Chapter-1

Introduction
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“Art is the greatest expression of that which is human.”

—David Lick

Of many other forms of art, literature is a special type of art as it takes human life as its main theme. Broadly, from creative writing to more technical or scientific works, all writings fall under the head of the term ‘literature’ but most commonly it is used to refer to works of the creative imagination, embracing works of poetry, drama, fiction and non-fiction. The writing that is recognised for its artistic quality and has passed the test of time is generally literature. In its various forms, figurative or critical, literature has become a way in life for all human beings to gather other forms of information. Literature was earlier taken for just an art form, used for expression, a mere play of imagination, pleasing enough, but far from any serious or practical importance. But now it is considered as powerful equipment in the hands of creative writers to reflect the reality, even the grimmer side of life and by that means fight against the established social norms and hypocritical reactions, outmoded customs, traditions, and the corrupt political system. It is now considered as a means to modulate and change the societal framework; as something that preserves the cultural ideals of a people— some of these ideals being love, beauty, truth, faith, duty, friendship, loyalty, equality, freedom, reverence. Upon these ideals, rest our whole civilization, our development, our world, our religion, our culture, our freedom. In fact the growth of literature and the growth of human civilization are inter-related. Thus human society and culture are naturally related to literature.
Literature is written for refreshing, inspiring and enlightening the mind, which it does in two ways—through its matter and through its manner. Both matter and manner should combine to produce such an effect as to capture the interest of the readers and add to the fund of their knowledge. Literature is the story of human race, human existence and thus of the society. Society consists of people and therefore it takes in its stride their knowledge, ideas, customs, traditions, folkways, beliefs, skills, institutions, organisations, artefacts, religion, music, language, dialects, basic foods, types of economy etc. Society is the world we live in. The artist through this special type of art paints the ease and sorrow, smiles and tears, joy and affliction, craving and praying of humankind on the canvas of his literary creation.

The idea that literature reflects society is at least as old as Plato’s theory of imitation. As a form of art, literature is taken as reflecting norms and values; as revealing the ethos of culture, the process of class struggles, and certain types of social facts and harsh realities of life. While we, as individuals and as a society, can turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the social evils deteriorating our world, literature should and it does hold a mirror up to the society and its culture. As a strong and relatively explicit tool for the dissemination of facts and ideas, it exists as a reality check as to what is going on behind closed doors, or right before our eyes, that we willy-nilly refuse to see. In fact, literature illuminates past; presents social reality, and anticipates future of society.

In any literary work, the artist reflects his relationship with the society he lives in and the culture he lives by. Very often, the relationship between society and
literature becomes uncomfortable, but it provides a buffer between reality and knowledge, and acts as a witness to history and change and harsh realities of life. It is said that God made man and manmade the society. And with the passage of time, that society started to influence the mind of man. The relations and inter-relations between man and man, and between man and society are obvious. An artist of literature is also a member of this society. Either he picks from the society or the society picks from his creation. After all society is this bond of fellowship between man and man through communication that the writers seek. They write from the perspectives of their culture and society and readers read it from the perspectives of their own culture and society. Thus in a single work of literature there can be multiple social and cultural points. In any work of literature, there is a stamp of the society and culture of the artist to which he belongs. His social life and manners are reflected in his works distinctly or vaguely.

For centuries, social issues have been at the core of innumerable works of art which take up several prevailing worries of gender, race, community, caste or class prejudice and many more. In fact as a part of a larger cultural body, literature has properties of both instruction and entertainment. Great works of literature influence readers, the most important components of society, not only because of well-developed plot and characters but also because of the social and cultural themes that they reflect and the realities that they depict. Literary scholars of all times have given voice to what has been happening in the history of humanity in different places. Through literature they have either pronounced their points of view in order to describe a certain social group or a specific situation that affects people’s way of life or they have directly protested against what they believe unfair for a harmonic
development of people’s life. Literature thus can be understood as a means to facilitate personal understanding as well as to encourage social cohesion.

