok. If the origin of the word is traced, it is found that the word *picaro* was first used by Eugenio de Salazar of Toledon in a letter written on the 15th of April 1560. The philologists were against the etymological origin of *picaro*, that is *picas* which means ‘to pick up’ though it suggests a *picaro*’s main profession in life.

Sebastian Covarrubias y Orozio, a Spanish lexicographer, in his *Tesora de la Lengua Castellana* (Madrid, 1611) counted a *picaro* as a man of loose character engaged in servile work and also a rascal who achieves his end through hypocritical ways *(LovetoKnow Free Online Encyclopedia, 2008)*. Roger Fowler states in *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* thus:

The Spanish ‘picaro’ or ‘picaron’, the anti-hero of such a novel, was translated into English as ‘picaroon’, he was a scoundrel of low-birth and evil life, at war with society. He was on his own, and the form of the novel is commonly an autobiographical account of his fortunes, misfortunes, punishments and opportunism. The tales are episodic, frequently arranged as journeys. The endings are abrupt, either as the picaroon sets off for America for a ‘new life’ or for the galleys. This allows a sequel to be added; but the mode is not formless. (177)

A genuine novella *picaresca* existed in Spain before the expression *picaro* became common. A picaresque tale is a first-person narrative which gives an account of the
episodic adventures of a rogue or a low-born human. The action of the story takes place at various spots and proceeds on with various characters. This allows the author to satirize the society. The imaginative skill of the author is exhibited through the plot of the story while the language, incidents, and characters give it a realistic touch.

It is believed that the genre has classical antiquity in *Baital Pachisi*, a Sanskrit legend, *Satyricon* of Petronius, and *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. The characters Encolpos, Ascytlos, and Gilton in *Satyricon* were with impeccable traits of a picaroon. Though the tradition continued in *Lucian, Oman de Renart, Fableux* and other works popular during Middle Ages, it is a general opinion that during that period, the fables absorbed the theme with roguery transferred from man to animal. Some of the works of Geoffrey Chaucer and Giovanni Boccaccio had the picaresque elements but if adhered sincerely to the codes of the genre, the tribute of being the earliest specimen of this genre goes to *La Vida de Lazarilla de Tormes y de Sus Fortunas y Adversidades*. Anthony J. Close specifies its influence drawn from Apuleius in his *The Legacy of Don Quijote and the Picaresque Novel* thus:

The author of *Lazarillo* borrows from Apuleius’ story the formula “wandering servant of many masters,” suppresses the supernatural and macabre aspects, and accentuates the comedy and possibilities of satire. (18)

*Lazarillo de Tormes* was attributed to Diego Hurlado de Mendoza but its authorship and publication details were obscure. It was taken that its publication could never be after 1554, and it was reprinted thrice before 1559. Inquisition had prohibited the tale since it
attacked the clergyman. In spite of that, the tale was widely read and soon appeared its sequel in 1555 at Antwerp, *La Segunda Parte de Lazarillo de Tormes*. It could not be considered as meritorious as its prequel because it lacked the tenor and probity of the first part. The sequel related the story of a pious young man who was changed onto a tunny by Virgin Mary thus saving him from death. After countless experiences in the form of tunny, he was at last restored into human shape and was to teach submarine language in Salamanca University. Many underhand copies of the first part circulated throughout Spain in spite of the Inquisition’s attempts to suppress them. At last an expurgated copy was authorized (*LovetoKnow Free Online Encyclopedia*, 2008). Close further observes about the framework set by this narrative as, “*Lazarillo* fixed the formula that would be exploited and freely varied by subsequent picaresque novelists” (16).

In 1599, Mateo Aleman’s *Primera Parte de Guzman de Alfarache* was published which was modelled upon *Lazarillo de Tormes*. It was the autobiography of a Genoese money lender’s son. The author had advocated ethical values throughout, and its reception was good. *Guzman de Alfarache* proved Aleman as an adept in introducing variety of episodes and in character portrayal. Aleman’s contemporaries were stunned by the astounding success of his fiction. The next to come of this genre was the *Segunde Parte de la Vida del Picaro Guzman de Alfarache* by Juan Jose Marti under the pseudonym of Mateo Lujan de Sayavedra in 1602. Both in *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzman de Alfarache*, it was difficult to differentiate the imaginary incidents and the personal memoirs of the authors. Augustine de Rojan’s *Viage entretenido*, published in 1603, was the first to give off the first-hand experiences of the author as a strolling actor
and playwright. It stood unexcelled for its literary merits and its pictorial representation of low-life. The credit of introducing female picaroon went to *La Picara Justina* written by Francisco Lopez de Obeda in 1605. But it could not acquire the true reputation which was ascribed to the picaresque novels because of its affected diction and lack of originality (1911 encyclopedia.org, 2008).

