CHAPTER – SECOND
SOCIAL VISION IN
CONTEMPORARY INDIAN FICTION
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In Reading a Novel the famous critic Walter Allen observes,

"Contemporary novels are the mirror the age but a very special kind of mirror that reflects not merely the external features of the age but also its inner face, its nervous system, coursing of its blood and the unconscious promptings and conflicts which sway it." ¹

The great movements, social, political and moral are bound to be reflected in the literature of a nation. For example 'A Tale of Two Cities' was inspired by French Revolution 'A Farewell to Arms' by Hemingway were inspired by the First World War. Similarly the second world war also gave rise to a crop of novels like 'The Caire-Mutiny' by Herman Wouk, 'The Cruel' Sea and 'A Time to Love a Time to Die' by Eric Maria Remarque and 'Young Lions' by Irwin Shaw.

Indian struggle for Independence was such an epic struggle as covered almost half of the twentieth century. The unarmed superstitious and poverty striken Indians had to shake off their lethargy of centuries. Before Indian nation could march ahead on the road of progress and freedom, it was necessary for it to forget its castes, sub-castes,

¹. Reading a Novel - Walter Allen, P. 19.
provincialism, communalism and other divisive forces. And this was to be achieved under the dynamic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi was a many sided personality. He was politician, philosopher, social-reformer, journalist, author and saint. With weapons of truth, non-violence, love and passive resistance he inspired the entire Indian people from North to South and from East to West, with idealism and deep patriotism.

Mahatma Gandhi was the Colossus who rode astride the age. The moment we think of India's national struggle for independence Gandhi's name perforce comes in our mind. Mahatma Gandhi and the political struggle of this memorable period of India's history have become synonymous. A reference to political problem of this period brings a direct and inevitable reference to Gandhi's personality and programme. Jawahar Lal Nehru implies the same thing when he refers to an attempt to write a file of Gandhiji.

The impact of Mahatma Gandhi's personality and his programme on this period and its literature was so great, that it will, not be improper to call it Gandhian Age. This period of Mahatma Gandhi's struggle has important milestone like the Khilafat Movement (1920-21), his Satyagrah against the salt law (1930-31), the Quit India Movement (1942), till independence was achieved in 1947. His political and
humaritarian work continued till the last evening of 30th January, 1948, when an assassin's bullet cut short the life of the Father of the Nation.

Indian movement for securing national independence was very much different from any other Revolution, say French Revolution, Russian Revolution or American Civil War. Ours was neither a bloody revolution nor an armed struggle for power. It demanded of all Indians a radically new approach to life. It was an emotional as well as an ideological experience spread over a much longer period of time than any other nationalist revolution in world history.

Indian national movement was not a single movement. On the contrary it was a combination of many different forces, working sometimes together in the same direction and sometimes in contrary directions. "No doubt Gandhian ideology was the prime mover. But along with it were also working the leftist, the terrorist and the revolutionary parties, towards the same end though through different means."^2 The Gandhian way itself had different meanings for different kinds of people. For some it was philosophy of life, For others it was an expedient strategy in achieving freedom of the country. Some people turned Gandhi into a

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2. Refer to Morning Face by Mulk Raj Anand, Last Section.
saint and to them Gandhiji's teachings were a sort of quasircligious dogmas. The ideas of different parties often came into conflict, and the men, who matured during those eventful decades, felt the pull of different ideologies and of ten shifted their loyalties from one to another.

"These were the years of heady action and the simultaneous happening of a wide variety of events blurred and confused the basic issues. Any novelist dealing with those turbulent years had to impose an order upon the splendid chaos and thus to discern a pattern in it to illuminate the human situation."  

On the social plane also a simliar struggle of freedom was going an aside by side with the political struggle. That was a determined fight against superstitions, caste system and untouchability which have been sapping the very vitality of our society.

In this context these words of Walter Allen are of special significance,

"In the literature of an age its conflicts, tendencies obsessions are uncovered and made manifest to a degree which is continually

astonishing; good writers are, so to speak, mediumistic to the deeper stirrings of life of their time, while they are still unknown to, or at any rate unsuspected by the public politicians and current received opinion."

The independence movement in India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was not merely a political struggle but an all pervasive emotional experience for all Indians in the nineteen, twenties, thirties and forties. No Indian writer writing in these decades or writing about them could avoid reflecting this upsurge in his work. Many of English novels written in India in the present century, for example 'Inqilab' by K.A. Abbas, 'Kanthapura' by Raja Rao 'Waiting for the Mahatma' by R.K. Narayan, to name only a few, deal with this national experience either directly as theme or indirectly as significant public background to a personal narrative. This was an experience that was national in character. It transcended boundaries of language and community.

Writers of Indo-Anglian Fiction wrote their principal novels, largely in this period of great ferment and excitement, their works truely reflect the conditions and

the problems that characterized the early decades of the twentieth century India and her people.

In the field of religion India was a pioneer. Her greatest contribution to the treasure house of religion was Vedantic philosophy of non-dulism or Shankar's Advaitvada. According to this principle, there is only one Reality and that is Brahman. The phenomenal world of appearance is as illusory as the appearance of a Serpent in a Rope. Under fear or emotional excitement our true vision is distorted and we have the illusion of serpent while there is only the Rope and no serpent. This Vedantic philosophy of Advaitvada, has very abstract metaphysics. Another doctrine of religious philosophy which is easier to understand and capable of being followed by a larger number of people is, the Marjar-Kishore-Nyaya. This principle implies that Almighty God is ready to take care of us, if we surrender ourselves completely in his hands. A kitten is quite safe and has nothing to worry so long as it allows itself to be lifted and carried about by the Mother Cat. We should like kittens, submit ourselves unreservedly into His hands. This school of philosophy comes under the category of Vishishtadwaitvada.

5. Refer to 'The Serpent and the Rope' by Raja Rao.
6. Refer to 'The Cat and Shakespeare' by Raja Rao.
Raja Rao, in 'Kanthapura' appears to feel an affinity with the Gandhian movement that sweeps over the village he describes. It is true that the story is narrated by an old woman who was an active participant in the movement and the personality of the author never intervenes directly. Yet the commitment of the author to his cause is not difficult to perceive.

R.K. Narayan, on the other hand, continues to remain uncommitted up to the very end. Narayan's whole achievement depends on his capacity to remain uninvolved. Narayan's novel 'Waiting For Mahatma', uses national experience only as the background to the personal narrative of Sriram and Bharati, unlike Raja Rao's 'Kanthapura', which deals directly with the national experience as the central theme.

Raja Rao writes with a sense of direct involvement in the national struggle which swept even through the villages of Southern India. But he is an artist and as such he makes the reader look at the happenings of the village in that era of Satyagrah, through the eyes of an old woman. As such he is free to mix facts with myth and fancy and succeeds in producing an epical effect on the minds of the reader. Though Gandhi never appears personally even once in his 'Kanthapura' yet the whole novel from the beginning to the
end is overwhelmed with Gandhi's personality, philosophy and programme through his local representative Moorthy. Had he made the generous cow-like Moorthy of the corner house, the narrator of events, the description, language used and the effect would have been different.

