LIFE AND FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

Arundhati Roy was born on 24 November 1961, in Shillong, Meghalaya to a Keralite Syrian Christian mother and a Bengali Hindu father, a tea planter by profession. Her mother, Mary Roy was well known social activist. Their conjugal lives were unhealthy and affected Roy badly. She said in an interview with Sunday plush-

I do not want to discuss my father. I do not know him at all. I have only seen him a couple of time, that’s it

She spent her childhood in Aymanam, in Kerala, schooling in Corpus Christi. She left Kerala for Delhi at age 16, and embarked on a bohemian lifestyle, staying in a small hut with a tin roof within the walls of Delhi’s Feroz shah Kotla and got the work of labeling on empty bottles. Then she proceeded to study architecture at the Delhi School of Architecture, where she met her first husband, the architect Gerard Da Cunha. Arundhati met her second husband, Pradeep Kishen, a film-maker, in 1984, under whose influence she moved into films. She acted in the role of a village girl in the award-winning movie Massey Sahib, and wrote the screenplays for In Which Annie Gives it Those Ones and Electric Moon. She also wrote the screenplay for The ‘Banyan Tree’, a television serial.

Manju Kapur was born in 1948 in Amritsar in India. She teaches English at Delhi University under the Manju Kapur Dalmia. She is a contemporary Indian novelist in English who has established herself with her first novel Difficult Daughters (1998), which won her prestigious commonwealth writers’ prize in 1998. She has also written best seller novels such as A Married Woman (2002), Home (2006), The Immigrant (2008) and Custody (2011). Her books have been translated into many other languages both in India and outside. She left her own mark in English novels and tried to portray Indian traditions, culture, patriarchy and social customs. Her novels reveal the life of women, their struggle for basic rights, quest for identity and struggle for survival. Her characters inherit the feeling of self-reliance.

In an interview with Hindustan Times she says that
Writing is “conveying a world view, it aims to persuade, to convince, to move. Obviously it is easier if you attempt to do all this with something you know.”

Githa Hariharan, another dominant woman novelist, was born in 1954 in Coimbatore in the state Tamil Nadu in the south of India and grew up in Bombay and Manila, and got her education in these two places besides the U.S.A. She has been an editor, first in a publishing house and then as a freelancer. Githa Hariharan is also a social activist known for her care and concern for women. In 1995, she challenged the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act as discriminative in the Supreme Court of India and was granted victory.

Indian English literature is a product of Indo-English literary relations which develops during English regime in India. England and India had come together or had been thrown together and out of their closeness whether legitimate or illegitimate had come into Indo-Anglian literature. By 1857, integration of British power under the East India Company had taken place. From 1857 to 1900, English Education spread rapidly. The next twenty years saw a further spread of English education and there were notes of discontentment. Then there was arrival of Mahatma Gandhi, and from 1920-1947, a unique revolution against the British bureaucracy in India was led under the leadership of Mahatama Gandhi. Indo-Anglian literature was used for the first time in 1833 when a book printed in Calcutta had it’s title “Indo-Anglian literature” which contained “Specimen Composition from Native Students”. Later, it was used by K.R. Srinivasa Iyenger and other writers. Mulk Raj Anand refers to Indo-Anglian writing as “an active school of didactic and creative art”. Indian writing in english is actually one of the voices in which India speaks. C.R. Reddy points out in the book Indo-Anglian literature:

Indo-Anglican literature is not essentially different in kind from Indian literature. It is a part of it, a modern facet of that glory which, commencing from the Vedas, has continued to spread it’s mellow light, now with greater and now with lesser brilliance under the inexorable vicissitudes of time and history, ever increasingly up to the present time of Tagore, Iqbal and Aurobindo Ghose and bids fair to expand with our and humanity’s expanding future.
Though the history of Indian writing in English is not much old but it has its origin in the field of English literature. As a matter of fact, Some Indians trying to accomplish creative self expression through English medium has given us Indo-Anglian literature. Indian English Literature is a combination of Indian literature and English language. Indian English Literature refers to only those works which have been written by Indian writers in the English and whose dialectic language could be one among the various languages of India. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora. It is known as Indo-Anglian literature. K.R.S Inger has very rightly pointed out-

It is legitimate to view Indo Anglian Literature as a curious native eruption, an expression of the practical no less than creative genius of the Indian people.  