“Great literature provides its readers with a window into various aspects of the human condition and a guide to the way we, as a species, relate to one another and to our surroundings. Literature gives us a mirror in which to examine our collective reflection as a people. It does not gloss over the pimples and blemishes of humanity, but exposes them quite openly. No concealer, no cover up, only the truth. Literature is the reflecting pool into which every person that ever existed can look and see both his own face and the faces of all his fellow people. It enables each human to not only find the humanity within his own heart, but also to connect him to the generations of other people who have been doing so since the beginning of time.”

As an imitation of human action, literature, with different perspectives, often reflects what people think, say and do in the society in different contexts. As the creative writer is an integral part of the society, and is continuously exposed to the world around him, his work provides a detailed preview of human experiences. Thus literature encompasses attitudes, morale and values of the society. It indeed reflects the society with its good as well as ill values. Literature projects good values in the society for the people to imbibe, emulate and follow. In its corrective mode, literature mirrors the wrongs and ill values of the society with a purpose to make the society amend itself by realising its mistakes and shortcomings. As stated by the great German playwright Bertolt Brecht, “Art is not a mirror to reflect reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.”
If some social sympathies are reflected in literature, our mind and attitude are bound to get influenced positively. A character Hector, in Alan Bennett’s play, _The History Boys_, says:

“The best moments in reading are when you come across something—a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things— which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours.”

Good works of literature by presenting various social perspectives and harsh realities of life settle, though quietly and unobtrusively, course of action that men may follow. Novels in particular, with their broad canvass are known to have greatly changed the direction of human mind and attitude and set in motion the movements that have altered our ways of life and influenced the society directly or indirectly.

A novelist, the socio-political being is never devoid of social sense. Since the invention of writing, social issues have been the heart of innumerable novels which deal with several worries and harsh realities of life seen and comprehended from various social perspectives. Social realism has always been a conspicuous concern in novels. Such realism gained prominence in the eighteenth century and the torch-bearer novelists like Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding eloquently and effectively reflected the various discourses of the society they lived in.

Charles Dickens is one of the supreme examples of the delineator of harsh realities of human life. He agitated for the social change and created a feeling for regulating and removing social wrongs through his serialised novels which
influenced his readers who belonged to the middle and upper class. He used fiction in its corrective function to contribute to several important social reforms. His deep social commitment and awareness of social ills helped him effectively criticise economic, social and moral abuses in the Victorian era in England. A great moralist, a social commentator and an outspoken critic of unjust economic and social conditions, Dickens showed compassion and empathy towards the vulnerable and disadvantaged segment of English society. Poverty and unhealthy living conditions associated with it, the exploitation of ordinary people by moneylenders, the corruption and incompetence of the legal systems as well as of the administration of the Poor Law have found vigorous and emphatic expression in his novels. In his *Oliver Twist* (1838), Dickens shocked the readers with images of poverty and crime. His *Hard Times* (1854) criticises the effect of Utilitarianism on the lives of the working classes in cities. Karl Marx asserted that Dickens “issued to the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists and moralists put together.”

Victor Hugo’s significant novel *Les Miserables* (1862) took up powerfully most of the political and social issues and artistic trends of his time in the 19th century and has been described as “one of the half-dozen greatest novels of the world” by Upton Sinclair.

Emily Zola, another French writer also emphatically touched upon various harsh social realities like urban slums in her novel *L’assommoir* (1877) and coal miners’ strike in *Germinal* (1885).
In Russia, Leo Tolstoy championed reforms with the power of his pen, particularly in the field of education. Miss Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852) called for necessary reforms and a movement against slavery in America. The novel has been regarded as “strongly weighted to convert the reader to the author’s stand” on the subject of slavery.6

Mark Twain in his Huckleberry Finn (1884) focuses on racism. It has been argued that by humanizing Jim and exposing the fallacies of the racist assumptions of slavery, Twain attempts at exposing the harsh reality of race-based discrimination.7

At the advent of 20th century, Upton Sinclair wrote The Jungle (1905), based on meat-packing industry in Chicago which was published in the socialist newspaper Appeal to Reason in serialised form from February 25, 1905 to November 4, 1905. He shocked and galvanised readers by his description of the appallingly unhygienic and inhumane conditions that workers were forced to work in. The writer Jack London regarded the book as “the Uncle Tom’s Cabin of wage slavery”.8 The influence of the novel was so much that the domestic and foreign purchases of America fell by half. Not only this, the novel brought public support for Congressional legislation and government regulation of the industry and passage of Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act.9