A great personality in the picaresque tradition was Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra who wrote *Don Quixote* and *Pedro de Urdemalas*, the meritorious works of picaroon lineage. Gines de Pasamonte was one of the secondary figures in *Don Quixote*, and one could encounter the profulgent demonstration of a Spanish picaroon’s traits in him. Cervantes differed from Aleman by giving more emphasis on aestheticism than moral attributes in his narrative. The autobiographical sketches began to flow in constantly, and *Viage de Mundo* (1614) by a missionary Pedro de Cevallos narrated the author’s experiences in the slums of Andalusia, his life as a sinful soldier in America, and finally his redemption which accomplished his spiritual conversion. Some of the novels which came during this period were Cristobal Suarez de Figueroa’s *El Pasagero* (1617), Francois Loubayssin de Lamarea’s *Enriquez de Castro* (1617), and *Enganos Deste Singlo y Historia Sucedida en Nuestros Tiempos* (1615) which contained perilous picaresque episodes. The most influential work of this era was *Relaciones de la Vida del Escuderp Marcos de Obregon* (1618) by Vincente Martinez Espinel. Its luminous style and lucid expressions secured a prominent place in this genre, and it was utilized by Le Sage in *Gil Blas*. The next prominent writer was Alonso Jeronima de Salas Barbadillo. He was the first to experiment the picaresque tenets with innovation. He rejected the autobiographical form in his *La Hija de Celestina* (1612); there was a shift between
dialogue and verse in *El Subtil Cordobes Pedro de Urdemalas* (1620); and the protagonist of *El Necio Bier Afortunado* (1621) was pictured as a cunning dolt in spite of a clever rogue (*LovetoKnow Free Online Encyclopedia*, 2008).

A great work of this series which was often praised with that of *Don Quixote* was *Alonso, Mozode Muchos Amos* (1624-26) by Jeronima de Alcada Yanez y Ribera. It expressed the religious flavour and contained precise information about the Spanish gypsies. The true life characters were inscribed onto the tales to give vivid sketches of reality. At this time came the novels of a great satirist Francisco Gomez de Quevedo y Villegas. His *Vida del Buscon Don Pablos* (1626) was a turning point where the form and technique were adapted whereas the other conventions were moulded to suit reality. The website *1911 encyclopedia.org* comments in its article “The Picaresque Novel” as follows:

There is no attempt to scare the wicked by means of awful examples; the moral lesson is contemptuously thrown aside; the vein of romance rent in twain, and the *picaro* - the nephew of the public executioner - is revealed as he is, gloating in cruelty and reveling in the conscious enjoyment of crime. But though Quevedo detests mankind, his morose vision of existence rarely degenerates into caricatures. In his repugnant misanthropic masterpiece the sordid genius of the Spanish picaroon finds absolute expression. Nothing further remained to be done in the matter of realism; hence the taste for picaresque novels grew less keen, and later writers unconsciously began to humanize their personages. (2008)
Diego Tovar y Valderrama wrote *Don Raimiendo el Entretenido* (1627) only to find that the interest in the picaresque heroes was fast waning. Though many stories came along the tradition to blaze people’s interest, the authors found to their dismay that the heroines and heroes could no longer interest the public as realism was taking in. Their survival was guaranteed only through translation. The works were translated to French and Portuguese. *El Siglo Pitagorizo* (1644) by Antonio Enriquez Gomez was a great influence to Le Sage and he utilizes the episodes in his *Gil Blas* (1715). Quevedo’s *The Buscon* was the last great book of this tradition in the seventeenth century since realism started dominating the literary scene (*LovetoKnow Free Online Encyclopedia*, 2008).

There were many fervent followers of this genre in the twentieth century that their contributions intertwined with the other facets of life. Camilo Jose Cela’s *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942) was a memoir of its protagonist narrating his childhood in a small village in Extremadura. Pio Baroja’s marginalized protagonists undergo persistent search for finding a meaning for their lives. His protagonist of *El Arbol de la Ciencia* (1911) was modelled upon Lazaro and Guzman, the ancient and famous picaroons. Luis Martin Santos was one among this lineage with his production *Tiempo de Silencio* (1962) which depicted the contemporary scenario with its sordid realities (Close, 17-18). With regard to the modern development, Close observes thus:

> Obviously, modern Spanish novelists, when harking back to the old picaresque models, recreate them in accord with contemporary concerns. The theme of the individual’s quick-witted struggle for survival in an urban jungle, treated farcically in the picaresque classics, now acquires somber, socially critical, and existentialist reflections. (18)
The picaresque tales made their entrance into the European countries with the translation of *Lazarilla de Tormes*. It was translated to French in 1561, Dutch in 1579, and an English version was probable before these years (*1911 encyclopedia.org.*, 2008). Thomas Nash was the first to initiate pure English picaresque novels, the first being his *The Unfortunate Traveller; or the Life of Jack Wilton* (1594). Nash related the adventures of Jack Wilton, a pageboy of Henry VIII. He travelled widely through France, Germany, Flanders, and Italy. The novel displayed the splendour of Italian courts and arts. It was filled with intrigues, violence, blood-sheds, and horror. Arthur Crompton-Rickett observes in *A History of English Literature* as:

Nash, like Greene, took the rogue in hand and painted with skill and fidelity, the needy adventures of the time *The Unfortunate Traveller or The Life of Jack Wilton* (1594), but unlike his contemporary he did so with a smile on his lips. He found the English novel suffering from too much sentiment, and promptly freshened it with his light-hearted humour. (108)

During the earlier years of the seventeenth century, the picaresque spirit was kept alive through numerous translations from the Spanish language. Then came in 1665, the *Life of Meriton Latroon, a Witty Extravagant* by Richards Head and Francis Kirkman. They were too indebted to their Spanish sources. The genre got its prominence only during the time of Daniel Defoe. His masterpiece was *Moll Flanders* with a female picaroon. It was clear that he had derived this idea from *La Picara Justina*. Though the work of Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, lacked in satiric spirit, it was found excessively in his *Colonel Jack*
which pointed out the various kinds of vices and wickedness (LovetoKnow Free Online Encyclopedia, 2008).

The tradition was faithfully followed by Henry Fielding in his novels like Jonathan Wild and Tom Jones and by T. Smollett in his Ferdinand, Count Fathom. Tom Jones is built strongly on the basis of the picaresque elements. It narrates the story of Tom Jones, a foundling. He wanders off home as he is driven away from his patron. He is neither roguish nor cunning in nature. He crosses various spots, meets with different incidents, and comes in contact with strange characters like gypsies and the man on the hill. The writer has made the story sensational, interesting, and thrilling. He has painted the exact panorama of different societies and sects with which the protagonist is in contact with. Despite these strong elements of picaresque, one could easily identify that Tom Jones deviated from the pre-ordained principles of picaresque in some aspects. The character of the protagonist and style of presentation were definitely different from the pre-existed Spanish picaresque novels and the novelist’s individuality penetrated in presenting the organic structure. The Spanish adopted the form and technique under a precise genre, but the English took it as a literary technique. Also it was believed that the English novels were in deficient of the sense of religious redemption of delinquency which was very important in the Spanish novels (Wikipedia, 2007)

As we move on through the history of the picaresque novel, it is evident that the novelists keep changing the features of the genre though the basic principles were observed. The stories are designed to suit the reader community and contemporary society. In spite of the formal loose episodic structure, the modern picaresque novel has a well-knit plot. The protagonist is rarely a rogue and he is presented with a humane
outlook, at least good at heart. The end of the novel has something to impart to the readers through the protagonist. After reading the modern picaresque novels, Edwin Muir in his *The Structure of the Novel* suggests that the word picaresque may be allowed to have a wider perspective with traditional meaning associated with it. He attributes these traits to Charles Dickens too (*1911 encyclopedia.org*, 2008). Thus, the expectation of the modern era is accomplished by the colourful altering and additions to the already existing parameters of antiquity. The modern writers worldwide write vigorously blending various techniques and presenting multiple themes. Their colossal contribution is commensurable with ancient times. Isabel Allende, a Latin American writer who fits perfectly into this tradition, adorns the highest pedestal of literary achievements. With reference to the Latin American literary tradition, even the first magnificent novel of the nineteenth century *The Itching Parrot* by Fernand de Lizardi carried the adventurous spirit, its pages picturing the journey of a roguish protagonist. Similarly the twentieth century novelist Borges presented tales of criminal protagonists with adventurous spirit. In the contemporary scenario, Isabel Allende has carved a niche in adopting this literary technique.

Isabel Allende was born in Lima, Peru on August 2, 1942. Her father was Tomas Allende who served as a Chilean ambassador to Peru and her mother, Francisca Llona, was also from a diplomatic family. Both her maternal and paternal lineages had political background. Allende’s uncle and godfather, Salvador Allende, was the first democratically elected socialist candidate in the world. He served as the President of Chile from 1970 to 1973. Allende first stepped into Chile with her mother when her father abandoned the family. Much of her childhood was spent in Bolivia and Lebanon.
The first acquaintance with Chile did not seem to alter or influence the tender mind of Allende. She attended a number of private schools in Chile and Lebanon, and had a brief home-schooling too. She was a voracious reader reading widely the works of William Shakespeare. During Allende’s second refuge to Chile at the time of civil war in 1958, her grandfather enticed her expounding the terrain of Chile, and stuffed her with sample knowledge about the country. He was one of her major inspirations. In Paula, she states his influence as, “My daily visits with Tata provided me with enough material for all the books I have written, possibly for all I will ever write” (119). Allende took his ideals and principles, and reflected them in her life faithfully.