As a category, this type of work comes under the broader realm of postcolonial literature which is the production from previously colonized countries such as India. India writing in English is comparatively related with recent history; it is few years old approximately one and half century. The first English book was written by an Indian “Travels of Dean Mahomet” in 1793 in England. Most of the early writing in English was non-fictional work, such as biographies, reminiscences and political essays. Indian English literature which began as a small plant has now grown and its branches spread in various directions. Indian writing in English is influence by writing in English. In its way Indo-Anglian literature has contributed to the common pool of world writing in English. It has achieved new range and power. Since 1920, English education and the use of English has been criticized, and Hindi has been considered as the possible substitute for English Indian constitution gave a farther imputes to English for a period of fifteen years. Sri Rajagopalachari favored use of English language for national and international purposes, as also the medium of teaching in higher education. The other feature of English language is that it is the veritable link for intellectual discourse between the east and the west, especially India and England. It is a two way traffic as we trace that Indian thought from Vedic period has found it’s way in the west. Prominent thinkers like Rammohan Ray, Swami Vivekanand, Tagore, shri Arbindo, M.K.Gandhi and Dr. Radhakrishnan have interacted to the western world. They used English as the powerful means of
communicating their message to the world. These stalwarts were the real makers of modern India, and what they said and wrote must be taken as our national literature. Therefore, English is one of our national languages, and Indo-Anglian literature as one of our national literature. Indian writing in English has come out on hospitable soil from a seed brought from the west.

The novel as a literary phenomenon is new to India. Epics, lyrics, dramas, short stories and fables have their long history. The novel as the sustained piece of prose fiction has taken roots in India during a period of more than a century. It came out as the formal written prose in the regional languages for functional and artistic purposes. Christian missionaries translated the Bible into Indian languages with the help of Indian scholars. And thus use of prose came into force for official use, for petitions, records, journalism etc. Then western classics were translated into a number of spoken languages of the people. The next step was the translation of original works under the inspiration of Western models.

Novels have been published in a dozen Indian Languages, and also in English. It has been facilitated due to comparative ease with which a novel can be translated from one language to another. It was in Bengal where the ‘literary renaissance’ started, and it was to be followed in the cities like Madras, Bombay, and other parts of India. Thus Indian fiction in English continuously developed due to following some definite patterns and it is not difficult to describe its gradual progression from the imitative stage to the realistic, from psychological to the experimental stage.

Indian fiction in English can be divided into two parts: Pre-independence and post independence era. The credit of real beginning of Indian Fiction in English goes to Bankim Chandra Chatarjee’s first novel Rajmohan’s wife published in 1864. There are a large number of Indian novels that deal with nationalist movement. The novelists of pre-independence era reveal the problems of livelihood and social status, the question of poverty, self-respect of national issues, the adoption of foreign language, and to some extent religious and cultural upbringing. All these realistic elements of pre-independence era are remarkably worked out in narrative pattern and thematic contents in the fiery talk of
Henry Derojio, the spiritual prose of Tagore and the pacifist pronouncement advocated by Gandhi.

With the coming of the trio - Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R.K. Narayan, the Indian English Fiction has begun its journey. The novelists like Bhawani Bhattacharya and Manohar Malgaonkar also felt the necessity about participation, bloodshed and positive association and reconciliation into varied groups that under led Indians cultural sensibility in mass. Bhattacharya’s novel So Many Hungers covers the war years with their uncertainties, privations, agonies, and frustrations. Kanthapura depicts orthodoxy pitted against reform, exploitation against sufferance, the corrupt officers against the self respecting villagers. Though most of the time they portrayed the village life and the incidental effect of freedom movement. They can’t have themselves away from Gandhian philosophy while they want or not, consciously or unconsciously entered into their creative writings.