In 20th century Pulitzer Prize winning novel The Grapes of Wrath (1939), by John Steinbeck is often considered as the most successful social protest novel. Though the novel has been criticised as a ‘pack of lies and ‘communist propaganda’10, it led to considerable changes in federal labour law.
Another novel presenting the harsh reality of prevalent prejudice against the blacks in America is Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940) which immediately established its author as a spokesperson for African-American issues. In his essay “Black Boys and Native Sons”, Irving Howe said, “The day *Native Son* appeared, American culture was changed forever. No matter how much qualifying the book might later need, it made impossible a repetition of the old lies […] and brought out into the open, as no one ever had before, the hatred, fear, and violence that have crippled and may yet destroy our culture.”

A more recent novel *Invisible Man* (1952) by Ralph Ellison, with more or less same racial theme addresses many of the social and intellectual issues facing African-Americans in the mid 20th century, including black nationalism, the relationship between black identity and Marxism, and the reformist racial policies of Booker. T. Washington, as well as issues of quest for identity and individuality.

Fundamental personal questions, dilemmas and confusions amidst complex social and psychological pressure obstructing the unbiased integration of not only blacks yet also of male homosexuals find expression in the novels of James Baldwin, particularly in his *Giovanni’s Room* (1956). The novel was written well before the equality of homo-sexuals was widely espoused in America. Baldwin explores in the novel the harsh realities related to internalized impediments to such individuals’ quest for acceptance.

In the realm of Indian English fiction, the great trinity of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao who “laid the foundation for the genuine Indo-Anglian novel, each imparting to the Indian experience a dimension of individuality based of
their particular approach to content and form”13, and Kamla Markandaya have been deified as path-breakers of Indian writing in English for their portrayal of contemporary Indian life in a truthful manner. They had a strong commitment to expose the harsh realities of life to effect the desired transformation in the society making nationalism, partition, poverty, peasantry, subjugated women, rural-urban divide, East-West encounter, feudal practices, casteism and communalism as their thematic concerns. Mulkraj Anand’s contribution to Indian fiction of social realism is incontrovertibly great. Hailed as Indian version of Charles dickens, Anand was “to Indian people what Anton Chekhov was to Russians: a profound interpreter of their lives, an analyser of their deepest conflicts, a verbaliser of their agonies”.14 His novels vividly portray from the perspective of the downtrodden, the wretched condition of Indian rural society of his time. He “believes that literature must serve society, solve their problems and guide them.”15 His novels Untouchable (1935) and Coolie (1936) are particularly “a plea for downtrodden, the poor and the outcaste, who face economic hardship and emotional humiliation in a rigid social structure.”16 Kamla Markandaya is widely acclaimed for her dominant theme of “the intersection of rural and urban life in India and the unrealized dreams of peasants seeking their fortunes in the factory.”17

