CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

The writing in English by Indians created renaissance in Indian literary and cultural history. Earlier, the education in India was mainly in Sanskrit which was confined to the priestly class. The English compelled colonial children in India to travel towards modernity by mastering their language and adopting it as a medium of expression. The Colonial education brought transformation of Indian literature. Prose became the chief genre during the colonial time. Very soon, English became a medium of creative expression by the Indian writers. Poetry came first followed by fiction. Initially, Indian writers writing in native languages also attempted fiction in English. Their efforts were modeled mainly on those of the Western writers. Therefore, their works in their vernacular are more or less forgotten today. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Krupa Satyanadan are the two writers of those days whose novels Rajmohan's Wife and Saguna were neglected till recently even after receiving considerable critical appraisal.

The Gandhian National Movement in the 1920s was the driving force of pre-colonial Indian English novelists. Gandhi figures in such novels as Murugan-The Tiller by K.S. Venkataramani and So Many Hungers by Bhabani Bhattacharya. Nehru is also very much the driving spirit to the Indian English novelists of that time. Almost all the writers in English of the early decades of the 20th century were influenced by Gandhi and his ideology; Nehru being another influence for them.

There was a time when literature written by Indian writers in English was looked down upon as inferior along with its artistic authenticity, linguistic expression and imaginative creation being doubted
forthwith. English language had become a necessity for Indian English writers in post-independence period. They gave supremacy to English language and adopted it as the language of their literary creation. Today, writings by Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy and other Indian English writers have got the status of original world class literature. Indian English fiction has become the focus of curiosity now particularly from the western point of view. A remarkable feature of Indian writing in English is that there are no schools, literary movements and regional groups within its orbit. Its history is scattered, discontinuous and transnational. Transnationalism is the prominent characteristic of Indian English writing, especially of fiction in the light of the rising trend of decolonization in the 1930s. It is to be taken as the takeoff decade for the Indian novel in English and its genealogy can be traced back to the previous century. During the colonial period, readers of Indian English novels were not Indians, but the British rulers and administrators. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s Rajmohan’s Wife (1864), the first Indian English novel was meant to highlight the Indian social realities to the colonial rulers.

Macaulay’s policy of English as the language of higher education had introduced urban Indian intellectuals to the British models of narratives. There were different types of pre-novel fiction forms available in different Indian languages. The earlier narrative texts in English about imaginative history A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the year (1945) was published in 1835 by Kailash Chander Dutt in Calcutta Literary Gazette and The Republic of Orissa: A page from the Annals of the 20th Century by Shashi Chander Dutt in 1845 in the Saturday Evening Harakuru. Both the texts depict imaginative battle of liberation against
British in future but end with dissimilar conclusions. *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours* by Kailash Chander Dutt remains an important pre-novel narrative text in the history of Indian English fiction and the other by Shashi Chander Dutt-*The Republic of Orissa: A Page from the Annals of the 20th century* in which the battle against British is led by a tribal from Orissa Bhiku Bank, chief of Kingaries. These pre-novel narrative texts were not borrowed as the models from the West. Shashi Chander Dutt’s political radicalism is very much remarkable from the viewpoint of the future development of Indian English novels. His *Shankar* (1885) was set against the background of 1857 revolt and *The Young Zamindar* (1883) depicted Resistance Movement throughout India against British imperialism.

As the Indian English novel emerged, it became literary fashion to associate it with the British colonial rule. K.K. Sinha’s historical novel *Sanyogita* or *The Princess of Aryavarta* (1930) dealt with the defeat of PrithviRaj Chauhan, a happening similar to the takeover of India by the British. His *The Star of Sikri* (1893) was also a remarkable contribution to the development of Indian English novel.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, spirit of nationalism became the driving force and a major theme of Indian English novelists. Sarath Kumar Ghosh’s novel *Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* (1909) depicted the princely state of Bharatpur in an allegorical manner. *Thillai Govindan* by A. Madhavaiah delineated the writer’s views about the relation between Indian people and the British imperial power. All the Indian English novelists of that time seemed to accept the dominance of the British colonial rule in their writings, however, with certain reservations. During the colonial India, Indian English novel was written
mainly by the upper-class Indians who described ambivalently the Western civilization as the liberating force, on the one hand, but depicted its threat to Indian civilization and Indian identity, on the other. Knowledge of English was a gender-specific skill and privilege in the nineteenth-century India and was restricted to urban upper-class males only. Indian English novel, during this period, followed traditions and conventions of the Victorian novelists.

The first Indian English novel, *Rajmohan’s Wife* (1864), written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, dealt with middle-class life. *Rajmohan’s Wife* was serialized in 1864 in a short-lived journal *The Indian Field* edited by Kishorichand Mitra. It was published in the form of a book in 1935 and was written during the period when romance was the dominant narrative theme in the Indian English Fiction. Nobody had ventured to write about the contemporary reality except Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

Lal Behan Dey’s *Govinda Samarita* or *The History of a Bengali Farmer* (1874), revised and renamed later as *Bengal Peasant Life*, depicted a poor Ugrakshatriya family in the Bardhaman district of West Bengal having become landless and helpless at the end of the story. This kind of theme was never written before in Indian English fiction. The only woman writer who wrote more than one novel in English in nineteenth century India is Krupabai Satyanadan whose two English novels, *Kamala-A Story of Hindu Life* (1894) and *Saguna- A Story of Native Christian life* (published posthumously in 1895) were reprinted in 1998. Both were noteworthy for the writer’s concern with gender, caste, ethnicity and cultural identity. Shashi Chander Dutt, Lal Behan Dey and Krupabai Satyanadan are important novelists of the day who made solid contribution to the development of Indian English fiction.
The period between 1930 and 1940 was remarkable in the history of Indian English fiction as well as in the Indian Nationalism. The Indian English novel expressed its themes of radical vision and anti-colonial nationalism. Nation-centeredness of the new generation of Indian novelists was notable because of being the expression of a characteristic cosmopolitan attitude and realistic experience.

Many Indian English novelists spent their life-time abroad and expressed the sense of cultural schizophrenia in their work. Cultural schizophrenia has been the characteristic feature of post-colonial fiction. Mulk Raj Anand’s work is the blend of tradition and modernity. G.V. Desani and Aubrey Menon expressed the sense of cultural heredity in their novels. The period between 1930 and 1940 was marked by social and political impact of ‘Gandhian Whirlwind’ and the era of late modernism in Europe. The novelists of this period dealt with the issues of ‘home’ but belonged still to the ‘world’ at the same time. This period stood as a powerful expression of anti-colonial nationalism. Declaration of Independence in 1947 created an optimistic mood among novelists after long period of political slavery and social constrictions. Civil Disobedience Movement contributed to the emergence of anti-colonial wave. Gandhi became the icon of the age and novelists dealt with ‘Mahatma - theme’ in their novels. Gandhi is conspicuous in the novels of K.Nagarajan, especially in his *Athavar House* (1937) and *Chronicles of Kedaram* (1961). In his *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), R. K. Narayan has drawn a comic portrait of him. Nehruvian influence is also traceable in the novels of the time which came into conflict with Gandhian nationalism. Cosmopolitan attitude of Nehru and Gandhism became major themes of the novels of the 1930s and 1940s. India-
Pakistan partition also featured as a major theme of the novelists of that period. Partition, as it is known today, inspired many creative writers. It is remarkable that many nationalistic novels, written by Muslim novelists, depicted mostly Hindu characters. For example, Aamir Ali’s novel *Conflict (1947)* had mainly Hindu characters in it. Its protagonist Shankar joins the National and Quit India movements. The novel by K.A. Abbas *Tomorrow is ours: A novel of the India of Today (1943)* dealt with the themes of nationalism and untouchability. Both Hindu and Muslim novelists of this period attempted to bring about communal harmony which had been disturbed after the partition. The national movement and its leaders influenced very much the art of novel-writing. Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao happened to write under this influence and Bhabani Bhattacharya’s *Gandhi the Writer (1969)* attempted to pen down an autobiographical text on the life of Mahatma.