In his two other novels 'The Serpent and the Rope' and the 'The Cat and Shakespeare' where the theme is metaphysical and philosophical, Raja Rao has made the erudite scholar Ramaswamy and the easy-go-lucky. Rama Krishna Rai narrators of the events. So he has taken particular care to see that the character and therefore the style of the narrator should be quite in keeping with the effect that he wants to produce on the reader. Raja Rao is a consummat artist and though committed to the ideology of his novels to the same extent as Mulk Raj Anand, he has escaped the charge of being a propagandist that some critics lay on Dr. Anand. In his short stories too, where he exposes the social-evil likes child-widowhood, poverty and extreme greediness, he has adopted suitable technique as required by demands of a story tellers art. In other short stories like, 'The Cow of the Barricade' and 'Narsiga' which reflect political events and echoes of the time he has again adopted the technique of a real artist. Thus Raja Rao though he has dealt in a central manner with political and social problems

and with religious abstruse philosophy and metaphysics, is really an artist and free from the charge of being a propagandist.

His hatred for the social evils like unequal marriage and consequent widowhood, orthodoxy, extreme greediness, poverty of the backward people caused by the existing economic and social order is clearly visible in the few short stories that Raja Rao wrote during his early literary phase. In 'Kanthapura' and short stories, like 'The Cow of the Barricades' and 'Narsiga', 'Akkyya' and 'Javani' even a cursory reader can easily find out detailed treatment of National struggle for India's Independence, economic exploitation of the poor Indian coolies by the white managers of the coffee estates, and social evils like untouchability, superstitiousness, extreme poverty and the like.

In his first novel 'Kanthapura' he wanted to give an epical character. The scene of the novel is laid in a village of the same name. Like other villages of South India, Kanthapura is an orthodox type of ancient village. Different castes of people live here. Their houses are situated in different lanes known by their castes. In this village there is a Brahmin streeed, a potters' quarters, a Weavers' quarter, a Sudra quarter and a Pariah quarter. The most important person of the village, is Moorthy the staunch follower of Gandhi. Moorthy is Gandhi's man, the Satyagrahi
and the leader of the non-violent movement in Kanthapura. At
the other extreme three stands Bade Khan the policeman, who
is the symbol of the oppressive soulless bureaucracy, made
visibly repulsive. Then there is Bhatta, the symbol of usury
and false orthodoxy and low cunning. He tries to create
disunity by holding a threat that Swamiji will excommunicate
Moorthy, who mixes with the untouchable freely. Swamiji will
deal sternly with all who help Moorthy. There is Range
Gowda, the symbol of commonsense and stolidity a sort of
Sardar Patel to Moorthy, the village Mahatma. The river
Himavalthy is herself a (spiritual) presence and the Goddess
Kenchamma of the Hill, the protectress of the people and
guardian of Kanthapura, is also a (living) Presence.

Beyond the village lies the Skeffington Coffee Estate,
the symbol of the impact of industrialisation on the
traditional community life at Kanthapura. In a few pages of
hurried description is vivified the life at the Coffee
Estate in lurid colours. Some incidents of white man's
leahery and the like, which are realistically described in
Mulk Raj Anand's 'Two Leaves and a Bud' are just glanced at
in a hurry as in an impossible nightmare.

Bhajans and Harikathas mix religion and politics,
freely and purposefully. Reading of a newspaper becomes as
serious a discipline as the reverent reading of the Gita and
hand spinning is elevated into a daily ritual like Puja.
Mythicizing of the political leaders is freely done by the grandmother, narrator. Gandhi is the invisible God, while Moorthy is the visible Avtar (incarnation). The reign of the Red man is Asuric and it is resisted by the Devas, the Satyagrahis. Gandhi Mahatma is Rama, the red foreigner or the brown Inspector of police, who flourishes a lathi on the Satyagrahis is a soldier in the ten-headed Ravan's army of occupation, Satyagrahi in prison is the divine Krishna himself in Kansa's prison.

In course of time the walls of orthodoxy are breached and the revolution comes as a flood and carried all before it. Besides Moorthy, other leading spirits of the Gandhian revolution in the village are Rangamma Range Gowda and the girl Ratna. In the end it becomes a mass movement and the villagers comprising men and women of all castes and professions and the labourers of the Skeffington coffee Estate all join together to defy the onslaught of the bureaucracy.

The usual story of lathi-charge and firing is repeated here. The authorities adopt the most repressive measures. The land of the villagers is taken away and an attempt is made to sell that the outsiders. But inspite of these repressive measures, the spirit of the villagers remains unbroken. They suffered and suffered terribly but for the noble cause of their country. The total effect, on the
whole, is not depressing, though many villagers had to have Kanthapura as they had sacrificed their all. After drinking three mouthfuls of water from the river Hemavatty, the grandmother narrator also left the village. But since then it has been a sacred place to her and Kanthapura has its Sthalapura as described by the narrator, with all the necessary poetry, gusto and romance.

Thus in this typically Mysorean village villagers rise heroically to a man, in obedience to Mahatma Gandhi's call for Satyagrah, against the Red Man's rule. The village is a South Indian Village; the characters are all South Indian, but the movement has an all India significance.

Raja Rao's second novel is entitled 'The Serpent and the Rope'. This novel was designed to be encyclopedic in nature. It contained all kinds of details of Hinduism (Vedantic Adwaitvada) and all it implies. A contrast with the western, materialism-oriented culture was also to be attempted. The style for such a treatise on the essentials of true Hinduism also needed to be prosaic and terse. Hence the narrator in such a novel needed to be a keen intellectual, deeply versed in the intricacies of Upanishads and Shankar's Adwaitvada. Consequently the person who is assigned the job of narrating in this novel, is a South Indian Brahmin, a Smartha. He is the eldest son of a
Professor of Mathematics at Hyderabad and a keen intellectual himself. Ramaswamy the narrator in this novel is also the central figure of the story he is trying to tell. Ramaswamy traces his lineage of Madhawacharya and far back to sage Yajanavalka of the Upnishadic Age. Ram had read the Upnishads at four and knows Sanskrit very well. His mother-tongue is Kannada while he knows English extremely well, because she had studied that till the college level. He goes to France with a Government scholarship to pursue research in European history. There he marries a French girl and is well acquainted with Western materialistic culture. There as a reaction, Ramaswamy becomes a Vedantin (of Adwaitvada). Such a Ramaswamy who is a replica of Raja Rao himself, is the narrator of events which are of spiritual significance rather than of worldly wisdom.

Similarly the third novel *The Cat and Shakespeare* is also a religious novel. Both these novels pertain to the second phase of Raja Rao's literary career, after he had experienced deep spiritual crisis in his life. The religious philosophy sought to be expounded in this novel is comparatively simple philosophy of complete surrender to the Almighty. This is known as Marjar-Kishore-Nyaya or Kitten principle. The story is related by Ram Krishna Pai, a petty South Indian Clerk in a Revenue office. The story centres round the life of Govindan Nair, who is the chief apostle of
this kitten-principle. His peculiar humour and argumentative twists, make him a fit vehicle of expounding this philosophy of a devotee.