But it is in this phase that we come across excellent novels for the first time, as is evident from Mulk Raj Anad’s Untouchable (1935), coolie. In his next batch of three novels Anand realistically the period of post war in India in his trilogy, Village, Across the Black Waters and The Sword and the Sickle. The Big Heart (1945) reproduces the terrific intensity of Untouchable. Across the Black Waters (1940) project his commonsense, his sense of the ache of Indian humanity and his compassion for the disinherited and the lowly or the Daridra Narayana. R.K. Narayan is the next important novelist who takes the craft serious and constantly strives to improve the instrument in the field of fiction writing in English, with his masterpieces like Bachelor of Arts (1936), The Dark Room (1938), The English Teacher (1945), Waiting for the Mahatma (1945), and with his best novel The Guide (1958) Swami and Friend (1935), Raja Rao is a novelist and short story writer, and reveals in his works his sensitive awareness of the forces let loose by the Gandhiyan revolution. His four most famous books are novels Kanthapura (1938), The Serpent and the Rope (1960), The Cat and Shakespeare, and The Cow of the Barricades (1947).
Indian English fiction has always played a very important role to the changes of the reality of materialistic world and theoretical perspectives that have affected and regulated its study since the time of its origin. Some Indian writers like K. S. Venkataramani, Murugan the Tiller (1927) is a novel with a river background. He can be called the first Indian English Novelist. Bhawani Bhattacharya’s novel So Many Hungers (1947), He who rides a Tiger (1954), A Goddess Named Gold (1960) and Shadow from Ladakh (1966) from an impressive achievement. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi in 1967 and makes a position in the field of Indian fiction in English. Chaman Nahal and Khushwant Singh’s most works wrote are Train to Pakistan (1956) and I shall not Hear the Nightingale (1959). Indian English fiction concentrated on the description of social reality of the times. And the works of all these writers are based on realism. The critical evaluations of their works were searched to explore how much they were successful in giving expression to the reality around them. Much of the study was based on sociological and Marxist theory. Far from all views, study of external reality and the psychological reality expressed through different characters which formed a different aspect of literary criticism.

The remarkable phenomenon that one finds amidst the artistic and visionary perspectives of these novelists is that they did not find much scope to analyze the human nature with an inner most delving as the novelists of post-modern era. The second important phase of Indian Fiction in English is different from the first phase as the writers
of the second era developed recognizable mastery over English language. The external struggle for freedom and livelihood of the pre-independence became an internal drama of the post independent age. More stress is laid on the psychic analysis of character and exposing mental states of exiles living abroad. We have thus reached the point where we are able to see Indian writing in English as a distinctive literature.

In an essay written in 1989, Anita Desai is all praise for Indian English Fiction of those days when she comments:

The changing landscapes of life, politics, geography, hunger, love, are explored in contemporary Indian fiction, as in literature of the country's past…. A character in R. K. Narayan’s story is both "from far away' and going 'far away again' not unlike Indian authors today… Indian authors are impelled by a knowledge of the past and a visionary stance toward the present; they take keen notice of the struggles.5

Contemporary Indian English writers experiment in English language. There are various Indian English Fiction writers who have shocked the literary world with their works that have enriched the literary world, and they have been awarded prizes in the field of literature. But a careful study of their development makes it clear there are two kinds of writers who contributed to the fiction. The first group of writers focused on the various social problems of India like poverty, class discrimination, social dogmas etc. which has an appeal to the west. The second group of writers includes those who are global Indians, who are Indian by birth but they have lived abroad, so they observe Indian situations objectively. That’s why their works became more impartial and their language enriched with more creativity. Even though they handle Indian sensibility but there is nothing like slavish imitation of English. These writers used English language so creatively that freshness became the main feature in their language. They mingled Indian spirit with foreign language. They coined new words and idiomatic expressions in English and added something new to English language. These words are now accepted as literary terms and they have their permanent place in the literary world.
Indian writers who present India and its culture were considered for the awards because everyone who touched the soul of India and Indians became hero. The west has a distinctive notion about the third world, where their eyes only see poverty, wretchedness, terrorism, lack of system, failure of democracy and so forth. And the writers, voicing one of these are sure to be recognized by the West. But in the last few years, the scenario has changed. The Indian writers are major contributors to the English fiction and they are no longer a ‘sympathy seekers’.