Elitist modernism, Fabian socialism backed up by J.L. Nehru and a synthesis of ‘East’ and ‘West’ at the intellectual and philosophical level were the characteristic features of the novels of that period. Mulk Raj Anand’s work is the expression of different ideologies like Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, Modernism, Marxism, Gandhism, and Socialism etc. Mulk Raj Anand left Bloomsbury Circle and came to India to live at Sabarmati Ashram as Gandhi had become his passion. His first English novel *Untouchable (1935)* is a portrait of its protagonist, a sweeper boy, Bakha. It depicts one day in his life and deals with the question of caste. In *Coolie (1936)* and *Two Leaves and a Bud (1937)*, his concern is not caste, but class. His trilogy *The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1941)* and the *Sword and the Sickle (1942)* deal with the life-history of a punjabi peasant, Lai Singh. *The Village* delineates the contrast between
rural and urban life. It also depicts conflict between tradition and modernity and the changing conditions in the country. *Across the Black Waters (1941)*, showing Lai Singh fighting in the First World War, is the only Indian English novel which deals with First World War impacting its effects on the Indian national life.

In *The Sword and Sickle*, Lai Singh returns home from the German prison and spends the rest of his life in search of personal and social identity. He finally, chooses Gandhism and discards communism as an ideology. Gandhism is present in *The Big Heart (1945)* too. After the independence of India, Anand’s career as a powerful novelist deteriorated as compared to his earlier one. *The Private Life of an Indian Prince (1953)* tells another autobiographical story of a prince who suffers from nervous breakdown. *The Old Woman and the Cow (1950)* deals with the theme of peasant life, and is concerned with misfortunes and revolutionary transformation of a female protagonist- Gauri. Anand’s major concerns as a novelist are Gandhian and Nehruvian ideologies, untouchability, class-conflict, peasant’s life and strife between tradition and modernity. As has been observed by a perceptive critic Leela Gandhi:

> *Despite their many limitations, Anand's novels are instrumental in the history of the Indian novel in English. Their experiments with social realism and corresponding attention to the surface of life in pre-Independent India, catches within fiction the complex alliances, misalliances, transformations and failures of the Indian national movement. Moreover, these novels are pioneering in their effort to render into English the exuberant dialects of northern India. Although awkward, Anand’s exposition of ‘pidgin - English’ prepares the way for the subsequent linguistic and cultural translations of Indian English Writers.* (70-71)
Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R.K. Narayan are regarded as ‘founding fathers’ of the Indian English novel. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar points out that:

As a writer of fiction, Anand’s notable marks are vitality and a keen sense of actuality. He is a veritable Dickens for describing the inequities and idiosyncrasies in the current human situation with candor as well as accuracy ... He has no laborious psychological or ideological preoccupations, and he is content to let his characters live and speak and act. (356)

Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938) deals with Gandhi’s non-violent movement for Indian independence. His other novels *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), *Comrade Kirilov* (1976), and *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1978) express his involvement in the movement of national struggle against the British Raj. *Kanthapura* (1938) represents non-violent struggle staged by Gandhi against the British Raj. His *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) was nominated for Sahitya Akademi Award in 1963. As Leela Gandhi has commented:

.....any other writer of his generation, perhaps, Rao stands out for his outrageous generic anarchy, as also for an unusual band of South Indian –French cultural heredity, very different from the predominantly North Indian-English fusion of Contemporary Indian Writing in English. (183)

Indian rural civilization. Malgudi became the driving force, passion and spirit for his writing. Narayan belonged to the typical Brahmanical, and therefore insecure colonial bourgeoisie community. This has found reflection in his literary works. His protagonists lack faculty for decision and resolution. They are not rebels, but rather prefer to compromise with old orthodox values and modernity. They have limitations and so do not talk in language of subversion of colonial power. His novels do not express engagement with modernity, but to the contrary, there is always present under the garb of humor some elements of fear and insecurity. His positive point is depiction of characters and faint consciousness of individuality along with nationality through colonial education. Confused anti-colonial assertion, post-colonial sense of inadequacy, failure and frustration in private life, disbelief in modernity and nostalgia for the past are main features of his writing. Pankaj Mishra’s apt comment in this regard is that:

_It is as if his people hastened to express their worthless individualities, since that is all they have, and were aghast that they should have so little in them to express: since the expression of it is all there is._ (208)

R.K. Narayan and his contemporaries are criticized for being from upper middle-class, elite and non-resistant colonial writers. According to Tabish Khair:

_Like Rao, Narayan too has tried to give voice to certain silenced aspects of lived Indian life, to make a small town and a certain middle-class Indians narratable. And like Rao, though in very different ways, Narayan had to cope with the tension of being both subaltern and Brahmin, of being a post-colonial Babu._ (223)

Many Indian English writers felt it odd to write in the language
of Colonial rulers after Independence. But still, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao continued to write in their language i.e. English. Narayan’s *The Guide* won Sahitya Akademi Award in 1960. Several writers attempted writing novel in Indian English, yet only a few of them could survive as professional writers. Among those who survived and gained reputation are Manohar Malgaonkar, Khushwant Singh and Arun Joshi.

Khushwant Singh wrote three novels - *Train to Pakistan* (published in the United States under the title *Mano, Majra* in 1956), *I shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) and *Delhi: A Novel* (1989). So far, his *Train to Pakistan* is the best novel on the theme of partition. His *I shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) deals with the life history of Sikh joint family of the 1940s while *Delhi: A Novel* (1989) deals with subject of man-woman relationship. Indian partition has been a pivotal theme for the Indian English novelist because it haunted the nation like an ominous ghost and made the creative writer self-conscious. It caused mental rift between the two communities and emerged as a migrating phenomenon in the history of modern India.

Arun Joshi’s novels - *The Foreigner* (1968), *The Apprentice* (1974), *The Last Labyrinth* (1981), *The City and the River* (1990) and *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971) deal with larger issues breaking away from the local or national boundaries. The universality of appeal makes his novels different from those of the others. He has made sincere efforts to authenticate his thematic projection by the use of indigenous English language. Mani Meiteihas observed that:
Arun Joshi’s writing reverberates with the feel of Indian life. His mastery over the treatment of Indian themes, ethos, and culture is effectively correlated by his use of a sensuous and picturesque language. (101)

The major theme of the novel of the 1950s and the 1960s is dissatisfaction with the metropolis and modernity. It focuses on the native issues like partition, migration, cultural conflict etc. and in doing so opens up the avenues for the development of Indian English novel.

The prominent characteristic features of the Indian English novel during this period are perfect character development and psychological depth marked by powerful sense of individual alienation. This sense of alienation is representative of situation of the Indian novelist of this time.

The period also witnessed the emergence of women writers who contributed remarkably to Indian English fiction. They are Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Narayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai. Their novels are rather autobiographical, and express their odd position trapped between tradition and modernity. The Novels by women writers based on personal experiences are - Venn Chitale’s In Transit (1951), Zeenuth Futehally’s Zohra (1951) and Mrinalini Sardesai’s This Alone is True (1952). Sunlight on a Broken Column written by Attia Hosainis, the representative novel about elite women’s consciousness offering vivid portraits of Muslim culture of Lucknow, affected by new reality after partition.

The women novelists of this time who belonged to the elite class were not as much interested in the depiction of conflict between tradition and modernity as, perhaps, they were in the portrayal of pitiable condition of Indian women. They all were influenced by the Western Feminist thought and tried to apply it to the Indian situation in which they were
considerably successful. Their works offered a foundation for the future generation of women writers who would take the genre up to the higher status.

Attia Hosain was born in an aristocratic Muslim family in Lucknow. During the 1930s, she was influenced by Progressive Writers Group and the National Movement. She migrated to England in 1947, and her novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* presented the story of an orphaned Laila by designing the narrative with the help of a complicated temporal scheme which moves backwards and forwards freely across time. Her novel has thus achieved the status of an important text in contemporary feminist discourses.

The personal and political subject matters get mixed up in Nayantara Sahgal’s fictional works. Her novels express a close affinity with the political elite. They represent the life of the rich in the country, their pretence, shallow morality and values. All her novels depict identity-politics of the educated and rich elite class with dimensions of power which always try to exploit and control women. Her *Rich Like Us* won the *Sinclair prize for fiction* as well as the *Sahitya Akademi Award*.