The same subject of Satyagrah struggle under the overall leadership of Mahatma Gandhi which threw many an Indian village into ferment, is treated in some short stories too. The story 'The Cow and the Barricades' after which Raja Rao names the collection of short stories has the same here. In this story Gauri the mysterious Cow which came every Tuesday evening before sunset to stand and nibble at the hair of Master, is the heroine of the story. The master like Moorthy of Kanthapura is the local leader and a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. Gauri is an uncommon cow in the words of the Master, "Perhaps she is the great Mother's vehicle." 

The writer has surrounded Gauri with a halo of mysticism and the suggestion is that Gauri is a symbol of some goddess perhaps Bharat Mata. The only other person at whose hair Gauri had nibbled was the Mahatma "who loved all creatures, the speechful and mute." 

8. The story, The Cow of the Barricades - Raja Rao, P.174
9. Ibid, P. 175.
10. Ibid, P. 176.
The time when the action of the story takes place is "The time when the Mahatma's men were fighting in the country against the Red man's Government." 11

The scene is a village with the Masters' ashram in it, somewhere in South India, reminiscent of Mahatma's village ashram at Yervada or elsewhere. The story describes an occasion when the army of the red Government stood poised to attack the peaceful Satyagrahis who had erected barricades on the road, to check the advance of the armed soldiers. Suddenly their came running Gauri from, no one knows, where and stood near the barricades, facing the guns of the soldiers. Such was the influence of Gauri, that the soldiers refused to fire. At last seeing no way out, the red chief fired his gun and killed Gauri with his bullet.

After this incident a metal statue of Gauri was erected at the place of her martyrdom. Elements of mysticism round the personality of Gauri, incarnation of Gods and Goddesses, satyagrah and the spiritual influence of the Mahatma and Bharat Mata, have all been suggestively combined in this beautiful story.

Another famous story Marsiga also makes mention of the Master's ashram in some South India Village, where the

11. Ibid, P. 176.
master speaks about Mahatma Gandhi to this shepherd boy. Uncle Sampanna, Carpenter Siddayya and Pariah Lingayya are some other persons about whom we hear in this story. Narsiga learns that the Mahatma works for Pariahs and loves them as the Master of the ashram does. He feels that, "Mahatma is an incarnation of God and so everybody touches his feet," including even the Brahmins. The illiterate shepherd boy imagines that Mahatma Gandhi will free Bharat Mata from the Redman as Rama freed the Sita from the prison of Ravana. Raja Rao is quite in his elements when he combine the political happenings of the day with Indian myths and mysteries, gods and goddesses to give religious colour and spiritual obscurity to them. This he dome admirably well both in his poetical novel *Kanthapura* and on a smaller scale in these short stories.

His short story *Akkayya* points before us a pathetic picture of child widowhood. This social evil which springs from unequal marriage, has been a curse of Hindu society since long. The Widow Akkayya who dearly loves and looks after the sons and daughters of other members in her family, has to live like a dependent in the family of her brothers and nephews and dies unowned by any one. No one wants "to take the responsibility of performing Akkayya's obsequies".

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test the course of her misfortune should cast its shadow on any one of her distant relatives. At last a Brahmin is hired for a few rupees to perform the necessary ceremonies. The story gives a lurid picture of unequal marriage and the consequent child widowhood which is a big social evil of Hindu society.

Javani is another such benevolent poor old woman who lives for others, and she has no one to call her own. Grinding poverty, superstitiousness, miseries and exploitation are the lot of this poor washerman's widow. Extreme greediness and belief in the godhead of serpents are highlighted in another story 'Kankpal', the Protector.

Raja Rao regarded the political domination of India by the aliens as the root cause of all evils. Political problems is the mother of all problems. Economic exploitation of the poor colliers by the white managers in due largely to the fact that they belong to the ruling class. Hence national struggle under the charismatic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, for the liberation of India from the foreign yoke is the very saga of noble sacrifice which calls for an epical treatment of the subject. Gandhian movement is not only political in character but it is economic, social and religious also. Thus in 'Kandhapur' Raja Rao describes through an old woman how nobly and to a
man all its inhabitants carried out Gandhian programme of Harijan uplift, Hindu Muslim unity, boycott of foreign cloth and picketing of the liquor shops. Thus this famous novel deals directly and centrally with the problem of all comprehensive national struggle, which had permeated right through every village of India. This particular village in permanent and excitement of the thirties is a representative picture of Indian villages in those days. 'The Cow of the Barricades' and 'Narsiga' are two stories of Raja Rao which are evidently inspired by the personality of the Mahatma and they have their local Masters a Kanthapura has its Moorthy who derives all his halo and glory from Mahatma Gandhi, about who every one talks in the village but who only a few have seen. Social problem like child widowhood with all its attendant tragic effects is the theme of another short story. Extreme poverty, ignorance and regional superstitions from the subject matter of another short story. Extreme greediness is the subject matter of yet two other short stories. Thus in the earlier phase of his literary career, Raja Rao is inspired by political, economic and social problems of the day.

14. Refer to Kanthapura - By Raja Rao
15. Refer to Akkayya - by Raja Rao
16. Refer to Javani - By Raja Rao
17. Refer to Kankapal and The Little Gramshop - By Raja Rao
In the second phase of his literary career after he suffered a deep spiritual crisis in his life, Raja Rao is inspired by the problems, philosophical, metaphysical and religious. In this phase of his career he comes out before us as a philosopher-novelist. Mystic philosophy of Shankracharya’s Adwaitvada which is the greatest contribution of India to the spiritual treasure house of the world, has inspired, the greatest and the most voluminous novel of Raja Rao. Marjar-Kishore-Nyaya or 'The Kitten Principle' of complete surrender of one self to the Almighty Mother Cat has inspired Raja Rao to write his third novel. Thus in the words of Raja Rao the reader clearly notices the various political, economic, social, philosophical and religious problems, which have influenced this novelist-philosopher.

R.K. Narayan another contemporary novelist of Indo-Anglian fiction comes from South India. Some basic human problems, we can glean from the novels of R.K. Narayan. The problem of educated unemployment and the problem of the hurdles created by the considerations of the astrology in the way of one's marriage versus love marriage figure in one novel and one

18. Refer to The Serpent and the Rope - By Raja Rao.
19. Refer to The Cat and Shakespeare - By Raja Rao.
short story of Narayan. The problem of phychic communion with the spirits, occupies the major portion of another novel. The problem of helplessness of Hindu wife vis a vis, the husbands arbitrary and eccentric behaviour forms the subjects matter of a third novel. Getting quickly rich by dubious ways, the craze for money brought in the wake of the Second World War, with the attendant evils, forms the subject matter of Narayan's later novels. The phenomenon of the appearance of some demonic human beings, who are a terror to all their neighbours and their ultimate destruction through their own hands like Bhasmasur is the theme of another novel. The problem of the ever widening gulf between the old generation that felt the influence of Gandhi and Gandhism, and the new generation of modernist youths, who throw to the winds all old values and traditions so dearly cherished by the old generation, is the central theme of another novel. His most famous novel deals with the problem of a tourist guide’s ambitious plan of bringing about a successful estrangement between the scholarly

20. Refer to The Bachelor of Arts and The White Flower by - R.K. Narayan.
21. Refer to The English Teacher by - R.K. Narayan
22. Refer to The Dark Room by R.K. Narayan
24. Refer to The Man Eater of Malgudi by R.K. Narayan
25. Refer to The Sweet Vendor by R.K. Narayan.
husband and his society fond wife and the ultimate recoil of this sin on the head of the sinner, who caught in his own share of sainthood dies, to convince his devotees of his magical powers.\textsuperscript{26} So in this way many a human problem can be gleaned from the novels of R.K. Narayan.