Allende’s marriage with Miguel Frias in 1962 broke half-the-way leaving their children, Paula and Nicolas, in her hands. Meanwhile, she entered the realm of journalism. She worked in a feminist magazine Paula, in a children’s magazine Mampato, in television shows and in movie documentaries. She hosted two talk shows on Chilean stations 13 and 7. Once in an interview with Pablo Neruda, she was appreciated by that famous poet for her imaginative skill, and he had suggested her to write novels. Upon his advice, she compiled her satirical columns in book form and made the follow-up to become a writer. She also published two children’s stories La Abuela Panchita and Lauchos y Lauchones. She also contributed to the genre drama by writing The Ambassador (1970), and published a collection of articles. For a brief while, she translated the novels of romance from English to Spanish. She was criticized for altering the dialogues of the heroines to make them very sharp and intelligent, and also for modifying the end of Cinderella stories thus letting the heroines to be independent and do things for common good. Though her endeavours of this kind were criticized, it is explicit
that she wanted the feminine world to be perfect and to have social responsibilities in addition to their personal ones. In an interview with Bob Baldock and Dennis Bernstein, her hidden thirst for this ideal is revealed. She says, ”I see a more feminine world, a world where feminine values will be validated, the same as masculine values are. A more integrated world” (2004). The world of feminism interested her much but not politics though it was the backdrop of her family.

In 1973, the military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte assassinated Salvador Allende and it made Isabel Allende to flee to Venezuela with her family. With reference to this great turmoil, Tim McNeese elaborates on Allende’s stance as follows:

As a journalist she took pains to record the stories of those who had been terrorized by the new regime. She spoke to the families of those who had been killed and wrote their stories of torture, terror, and death. She would one day weave some of these stories into her first novel, *The House of the Spirits*. (65)

During the 1970s, she worked for different newspapers and literary magazines. After, she served as an administrator at Morocco College, a secondary school in Caracas. In 1979, by the way of responding to the letter which contained the news of her grandfather’s fatal illness, she started writing a letter to that dying man who had played a pivotal role in shaping, influencing, and perfecting Allende’s mind and soul. Later, she realized that it was not merely a letter, but a novel of wide acclaim. It was her first novel *La casa de los espíritus (The House of the Spirits)* which was first published in Barcelona in 1982 after being rejected by several Spanish publishers. It proved to be successful in the French and
German editions in 1989 and in its English translation in 1985. The novel received many critical receptions for its treatment of magical realistic technique. Adan Griego in “Stanford Presidential Lectures in the Humanities and Arts” monitors Allende’s debut novel thus:

Using a narrative style in which the magical and the real blend together seamlessly, Allende traces the history of her native (although unnamed) Chile through several generations of women, upto the after math of the tragic 1973 coup d’état. It is narrated by the granddaughter of the clan, Alba who pieces together her family’s past from numerous notebooks written by her grandmother, Clara. It is both a family saga and an account of the tragic fate of a country under the tyranny of military rule-where the personal and the historical blend together just as do the magical and the real. (1)

A film version of this book was made by a Dutch director Bitle August in 1993. Her magical realist approach made her famous among the Latin American writers and she was compared with Gabriel Garcia Marquez. In one of her interviews, she accepts that the masterpiece of Garcia Marquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude, has influenced her. She was also influenced by the writers like Carlos Fuentes, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, Jose Donoso, and so many writers of her contemporary era like Educaro Galeanao.

Allende’s second novel, De amor y Sombras (1984; Of Love and Shadows, 1987) is based on political massacre. It voices against oppression and the murderers who
went unpunished. It was also featured into a film by an American director, Betty Kaplan. Though the novel is set in Chile, it has a universal appeal. It was followed by *Eva Luna* (1987; in English, 1988) which talks about forging new identity by the protagonist. *Cuentes de Eva Luna* (1989; *Stories of Eva Luna*, 1991) followed comprising the characters that appeared in her previous novel. In 1991, appeared her *El Plan Infinito* (*The Infinite Plan*, 1993) which is a bildungsroman of the central character, Gregory Reeves. The tragic illness and death of her daughter Paula was made into a memoir *Paula* (1994; in English 1995). Her intensive emotional excitement could be sensed here as that of her first novel. It was an added merit to her achievement, winning wider audience than any of her previous works. Then came *Aphrodita: Cuentes, Recetas y Otros Afrodisiacos* (1997; *Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses*, 1998) which is a collection of recipes for the dishes with aphrodisiac powers. After these two non-fictions, she wrote *Hija de la Fortuna* (*Daughter of Fortune*), published simultaneously in Spanish and English in 1999. It is a story of passion and search resulting in self-discovery. It was followed by *Retrato en Sepia* (*Portrait in Sepia*), published in May 2001 in Spanish and a few months later in English. She designed the tale in such a way that it formed a link between *Daughter of Fortune* and *The House of the Spirits*.