Kamala Markandaya who tried to look beyond the elite-themes in her search for truth wrote ten novels that represent noteworthy range of characters. Markandaya’s fictional canvas portrays specific social conventions and attitudes that victimize women. Her noteworthy novels are *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973) and *Pleasure City* (1982).

The youngest of the women novelists of the period is Anita Desai whose *Cry the Peacock* (1963) and *In Custody* (1984) deserve high
acclaim. She has depicted in them status and struggle of the upper middle classes along with giving priority to the psychology of women. As have been perceived by O.P. Budholia:

Anita Desai, like other existentialists, explores the hidden traits of human personality and creates many prospects for exploring the conscious level of human mind in action. In her fictional world, the Protagonist's conscious level operates in such a way as it creates in him a quest for self-preservation and self-identity which is called in psychology ‘lust for life’.

With the publication of Heat and Dust (1975), Jhabvala’s position as an Indian English novelist became precarious as she herself refused to be called so. Nevertheless, her novels revealed considerable amount of attention to Indian issues. Therefore, she is, though unwillingly, considered as an Indian English woman writer by readers as well as critics of Indian English fiction. V. S. Naipaul is not an Indian English writer though he writes about India as an outsider. He is a Caribbean writer in search of his roots in India.

New and old Indian Diasporas are two different things. In one respect it is the semi-voluntary flight of indentured peasants to non-metropolitan plantation colonies like Fiji, Trinidad, Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia, Surinam and Guyana, approximately during the years between 1830 and 1917. And, on the other hand, it is the late capital or postmodern dispersal of new migrants of all classes to thriving metropolitan centers like Australia, the United States, Canada and Britain. Shamsi merchants who settled at the coast of East Africa in 19th century and Surats traders who followed girmityas (indentured labourers)
to Fiji after 1879 and those from privileged category settled in London belonged to old Diaspora. Old Diaspora was formed by communities coming from different locations, speaking different languages and following different religions. They left their homeland for different reasons. Colonialism was also responsible for ‘old’ Diaspora. Australian Sugar Corporation was responsible for migration of indentured labour to Fiji Islands. ‘New’ Diaspora, on the other hand, included descendants from the old Diaspora and post-Independence emigrants from the subcontinent to sundry metropolitan centers. The writers such as Subramani, David Dabydeen and Naipaul belonged to the writers of the ‘old’ Diaspora, whereas Rohinton Mistry, Haneef Qureshi, Bharti Mukhrjee, Farooq Dhondi belong to the new ones.

Diaspora writing is an important feature of contemporary literary movement called *New Literature in English*. It is also known as Literature of the Emigrant Experience, but the two are different in the sense that the former refers to the literature of the late 1980’s and 90’s whereas the latter includes earlier writers like V. S. Naipaul, Cyreel Debideen, Harold Ladoo and others who, in an effort to search for their roots, often turned to Indian origin. The writers of the 1980’s and 90’s, on the other hand, share contemporary global experience and accept the cosmopolitan elements as parts of their lives. Alienation peeps up at times in their works, but it is overcome by means of ‘shared experience’.

Diaspora writers belong to different parts of the world, particularly from the so-called Third World countries. They are writers from Africa, South Asia, Caribbean islands, and even from such developed countries like Australia, Canada, and Latin America. The one thing that they have in common is that they belong to countries which were all once ruled
over by the British Empire and hence English became the language of their administration, legislation, judiciary and higher education. The writers from these countries are the product of colonial rule and colonial values. They carry with them, knowingly or unknowingly, the impact of colonialism on their creativity. However, in an attempt to get rid of the colonial values, the new writers from the ex-colonies evolved certain common traits and strategies once associated with Postcolonial writings which further developed into New Literatures in English. The writers associated with Old Diaspora, besides the Nobel laureate V. S. Naipaul, are Shiva Naipaul, K. S. Maniam, Cyril Dabydeen, Neil Bissoondath and others.

These novelists write about the ‘middle position’ of communities, sand-witched between imperial rulers and colonial exploiters. This ‘middle position’ is found in the writings of G. Vassanji who was born in Kenya, grew up in Tanzania, educated in America, and got settled in Canada. His three novels are - *The Gummy Sack* (1989), *No New Land* (1991), and *The Book of Secrets* (1995). Vassanji’s main theme for writing is Shamsi traders from Gujarat who migrated to East Africa during the 19th century.

The old Diaspora can be recognized by its melancholic withdrawal into zones of exclusivity but the new Diaspora can be understood by its conscious occupation of border zones containing restless responses to gender, ethnicity, nation-states and class. The new Diaspora writers write about the threshold zone of intercutting and subjectivities which defines the memorable experiences of migrants. Bharati Mukherjee, for example, writes about her inner responses to the emigrant experiences. Her notable novels are *The Tiger’s Daughter* (1972), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989),
*The Holder of the World* (1993) and *Leave it to Me* (1997), a bleakly comic postmodern exploration of personal identity within contemporary California’s hybrid cultures. Her fictional works of the American context consistently deal with Asian immigrants to the West, charting the search for identity undertaken by semi-assimilated Indians and the multicultural underclass in the US and reveal the split in the Diaspora subject expressed in the sense of being here and elsewhere; of being at home and abroad.

Farrukh Dhondy’s *Bombay Duck* (1990) maps the trajectories of sexuality, politics, crimes, migration, violence, nationalism, and ethnicity that link Delhi and London upper-class Indians and subaltern West Indians.


Meera Syal’s novel *Anita and Me* (1996) optimistically regards Diaspora definition which expresses the condition of Diaspora not as a melancholy, but as a chance to experience new world. Sudesh Mishra summarizes the condition of ‘sugar’ Diaspora and ‘Masala’ diaspora in the following lines:

*The movement from Sheo Persad Naipaul to Meera Syal suggests an important rethinking of the concept of ‘home’ within the Diaspora, especially as it occurs against the backdrop of the global shift from the centering or centripetal logic of monopoly capitalism to the de-centering or centrifugal logic of transnational*
capitalism, whereas for the sugar Diaspora ‘home’ signifies an end to itinerant wandering, and the putting down of roots ‘home’ for the masala Diasporais linked to the strategic espousal of up-rootedness, to the constant mantling and dismantling of the self in makeshift landscapes. (294)

The 1980s witnessed new spirit of revolution and transformation of thematic, linguistic and structural aspects of Indian Eng-linguistic fiction. The most notable novelist of the 1980s is Salman Rushdie whose continuous experimentation with the novel form made it a new genre. He set new trends in Indian English novel which are being followed by the writers of the succeeding generation.

Salman Rushdie’s first novel *Grimus* (1975) is about a man who quests for the meaning of life after the gift of immortality. The novel combines fable, fantasy and magic realism. His Booker prize winning *Midnight’s Children* (1981) is a magical, realistic and fantastic reflection upon the postmodern narrative. It traces the history of postcolonial India. His *Shame* (1983), a serial-comic novel, explores violence and responsibility set in a fictionalized Pakistan with the characteristic blend of fantasy and history. *The Satanic Verses* (1988) is a complex narrative which tells stories within stories about the clash of good and evil in a fantastic, allegorical style. *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995) is a satirical view of India’s politics. *The Ground beneath Her Feet* (1999) is a love story which reworks on the myth of Orphans in its examination of the East and West. Rushdie’s novel *Shalimar the Clown* deals with the Kashmir issue, the land for which he seems to have tremendous love and affection. His fiction deals with post-modern issues of cultural mongrelisation and hybridism, and explores the intersection of
history, narrative, and national and racial identity in a manner which is both challenging and enjoying. He is a self-conscious writer about his location as an expatriate and migrant writer having hybrid identity conflicting with dominant cultures and values at locations, ‘native’ or ‘adopted’. Anuradha Dingwaney’s comment is worth noting here:

*There is an entire generation of novelists from India who feel the weight of Rushdie’s influence as enabling (or disenabling) their own talents. Quite apart from what Rushdie demonstrated via his technique, his vivid descriptions, and his idiosyncratic characters, he showed Indians how the English language could be appropriated, bent in any way one wanted, to achieve sensational effects.* (317)

Salman Rushdie proved to be the driving force behind this revolution. His *Midnight’s Children (1981)* became the representative text for initiating postmodern renaissance in Indian English fiction. Rushdie’s unchallenged influence instituted certain postmodern playfulness, the retelling of history in context to contemporary problems of identity-politics, the new fashion of Indian English Language, the use of apt allegorical magic realism, the sexual frankness, the themes related to Bollywood film industry in Indian English fiction. Virtually, it inaugurated literary postmodernism in India. Rushdie represents the complex spirit of the 1980s and the 1990s Indian English fiction. International readers became attracted towards India and Indian fiction due to Rushdie’s emergence on the global literary horizon.