So far as the political, social and economic problems that faced India and Indians in those days are concerned R.K. Narayan has touched upon them only incidently, indirectly and within the frame work of his Malgudi. Gandhi and his activities, figure quite prominently in one novel of R.K. Narayan, but all this is not directly connected with the main thread of Novel.\textsuperscript{27} In some short stories like 'And End of Troubles and A Change, however, we get more direct reference to the extreme poverty and backwardness of people.\textsuperscript{28} The latter story shows the impact of machine on the life of a bughee driver,\textsuperscript{29} and the ill treatment meted out to low-cast people. We also find direct reference to political perspective\textsuperscript{30} and economic inequality. The problem of wicked system figure in another story.\textsuperscript{31} So in R.K.

\textsuperscript{26} Refer to the Guide by R.K. Narayan.
\textsuperscript{27} Refer to Waiting for the Mahatma by R.K. Narayan.
\textsuperscript{28} Refer to And End of Troubles by R.K. Narayan.
\textsuperscript{29} A Change by R.K. Narayan.
\textsuperscript{30} Refer to Gandhi's Appeal and Another Community by R.K. Narayan.
\textsuperscript{31} Refer to Gold Belt by R.K. Narayan.
Narayan's stories and to a lesser degree in his novels, here is some references to political, social and economical problems of the day.

In this first novel, we are introduced to a cheerful world of young school boys, Swami and his friends. They enjoy their juvenile life, with quarrels compromises, their club life and the important cricket match in their school.

The second novel 'The Bachelor of Arts' depicts the problem of educated unemployment. After taking his B.A. degree Chandran, (the hero of the novel) fails to find any suitable employment for some time. But Chandran makes a compromise with the times and accepts a lower job which is not commensurate with his qualifications. Dr. Anand's hero Nur in 'Lament Over the Death of the Master of Arts', suffered more terribly so much so that in utter frustration he developed tuberculosis and finally died, leaving the members of his family lamenting over the death of this master of Arts. Anand brings out the poignancy and pathos of the entire family when this future hope of the family, not to speak of becoming on I.A.S. fails even to get a job. The present system of general education perhaps is to a large extent responsible for this problem. Narayan only describes with a true artist's detachment and objectivity how young and ambitious men were forced to accept a railway clerkship
of Rs. 30/- p.m. or other third rate job as newspaper agency. Unlike angry Mulk Raj Anand, Narayan does not unduly emphasize the tragic note and offers practically little comment of his own.

The second problem which Chandran has to face, is the problem of rigid customs and useless traditions existing in Hindu society, like the absurdity of astrological considerations, in comparing the horoscopes of the boy and the girl before finalising the marriage proposal, Chandran falls in love with a young beautiful girl Malathi, but fails to marry her because his horoscopes does not agree with hers. In this case, Narayan offers some comments on the absurdity of consulting the horoscopes.

The third novel 'The English Teacher' highlighted the problem of psychic communication with spirits of the dead. Krishna's wife Susila dies after a brief illness and he feels an utter void in his life. Then through a stranger, Krishna learns that the spirit of his late wife is eager to send him a message. Narayan describes in details the method of receiving the messages from the spirits. After some practice Krishna himself develops the capacity of directly receiving communications from the spirit of his wife. He begins to feel that the spirit of his wife, though unseen is near him.
R.K. Narayan seems to believe himself in the possibility of psychic communication with the spirits which he has described so elaborately at various places in this novel. It may not be out of place to contrast him with Mulk Raj Anand has satirized in several of his novels the practice of seances, in which a spirit is invoked on some medium and its help is sought to remove the ailment of a sufferer.

Another issue that Narayan has raised in this novel is the problem of education. He shows his decided preference for the introduction of a new type of school called 'leave-alone' school for children. In this type of school children are absolutely free to do things accordingly to their free will. Teachers here do not impose their will on children by punishing them Krishna, the English teacher in a college when he sees the new type of leave alone school feels now disgusted with, "stuffing Shakespeare and Elizabethan metre and Romantic poetry for the hundredth time into young minds and feeding them on the dead mutton of literary analysis and theories and histories." 32 Krishna therefore resigns his English lecturership and accept the head mastership of this new type of school for children.

The next novel 'The Dark Room' shows a more sombre atmosphere. The novelist draws here the poignant picture of

a South Indian Middle Class Family, in which the wife's life becomes much of a hell, because of the frequent fits of anger and irritation of her whimsical and obstinate husband Romani. The bitter domestic life of this novel is just a counter foil of the sweet and happy domestic life of the English Teacher. In 'The Dark Room', the happiness or unhappiness, and quiet and disquiet of the household depend purely on the mood and temper of the house, Romani. In this house the servants, children and even the wife are constantly in a state of terror due to the domineering and cynical ways of Mr. Ramani. The appointment of Shantha Bai in Ramani's office brings more misfortune to the wife Savitri. Unable to bear any more, Savitri, in a fit of depression and anger leaves the house of her husband to drown herself into the river Sarju, one midnight. But as ill luck would have it a placksmith burglar, who was prowling about at this time saved her life. For a day or so Savitri tries to find some independent employment for herself. But soon being fed up with this state of affairs, she comes back again to her hateful home to sulk in the dark room without much effect on her erring husband, Ramani.

This novel thus shows the helpless condition of the Indian woman. She is aware of her debased position in the domestic life, however much we may talk of woman's lib. That is why Savitri quietly comes back again without much fuss. She has neither the courage nor the independence of
spirit, that Gauri the heroine of Mulk Raj Anand's *The Old Woman and The Cow* exhibits under similar circumstances. Gauri never thinks of committing suicide, but goes out of her husband's house to adopt the profession of nursing, in a clinic and never returns home. Narayan's heroine is, an average type of Hindu housewife, who is capable of nothing bolder than sulking in a dark room. Anand's heroine, on the contrary, is more courageous and she has found in Mahindra, a beneficent Providence. But how many Hindu housewives have such a good fortune and such protecting heavens!

Minor issues like the exorbitant love for money and sex, can be gleaned from the later novels like *The Financial Expert, Mr. Sampath* and *The Guide*. In these novels there are more complex and more crooked persons. In *The Financial Expert* Margaya rises from a very humble position to be a very big banking magnet. Accumulation of money and more money, by hook and by crook is his only obsession. Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth whom he worshipped so devotedly, smiles on him and he becomes fabulously rich. His son Balu, however, gets spoiled Dr. Pal, who was once the source of his wealth, now turns against him. Very soon an alarm of his impending bankruptcy spreads like wild fire. Long crowds of his clients knock at his gate to withdraw their deposited money from his bank and in no time he is reduced to his original poverty.
Mr. Sampath is novel of same name is another roughish but very resourceful hero. He begins his life as a printer of Srinivas' weekly. The Banner. But soon he manages to attract huge funds for starting the film industry. Various actors, actresses and technicians are employed and the shooting of a film begins. But infatuation of an artist Ravi for the beautiful heroine Shanti Devi, whom he tries to abduct brings complication in the whole affair. Ravi becomes mad and is removed to an asylum while Mr. Sampath gets the best of both the worlds.