Taking a departure from the first generation of Indian English novelists, the Postmodern Indian English novelists seem to have buried down the erstwhile fundamental issues and have focussed on the newly emerging issues like globalisation and subsequent multiculturalism, postfeminism, cyber-feminism, queer theories, cultural conflicts, diaspora sensibility, glamour, consumerism, commodification, BPOs, upward mobility and consequent erosion of ethical values, and transforming public sphere.18
Moving a little beyond India, and encompassing a culturally, racially and religiously diverse South Asia, South Asian authors have influenced an entire generation with their writing and have achieved a global prominence that is unique among post-colonial literature. The term ‘South Asian’ itself refers to much like any other pan-ethnic formation, uniting the ethno-linguistic composition of the nations of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives into one regional designation, yokes together different and diversified traditions, cultures, and histories of the region of the Indian subcontinent, and “South Asian writing” refers to the literary works of writers who biographically or culturally belong to the Indian subcontinent and its diaspora. Famous South Asian authors are offbeat writers and have attracted great critical acclaim in literary spheres. Over the years, they have contributed to the world of English literature and literature in regional languages. These authors in English deserve a special mention as they have endeavoured to add variation to the popular and dominant literary genres. Their portrayal of the sub-continent, its rich cultural heritage, its successes and failures, its dreams and aspirations, joys and sorrows, and prevalent societal norms has earned them a niche in the literary circle all over the world. Some of the popular writers are: Khushwant Singh (Train to Pakistan, 1956), Attia Hosain (Sunlight on a Broken Column, 1961), Anita Desai (Twilight in Delhi, 1978), Bapsi Sidhwa (Cracking India, 1988), Bharti Mukharjee (Jasmine, 1989), Salman Rushdie (East, West, 1994), Shyam Selvadurai (Funny Boy, 1994), Rohinton Mistry (A Fine Balance, 1995), Arundhati Roy (The God of Small Things, 1997), Michael Ondaatje (Anil’s Ghost, 2000), Jhumpa Lahiri (Interpreters of Maladies, 2000), Manil Suri (The Death of Vishnu, 2001), Jamil Ahmad (The Wandering Falcon, 2011), Tahmima
Anam (*A Golden Age*, 2007), Amitav Ghosh (*Rivers of Smoke*, 2011; *Sea of Poppies*, 2008 ), Danial Mueenuddin (*In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*, 2009), Kiran Desai (*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, 1998; *The Inheritance of Loss*, 2006 ), Mohsin Hamid (*Moth Smoke*, 2000), Amit Chaudhari (*The Immortals*, 2009), Vikram Chandra (*Sacred Games*, 2006), Monica Ali (*Brick Lane*, 2003), Vikas Swarup (*Q&A*, 2005, a novel filmed as Slumdog Millionaire), Khalid Hosseini (*The Kite Runner*, 2003), Romesh Gunesekera (*Reef*, 1994). These eminent South Asian novelists have contributed significantly to the evolution of English Literature. Known for their literary prowess, their penchant to write about their countries and life outside the safe cocoon of their homelands, these famous authors of South Asian origin have earned a standing in the literary circles by their sheer writing expertise.¹⁹

Their varied social, educational and cultural backgrounds have a major contribution in the presentation of a kaleidoscopic overview of the culturally diverse and vibrant sub-continent. Their writings have influenced readers from all walks of life with their wide range of themes which includes the legacy of the British Empire, struggle for independence, the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan and the unprecedented accompanying violence, the migration of Hindus and Muslims across the new borders, the Bangladeshi war for independence from Pakistan, the conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil minority, racism and caste system, the experience of plantation labourers, the experience of the new immigrant nationalism and transnationalism, identity and language, the individual and the collective, authenticity and hybridity, home and homeland, the collision of the ancient and the modern etc.²⁰ Their extremely absorbing and interesting works, capable of being viewed and analysed from varied social perspectives, have greatly
contributed to the process of social change by presenting harsh realities of life, highlighting the need to uproot social evils and by formulating and fostering certain principles that demand a radical restructuring of social thought.

The present study takes as its subject matter the selected works of two of these writers namely Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry with the objective of tracing their contribution to the vast ocean of literature in English and their perception of a relationship between society and its art. Both of these South Asian novelists come of Parsi descent, therefore the study also attempts to record their efforts of preserving one of the fast disappearing community of theirs i.e. Parsi. Their novels endeavour to make the human society free of dominance and hierarchy, a society that rests on the principles of justice and equality and is truly human. The study deals with grim realities of life and corresponding social perspectives, set-up and circumstances these novelists have exhibited in their writings particularly in the context of India.

Pakistani-Anglophone author Bapsi Sidhwa (also rendered as Bapsy Sidhwa) is a well-known postcolonial South Asian author who has been acclaimed internationally as Pakistan’s one of the most leading diasporic writers. She wrote four internationally acclaimed novels between 1978 and 1993, all of which have been translated into several languages including German, French, Italian and Russian. Her first novel *The Crow Eaters* was published in 1978. Although she wrote *The Bride* (1983) as her first novel, it was published after *The Crow Eaters*. Her third novel *Ice-Candy-Man* was published in 1988. Bapsi’s fourth novel, *An American Brat*, was published in 1994. Apart from these novels, she has also