During the 1980s and the 1990s, Indian English novelists started using vernacular form of Indian English. The process of the Indianization of Indian English fiction kept writers of this period away from blind
Eurocentric imitation. This is something unique in the history of Indian English literature. Before Rushdie’s appearance on the literary scene, Indian English Writers were contented with their efforts to write in an alien language such as English, but after Rushdie’s emergence, the Indian English writers started writing about fractured image of India and its socialistic idealism. Rukun Advani’s novel *Beethoven among the Cows* (1994) represents the same disillusionment and fractured Indian identity. The author’s agony for the mental split became reason for the gloom that pervades his novel. Advani feels nostalgia for the lost unity of Indian Society.

Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novel *English August* (1988) is different in the sense that it is the search for finding out possibility of linguistic boundaries to create ‘Native English novel’. *English August* and *The Last Burden* (1993) bring out the conflict between tradition and modernity in contemporary India. Shama Futehally’s *Tara Lane* is different for its note of disillusionment of Nehruvian ideal of equality of identity and opportunity.

Amitav Ghosh expresses contemporary academic debates regarding culture and colonialism in his novels. His first novel *The Circle of Reason* (1986) has been written in the mode of Rushdie’s magic realism. It tries to recover a tradition of cultural exchange. Ghosh’s most remarkable novel is *The Shadow Lines* (1988) which offers profound comments on several contemporary issues such as violence, migration, cosmopolitanism, war etc. It is an accomplished work from both thematic and structural point of view. In *In an Antique Land* (1992), Ghosh combines travelogue and historical reflection in the text to challenge the dominance of the academic anthropologis’s scientific gaze. *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996) deals with the role of science, history and colonialism in the form of a detective story.
whereas *The Glass Palace (2000)* expresses historical and nationalistic issues like colonial hegemony, the economic and cultural subjugation of populous regions by the West, migration, Diaspora and refugees. His writing is marked by generic inventiveness and its affinity with the transitory nature of global culture. He is unquestionably the champion of postmodern weightlessness.

Shashi Tharoor’s novels *The Great Indian Novel (1989)* and *Show Business (1991)* deal with the nature of society and the nation, and its history and politics featured in a style which makes full use of linguistic tricks and games. In *The Great Indian Novel*, he uses traditional Indian literary form to narrate historical reality in an ironical and allegorical style.

The fiction of the 1980s and 1990s is remarkable for its experiments with new genres by novelists. They tried to rewrite in the genres of Indian literary tradition. Hindi films have also influenced the novelists of this period in terms of themes, techniques and style. Ruchir Joshi’s *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh (2001)*, I Allan Sealy’s *Hero* and Tharoor’s *ShowBusiness (1994)* can be cited as examples. The tradition of Indian novel dealing with high-cultural forms has been fractured down by these novelists. In the year 1995, Mukul Kesavan and Vikram Chandra produced novels that dealt with the theme of translating Indian history into the novel. These novelists gave voice to suppressed Indian history and examined exclusions from the national imagery. Verily, they presented history as a form of narratives.

Shashi Deshpande has expressed the plight and consciousness of the women of urban middle-class. Her major novels are - *The Dark Holds No Terrors (1980)*, *Roots and Shadow (1983)*, *That Long Silence (1988)*, *Small Remedies (2000)* and *The Binding Vine (1992)*. She portrays women’s voices behind the silence. As Anita Singh has pointed out:
Shashi Deshpande not only forthrightly articulates a thematic and technical maturity but also effectively communicates an intensely apprehended Feminine Sensibility. She has apparently injected a new consciousness, offering varied, interpretation of imperishable Indian values as well as highlighting our cultural heritage. She added a new depth, a new dimension to Indian English fiction. (124)

Instead of imitating the realistic mode of Shashi Deshpande, Gita Hariharan has used traditional story-telling technique with modern style in her novels - *A Thousand Faces of Nights* (1992) and *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994). Her novels represent oriental view of India and high culture of its antiquity.

The only novel to date by Arundhati Roy *The God of Small Things* (1997) records the dislocations between the Small God of individual lives and the Big God of the nation. Booker Prize winner, it is the latest and valuable addition to the quality of postmodern Indian English fiction. R.K. Dhawan argues that:

Arundhati Roy is an excellent storyteller and the novel seems to us a literary sport. We may not hesitate to call it a contemporary classic. It is a modern novel in its theme and the treatment of the theme, a postmodern novel in its knotting and knitting of narrative threads, manipulation of expressive literary forms and creative ‘play’ with words, a feminist novel in the pity and terror that it evokes for the condition of women in a particular cultural milieu, a political novel in its criticism of the hypocrisy of the communist party, an autobiographical novel in the way the facts of the author’s life have been distilled into a verbal artefact and so on. In fact, the novel is eminently

Vikram Seth’s experimentation with the novel form did not come as live and fresh as that of Rushdi’s innovative and evocative genre. Seth, however, holds important place among the contemporary Indian English novelists. The *Golden Gate* (1986) by him is a novel in verse form. His *A Suitable Boy* (1993) tells the story of the upper-class Indian women rebelling against arranged marriage to a suitable groom. His novel *An Equal Music* (1999) is the narration of a story of lost love set in the world of classical music performance.

Vikram Chandra’s *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995) dealing with fantastic events has epic digressions. The writer thinks that India has endless narrative potential. His imaginative fictional characters mix not only with gods but also with real historical figures. This novel presents history as *The Big Indian Lie*.

The Indian English fiction in the 1980s and 1990s represents ideological work of the globalized middle classes in relation to Indian and
global culture and class. The novels of this period cannot be ignored as product of globalized intellectual elite-class. They communicate India and Indian culture within and outside of India and try to reimagining the nation and act an instrument of a globalizing culture. These novels have proved India to be the source of endless narrative possibilities. Indian English fiction of the 1980s and 1990s has created favorable literary environment to believe that English is one of India’s languages with its own culture, flavour, limitations and limitless scope of expression and culture to the world audiences. R.S. Pathak’s comment in this regard is that:

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\text{Despite all its problems and challenges, Indian English novel has stood the test of time and proved its worth and relevance. For its verve and resilience, it has been found to be “a meritorious outlet”. The prose fiction in English written by the Indians is undoubtedly the most popular vehicle for the transmission of Indian ideas to the wider English-speaking World. (11)}
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The British intention to impart English education to the Indians proved to be a blessing in disguise. The first few who came into contact with the progressive ideas of the west realized that their nation was in a kind of stupor and they braced themselves to shoulder the responsibility of awakening the slumbering nation into activity and self-realization. Dedicated reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy welcomed the new education as a tool to fight the evils of Child-marriage, Sati, Caste-system and such others.

The encounter with the west provided an opportunity to the educated Indian intellect to synthesize the Eastern spiritual values with the Western modern trends to the advantage of the natives. Swami
Vivekananda, one of the greatest spokesmen of India, felt that the English language was the most effective instrument for disseminating Indian thought, and The Anglo-Saxons have created a future for India. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar observed: “English is the veritable Suez Canal for intellectual intercourse between the West and the East” (Surendran 15). The introduction of English in India opened new vistas of knowledge to the Indians and enabled the voice of India to be heard by the rest of the world.