In 'The Man Eater of Malgudi' come across Mr. Vasu who is a terror not only to the house owner Mr. Natraj, but also to all those who come in contact with him. Mr Vasu's extraordinary physical strength, his unshakably firm determination and his sadistic pleasure in inflicting pain all around suggest to the reader that he is no less than a Rakshas (a demon). Poor Natraj, he house owner who had accommodated Vasu in his upper storey and Shastri the press-in-charge are quite helpless and terrified neighbours. But such devils (Asuras) have in themselves the seed of their own destruction. This is how the world has always been saved to this day from such demons. In his attempt to beat away a mosquito from his face during his sleep Vasu delivers a hammer like powerful fatal stroke on his forehead and shatters his own head. Thus like Bhasmasura Vasu dies by his
own hand, and the terror stricken people of the neighbourhood heave a sigh of relief.

The Guide shows the cunning rogue Raju. The tourists Marco and Rosie, employ him as a guide to show them the old monuments and the famous caves of the Mempi Hills, while Marco is engrossed in his scholarly studies of an antiquarian, Raju succeeds in winning a way Rosie from Marco. He now becomes the general manager of Rosie's dance programmes and earns a lot of money. But soon for a small fraud he finds himself in prison. After his release he poses to be a hermit. Soon he becomes famous and is surrounded by a number of devotees. As a hermit he undertakes a fast for a number of days to propitiate the god of rain for the benefit of his devotees. Ultimately he dies in this attempt, entrapped in his own net in the posture of a hermit.

'The Vendor of Sweets' brings to the force the unbridgeable gulf that exists between the two generations young and old. Jagan the hero is the sweet vendor, who has tried to follow in his life some Gandhian principles. In his dress, food, habits and daily spinning he is a Gandhian. But his son Mali is just the opposite. He is represented of the Ultra-modern America returned young men.

'Waiting for the Mahatma' shows the political problem. In Narayan's political novel, Gandhiji himself appears in person and addresses political meetings in Malgudi. Activities of the Indian people following Gandhiji's declaration of Quit India movement and Netaji Subhash
Chandra Bose's broadcasts from abroad against the British government are quite prominently mentioned. Narayan also shows glimpses into Gandhiji's Ashram life and his assassination. The theme of the novel centres round the personality of Mahatma Gandhi and political happenings of those days is spread out before the reader. He makes the reader look at these incidents through the narrow viewpoint of Sriram, who is an immature romantic youth and who can not gauge the importance and magnitude of even such movements as Quit India movement. Sriram falls in love with Bharti who is an orphan girl and who since childhood lived in Gandhiji's ashram. He does not understand the importance of Gandhi and his philosophy but joins Gandhiji's entourage only for the sake of Bharati. Seen through the eyes of such a Sriram, even the most important things become secondary or even territory in importance.

"Viewed through the consciousness of a rather limited person, who cannot see beyond the immediate present, who can think not in terms of abstract ideals but only of concrete facts the nationalist movement is seen entirely in terms of small events and particular situations." 33

It is such trivial matters that worry Sriram and not the larger issues of ideal and principle. He knows his

33. Twice born Fiction - Meenakshi Mukerji, p. 41.
limitations and know that although his service is as humble as of a squirrel in building the bridge to Lanka, even this trivial sacrifice will please Bharati. The refore Sriram overturns trains, set fire to buildings and performs other acts of destructions with as much indiscriminate enthusiasm as he had shown for spinning, for non-violent picketing and for writing slogans on the wall, unable to see any qualitative difference between these two kinds of activities. In *Waiting For Mahatma* there is no attempt at generalisation. This is a novel of the highly particular.

In Narayan's beautiful short story entitled *Gandhi's Appeal* shown how a lawyer and his wife Padma are irresistibly led to contribute handsomely, though the two had taken every care to avoid doing so in the beginning. Narayan's other story that deals with the political conditions of the time is captioned as *Another Community*. This story refers to the savage and shameless carinage that India witnessed at the time of the transfer of power from the British hands. The story describes how an innocent and good intentioned insurance clerk who hates communalism, from the core of his heart falls a pray to the fury and violence of the communal riots. The story gives a very vivid description of fear suspicion and hatred which swayed the minds of the people during the days of communal riots.
Some of his short stories directly refer to similar other social and economic problems. The story entitled "The White Flower" is a mild satire on the Hindu system of marriage, according to which the union of two hearts depends upon the wishes of other people more than the wishes of the two persons directly concerned. The two astrologers supporting the side of the boy and the girl, do not agree so far as the validity of the two horoscope is concerned. The matter is therefore referred to the priest of a temple who places two flowers - the white one for 'yes' and the red one for 'no' before the idol of Hanuman, and a girl of five is asked to pick up one of them. In the story 'The Gold Belt' reference is made to the wicked and cruel system of dowry which ruins the life of many a Hindu girl. Poor Sambasivan is threatened with the annulment of his daughter's engagement in the absence of gold belt, demanded by the bridegroom's father.

The wretched economic condition of the down-trodden people in this country is movingly described in the story, 'And End Troubles'. This pathetic story describes the tragic death of Kuppan a poor rickshaw puller. In this attempt to reach his old patron whom he sees getting down from the bus, the rickshaw puller meets an accident and is run over by the bus. Another story of his entitled 'A Change' shows the impact of the machine age and the human lives. Samad who works as a syce and a bughee driver is deprived of his job
when his master purchases a car. Finding no alternative he purchases a tanga and a pony and lives on the wages received from the passengers. He is soon ousted from there also when buses enter into competition with him. He has to sell away his horse and tonga and turns a hawker.

'Half-a-Rupee-Worth' is another of Narayan's stories, which throws light on the miseries of the poor people caused by the hoarders and black marketeers. The poor people cannot afford to pay for rice owing to the mounting price. Subhash, a rich merchant, hoards rice in a secret godown and sells it at an exorbitant price as scarcity conditions are created in the market. He, however, meets his doom in his own overstocked godown where the rice bags topple down on him and kill him then and there. Thus some short stories of R.K. Narayan, undoubtedly, paint to the economic problems of the poor sections of Indian society in this country.

Narayan's interest is confined to some human problems that his characters in the various novels have to face. For example, these problems pertain to education, educated unemployment, and obstacles presented by astrological considerations, in the union of true lovers. Economic inequality and even political happenings of great magnitude are viewed through a limited perspective of some particular character. Narayan thus gives an impression that the problems with which he is concerned, have little to do with
the country or age as a whole. His problems are limited to a narrow place and to a narrow range.