They have their English and their genuine experiences to share. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that unexpected and overwhelming changes in Western attitude towards India and Indian Literature came when Salman Rushdie came with his novel *Midnight’s Children* that was published in 1981. In the novel, Rushdie conjures up a generation of Indians born at midnight 15 August 1947. He writes,

> What made the event noteworthy… was the nature of these children, every one of the whom was, through some freak of biology or perhaps owing to some prenatural power of the moment, or just conceivably by sheer coincidence… endowed with features, talents or faculties which can only be described as miraculous. It was as though … history, arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise, had chosen to sow, in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world has seen up to that time.\(^6\)

**Indian Women Novelists**

Feminist literature in English is not a recent phenomenon. It has been there ever since perspective on life was recorded in the form of literature. Feminism in the Indian context is a by-product of the western liberalism in general and feminist thought in particular. The indigenous contributing factors have been the legacy of equality of sexes inherited from the freedom struggle, constitutional rights of women, spread of education and the awareness among women. The Indian women caught in the flux of tradition and modernity saddled with the burden of the past but to cast of her aspiration constitutes crux of feminism in Indian literature. It precipitates in search for identity and a quest for the
definition of the self. In critical terms, it boils down to scrutinizing the miserable condition of women characters. Feminist English literature is a mixture of various shades—soft, prominent and harsh. Articulated and precisely defined feminist sentiments can be traced in the works of female writers.

Traditionally, the work of Indian Women Writers has been underestimated due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. The factors contributing to this prejudice is the fact that most of these women writers have observed no domestic space. The Indian women's perceptions of their aspirations and expectations are within the framework of Indian social and moral commitments. As, Chaman Nahal writes about feminism in India:

Both the awareness of woman’s position in society as one of disadvantage or in generality compared with that of man and also a desire to remove those is advantages.  

But with the progressing of the country from tradition to modernity, Indian English literature reveals a chain of women writers. In such a traditional period women have been playing an important role as a precursor of the change. Fiction by women writers contributes a major part of the contemporary Indian writing in English. They depict the psychological sufferings, frustrations, social agitations, and their stillness as a means of communication of Indian middle class woman. This subject matter is often considered as the trivial depiction of the lives of women. Indian women novelists give a new proportion to the Indian literature.

They have developed their writings over a period of time. They change the old trends not only in novel but also in all genres of literature. Some recurring themes in their novels are female experiences in the family and society. They have female’s perspective in the world which affects the cultural and language patterns of India. Nowadays, people enjoy reading the western novels written by the new age of women writers. They are mostly western educated, middle class who express in their writing with the predicament of upper caste and class traditional Hindu women. Most of their characters ensnare in
arranged marriage and enforced widowhood. A great American women novelist Tony Morrison views:

Only women can present the real and natural story of women. Only woman can fight for the sake of women. She may be practically true but her statement cannot be overlooked because has been observed that women writers are more authentic and vocal in rising the conditions of women in male dominated society.8

The Indian women novelist who have high educational and intellectual standards, have sharpened their observation of life and established a psychological depth to their writings. So these writers created a new canvas for the younger generation of Indian women novelists. These women writers have presented an insider view of female psyche, inner aspiration and their peculiar responses to man and things. In this respect Naik observes-

“The ‘new’ women novelists naturally share most of the preoccupations of their male counterparts, though in spite of what fanatical feminists would claim, they do have ‘a room of their own’ in the fictional mansion, in terms of certain pressing concerns and attitude towards them.9

Indian writing in English is now gaining ground quickly. In the realm of fiction, it has announced a new era and earned many honors both at home and abroad. The female writers have started questioning the outstanding old patriarchal domination. Now they are no longer puppets in the hands of man. They have shown their worth in the field of literature both qualitatively and quantitatively and are showing it even today without any obstacle. Today, the works of Kamla Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Geetha Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and Manju Kapur and many more have left an indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English.