Thus English became an integral part of the way of living and thinking as evidenced by some of the native talents who felt the urge to express themselves. The pioneers could not help being influenced by the great masters of English literature. The temptation to emulate was great and it took some time for the Indian creative writers to free themselves from the self-adopted style and put their individual talent to its full use. In the beginning, prose writings were mostly utilitarian in purpose. There were quite a number of enthusiastic poets like Henry Derozio, Romesh Dutt and Toru Dutt. Their Poetry was still imitative in style. Then came the fiction that dealt with romantic idealization which finally landed on the firm ground of various kinds of realism. The study of English literature stimulated the study of native literatures, especially Bengali, and thus it happened to be responsible for the creation of the Indian novel. Progressing from translations to historical romances and then to the realities of life around, the Indian novelists have gradually come to grips with the challenging and absorbing problems of the struggle for independence. Those who took to writing in English were inspired by the examples of English writers in India. They also wanted to bring the western models to their country. A wider international reading public acted as a further incentive to them. In addition to these, the growing
nationalism prompted them to interpret India to the West.


While considering Indian-English literature, one tends to ponder over the much discussed topic of ‘Indianness’ in Indian Writing in English. As per K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar observation “What makes Indo-Anglian literature an Indian literature and not just a ramshackle outhouse of English literature is the quality of its ‘Indianness’ in the choice of its subjects, in the texture of thought and play of sentiment, in the organization of material and in the creative use of language” (Mohan 8).

Of course critics differ in their opinion as to what consists of this ‘Indianness’. V.K. Gokak seems to agree with Srinivasa Iyengar when he says, “the Indianness of Indian writing consists in the writer’s intense awareness of his entire culture” (114). Whereas Balachandra Rajan feels that to arrive at or even to contribute towards a declaration of nationality is not necessarily relevant to his [the artist’s] concerns and may even infringe on the honesty of those concerns. Meenakshi Mukherjee has put
it, “whatever be the language in which it is written, a novel by an Indian writer demands direct involvement in values and experiences which are valid in the Indian context” (12). What the Indian critics expect in Indian Writing in English is only a feel of the ‘shared experience’ of the tradition, culture, and heritage which they have in common with the writer. To look for Indianness in Indian Writing does not mean that it should be judged from the national standpoint. It is true, “what one has in mind is a shared tradition, a community of interests and a set of values that people live by, all of which give a sense of identity to individuals and nations” (Pathak 4).

Mulk Raj Anand feels that Indian English could be called metaphorically pigeon-Indian and says, “I would like to believe that in the best writing in this language, the words soar in the imagination like a pigeon in flight” (41). Meenakshi Mukherjee termed the Indian-English novel as the twice born fiction because of its dual parentage.

The Indian writer’s choice of English as the language of expression of his creative urge also has come under some criticism. India being a country where different languages are spoken, an Indian writer is prone to accept the multilingual ism. English can no more be considered an alien language. It must be accepted as the latest addition to our cultural spectrum. As Raja Rao has put it, “English is the language of our intellectual make-up-like Sanskrit or Persian was before” (6). The Indian writer in English is in an advantageous position by virtue of being able to draw from the perennial sources of Indian literatures. A.K. Ramanujan dismisses the argument and says that, “it is not a matter of controversy whether people can, will or should write in a particular language. I don’t think people who write have a choice in the matter” (12). Kamala Das in her poem *An Introduction* pleads
for being given the freedom to choose the language. She asks: “Why not let me speak in any language I like?” (Das, 9)

A talented writer can bend the language to his purpose, communicate the texture of the spoken speech and create the native atmosphere. The creative use of language demands a command over it in order to make it flexible and pliable so as to catch the tone, feeling and heart of the Indian theme and atmosphere. Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan in their own inimitable style adopted the English language to serve their purpose. Mulk Raj Anand states that I believe that Indian English writing has come to stay as a literature of India, because it is based on Indian English language of the most vital character, like Irish English, American English, Welsh English, Australian English or Canadian English. Raja Rao, in his foreword to Kanthapura, expresses a similar idea:

"We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American... the tempo of the Indian life must be infused into our English expression even as the tempo of the American or Irish has gone into the making of theirs." (296)

These three innovative writers, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand have brought world recognition to the new genre namely Indian-English fiction. Raja Rao’s Kanthapura deals with the sweeping influence of Gandhian thought that ignited the whole country and spread like a great forest fire. Raja Rao used the traditional Indian form of story-telling where
episode followed episode. *The Serpent and the Rope* is said to be his *magnum opus*. His novels reflect his obsession with the Indian philosophy of Advaita. The very titles of his novels are symbolic in the sense that they indicate his preoccupation with different branches of Vedantic thought.

The portrayal of middle-class life in R.K. Narayan’s novels is realistic and authentic. He limits his province to the South Indian middle class. He peopled his fictional world Malgudi with such variety of characters that critics began to wonder whether Narayan’s Malgudi had an original on the map of India. According to some critics, Narayan’s ‘Malgudi’ ---a South Indian town of his own creation ---is the real hero of his novels. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar observes, “It would be interesting to advance the theory that ‘Malgudi’ is the real hero of the ten novels and many short stories of R.K. Narayan” (16).

In his early novels Mulk Raj Anand took cudgels against the ills of the society like untouchability. He championed the cause of the poor and the downtrodden. The publication of *Untouchable* was sensational for the reason that it dealt with the life of an untouchable, a boy from the lowest stratum of society. This novel was rejected by nineteen publishers because it narrated the story of the sweeper who cleans toilets. Mulk Raj Anand’s confession is that:

*In spite of the fact that I worked and worked and worked nearly for five years on the novel Untouchable and thought I had created a compact, short, symbolical work, I fancied with a universal significance, it was turned down by nineteen English publishers, one after another, and I must confess that I felt suicidal, until, a young English poet, Blakeston, took the book to a small publisher called Wishart Books Ltd. and brought the*
assurance that they would publish it if E.M. Forster
would write a preface to protect the book against being
called ‘dirty’ because it dealt with dung. (Bai 12)

Anand was a crusader against superstition, feudalism and
imperialism. The ‘big three’ were followed by other distinguished writers
like Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya and
Balachandra Rajan.

Though women writers also attempted their hand at this new genre
as early as 1879, it is not until a later date that they could occupy a position
of importance along with the stalwarts. Kamala Markandaya, the earliest of
the top-ranking women novelists, shot to fame with her very first novel
_Nectar in a Sieve_ (1954). She was followed by eminent novelists Ruth
Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai. To date, Kamala
Markandaya has ten novels to her credit. As an Indian writer settled in
London, she is familiar with the interaction of the two cultures - Eastern
and Western. Her novels reflect the East-West encounter in different
contexts and project the resultant identity crisis. In novel after novel, she
has explored life in India in the context of the impact of modernity on
basically the traditional Indian society and the cultural upheaval. The range
and variety she has displayed is remarkable. Her settings and characters are
never repetitive. Kamala Markandaya believes that literature should play a
constructive part in righting the wrongs of society. She protests against
oppression and domination. She claims to be on the side of the human life
against machinery, against exploitation of the weak, against war and
violence. Her prime concern is with human beings. Her tragic vision owes
to her humanistic attitude. Her canvas is small but she fills it with living,
pulsating people-people in relation to one another. It has been observed
that "Personal relationships are Kamala Markandaya’s forte” (Mishra 112).
Step by step she builds up relationships, analyzes them and dramatically
makes them represent something larger than themselves. A fine feminine sensibility also pervades her fictional world.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala is variously described as inside outsider and outside insider. She came to India at the age of 24 as the wife of Cyrus Jhabvala, a young Parsi architect. Her creative urge found its artistic expression during her 24 years of stay in India. She wrote eight novels and published collections of short stories. Her work shows that India is her preoccupation. Again and again she turns to the theme of the interaction between two cultures namely European and Indian. Her fictional world is pervaded by domestic atmosphere and deals with familiar themes. She concentrates on the milieu familiar to her - the middle and upper middle class Indian society in Delhi. Her novels evolve themselves as social comedies wherein she portrays the follies and foibles of the young with a mild amusement tinged with irony. Her satire is directed against snobs, sham social workers, pseudo-litterateurs and culture-vultures. She has often been compared to Jane Austen because of her earlier books dealt with the “same sort of society” as Austen’s did. Jhabvala’s keen observation and awareness of life in Indian society combined with her critical acumen has resulted in the authentic portrayal of the day to day life of individuals in different predicaments. Jhabvala is especially aware of the position of women in Indian family, and her novels portray the change brought about in her attitude by the changing cultural context.