Social life in a country of the size of India is so full of vagaries and varieties that Bhabani Bhattacharya, like other contemporary novelists, with an observant eye and an understanding heart will find the material spread out before him to be literally inexhaustible. His first novel, 'So Many Hungers,' was published in October 1947, soon after the transfer of power by Britain to India and Pakistan, but it actually covers the war years with their uncertainties, privations, agonies, cruelties, frustrations. Bhattacharya's denunciation of exploitation - political, caste-based or economic is rendered in human terms and not ideological terms. Hungers presents a moving spectacle of persons reeling under Bhattacharya's denunciation of exploitation - political, caste-based or economic is rendered in human terms and not ideological terms. Hungers presents a moving spectacle of persons reeling under economic and political depredation. The political message that self-rule is a must even for individual self-fulfilment is presented not through ideological debate but through Rahoul, the protagonist, who comes to realize it on his pulse. Again, the nexus between black-marketeers and the alien rulers is made all too patent not through rhetorical argument but by making men like Samarendra Basu and Sir Ablabandhu Kowtow to the British.
The strategy used here is of making human agents act in a manner which leads to the ideological as an inescapable conclusion. In Tiger, there is an ominous alliance between Mangal Adhikari, the priest, Motichand, the speculator and Sir Ablabandhu, the anglophile today, which reflects the ganging up of the upper classes and the business magnets to perpetuate their hegemony - religious, economic and political - over the masses.

In Tiger and Hungers, the novelist renders in active human terms what the sensitive man in him had himself seen.

My creative writing had its true genesis in the hungers - hit streets of Calcutta where the great famine raged. I had on intense need of release from the agony of the traumatic experience.34

However, there remain some minor blemishes from the artistic viewpoint where the novelist seems to be passionately carried over. In Tiger Kalo is thrown behind the bars for three excruciating months just

34. Bhattacharya in an interview with Ramesh Srivastava, Perspective on Bhabani Bhattacharya, P. 220. In Another interview included in Contemporary Novelists in the English Language (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1972), Bhattacharya explains that the famine in Bengal caused "emotional stirrings" which were "a sheer compulsion to creativity". The result was So Many Hungers! (P. 71).
because he had stolen a few Bananas from a carriage (p.30). A famished person is subjected to unspeakable atrocities simply because he could not take his eyes off the food staked in an eating house. The bully of a magistrate asks the convict, "Why did you, have to live?" (P.30). However, these only underscore the relative ease with which ideology is humanized and harmonized within a non-ideological framework else. Where in Bharracharya's corpus.


"You are city-bred, village-wed. I am village-bred, city-wed. We share one common lot; we've been pulled up by the roots". When Roop-lekha went to live with her husband in the city, she had to stand the critical stare of the sophisticated; she had to give up her old modesty, she had to eat fish and meat - "though at first the smell and taste sickened me." With Mohini, it has to be the other way about; she has to learn to countrify and traditionalize herself, attune herself to the atmosphere of her husband's village and its Big House "Why all this bother?" asks Mohini; if city is city and country is country, why try the impossible task of trying to make them meet? But Roop-lekha has her answer:
We who're so wed serve some real purpose. It's as though we made a bridge between two banks of a river. We connect culture with culture, Mohini our old Eastern view of life with the new semi-western outlook...

Bhattacharya's another novel, *A Goddess Named Gold* presents most artistically the message to the society that freedom must be used as a means to egalitarian ends. The 'axes' here are "hardly visible and the grinding is not very audible." Meera's grand father, the minstrel, gives her a taveej which will turn copper into gold if she performs disinterested acts of 'Kindness': a poor man is forcibly evicted so that Meera could rehabilitate him later, a boy is reported to have tumbled into a well so that Meera could volunteer to go into the well to save him, a compulsive drunkard and a habitual prostitute are to be joined in wedlock by Meera.

In his novel, *Shadow From Ladakh*, Bhattacharya has a challenging theme: India at the time of the Chinese invasion of 1962. The title itself sets the pace of the writing, and the military situation casts its shadow almost everywhere in the society. Ladakh x-rays Gandhism in humanistic terms to detect the chinks in its armour. But

this too is accomplished situationally pitting Satyajit against Roopa and the haunting reminiscences of Harriet Green and Stella Johnson, pitting Sumita against a sculpture in an amorous posture, and by presenting Suruchi, left alone to mourn the grievous loss of Ajoy and Sanjay stifled within her. The novel succeeds in exposing Gandhism as contrary to life: Gandhian non-violence is presented as partly irrelevant and anachronistic, not in cerebral verbiage but through Satyajit's failure to evoke popular response to his Shanti a march to Ladakh. It is in a similar vein that the underlying discontent in Bhaskar and Roopa precipitates the awareness of the inadequacy of a purely consumeristic modernist way of life.

Bhabani Bhattacharya portrays the society with political scenario in ominently human rather than in ideological terms in all his novels without a single exception: the alien despotism, the long drawn out fight for freedom, the high hopes at the attainment of Independence, the mushrooming of opportunists and ideologues soon thereafter; the rise of diverse social forces all competing for social and economic gains in an a moral no-holds barred rat race.
Bhabani Bhattacharya lashes at the forces of reeking, decaying customs and rituals, superstitions, orthodox practices which was the progress of newly independent India. Out of the clash between the old and the new times, village and city; orthodox and progressive ideologies and attitudes, past and present, selfishness and co-operation, anti-life and life; the visionary with a social purpose in Bhabani Bhattacharya, consistently seeks and urges for a creative and meaningful new synthesis.

In Manohar Malgonkar's novel 'The Princes' the social protest is in a different milieu. The novelist takes us into the turbulent world of the princes; where the prince like an ordinary mortal is seen protesting against his parents and his environment. The novel traces the psychological struggles and evolution of Abhay as he is exposed to the traumatic childhood experiences and the double pulls of the conflicting loyalties and ideologies. From a state of personal and social anonymity and loneliness because of tremulous emotional turmoil of childhood, Prince Abhayraj matures, through a process of involvement in war, extramarital sex, into an emancipated man who realized his fulfilment towards the end of the novel. He becomes a more confident and poised man who has overcome the conflict between his loyalties and ideologies with a new understanding.36

36. G.S. Amur, Manohar Malgonkar, pp. 80-81.
Rakesh in *This Time of Morning* faces the uncertainty of Hinduism, Sanad in *A Time To Be Happy* is puzzled by it. Rakesh finds that while Islam and Christianity clearly spell out what they believe, Hinduism remains a "baffling uncertainty. Likewise in *Storm in Chandigarh* Trivedi, Vishal Dubey and Harpal are critical of this ambiguity of Hinduism. Trivedi tells Dubey, "This lack of definition does not suit us at all." Vishal also echoes this view. Like Trivedi, he also feels that Brahminism has not been able to provide a "quality of life which a people evolves for itself." Instead it had lost its vitality and become ineffective.

The surface interpretation of the philosophy of Hinduisim is another factor that makes the Indians apathetic. It is this apathy which people like Vishal and Ram Krishna fight against. They see that for people like Saroj and Smrit non-attachment has come to be a submission to fate. It has come to mean resignation not resistance. Vishal sees no use for martyrdom in any form specially the kind bred into women outraged him, "It was even elevated to a mystical importance, glorifying their acts of self-effacement and never more than when it demanded the sacrifice of theirselves." He tells Saroj, "we are still bound by

38. Ibid, p. 82.
meaning doctorines and we show no mercy to thos ewho don't conform. He does not accept the "established ideas about morality" but believes that there is a "higher morality" and discards the accepted meaning of purity and Chastity as a "fable of flesh unpolluted by man." He prefers action to non-action and advices Harpal and Saroj to take a stand against injustice.