A major development in modern Indian fiction is the growth of a feminist or women centered approach, that seeks to project and interpret experience from the point of a feminine consciousness and sensibility. As Patricia Meyer Specks remarks,
There seems to be something that we call a women's point of view on outlook sufficiently distinct to be recognizable through the countries.\textsuperscript{10}

Many Indian women novelists have explored female sensibility in order to establish an identity. The theme is from childhood to womanhood-developed society respecting women in general.

Toru Dott has written Bianca and Le journal Among other early novels by women writers may be mentioned Raj Lakshmi Debi’s \textbf{The Hindu Wife}, or \textbf{The Enchanted Fruit} (1876), and Mrs. Krupabai Satthianadhan’s \textbf{Kamala, A Story of Hindu Life} (1894) and \textbf{Saguna, A Story of Native Christian Life} (1895). Santha Rama Rau's \textbf{Remember for the House} (1956). Mrs Ghoshal was the first Bengali Woman who wrote an \textbf{Unfinished Song} 1913 and the Fatal Garland (1915).

It is however, only after the Second World War that female novelist started enriching Indian Fiction in English. Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Prawer Jhabavala are the most outstanding women novelist. Kamla Markandya's first novel \textbf{Nectar in the Sieve} takes the readers to village life of south Indian people. The novelist brings to light the village life of peasants; Industrialization enters into the village in the shape of tannery. Her other important novels are \textbf{Some Inner Fury} (1957), \textbf{A silence of Desire} (1961), \textbf{Possession} (1963), \textbf{A Handful of Rise} (1966), \textbf{The Coffer Dams} (1969). Ruth Prawer Jhabvala has published her six novels – \textbf{To Whom She Will} (1955), \textbf{The Nature of Passion} (1956), \textbf{Esmond in India} (1958), \textbf{The Householder} (1960), \textbf{Get Ready for Battle} (1962), and \textbf{A Backward Place} (1965). R.P.Jhabwala was born in Germany of Polish parents, settled down in England in 1939, when she was twelve, and took an M.A degree at the London university. She married an Indian architect in 1951, and thereafter she was settled down in Delhi.

Anita Desai has added a new dimension to the achievements of Indian Women writers in English Fiction. Anita Desai’s two novels, \textbf{Cry the Peacock} (1963), and \textbf{Voices in the City} (1965) have added a new dimension to Indian English fiction as they reflect the climate of sensibility that suddenly blazes like lighting. Her main concern is the exploration of feminine sensibility in order to convey the fever and fretfulness of the
stream of consciousness of her protagonists. Desai moves out of the background of the Delhi and Calcutta, and realistically projects the prison in her novel **Bye- Bye Blackbird** (1971). Nayantara Sahgal, a daughter of Vijayalakshmi Pandit has also published two novels- **A Time to Happy** (1957), **This Time of Morning** (1965). Sahgal liberally draws upon her knowledge of what happens in the corridors of power of politically important people in this Time of Morning. The novel can be called one of the best political novels written by an Indian writer. Mrs Sahgal’s feeling for politics and her command over English are more impressive than her art as a novelist. Vimla Raina’s **Ambapali** (1962) is a historical novel set in ancient India of the Buddha’s time. C.P. Snow has study the politics of an Oxbridge College in the Maters. Of the other women novelists, Shakuntala Shrinagpsh published the novel **The Little Black Box** in 1955. It is morbid novel which reflects the personality of a woman Sarla who lives a life of resentment and bitterness.

Arundhati Roy has explored issues related to subalternity and untouchability, especially the religious hypocrisy, poverty and corrupted system. Her debut novel **God of Small Things**, Manju Kapur’s all five novels **Difficult Daughter, A Married Woman, Home, The Immigrant** and **Custody** have different theme but deals with the typical middle class dreams, hopes and aspirations. The background of these novels is urban in nature and catches the city life with ironic detachment. And Gita Harihara’s **The Thousand Faces of Night** (1992), **The Ghosts of Vasu Master** (1994), **When Dreams Travel** (1999), **In Times of Siege** (2003), **Fugitive Histories** (2009). These are some of the leading women writers writing in Indian English literature.