Nayantara Sahgal has established her reputation both as a journalist and as a novelist. She has so far eight novels and two autobiographies to her credit and has published a number of articles and two other books namely *Freedom Movement in India* and *Indira Gandhi’s Emergence and Style*. Her novels present an authentic picture of India after independence.
Her personal background explains her sustained interest and involvement in the present-day India. Being the daughter of Vijayalakshmi Pandit and the niece of Jawaharlal Nehru, she is very familiar with the politics of India before and after independence and this explains the authenticity of the political situations presented in her novels. She is described as one of our best socio-political novelists today. Jasbir Jain feels that her main contribution thematically has been her deep involvement and concern with politics, especially Indian (22). However her absorbing concern with politics is not divorced from her humanistic concern. Her characters, though very much involved in political situations, are starkly human. Their personal predicaments, sometimes, run parallel to the political crises they have to face. Sahgal is a champion of individual freedom which is manifest in varied forms in her novels. Her novels portray the various social and cultural changes that took place in India and the individuals’ response to them. Sahgal’s concept of morality is different from that prevailing in the society and chastity for her is not a concept of the flesh, but of the spirit. Her women characters seek fulfillment and self-expression within marital life but if it is not possible, they break off the bond to live as free individuals. She shows the need for a new morality in which a woman is treated as man’s equal and the relationship is cemented with mutual trust, love and understanding.

Anita Desai breaks a new ground in the world of Indian-English fiction by shifting the emphasis from the external to the internal world. She creates a world of her own which she fills up extraordinarily with sensitive beings. She eschews social documentation and moralizing. Her novels are not devoid of social purpose. They delineate the inner lives of hyper-sensitive women whose inexternal quest for meaningful life is the
true significance of things.’ Anita Desai states that the purpose of her writing is “an effort to discover, to underline and convey the true significance of things” (Kundu 2005). This explains how involved she is with her characters. Her protagonists suffer intensely because of their futile attempt to find emotional contact, response and understanding. Her concern with and search for the causes of human suffering lends intensity and depth to her writings. She paints on a small canvas but succeeds in adding a third dimension to it. Madhu Sudan Prasad feels that “she has added to Indian-English fiction an existentialist dimension, a lyrical splendor and a technical richness that were hitherto lacking” (Bai, 14). Anita Desai has, of course, carved a special niche for herself in the world of Indian-English Fiction.

It is an accepted fact that these women writers have added a new dimension to Indian-English fiction with their exquisite perception of men and matters. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to study the women characters as presented by these women novelists in their novels and to see to what extent these novelists have succeeded in making their characters different from those presented by their male counterparts.

The word ‘New Woman’ has come to signify the awakening of that woman into a new realization of her place and position in family and society. Conscious of her individuality, the new woman has been trying to assert her rights as a human being and is determined to fight out for gaining equal treatment with man.

The feminist movement in England had its supporters in Mary Wollstonecraft, Sarah Grand and Olive Schreiner. Ellen E. Jordan’s observation is that:
the English feminist endowed the new women with her hostility to men, her questioning of marriage, her determination to escape from the restrictions of home life and her belief that education could make a woman capable of leading a financially self-sufficient, single and yet fulfilling life. (Bai 14)

Indian woman wearing the badge of silent-suffering and being an upholder of Indian culture has been an oft-repeated type in Indian-English fiction. Perennially shown to be enacting various roles- of a mother, a wife, a daughter, and a sister - and being merely a cog in the family machine,she has never had her claim to have a life of her own wherein she could seek personal gratification and self-fulfillment. This is mainly because of the prevailing patriarchal society where the authority emanated from the eldest male in the family. In the male-dominated society, the inflated male tends to dominate and neglect the female who is his equal partner in life. This male domination in life, being a natural phenomenon in a patriarchal society, and the consequent relegation of women to a secondary position seemed to have prompted English feminists like Olive Schruners to take up the cause of women. She published three allegories in 1887, and *Three Dreams in a Desert* in The Fortnightly Review. She stressed the need for women to break free from the shackles of their traditional mould and prefer their self-fulfillment to their duty of sacrificing themselves for their hobnails and children.

Indian women took pride in serving and self-sacrifice. They had set for their models Sita and Anasuyawhom they tried to emulate. It should also be remembered that the Indian woman, eulogized as an embodiment
of sacrifice and suffering, a monument of patience and devotion, a selfless bestower of love and affection, was given an enviable position of respect in the Vedic age. Manu, the earliest Hindu law-giver stated, “Where women are honored, there the gods are pleased, but where they are not honored, no sacred rites yield rewards” (Kakar, 57). Child marriages and forceful confinement of women to the home seem to be the consequences of several socio-political factors that emerged at a later date. Rigveda speaks of marriage as a union of two persons for full development. The words Jaya, Jani and Patni indicate the respectable position of women in the family. It is observed, “Jaya has the special sense of the sharer of the husband’s affection and Jani, the mother of children and Patni, the partner in the performance of sacrifices” (Shastri 17-18). The wife was given the supreme place in the household of her husband and she was at the helm of affairs and commanded a place of respect. She was treated and respected as “the helper in the pursuit of virtue.”

There were learned upanishadi in the past women like Gargi as well. A.L. Basham observes, “the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad tells of a learned lady Gargi Vacaknavi who attended the discussion of the sage Yajnavalkya and for a time ... non-plussed him with her searching questions” (Bai 17). This period was said to be one of the best periods of Indian history when women were allowed to discuss the highest spiritual truths of life. Gradually, there was a slow decadence in the position of women. A son began to be preferred to a daughter. Who was considered encumbrances? The Maitrayani Samhita places woman on par with dice and drink, and describes her as one of the major evils in human society. Ceremonies were performed in order to avoid the birth of a female child.
Even then, the position of woman was not so bad as to make her only an object of pleasure.

The process of woman being made a possession of man is a gradual one. Historical and sociological aspects seemed to have contributed their share in keeping the women behind curtains. It is said that the seclusion of woman in zenanas is not a Hindu custom at all, but was introduced in India after the Mohammedan conquest about the time when the Plantagenet rose to power in England. But this state of affairs did not last long. One of the desirable positive changes brought about by the British imperialist rulers was the introduction of female education.

It is heartening to note that the cause of women’s education had the support of many reformers, philosophers and thinkers. Swami Vivekananda said, ‘Educate your women first and leave them to themselves.’ Dr. Annie Besant advocated women’s education on the ground that the education of India’s women depends upon the rising of India as a nation. People welcomed with great joy the recommendations of the University Education Commission which felt that there cannot be educated people without educating women. If general education had to be limited to men or women, that opportunity should be given to women, for then it would most surely be passed on to the next generation.

Indian woman’s freedom from the shackles of illiteracy and ignorance symbolically as well as literally heralded the dawn of independence. Her hitherto dormant thirst for knowledge and craving for recognition were awakened, and her latent potentialities that rusted with disuse were tapped and brought to the forefront. The first fortunate women who had the benefit of western education began to campaign for political equality for women with men. This was the transitional phase,
when the Indian woman had to face the conflict between tradition and modernity. The problems of adjustment between the time-honored values and personal fulfillment naturally led to some kind of friction and resultant frustration. It appears to be paradoxical that men who had advocated female education should be lacking in their complementary progressive attitude to accept and digest the awareness and changed ideas of their women, and regard their place and position in family and society. They tend to observe double standards and expect the women to be the custodians of the Indian tradition which they believe is in perpetuation with the ‘Sita-Savitri’ image. Promilla Kapur observes that husbands who like their wives to “take up jobs but dislike them to change at all as far as their attitude towards their roles and statuses at home is concerned and dislike their traditional responsibilities being neglected” (Sharma 89).

The New Woman has tended to voice a note of dissent to this and to resent being stifled under the oppressive restrictions. She now has her own changed notions of life. It is true that women’s education, her rights of citizenship, legal rights and above all her gainful employment and economic independence have tremendously influenced her outlook on conjugal relationship and attitude towards marriage.