Professor Usman in 'A Situation in New Delhi', also points out ambivalence of Hinduism present in teh Bhagawad Gita. The performance of duty in a non-attached way was on the one hand capable of evoking the best in man, while on the other it could lead to must brutal and inhuman action. He urgently feels the need for some action firmly based in reality and gounded in the Indian way of life because, "you can't make revolutions in the air... It has to come from the ground under your feet."

Thus, not only are these characters protesting but like ideal visionaries they suggest remedies to cure the maladies of society and recarve the role of an individual in the socio-economic milieu.

41. Ibid, P. 192.
43. Ibid, P. 115.
Kamala Markandaya's novels are distinctly sociological in focus. We can find in them an authentic portrayal of the contemporary India and its challenges. As Shiv K. Kumar comments,

Of all the contemporary Indian novelists writing in English, Kamala Markandaya is the most accomplished ... in respect of ... her authentic portrayal of the Indian scene. What distinguishes her most intensively from other Indian novelists is her acute awareness of a gradual shift in values that has been taking place in this subcontinent during the fast two decades or so.44

Social life in India bristles with problems "vagaries and varieties", as Iyengar calls them, and an observant novelist like Markandaya deals with the most conspicuous of them. Her themes are not different from most other post-independence Indian novelists, which revolve round "contemporary problems."

'Nectar in a Sieve' is the story of a 'Faceless' tenant farmer, his family and their village. The story is

told by Rukmani, who remembers the early days of her marriage with Nathan and the birth, death and defection of her children. Until the introduction of a tannery in the village, the dignity of labour was the basis of a happy living of the traditional farming community. The sowing of seeds disciplined the body and the sprouting of the seed uplifted the spirit. Nathan wanted to pass on the traditional knowledge to his sons, but they deserted him and went in search of more lucrative professions. But "while there was land there was hope." The novel recalls Venkataramani's Murugan the Tiller and Premchand's Godan. Like them it presents the saga of Indian life at the grass-roots. The main focus of Markandaya's novel is hunger and the consequent human debasement. Under desperate conditions, as Arjun, Rukmani's eldest son, says, "the important thing is to eat." However, the rains having failed, Rukmani, Nathan and their children starve and drift apart.

In 'A Handful of Rice' (1966) also Kamala Markandaya takes up the theme of poverty and hunger. In fact, this novel seems to be a sequel to 'Nectar in a Sieve'. The latter novel shows Ravi's encounter with a sergeant his flight to the city of Madras, his futile efforts to find a suitable job for himself his interest in Nalini, and his 'ganging' up with Damodar to eke out living out of petty

thefts and burglaries. Ravi is thus caught in the vortex of change from the traditional rural society to the materialistic urban society.

'The Coffer Dams' thus projects some of the major issues pertaining to the tribals. The building of the dam heralds the onset of new values - commercialism, culture of luxury and convenience and alienation and other factors incumbent upon industrialisation.

Markandaya has treated issues such as race-relationship, the East-West encounter, rootlessness and identity crisis in her powerful novel. 'The Nowhere Man' (1972). The protagonist, Srinivas, is an old man of about seventy who has no option but to leave India and settle down in England. He adopts England as his own country, where he has lived nearly two thirds of his life.

Kamala Markandaya's novels evince a genuine concern for socio-cultural problems be setting the Indian society. Her novels do not present ready-made solutions to problems, but do give certain helpful hints. Notwithstanding occasional exaggerations, her portrayal of the plight of Indian masses, their quest for identity, man-woman relations, the interplay between the tradition and the modernity and cultural issues like the East-West encounter and race-relations must be considered to be her remarkable contribution to Indian English Fiction.
In the same vein K. Nagrajan reflects the struggle against alien rule in 'Chronicles of Kedaram' (1961), using political background for a family chronicle, as in his earlier novel 'Athwar House' the period covered is 1925-1939 and it gives various shades of the struggle both at the political and personal levels. The protests described are those of the traditionalists and modernists; the nationalists and the imperialists and high castes and low castes.

Venu Chitali's 'The Transit' (1950) also tells the story for three generations of a Maharashtrian Family which, after various struggles, has undergone various political and social changes in India. Another novel is the same tradition is Zeenith Futehally's 'Zohra' (1951) which reflects the alterations and adaptations of the upper class Muslim society during the freedom struggle.

Arun Joshi's The Apprentice (1974) is a confession made by a Government Officer in the form of a dramatic monologue. Ratan Rathore the son of a dedicated freedom fighter, feels the need for an overall change in the prevailing immoral and degenerate situation in the society after Independence. Earlier in his career, too, he had felt that the individual was responsible for this decadent state of affairs, but now he feels that something else also has blighted the atmosphere of the country.
Evolving from the eighteen and the nineteenth centuries, the literature of dissent, like all other literatures, acquired shape and direction by the social, political, and economic forces of our society. The patterns and approaches in this literature reveal that the fascinating aspects of life dominate the canvas of Indian English Writers. Whereas Mulk Raj Anand has skillfully described the protests of the 'pariahs' and the underdogs of Indian society, Nayantara Sahgal portrays the woes and the struggles of the higher aristocratic circles. Bhabani Bhattacharya and K.A. Abbas depict chiefly the sorrows and conflicts of the common masses; Manohar Malgonkar convincingly brings to the fore the struggles of some of the princes against the merger of their states in the Indian Union. With equal masterly strokes of realism, Malgonkar in *Distant Drum* portrays the conflicts and anxieties of the army men when they found their erstwhile friends standing before them as their enemies after the partition.

Furthermore, while R.P. Jhabhwala and Markandaya discuss the furies and frets of peripheral life, Anita Desai scans the innermost conflicts of the human psyche. All these approaches are conducive to the wide-ranging patterns and shades of protest; they demonstrate that the Indian English writers are visionaries concerned not only with the changing norms of the times but also with the improvement of the future of country as a whole.
These writers have tried to remove the cob webs of outworn and negatory customs prevailing in India. With a heightened awareness of their unique position to criticize and condemn these hide-bound traditions, the Indian English writers have artistically woven the themes of anger and protest in their works. The removal of the decadent and substitution of worthwhile values extend to all spheres of society: political, economic and feminist.