Sidhwa was born on August 11, 1938 in Karachi, Pakistan, the then part of India, in an eminent Parsi business family. Shortly thereafter, her parents, Peshotan and Tahmina Bhandra, migrated to Lahore where she was raised. As Parsis were a religious and ethnic minority in Pakistan, and in Lahore in a minuscule number of about one hundred and fifty in all, Sidhwa’s family was cut off from the mainstream of the Parsi life. The only and lonely child of her parents, Bapsi grew up with polio and was educated at home until the age of 15. Bapsi Sidhwa took her matriculation examination privately. Talking of her solitary childhood and upbringing she says:

“If I were brought up in Karachi which is (again) very much a part of Pakistan, my experience as a child would have been totally different. I would have been brought up among the Parsis. I was brought up apart from my cousins and other relatives. My family was not a big joint family. In my home, my parental grandmother was with us for a few years, but there was not much influence of the joint family calibre. I was largely brought up by the servants.”

Feeling isolated from children of her own age because of her physical deformity, Sidhwa resorted to reading as a way of spending her days. The first novel she read was Louisa May Alcott’s classic *Little Women*. As she puts it herself: “this
introduced me to a world of fantasy and reading – I mean extraordinary amounts of reading because that was the only life I had.”

In an interview to Jugnu Mohsin, she attributes her creative genius to her solitaire and confesses, “I recognize the fact that my loneliness has had everything to do with my creativity. When you’re on your own, you have to fall back on your own resources to entertain yourself”.23

She graduated from the Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, in 1956. The very next year she fell in love with Gustad Kermani, a sophisticated businessman of Bombay and married him at the age of nineteen. Though the marriage did not prove successful and after living in Bombay for five years she got divorced and moved back to Pakistan where she remarried Noshir R. Sidhwa, a Parsi businessman in Lahore in 1963, with whom she has three children, two daughters and a son.

In 1975 Sidhwa served as Pakistan's delegate to the Asian Women's Congress. She immigrated to the United States in 1983, and became a naturalized American citizen in 1993. She now lives in Houston, Texas. Sidhwa says:

“[As a woman, [the United States] has given me a tremendous amount of freedom. The sense of being able to just take off, on your own, without having to have company. In Pakistan and India, we tend to move in bunches and do things together, and you’re always part of a family, or a group. Here, you don’t carry so much “baggage” when you take off. No, it wasn't that hard really. Phillip Lopate at the University of Houston suggested that I teach, to which I replied, "How can I teach with just a bachelor's degree from Punjab University?" And he said, "You've
published two very good novels -- that is like getting several PhDs! You're qualified to teach Creative Writing." I went into it with a lot of hesitation because I didn't have role models. But, I did it and I have enjoyed it."24

Since moving to the United States, Sidhwa has taught, lectured, and presented workshops in creative writing at several colleges and universities, including Columbia University, St. Thomas University, the University of Houston, and Mount Holyoke College in Amherst, Massachusetts. She held a Bunting fellowship at Radcliffe/Harvard in 1986 and was a visiting scholar at the Rockefeller Foundation Center in Bellagio, Italy, in 1991

She has bagged prestigious LiBeraturepreis award from Germany (1991) and the Sitara-i-Intiaz Award of Pakistan (1991), Pakistan's highest national honour in the arts, “Lila Wallace – Readers’ Digest” writers’ Award (1993), Primo Mondello Award in Italy (2007), HCC Asian-American Legacy Award (2008). She is the first recipient of the South Asian Excellence Awards for Literature (2008). She has served on the advisory committee to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on Women's Development also.

Sidhwa’s characters, often women, are caught up in the historical events surrounding the geographical and social vivisection i.e. “Partition” of India and Pakistan in 1947, and its repercussions, particularly violence and subsequent development of Pakistan as a separate independent nation. Sidhwa skilfully connects gender to community, nationality, religion, and class and shows how these various aspects of cultural identity and social structure not merely affect or reflect one another, but instead are inextricably intertwined. Her recurring themes include human relationships and betrayals, the coming of age and its attendant disillusionments, victimisation of women, identity crisis and horrors of the Partition of the sub-continent.