The image of women in fiction has gone through a change during the last four tanners. Now women writers are not following traditional portrayals of enduring self-sacrificing women, towards conflicts, female characters searching for identity; no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status. The major engrossment in recent Indian women’s writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. In a culture where
individualism and objection have often remained alien ideas and marital bliss and the
woman’s role at home is a central focus. In that present scenario women are more
assertive, more liberated in their view and more articulate in their expression than the
woman of the past was.

**Contribution of Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and Githa Hariharan to Indian English Fiction**

**Arundhati Roy**

The International community knows Arundhati Roy as an artist with her debut
novel *The God of Small Things* which was started in 1992 and finished in 1996. She
received half-a-million pounds in advances, and rights to the book were sold in 21
countries. *The God of small things* won Booker prize in 1997. Roy is the first non-
expatriate Indian author and the first Indian woman to have won this prize. Explaining the
reason why Roy’s novel was chosen over the other Booker contender Jason Cowley, one of
the five 1997 Booker Judge said:

*The God of Small Thing* fulfils the highest demand of the art of fiction to
see the world, not conventionally or habitually, but as if for the first time,
Roy’s achievement and it’s considerable, never to forget about the small
things in life: The insects and flowers, winds and water, the outcaste and the
despised, she deserved to win.¹¹

Bimalijeet saine rightly remarks about the thematic implication of *The God of Small Things* in feminine perspective:

In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy implicitly presses for greater
social reform in the rigid positioning of woman and the intolerable flight of
the deprived class. She narrates of pain and misery of a lonesome mother in
an indifferent perceived through the eyes of her seven years old child-a
world where the age old subjugation of woman and the indescribable
humiliation of the underclass still persists.¹²
Roy wrote India's testing of nuclear weapons in Pokhran, Rajasthan ‘The End of Imagination’, a critique of the Indian government's nuclear policies. It was published in her collection ‘The Cost of Living’, in which she criticises against India's massive hydroelectric dam projects in the central and western states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. She has since devoted herself entirely to non-fiction and politics, publishing two more collection of essays as well as working for social causes. In 2002, Roy was convicted for the disrespect of court by the Supreme Court in New Delhi for accusing the court of attempting to silence protests against the Narmada Dam Project, but she received only a symbolic sentence of one day in prison. Roy was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in May, 2004, for her work in social movement and advocacy of non-violence. In early 2005, New Republic commentator Tom Frank sparked controversy with the comment, "Maybe sometimes you just want to be on the side of whoever is more likely to take a bunker buster to Arundhati Roy." In June 2005, she took part in the World Tribunal on Iraq. She believes that,

A feminist is a woman who negotiates herself into a position where she has choices.\textsuperscript{13}

Arundhati has never admitted that she is a feminist but \textbf{The God of Small Things}, reveals at many places her feminist stance and her protagonists represent feminine sensibility. Arundhati Roy’s mother says,

Arundhati is a born talker and a born writer. While, she was studying in school, it was a problem to find a teacher, who could cope with her voracious appetite for reading and writing. Most of the time, she educated herself on her own. I can remember our vice-principal Sneha Zaharias resorting to Shakespeare’s The Tempest as a text for the little fourth grade.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{The God of Small Things} is known as semi-autobiographical novel. A major part captures her childhood experiences in Aymanam. Contrary to some assumptions, Roy is not a twin. The stylistic innovations make the novel unique and bring vitality and exuberance to the novel. The novel is unique in every aspect and it is a linguistic
experiment with the English language. The stylistic writings include the use of words, phrases and even sentences from vernacular language, use of italics, subject less sentences, faulty spellings, topicalization, deviation from normal word order, single word ‘sentences,’ change of word classes, clustering of word classes and a variety of other techniques. She has given prominence to ecology and subalternity as the major themes in the novel.