Isabel Allende writes magnanimously triggering her imagination to combine with real events. Her sketches are so vivid that she enthrals her readers’ mind and enhances their literary spirit. She is a wonderful story-teller who has a strong notion on the indispensable role of novels in a society. She says in an interview with Michael Toms:

I think that stories are to the society what dreams are to individuals. If you don’t dream, you go mad. Dreams somehow unclog your mind and keep
you tuned in to the unconscious world, from which you can draw experience and information. I think that’s what stories do… The power of storytelling is amazing. (41)

Along with her exquisite narrative power, her amazing adventurous spirit could be seen in her trilogy; Ciudad de las Bestias (City of the Beasts, 2002), Reino del Dragon de Oro (Kingdom of the Golden Dragon, 2003), and El Bosque de los Pigmeos (Forest of the Pygmies, 2005), which narrates the adventurous journeys of Alexander Cold, Nadia, and Kate Cold in three different continents, South America, Asia, and Africa respectively. The transformation of Alexander is evident at the end. In 2003, there came another novel named Mi Pais Inventado: Un Paseo Nostalgico por Chile (My invented Country: A Nostalgic Journey to Chile) which related two different national tragedies. That was followed by Zorro (2005), a tale of adventures to reclaim the hacienda on which the protagonist is raised, and Ines del Alma Mia (Ines of My Soul) in 2006 which paints vividly the life of a historical heroine who was absent in history books and who sought adventures in the New World with her lover, the Spanish Conquistador Pedro de Valdivia. Her next work La Suma de los Dios (The Sum of the Days), published in 2007, overflows with her autobiographical elements once more. La Isla Bajo el Mar (Island Beneath the Sea, 2009) is her latest fiction which drafts the story of an eighteenth century slave in Santo Domingo who struggles to get freedom and to secure a life in the male dominated White society.

Allende’s folk tale eloquence and luminous expressions have added reputation to her career. Her works comprise elements of feminism, search for identity, search for self, the culture of Latin America, role of women in Latin America, autobiography, memoir,
picaresque, romance, patriotism, humanism, and so on. Her gracious use of magical realism proves her to be a writer of considerable merit and indubitable excellence. Her series of novels is an exemplification for her dedication to her profession but more than being a mere story-teller, she astonishes the readers with her extended knowledge on life and soul. With perfect ideals on life, she is a great humanist concerned with the betterment of humanity, particularly through spiritual means. As she is a meritorious writer so is she an optimistic thinker, who charges against the waning spirit of man. She says in the interview with Michael Toms:

I don’t think that we’re going to destroy ourselves with ozone layer or a nuclear holocaust. I think that we’re going to survive and be better … I think there are new forces in the society that are leading to change… So I’m hopeful, very hopeful. (43)

Of the countless international prizes Allende has won like the Chilean Cultural Award; Common Wealth Award of Distinguished Service for Literature, USA 2004; and International Women’s Forum Award, Mexico 2002; Condicorcion Gabriela Mistral stands distinguished since she is the first woman to receive this honour. She has received many honorary degrees from various academic institutions, and she is a reputed member of the Academia de la Langua in Chile, American Academy of Arts and Letters, and being a Chevalier dans l’ordre des Arts et des letters in France. In 2006, she was one of the prestigious eight flag bearers at the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy. At present, Allende lives with her second husband, Willie Gordon and with their family settled in Sausalito near San Francisco.
The object of any art is fulfilled if its message and beauty of presentation are spread throughout, transcending boundaries. The valuable resources of one end should enrich the literature of another end. Translation is the only tool to achieve this. The culture and nature of a country or continent can be well comprehended through the translated works. In the literary world, the valid and worthy works of literature would remain unknown and unexplored in alien areas but for translation. Translation is the key to open the treasury of foreign literature. Tom Mc Arthur narrates about translation in *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* as follows:

Translation … The restatement of the forms of one language in other: the chief means of exchanging information between different language communities. Translation is a fundamental yet often overlooked element in life and has played decisive part in the development of language like English, especially by promoting the flow of ideas and the spread of the literary forms in which they have been expressed…. (1052)

Translation thus plays a main role in world literature. There are many professional bodies like Institute of Translating and Interpreting (ITI), American Translators Association (ATA), International Federation of Translation (FIT), and Association Internationale des Interpretes de Conference (AIIC) to promote translation. In early 1970s, half of the world’s book production came from translation. Since the activity of translation animates the world literature, the twentieth century is referred to as the ‘Age of Translation’. The role of translators has become prominent and important.
Margaret Sayers Peden is a renowned translator who has translated almost all the works of Isabel Allende from Spanish to English. She has started translating by sheer chance. After reading one of the novels of the Mexican dramatist Emilio Carballido, she commented to her husband that it was a shame of not reading the book since it was perfect. Her husband advised her to translate it and thus came a spark within her to translate. She started translating many Latin American authors with the help of her husband who was a professor of creative writing. She has translated about forty five books. Literature and art are the two great passions of her life. She is an ardent lover of Spanish language and Hispanic culture and considers translating as a continual, learning process. Maria Del Mar Grandio comments in her article “Margaret Sayers Peden: An Open Book on Hispanic Culture” as:

Sayers Peden joins these two pillars of her life, book and Latin culture, in what has become her third passion: her work as a translator. And with good reason; she has come to be, without setting out to do so, the translator of renowned Latin American authors like Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz and Isabel Allende. Sayers Peden, like her own home, is an open book of the Hispanic Culture. (2001)

Grandio also observes, “Among all the writers, Isabel Allende is her favorite; she considers Allende above all a great friend. A photo of Allende and her husband sits on a table. And in her bedroom, Sayers Peden has a necklace made by Isabel Allende herself” (2001). With her merits, Sayers Peden stands as an excellent figure in the field of translation for which the lovers of literature shall always be grateful to her.
The present research project is an attempt to trace out the picaresque elements pervaded in the selected novels of Isabel Allende - *The House of the Spirits, Daughter of Fortune, City of the Beasts, Kingdom of the Golden Dragon, Forest of the Pygmies, Zorro*, and *Ines of My Soul*. The rationale behind the selection of the novels is that the novels under study illustrate invariably the picaresque aspects with the necessary devices that prompt research findings. *The House of the Spirits*, though limited in exhibiting the picaresque features, is taken for analysis as it is the first venture of Isabel Allende into the world of picaresque through magical realism. *Daughter of Fortune* is the best illustration of picaresque since it falls perfectly into the picaresque lineage. As the trilogy, *City of the Beasts, Kingdom of the Golden Dragon*, and *Forest of the Pygmies*, details throughout the adventurous journeys of the protagonist it is included in the analysis; also with the intention of showing that age is not a constraint in exploring the world and for knowing the principles of occult. As Allende has so far recreated one legend *Zorro* and has written one historical commemoration *Ines of My Soul*, they both, with their trans-continental adventures, are included for the research analysis.

The picaresque elements featuring through two planes, physical and spiritual, are sorted out with reference to the adventurous journeys of the protagonists. As Jonathan culler notes down in *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*:

> Literature has always been concerned with questions about identity and literary works sketch answers, implicitly or explicitly, to these questions. Narrative literature especially has followed the fortunes of characters as they define themselves and are defined by various combinations of their past, the choices they make, and the social forces that act upon them. (110)
The contribution of the supernatural elements to the development of theme is critically analyzed. The dogmas, self realization and self-actualization, which lead to the triumph of self are appraised at the backdrop of the picaresque tenets. The exposure of the explicit and implicit elements of the picaresque in the selected novels of Isabel Allende may be considered as the endeavour of this research analysis.

A review, the criticism of any work of art, plays a pivotal role in the modern literary world since it aims at perfection - perfection of presentation, perfection of ideas, and perfection in reception. While the former two cases are aimed at the artist, the latter one is at the audience. Perfection and better understanding become the core aim of a review but it is often unavoidable to see its flexibility owing to the varied perceptions of different reviewers. Controversial opinions are common even in ordinary subjects and they become so acute, with a wide range of allusions, in literary subjects. The intellectual and spiritual search, comparison, appraisal, ridicule, condemnation, satire, and there is nothing which could not be seen in reviews. Apart from its purpose of criticism, it enables one to spot out the research gaps.

Isabel Allende, who is ranked among the world’s best writers, is subjected to many reviews which are exemplifications for her wide range of readers. The reviews are multi-faceted commenting on her works, various privileges, and drawbacks. But it has to be noted that even while expressing disappointments, the reviewers never forget to applaud Allende as an excellent writer.

Allende’s debut novel *The House of the Spirits* received a wide range of reviews. Ronie-Richelle Garcia-Johnson argues that a tinge of feminism pervades throughout the
story and in a chapter of his senior honour thesis, he examines the men and women characters of Allende struggling for dominance. The reviewer has given the idea of other critics also, that Nivea, Clara, Blanca, and Alba are allegorical characters who epitomize women at various phases of Chilean social and political history. Besides the political battle, he spots the battle of sexes, which is a continuous struggle for space in the house, as a key issue. He observes:

The battle of sexes is cleverly manifested in the continuous struggle for space in the house; the main house in *The House of the Spirits* is a divided one. Allende’s magnificent representation of the fight for dominance between men and women, the discordant co-existence of the male and female, is a prime example of the author’s perception and presentation of a universal theme. (184)