Many of her protagonists are Parsi, the community to which she herself belongs; and through them she takes the reader to the heart of that minority community. The focus on the Parsis, their rites, and customs, not only provides a rich subject in itself, but also an ideal vehicle for observing the history of India, and in particular, the events played out between Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims, from a detached yet intimate insider/outsider perspective.

Rohinton Mistry is yet another novelist under discussion in the present research work. He was born on 3 July, 1952 in Bombay, India. He graduated from ST. Xavier’s College, Mumbai in Mathematics and Economics. In 1975, at the age of 23, he immigrated to Canada and received a BA degree in English and Philosophy from the University of Toronto. He currently lives in Brampton, Ontario.

This Indian born Canadian author also practises Zoroastrianism and belongs to Parsi community and is famous for his short stories and novels. His notable works

He is the first to have won two Hart House literary prizes (1983, 1984). He won these awards while attending the University of Toronto for his stories which were published in the *Hart House Review*. In 1985, he won Canadian Fiction Magazine's annual Contributor's Prize. His first novel *Such a Long Journey* won him the Canada's Governor General's Award (1991), the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best Book (1991) and the W. H. Smith/ *Books in Canada* First Novel Award (1991). The novel was shortlisted for prestigious Booker Prize and for The Trillium Award (1991).27


His third novel *Family Matters* (2002) was shortlisted for Man Booker Prize (2002), James Tait Black Memorial Prize (2002) and International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award (2004). In recent past, Mistry was the 2012 laureate of the $50,000 Neustadt International Prize for Literature.28 His latest work is the short fiction *The Scream* (2006).
Though he enjoys the status as one of Canada's most successful writers over the past fifteen years, Rohinton Mistry writes very little about Canada itself. Instead, he concentrates almost exclusively on India, and on the state of the Parsi community within India. And when he writes about Canada in his short stories or novels, he often represents his adopted country as the site of a Parsi diaspora, a place where immigrant Parsis renegotiate their identities and their relationships with one of India's most endangered communities. He deals with cultural identity and challenges of faith in his novels. Harsh realities like State of Emergency, political corruption, extreme poverty, personal loss and grief also find place in his works as some of major concerns. He is also interested in dealing with familial love and obligation and permanence of love in the face of the temporariness of everything else. While showing struggles between modernity and tradition, hope and despair, he tries to strike a balance between the opposites. Demands of tradition and possibilities for compassion, loss of innocence, humiliation, torture, and disillusionment are some of his other well-known themes.

Both Mistry and Sidhwa are born of Parsi descent. The Parsis, devoted to Zoroastrianism, are a small, yet united, religious community in India. Their ancestors fled Islamic persecution in Iran (ancient Persia) during the eighth century. Today only a small part of our massive population follows the faith originally propagated by the prophet Zoroaster between 1500 and 600 B. C. The largest surviving group of the Parsi community is to be found in Bombay. A small number of Parsis live in Karachi (Pakistan) and Bangalore (Karnataka, India) also. The population of the Parsi community is diminishing fast, as conversions to the faith is not acceptable in Zoroastrianism. They maintain the importance of the purity of their
religion in the face of high death rates and low birth rates. The community finds best expression in the writings of Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry, the novelists of post-colonial era. In fact, their novels are the sentimental articulation of the ambivalence, the nostalgia and the dilemma of this miniscule community of India.

As these novelists grew up around the period of Independence and the Partition, these two significant events of Indian history provide important background to their novels. They engage themselves with history in different ways and are conscious of historic processes. They find their country and community being impacted by the forces of history. Their works display diasporic sensibility, uprootedness, displacement and exile. Though they tightly focus on Parsi community in their works, ample space has been given to other social perspectives also. Life of Indian sub-continent pulsates in their fictional work where most of the protagonists are from India. Their works display a concern for not only their own community but also the country, the sub-continent and the humanity in general. They deal with so many problems and present in their works a huge variety of harsh realities of life, which include expatriate experiences, communal riots and disharmony, partition, inter-community marriage, class and cultural conflicts, tribal women’s problems, feeling of alienation, suffering resulting from betrayal and loss, the problems of middle class families of India and so on. Caste-system, political issues, corruption, oppression and suppression of underdogs, inter-community relationships, weaknesses in the tribal system and prevalent other social evils are also not spared. The present study is an effort to record these harsh realities of life in the light of the various and varied social perspectives as presented in the selected novels of these two Parsi novelists in their own peculiar style and view-points. The
novels taken for the study are: *The Pakistani Bride* (1983) and *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Such a Long Journey* (1991) and *A Fine Balance* (1995) by Rohinton Mistry. Attempt has been made to analyse the texts from various social perspectives and each of them yield interesting findings.