The seed of **The God of Small Things** was from Arundhati’s early life. Through her experience she wants to do something extra-ordinary in her life. She observes:

> The real reason was also that I had just got a computer and I liked the idea of writing on it. So I just start putting down what was going on in my mind. It was very private thing. I would not show what I had written to anybody. It would just stay in the computer. It was all just coming out of me like smoke I suppose and I kept putting it down.\(^{15}\)

Roy’s close observations and the minute aspects in the creation of her literary skills are observed in her other works. Her two important articles on the net are ‘The end of Imagination’ and ‘The Greater Common Good.’ In the End of Imagination, Roy criticizes nuclear policies of the Government of India. Arundhati Roy foretells the harmful consequences of nuclear weapons on human beings and ecology in **The End of Imagination**:

> Our cities and forests, our fields and villages will burn for days. Rivers will turn to poison. The air will become fire. The wind will spread the flames when everything there is to burn has burned and the fires die, smoke will rise and shut out the sun. There will be on day and only interminable night. Temperatures will drop to far below freezing and nuclear winter will set in. Water will turn into toxic ice. Radioactive fallout will seep through the earth and contaminated groundwater. Most living things, animals and vegetables, fish and fowl, will die. Only rats and cockroaches will breed, multiply, and complete with forging, relic humane for what little food there is.\(^{16}\)
Manju Kapur

Manju Kapur’s debut novel *Difficult Daughter* won her international acclaim and common wealth prize for the best first book published in 1998 and located primarily in the India of the 1940s, Manju Kapur speaks, with great narrative eloquence, of the idea of independence. It presents the image of suffering women. The story of Virmati is partially based on the life of Kapur’s own mother.

... Virmati, the protagonist rebels against tradition. Yet she is filled with self doubt. She pleads for studying further and postponement of her marriage. She attempts suicide, when faced with prospect of marrying the canal engineer. The family brands her ‘to be restless, sick and selfish’ and locks her up.¹⁷

In post-colonial era, partition has ever been the most prolific and outstanding area for creative writers. During this stage, number of novels were written on the theme of the destruction. It brings the predicament and provides a sad telling commentary on the breakdown on human values.

Manju Kapur’s second novel *'A Married Woman'* is a seductive story of a love at a time of political and religious upheaval, and is told with sympathy and intelligence. *A Married Woman* is the story of an artist whose canvas challenges the artificiality of middle class existence. Manju Kapur presents it through her central character Astha:

A woman should be aware of self-controlled, strong willed, self-reliant and rational, having faith in the inner strength of womanhood A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense.¹⁸

Asth a likes to live independent life and proceeds on the path of full human status that predicts a terror to Hemant and his male superiority. However, she finds herself trapped between the pressures of the modern developing society and shackles of the ancient prejudices. She sets out on her quest for a more meaningful life in her lesbian
relationship. She canonizes and immortalizes her insulted feminine sensibility raising the male fit to social transformation in the society.

Her next, third novel *Home* is a multi-generation family saga, and was shortlisted for the Hutch Crossword Book Award in 2006. This novel is more domestic and the generation conflicts are also more highlighted. Kapur has tried her best to put those issues in this book which are commonly encountered in a joint family and are usually kept under the carpet to protect the fake family honor and name. A lot of designing and bantering goes behind the curtains while maintaining the outer shame of a big happy family. The author has tried to raise some pertinent issues to the fore and due to this *Home* does not remain a simple story of a Karol Baug sari seller, but gets a more universal color and makes an invitatory family saga. Kapur presents Nisha, the protagonist, as bold, educated and balanced and of course, a modern Indian.

Her fourth novel *The Immigrant* (2009) is a story of immigrants. Kapur explores a pensive and compassionate tale of those who try to knock the doors of the West for better prospects in their lives without leaving behind the great cultural loads. Living abroad as an Immigrant is not easy without many adjustments as it happens in the case of Naina and Anand. East is East and West is West and no one can bridge the gap without adjustments. Hopes and desires, failures and frustrations could not be minimized without adjustments. Naina suffered a lot and Anand was confused in understanding Naina.