When England was in the throes of feminist movement, English feminists expressed their resentment at the treatment meted out to women. Mary Wollstonecraft, a staunch feminist, declared in her spirited work _A Vindication of the Rights of Woman_: “here throw my gauntlet, and deny the existence of sexual virtues not excepting modesty. For men and women, truth, if I understand the meaning of the word must be the same ... women, I allow, may have differed duties, and the principles that regulate the discharge of them, I sturdily maintain, must be the same” (119). Another
feminist Sarah Grand leveled a scathing criticism against those men who treated women no better than cattle. Her first article, an attack on what she called *The Bawling Brotherhood* was published in The North American Review in March 1984. She says, "Both the cow-women and the scum-women are well within the range of the comprehension of the Bawling Brotherhood, but the new woman is a little above them and he never even thought of looking up to where she has been sitting apart in silent contemplation."

The Indian counterpart of the *Bawling Brotherhood* continued to feel uneasy and touchy with regard to the ‘New Woman’ while the great thinkers and reformers worked for the uplift of Indian women. However, it appears “while the modern Indian wife is confronted with the problem of multiplicity of roles she has to perform, the modern husband is experiencing a value conflict as he is being pulled into two opposite directions by images and expectations of the traditional and the modern wife” (INFC&C 21). While the few liberated women were aspiring for their socio-legal rights, women in general continued to cherish the Sita traditional, conventional image. This dichotomy explains the complacence of the Indian-English writers who continued to picture the meek, submissive, tradition-bound and willing sufferer taking pride in sacrifice. In Meenakshi Mukherjee’s view, “in the relationship between man and woman, two chief archetypes are seen; the Radha-Krishna’s motif . . . and the Rama-Sita relationship, where the woman is the submissive sufferer, who through her suffering enhances the nobility of her husband. These archetypes appear time and again not necessarily because the authors are trying to give a mythical coloring to their work, but because these are part of our cultural pattern, our ideals of aspiration, that may or may not have any basis in the actual conduct of real human being” (137). It appears that
the more patient and unquestioning the woman is the higher would be the pedestal for her in the hearts of the tradition-bound people of India.

The slow but steady changes in cultural, social and economic patterns of life have expanded and altered the nature of reality for women. Rare instances of acknowledgement of injustice and feeble protest here (Savitri in R.K. Narayan’s *The Dark Room*) and a deviation from the accepted norms there (Rosie in R.K. Narayan’s *The Guide*), and (*Gauri* in Mulk Raj Anand’s *Gauri*) are seen in the novels written by male writers. Raja Rao’s women at times are elevated to the level of symbols of ‘Shakti’ and ‘Mother Earth.’ Most of the time, it is the western woman who like Madeleine in Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope* and Cynthia in Balachandra Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer*.

There are traces of feminist trends in early English writers too. The world of Shakespeare’s comedies is illuminated more by the wit and wisdom of the heroines like Olivia, Beatrice, Rosalind and Portia than by the heroism of their men. The portrayal of women gained importance and depth in the novels of women. Jane Austen’s heroines are women who assert their individuality and attract attention by the sheer force of their character. They possess qualities like self-respect, independent judgment, alert observation and a readiness to improve themselves. Jane Austen has stressed the need to acquire self-knowledge. Speaking of Maria and Julia Bertrams in *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen has observed “It is not very wonderful that with all their promising talents and early information, they should be entirely deficient in the less common acquirements of self-knowledge, generosity, and humility.” It is absolutely true that Jane Austen’s women have the confidence and the independence of the ‘New Woman’. It should be noted that women novelists like the Bronte sisters and George Eliot excelled in the portrayal of woman, her feelings, her
frustrations and passionate longings. Hitherto woman had been revealed as
she ought to be in feminine splendors, and her life presented from man’s
point of view alone. Charlotte Bronte revealed woman as a human being
whereas George Eliot presented various facets of her life, this entails upon
the complex personality of the novelist. All these women are the
forerunners of the New Woman.

In Indian-English fiction too, though the ‘New Woman’ finds recogni-
tion of her existence and support for her cause from some quarters, she
makes her appearance in flesh and blood in the novels of women writers
only. The publication of Nectar in a Sieve by Kamala Markandaya ushers
in a welcome deviation from the established practice of hero-oriented
novels. Woman as an individual with throbbing pulse, feelings and
aspirations, involved in the vortex of life that is complicated, demanding
and exhausting, makes her appearance in the novels by women writers.
The appearance of the fully awakened woman who is prepared to accept
the challenges in order to live a meaningful life is a recent phenomenon in
Indian-English literature.

Women novelists writing in English have attempted to project
woman as the central figure. They have succeeded in presenting the
predicament of woman most effectively. The works of women writers have
also given a distinct dimension to the image of woman in the family and
society. The reason might be their instinctive perception of and insight into
the woman’s reactions and responses, problems and perplexities and the
complex working of their inner selves and their emotional involvement and
disturbances. Though the much honored and traditional image of woman
still holds the scepter, the pulsating heartbeat of the humane woman has
been felt in general, and occasionally even sympathized with. The credit
should go to the women writers for portraying a life-size picture of the
contemporary woman with all her longings and aspirations, hopes and frustrations.

Among the women writers, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal are foremost in the field. Sensitive women surrounded by violent and vicious circumstances, reacting neurotically to the existential problems, begin to appear in the fictional world of the women writers under discussion. Women come to occupy the central position in the fictional world of these women novelists. As Jasbir Jain has observed “Almost in every novel Nayantara has a central woman character that gradually moves towards an awareness of her emotional needs” (Prasad 49). The emotional world of woman has been explored and analyzed with admirable insight and sympathetic perception. Revealing a rare imaginative awareness of various deeper forces at work and a profound understanding of feminine sensibility as well as psychology, Anita Desai mainly explores the emotional world of women.

Among the women writers mentioned above, Kamala Markandaya alone has attempted to deal with the problem of subsistence. Poverty and hunger are the two problems in India that no one can deny. India is a country where the majority of the people can hardly manage to get two square meals a day. Kamala Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* deal with the plight of poor people witnessed an unending struggle for living at subsistence level. There is a passing reference to the burning problem of dowry in *Nectar in a Sieve*. Rukmani has to marry Nathan, a poor farmer because her father has spent all the money on the marriage of other daughters and cannot afford dowry. Jhabvala also refers to this problem of dowry in *Get Ready for Battle*. Sumi knows, “it was
difficult to find a husband for a girl like herself whose parents could not afford much dowry.”

It is surprising to note that these women novelists have not taken up the social problems like the evil influence of the caste system and inter-caste marriages. This question might have involved larger issues like the purpose of literature and the significance of the role of the novelist in society. Paul Verghese feels that critics will be inclined to look upon the literature of a country as a store house of cultural and sociological information pertaining to a people and not as literature. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar expects Indian writing in English to project a total vision of India, interpreting her aspirations and hopes and recording her ardors and defeats and partial realizations not before the outside world alone but even before the diverse linguistic regions within the country. Sitaram Jayaswal says, “the role of the writer is to feel the pulse of the society, know its sickness and suggest such curses as are in consonance with his culture” (Bai 21). The silence of the novelists, under consideration, in respect of such problems that are gnawing at the vitals of the nation appears to be deplorable. The peculiar situation in which the concerned novelists were placed might have forced them to confine themselves to the lives and the problems of the milieu with which they were familiar.

Kamala Markandaya, though an Indian by birth, married an Englishman and settled in England. She is far away from her homeland and the problems and issues that plague its people and hence she tends to draw from her experience the India as she knew. Understandably, her novels reflect the East-West confrontation and its resultant conflicts. Her novels are celebrated for their wide and varied range of characters and
situations. They exemplify her concern for the welfare of the common people, sympathy for their lot and anger against the oppressive forces.