Allende’s use of spatial symbolism to emphasize the action of women characters is also mentioned. At the end, the reviewer hints that the struggle is not a feminine one but it is for the justice of all classes, creeds, and sexes. Susan de Carvalho examines in her review the destiny ordained by the narrators of the novel *The House of the Spirits*. The reviewer identifies Alba, Treuba, and her family with Allende and hers. She then analyses the roots of Alba’s destiny and concludes by pointing out the mystery of Allende’s writing process as that, “...the forces which drive her and her characters to write are not completely explicable” (67). Claudia Marie Kovach’s interpretation of the novel through mask and mirror images is a mechanism for complete reconciliation and justice (1994). Also the review attempts a multi-faceted approach deducting the novel in terms of personal, social, political, institutional, and even national traits.
Linda R. Richards appreciates the characterization in Allende’s *Daughter of Fortune* in her review “Her Fortune’s Mistress” (1999). The reviewer finds the part dealing with the Californian Gold Rush quite amazing. Katrina interprets the same novel as a book of “Class status and escaping one’s birth” (2008). Also Allende, she says, elaborates on racism, inter-racial connection, and sexual exploration. The two experimental characters of her, Rosa and Eliza, are drawn for the purpose of the exploration of the themes referred to. The reviewer compares Allende with Gabriel Garcia Marquez but admits her partiality to the retelling style of Allende in such themes of love. Jay Miskowiec compares *Daughter of Fortune* with *Tom Jones*, in the respective author’s style of presenting the complexity of character (1999). Though the reviewer is not quite satisfied with this book of Allende, she appreciates the risk of innovation or experimentation or idea. It is also suggested that the novel may be called a post-modern picaresque owing to “the genre’s irony and constant juxtaposition of ideas and styles, the position of the body as a political, discursive site - in general the creation of a heterostopic text...” (1999).

The reviews of the trilogy, *City of the Beasts, Kingdom of the Golden Dragon*, and *Forest of the Pygmies*, points at Allende’s dealing of magical realism. Nora Krug of *The New York Times* comments that the book *City of the Beasts* has too many stories with unrealistic events and shallow characters (2003). Jane P.Fenn, in *School Library Journal*, expresses her interest in the mysticism and fantastic happenings in the book (2003). Sandy Mac Donald in his online review states that it is an epic quest for a mythical creature (2008). The review also sketches out the lessons that the novel imparts like respecting differences, and to draw on deep reserves to meet unforeseen challenges.
Jen Talley Exum appreciates it as, “Isabel Allende’s first novel for young adults, City of the Beasts, is a triumph of magical realism that’s part coming-of-age, part eco-thriller and part magical journey” (2008). The Central Library Evening Readers’ Group recommends this book for all age-groups (2008). Mhairi Britton, in the online review “Scientific Magic of the Amazon” lauds the novel as, “…gripping, sinister, magical, and sometimes very amusing… there is a scientific explanation for every weird and wonderful thing that happens” (2005). Mel, another online reviewer, finds the novel as a fable and mystery (2003). Mel further universalizes the atrocities done to the indigenous tribal people everywhere.

Anita Nair, in spite of accepting Allende as a classic magic realist writer, criticizes Kingdom of the Golden Dragon as an amateur attempt since it straddles too many genres, and none are blended competently and with flair (2008). But the reviewer Freewilly comments on it as another Indiana-Jones style of adventure (2007). The reviewer states that Allende combines empathetic young characters; exciting adventures; and an intelligent, sympathetic look at cultures, customs, and creatures of a remote and fairly unknown area. Kirkus Reviews calls Allende’s writing clunky and awkward (2004). In Booklist, reviewer Hazel Rochman says that though the book is thrilling, it seems too much like a travelogue (2004). Publisher’s weekly notices “the mystic aura that surrounds the story [adds] depth and excitement to a classic battle of good versus evil” (75).

Christian Perring terms Allende’s final novel of the trilogy Forest of the Pygmies as an adventurous tale which has colourful characters, exotic cultures, and positive female role models along with elements of magical realism. But the reviewer finds the
novel “strangely old-fashioned” (2005). Hazel Rochman observes the convenient use of magical realism in this book and states that the close encounters with elephants, crocodiles, snakes, and gorillas would amuse the readers more than the human resources of the novel (2008). Reyhan Harmanci of San Francisco Chronicle feels it to be a multi-cultural dose. The review states:

Allende does a good job of weaving Eastern and Western traditions together while adding doses of African history that never stray far from the story, so lessons can be learned by the readers without ever feeling like they’re taking their multi-cultural medicine. (2008)

The review of Katie Haegele notes down the two things for which Allende’s adult fiction is known for - passion and politics (2008).