Manju Kapur’s fifth novel *Custody* is not just a social commentary, but a novel that is true to the worldwide anxiety of modern marriage, with its burden of individualism. It is set in the thriving, upper middle class colonies of Delhi in the mid-nineties, against the backdrop of the initial surge of foreign investment in India. Kapur depicts the gendered nature of custody which is conflict in India. Generally men refuse to grant divorce while women usually have greater claim to the children but they refuse to do so. Both the parties counsel the legal advice. The battle lines are drawn early and both parties fight to its end. This novel tells the fascinating as well as compassionate tale of modernity. Kapur has created some movable characters in the novel also. Her simple style of story-telling adds further charm in the novel.
In that time of increasing globalization Manju Kapur is trying to show changing life of women. It accounts the various intricacies around the dissolution of marriage and a family in modern India. The novel shows that a childless marriage is treated with contempt. The blame is attributed to the female infertility as ground of divorce.

In her writings, Manju Kapur has forced on the issues in the context of patriarchy; inter-religious marriage; family bond, male-female bond, co-existence of past and present. She has narrated her women protagonists as victim of biology, gender, domestic violence, and circumstances. Kapur thinks that,

> There is a man within every woman and a woman in every man. When, manhood is questioned womanhood is fragmented.19

A major pre-occupation in recent Indian women's writings has been a delineation of Inner life and subtle relationships. In a culture where, individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas and marital bliss and the women's role at home is the central focus. It is interesting to see the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural diversion.

**Githa Hariharan**

She published her debut novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) which arises waves in the literary world and won 1993 Common Wealth writer’s prize. The novel forwards the female bond and attempts to create new image for the recreation of woman’s identity. The mother-daughter relationship has been redefined in this novel. In a patriarchal setup, mother daughter relationship is ‘deformed’ and motherhood has controlled meaning. The novel is the story of Devi’s quest for self image.

Hariharan’s second novel, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994) is centered on protagonist, a retired school teacher named Vasu. In this novel the primary focus is on problems encountered by Vasu master as a teacher and not on the problems of his ‘feminine ghosts’. The novel presents the background of the role of teacher and student. It gives the academic identity of a boy and teacher.
Hariharan’s third novel, **When Dreams Travel** (1991) is a kind of feminist retelling of the Arabian Nights. The physical affinity between the two sisters bring into focus another facet of their troublesome relationship. Hariharan’s novel thus becomes the quest for the power of feminine in a male bastion. Here the author attempts to write a metafiction through an elaborate intertext that is made foreground the feminist issue from a fresh perspective.

**In Times of Siege** is Hariharan’s fourth novel. The novel is looking at what happens when people who cherish liberal ideals are put to test. The setting of the novel is in two Universities in Delhi i.e. Kasturba Gandhi University and Kamala Nehru University. And through Meena as her mouthpiece, Hariharan establishes the link between fascism and the ugly faces of Hinduism. The novel implicitly concludes that basic human rights must be protected not only for the sake of individuals and countries involved but to preserve the human race.

**Fugitive History**, the fifth novel by Hariharan exposes the legacy of prejudice that sometimes insidiously, sometimes perceptibly, continues to affect desperate lives in present day India. It is built on the memories and real life experiences of three women-Mala, her daughter Sara and Yasmin, one of the victims of 2002 riots in Gujarat.

Thus we can see Indian English Fiction has undergone a lot of transformation from its starting days to the present time and has got a whole new strength in term of concept, marketing, presentation, business and impact on the Indian culture. If we see behind the list of Booker prize winners, we see that the writers of Indian origin like Salman Rusdie, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and the recent winner Arvind Adiga have one thing common in their writings – they are not traditional Indian English Writers. All the three are very intimate with English language, rather English is their first language. So medium is not at all creating any problem for them. They can use English language as naturally as they breathe. And more important is that major part of their life, these writers have lived in abroad so they have assimilated the western trends and it lends them the distance to have an objective in India.
References

1. An Interview with Sunday Plush
2. Manju Kapur’s Interview with Hindustan Time.
4. Ibid, p.4