As for the scheme of the thesis, the study has been divided into seven chapters followed by a Bibliography.

The current chapter is the first one and serves as a blueprint of the entire thesis. It discusses the reciprocal relationship between society and literature and the important role that literature plays in exposing social evils and highlighting harsh realities of life. It aims at providing general introduction of Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry and their literary oeuvre. The chapter provides an introduction of the coming chapters and the important issues of focus therein that the study of individual novel aims at.

The second chapter “Subjugation of Women in *The Pakistani Bride*” concentrates on the harsh reality of the victimization and exploitation of the ‘other sex’—the ‘fair sex’ in human society as presented in the novel. It places the woman perspective at the centre and focuses on suffering, powerlessness and travails of women within a patriarchal social structure. The epicenter of gravity and nucleus of concern remains the violence, tyrannical and proprietorial attitude of men to which women are subjected. The chapter attempts to analyze how the male society inflicts violence against the body of a woman in order to exercise control over her desires, emotions, thought process and life.
The third chapter “Trauma of Partition in Ice-Candy-Man” is a study of the holocaust of the Partition depicted in the novel. Written from a Parsi-Pakistani perspective, the novel warns us against the power-hungry politics, religious extremism and communal frenzy which together can divide not only the countries but the hearts of friends too. The chapter attempts to study the partition of the sub-continent as much more than a historical fact. It tries to focus on the question what the physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological and real implications of the partition of India are.

The fourth chapter entitled “Suffering, Loss and Betrayal in Such a Long Journey” discusses the basic and serious issues of life with a continuous strong undercurrent of suffering, feeling of loss and betrayal. There is an attempt to point out the harsh reality that the suffering of ordinary people whose problems follow one after another in quick succession at family front are aggravated by the corrupt and deteriorating political, economic and administrative states of affairs prevalent in the nation. With its Parsi protagonists, the novel not only underlines the identity crisis and alienation from a Parsi perspective, but also makes the issues relevant for ordinary citizens of the country who are used as scapegoats by corrupt and power-hungry politicians. The chapter aims at knowing whether one should learn to embrace emotions or to run away from them; whether or not it is possible to reach a suitable destination in life by way of forgiveness and by accepting harsh realities as part and parcel of life.

The fifth chapter entitled “Oppression in A Fine Balance” focuses on the harsh reality of social imbalance and inequality. The chapter analyses Rohinton
Mistry’s treatment of the theme of oppression of the people dehumanised and degraded on account of their gender, class, caste and race. It also examines how law and politics become chief instruments of suffering and political oppression. There is an attempt to understand how the state of oppression is sustained and perpetuated by means of excessive physical or mental violence, and how it ruins the victims physically and psychologically. The chapter underlines the grim reality that the annihilated and shattered self of the victim of oppression is left in a pathetic state of depression, powerlessness and psychological impotency.

Chapter Six is the comparative study of both the novelists in regard with their themes, style and their approach towards various social issues and harsh realities of life in the novels taken up for the present study. The chapter aims at highlighting the commonalities and uniqueness of Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry as novelists.

Chapter Seven is the concluding one and aims at the summation of the previous chapters including the findings of the study. It makes a humble attempt to establish the instrumental role these narratives can play in the understanding of harsh realities of life from different social perspectives. The chapter maintains that whatever be the scope of their concern, both the novelists under the study are ultimately concerned with humanity, its existential dilemmas, weaknesses and strength of human beings in the moment of crisis. They have psyche of the social critic. They not only present harsh realities of human life and weaknesses of human nature in their novels, but also offer some solutions to reach a kind of social harmony and balance wherein lie the significance and relevance of the study of their works.
REFERENCES