Allen Barra in Houston Chronicle comments Zorro to be a picaresque novel with post-modern techniques. There is also a reference about the cultural impact on the creation of a soul and its heritage (2005). The cultural world of Zorro is also referred to by Amy Canfield in The Miami Herald. According to this review, the thrilling journey of Zorro goes “…into a world in which cultures clash as often as swords… But amid all the fun, Allende weaves in lesson in humanity as well cultures are often at cross-purposes on Zorro, but Allende makes sure their commonalities are evident” (2008). While Mishra Stone in Library Journal sees it as a crisis of identity (2008), Craig Nova in Washington Post acknowledges the enjoyment of a picaresque novel through Zorro (2005). Also the reviewer identifies plenty of actions which the Hollywood would call as non-stop actions. Allan Cogan, in the review “Zorro by Isabel Allende,” opines that Allende has written
this volume in the style of biography which provokes the thought that he might be a real person (2005). Mary Ann Gwinn calls Zorro a Hispanic Robin Hood and identifies the novel as, “Richly textured and moody, ironic and humorous…” (2005). She further remarks Allende as a writer of merit since she is capable of making the improbable seen possible. Ian Sansom in *The Guardian* goes to the extent of identifying Zorro as archetype neurotic who might be a split-personality and even a multiple-personality (2005). Jana L. Perskie lauds the fiction as a glorious literary adventure and a classical romance (2005). According to the reviewer, Allende has brought forth a hero who is more human than a demigod. It is further observed that her characters brim with life and that the novel is better than the legend of Zorro.

Jonathan Yardley observes that the fidelity to the basic historical truth has fettered Allende’s imagination in designing *Ines of My Soul* (2006). The review applauds the vivid portrayal of the book, especially in the early pages. He examines the story at the backdrop of the atrocity of the Spanish conquest. The review also mentions the romantic features amid the bloody battles of this novel. In all her novels, passion and love become the ingredients. *Providence Journal* comments it as the “Surrealistic merging of a spirit world with our world…” (2008). “The Starred Review” of the *Publisher’s Weekly* recommends this book as a tale on documented events of Ines Suarez that Allende has crafted a thrilling epic packed with passionate romances and ferocious battles (2008). Justin Delacour, in his review, points out Allende’s comparison of the brutal period of that portion of history as mentioned in *Ines of My Soul* to the present day scenario of Latin America, and that the conquistadores change a culture, a race, a religion, and a whole continent (2006). A *Boston Globe* review concludes that *Ines of My Soul* might be
the best novel of Allende even better than *The House of the Spirits,* and it is enjoyable not because of the style of presentation but for the question it rises (2008). Wendy L. Smith starts the review by mentioning the dominant elements in the novel; love and power. Though the reviewer is disappointed to have such historical fiction from Allende, he observes thus:

> Allende's purpose is sincere enough: to enlighten us about Inés Suárez, a real person who played a major role in the Spanish annexation of Chile; to give credit to the unacknowledged women who helped found the New World; to engage us in a couple of passionate love stories. (2006)

The reviews and criticisms referred to enhance the level of perception and pave the way for the better understanding of the works of Allende thus providing a scope for the current research analysis.

The objective of the current research project is to explore the underlying concepts manifested through the picaresque elements as handled by Allende in the novels under scrutiny. The conceptual framework of the research focuses on the physical journey, inward development, and magical realism culminating in the research findings.

The current research entitled “Picaresque Elements in the Novels of Isabel Allende: A Critical Analysis” is structured into five chapters, “Introduction,” “Transcending Boundaries,” “Turning Inward,” “Magical Realism,” and “Summation,” of which the first chapter “Introduction” has sketched the attributes of literature, Latin American literature, novel, picaresque novel, the making of the writer Isabel Allende, the
importance of translation, the merits of Allende’s translator Margaret Sayers Peden, and the review of literature.

The second chapter “Transcending Boundaries” primarily deals with the aspects of picaresque with reference to its flexible nature directed by time and space. Allende’s protagonists are analyzed in the light of picaroon and the motive which determines their course of action is analyzed. A detail analysis of the protagonists’ physical journeys follows with special reference to the crucial moments of the travel which bring forth their transformation and reformation. Bildungsroman traits pervading *Daughter of Fortune* and the trilogy are highlighted.

The third chapter is “Turning Inward.” As this is concerned with mind and heart, the importance of human mind and the proper use of will power are examined at the outset. It details the ways in which the protagonists’ illusions and negative emotions are uprooted through their journeys resulting in the improvement of self. Allende’s central characters are not averse to change and their transformation has resulted not only in the betterment of self but also in giving shelter to the oppressed and the victim group.

The fourth chapter “Magical Realism” gives a brief account of the origin of the term and its development. The magical realist episodes of the novels under study are focused and the underlying elements which contribute to the thematic framework are examined. Ecological concerns of the author are monitored and the power of animal totems that activates human energy is scrutinized.

The fifth and final chapter is “Summation” which briefs the essence of the previous chapters and their contribution to the research findings. Allende’s usage of
symbols and other literary techniques are analyzed with reference to the theme. The research findings are enumerated with reference to journey motif in general and individual movement in particular.

The documentation is done following the guidelines given in the seventh edition of *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.*