Nayantara Sahgal's novels deal with contemporary Indian political scenario with deep insight and a convincing portrayal of the working sof selfish politicians and corrupt bureaucracy. Again, the younger generation like Rishad, Naren and Swarnapriya Situation in New Delhi resort to the cult of violence for the destruction of the corrupt system and for building a new one. On the other hand, the intelligentsia finds itself in a dilemma on account of the vacuum in the leadership which could inspire them to 'get ready for the battle' once again; only this time the battle is to be against the internal misrule. There are people like Devi, Professor Usman, Sonali, Raj Garg and Vishal Dubey who rebuke the passivity of the masses for not resisting any evil or tyranny. These protagonists simultaneously assert new philosophies or policies and prescribe new remedies for curing the maladies of the system. Also, they nurture the
ideals of humanity, equality and "Freedom to be free". They are convinced that the change in the present system is a must, and that only by destroying or cleansing the old corrupt system, can a new system evolve. However, this new revolution according to them, has to be a non-violent one, as it is the only means which appeals to the Indian psyche. Professor Usman and Devi in the same novel resign from their lucrative posts in order to fight for establishing the new policies necessary for the healthy growth of the country. Sonali and her likes shun any place in the tyrannical rule during the Emergency, and are very much critical about the family rule, red-tapism and compulsory family planning. The protest in this phase is the protest of the isolated suffering victims who vouch for a golden age, 'a Ram Rajya' and fight against the negatory forces in their own peculiar ways.

Like the South African writers, the Indian English writers too, belong to a society that is riddled with many corrupt practices, and superstitions; poverty and illiteracy. It is not surprising therefore that the writers take up this vital issue of protesting against these evils. This protest takes shape from the conflicts between the victim and the victimizers of the Indian society and the artists are inspired by the continuous imposition of and intimidation by one group over another. Further, the socio-political and socio-economical forces enlarge the spectrum of these writers who portray the multifold facets of life and its battles.
M.R. Anand's heroes like Bakha (Untouchable) Bhiku (The Road) and Ananta (The Big Heart) are the underdongs of society who are aware of their lot and who want to improve it along with the society at large. Also Bhabani Bhattacharya's protagonists are humanists and diehard optimistic visionaries. They want to purge the society of all the evils and can overcome their weaknesses and miseries despite many impediments. Kalu in He Who Rides A Tiger is a victim of religious bias and society. He flouts religion by dissembling as a brahmin priest. Later, he successfully overcomes the psychic conflict that emerges out of this deception. Jaidev, Biten, Harindra and Sudha, in Music for Mohini also disapprove of the discrimination based upon casteism. With Mohini, they fight against evils like child-marriage, sati-system, bride showing, dowry system, illiteracy and superstitions. Also the victims of circumstances like Kajoli, Meera, Mohini, Chandra Lekha, Devta (Devesh Basu), Rahoul and Kanu fight against the exploiters like Seth Shayam Sundarji Music or Mohini, Samarendra Basu So Many Hungers, the 'vulgar betel woman' (Jackal Woman') who prompts Kajoli to sell her body, and Jaidev's orthodox obstinate mother who forces Mohini to offer the blood of her bosom to the Goddess. Kajoli's mother's So Many Hungers refusal to live in a world without honour and convictions may be regarded as a
metaphysical extension of her protest. Likewise Bhaskar, Sumita, Suruchi and Bireshwar etc. in *Shadow From Ladakh* fight against the anti-life philosophy of Satyajit. On the other hand, Satyajit takes a firm stand against the expansionist policies of capitalism and imperialism, be it the extension of Steeltown to engulf Gandhigram or the assault of the Chinese to swallow India. Satyajit and Bhasker both fight against other prevailing social evils like casteism, population explosion and child-marriage.

Prince Abhay's peculiar protest in Malgonkar's *The Princes* provides another view of the princes' life when he condemns his unjust father and immoral mother who had eloped with a muslim palace offier. His traumatic childhood flashbacks tax his peace of mind and he enters into a wayward course of life sometimes by joining the army and sometimes by entering into dubious extra-marital relationship. His quest of "self" and a conscious awakening to the harsh realities make him a courageous fighter against the meaningless existence. The Indian English writers while depicting the maladies of the unhealthy society also show like visionaries, various remedies for eradicating social evils.

The struggle of the 'weaker-sex' in our society also provides an interesting theme in the Indian English fiction.
The weaker sex now no longer seems to be so weak. The very fact that they are taking their stand against anything that hurts their dignity or self-respect as a human being, renders their protest meaningful. These emancipated women are in quest for a 'self' and a 'new morality' which might enable them to live like human beings and as 'co-partners' with their husbands in the true sense of the word.

R.P. Jhabhwala expounds the burden of the white woman living in India. They face the conflict of making an inevitable choice between drowning and disaster by staying on and escaping by withdrawal and flight. Most of the western women in her fictive world choose the latter.

Markandaya also delineates the double pulls that the Indian woman faces: between tradition and modernity; between Indian and Western ways of living; and between her dignity as a human being and her roles and obligations as a sister, mother or wife. In short, between her need for autonomy and her need for nurturance. Both Markandaya's and Jhabhwala's women shun politics. Both introduce the foreign characters like Helen The Coffer Dams Olivia heat and Dust. Lee, Margaret and Evie A New Dominion who are disillusioned and dissatisfied with the western ways of life and its mechanical society with a lust for materialism. They too, are in 'quest for a new self' and a new meaning in life. The western women also like Esmond's wife and Rose
suffer the humiliations at the hands of their husbands and become totally dependent on them for their needs, like their Indian counterparts. Both of them, again, explore the possibility of human relationship and psychological motivations by making their protagonists explore the Indian milieu. The protagonists who fight against the poverty, squalor and superstitions; racial recalcitrance and cultural chaos; and their inner crises have important roles to play in their fiction.

While Jhabhwala and Markandaya discuss the furies and frets of peripheral life, Anita Desai searches the innermost chasms of the human psyche. The existential absurdity of life leading either to arid existence or to decay and death as witnessed in Maya, Monisha, Nanda Kaul and Sita in her novels is unforgettable. The alienation of these characters is further aggravated by their indifferent and callous male partners on the one hand, and the power, pressure and prestige emanating from solid economic and social institutions on the other. Further women like Monica, Sita, Amla and Bim can also be seen struggling to juggle domesticity, love, children, career and emotional fulfilment. their acute sensitivity makes all the women protagonists of Desai suffer from neurotic dissatisfaction.
Nayantara Sahgal's women like Saroj, Simrit and Mara also face and fight the pangs of sorrows and hypocrisy of the male dominated world. They try their utmost to adjust, adapt and sacrifice so that their world may not fall apart. But this being not so, they do not hesitate to carve their own way which gives an identity and meaning to their individual lives. Saroj, Simrit, Mara Sonali and their likes focus attention on the struggles and challenges involved in contemporary living and the loneliness that forces every woman to draw upon her own resources.

Likewise Gauri (The Old Woman and the Cow), Rukmani (Nector in Sieve) Gulab (Esmond in India), and Sarla Devi (Get Ready for the Battle) are emancipated women who boldly face the inimical forces around them.

These emancipated women, therefore, are in search of new ways of life and are positively motivated towards a larger concept of love, joy and sympathy; they want to transcend the patriarchal, bureaucratic society of programmed consumption.

The Indian writers have depicted through their works that they have boldly faced the inimical forces of our society and country. Though there are no radical solutions suggested, the way each protagonist confronts the reality and creates new patterns of revolt against the established
exploitative forces brings in a new resonance, a new vibrant way of looking at life and an inner area of enlightenment. However futile such a protest may be, it gives a sense of exhilaration, a new vision and a ray of hope while it lasts.