Her work of art is characterized by her moral standpoint. The righteous anger that one senses in her novels is the result of her firm moral stance with which she can never compromise.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala spent the major and the most fruitful part of her life in India. Though an Indian, through and through, she retains the power of objective observation which is the strong point for an outsider. She touches upon some of the real and day to day problems confronted by the middle-class and lower middle-class people. Though her characters look more like caricatures than realistic and life-like pictures, they bear the unmistakable resemblance of their originals. She wields her pen to attack the objects of satire in the restricted circumference of the society of her acquaintance and familiarity. The targets of her attack are the upcoming bourgeois business community, the sham society-ladies and the expatriates from India, struggling in their vain search for fulfillment. Her attack is not so much directed against the people as it is against their weaknesses like selfishness, pretentiousness and self-deception. Her observations, no doubt, tinged with irony, do not lack in sympathy.

Anita Desai is adept in presenting the longings and frustrations of hyper-sensitive individuals. She is hailed as one who ushered in the psychological novel and excelled in her chosen field of exploration of the psyche of sensitive women. R.S. Sharma observes that “Cry, the Peacock, Anita Desai’s first novel, is also perhaps the first step in the direction of psychological fiction in Indian Writing in English.” Her characters are not drawn from the mainstream of life and as such cannot be repre-
sentative of the common lot of women. The introvert women are mostly from affluent families and have no cause to worry about the basic physical needs of life. This, apart from the writer’s choice of the study of their psyche, explains why they are and indulge in introspection more concerned about their emotional needs.

Nayantara Sahgal is acclaimed as the only political novelist, at least among women writers. She confines her novels to the affluent society involved in politics. Her familiarity with the society she has portrayed in her novels lends them authenticity. In spite of her comprehension of and concern for the dilemma of the new woman, she is restricted by the very political background of hers to portray them in true form. She deals with the predicament of only the elite and the affluent women trampled and oppressed because of their dependence upon men and the harrowing experience they have to face in their struggle to come out of the male bondage and stand on their own feet are realistically portrayed in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal.

One wonders why this important aspect of a woman’s life and the necessity and attempts of hers to gain financial independence has not received the importance and emphasis it deserved, in the novels even of women writers. The prominent feature of the new woman in the changed India has been her constant effort to live as an economically independent individual. The rising prices and the insatiable longing of the middle-class for the comforts of life are responsible for women, taking to work. This feature, somehow, has not been taken up for serious consideration by women writers. There are, of course, exceptions who, show that the women writers are not wholly unaware of this aspect of the new woman in India. Anasuya in Kamala Markandaya’s Possession is a writer but her
professional life has not been discussed in detail, most probably because of her being an observer and narrator in the narrative. Amrita in Jhabvala’s *To Whom She Will* works in a radio station, but to her, a rich girl, the job is merely a fashion and a pastime. A minor character, Roshan Merchant in Kamala Markandaya’s *Some Inner Fury* is another example. She publishes a progressive newspaper. The other two cases are of English women. Judy in Jhabvala’s *A Backward Place* is probably the only example of a woman who takes up a job in order to solve the financial problems for running her domestics. *Anita Desai’s Bye-Bye, Blackbird* presents a working woman in Sarah, who uses her job as a means to deal with her dilemma of identity. As an English woman married to an Indian, she has been shown to undergo the emotionally disturbing experience of a split personality as the secretary in the school office as Mrs. Adit Sen at home in London.

The theme that runs as an undercurrent in almost all the novels of Anita Desai is the irreconcilability between the inner and the outer worlds, the imponderable gulf between expectation and reality resulting in the deep anguish of the sensitive soul in eternal search for peace. The range of Kamala Markandaya’s novels is varied and wide. Her characters include all kinds of people right from princes to prostitutes, but she is particularly adept in articulating the problems of the inarticulate middle-class people. Her novels show that however objective a writer she may be, she is bound by her knowledge and experience of the world which in turn gets reflected in her writings and brings in the inner self into her works. Almost all her novels invariably deal with the cultural schizophrenia resulting in the individual’s search for true identity.

The theme of East-West encounter fascinates both Kamala
Markandaya and Ruth P. Jhabvala. While Kamala Markandaya is concerned with the disturbing impact of the western influence on the economic, social and cultural life of India, Jhabvala studies the impact of India on the westerner - an expatriate in India. Nayantara Sahgal’s novels are read like commentaries on the political and social turmoil that India had been facing since independence. Her concern for the women who are caught in the dilemma of liberty and individuality or stability and protection by marriage is understandable. Her novels, especially *The Day in Shadow*, carry an unmistakable ring of autobiographical element.

In Kamala Markandaya’s novels, the circumstances and situations direct and mold her characters. Rukmani and Mira, Ravi and Srinivas are victims of the happenings on which they have no control. In Anita Desai’s novels, the destiny of a character is decided by his/her own action. Maya, Sita and Nanda Kaul are victims of their own hypersensitive nature, rather than of the circumstances in which they find themselves trapped.

All the same, one tends to feel that the women writers have shown an admirable understanding of the problems and the predicaments of the women. They have tried to go deep into the forces that condition the growth of a female in the patriarchal society. Their novels reveal the variegated facets of women in modern India, and reflect the fully awakened feminine sensibility.

Oriental in cultural heritage and sensibility and accidental by habitation, Kamala Markandaya seems to be familiar with the interaction of the two cultures and its resultant identity crisis. Her concern with the disturbing impact of modernity on the basically traditional Indian society is evident in all her novels. India’s quest for its true identity in the context
of cultural changes finds itself projected on the fictional canvas of Kamala Markandaya. To Quote Harrex “Kamala Markandaya’s fiction is of particular interest among modern Indian novels because it crystallizes various literary directions the quest for identity has taken since the thirties” (Bai 26).

Kamala Markandaya’s novel Possession is a fictional projection of the quest for identity. Valmiki, a goatherd and born painter, is discovered by an arrogant and insolent English heiress, Caroline Bell who takes him to England. He picks up western sophistication with amazing speed and for some time luxuriates in the material comforts provided by Caroline. He fits perfectly into the mould cast for him by his mentor. Caroline tries to possess him, physically, culturally and spiritually. Critics read the novel as an allegory of Britain’s attempt to subjugate India. Caroline sets about getting Possession of Valmiki with the same dedication and ruthlessness with which the British subjugated India. The inherent allegory apart, it is an individual’s struggle to find his identity. Caroline’s proprietary attitude and desire to own him frustrate Valmiki. He falls in love first with Ellie and then with Annabel, but Caroline succeeds in driving them out of his life. Valmiki who has luxuriated in the riches and material comforts provided by Caroline, begins to feel stifled, suffocated and out of his element. As H.M. Williams has observed: “Valmiki becomes the artist lady. Bell had intended to make but at the expense of nearly destroying his soul.... He finds only waste and death in personal relationship and to recover his true self has to break with lady Bell and return to India.”

In Jhabvala’s Esmond in India too, Esmond seems to go through a similar experience however in a different context. The initial attraction
India holds for Esmond evaporates in course of time and he feels caught and trapped in India. He hates his Indian wife Gulab, who now stands to him for India but he feels oppressed by her presence. He feels “trapped, quite trapped. Here in this flat which he had tried to make so elegant and charming, but which she has managed to fill completely with her animal presence. His senses revolted at the thought of her, of her greed and smell and languor, her passion for meat and for spices and strong perfumes. She was everywhere, everywhere he felt her” (Surendran 158). His enthusiasm and love for India and its culture fail to insure him against the simmering discontentment that results from the growing alienation.

Jhabvala speaks of the cycle of emotions, every European living in India undergoes. She speaks of the first stage of tremendous enthusiasm when "everything Indian is marvelous”. In the second stage, “everything Indian not so very marvelous” and in the third stage “everything Indian abominable.” In her Esmond in India, Esmond seems to have passed through all these stages he is considered to have become an authority on Indian culture. He also organizes excursions to historical places acting as an important guide. He marries an Indian girl, and takes pride in his son. Yet he creates a little Europe of his own in his own home, a neat little flat with neatly arranged furniture. He takes lunch of cheese salad sitting alone at his smart little dining table—"everything on the table was colorful, photographed full page advertisement in an American magazine." His fleeting affair with Shakuntala, the vain romantic girl, does not make him feel involved. Whatever solace he gets comes from his English girl-friend Betty. He longs to go back to England and dreams of his journey with Betty.

In Kamala Markandaya’s Possession, Valmiki’s condition is akin
to that of the monkey Minou which he carries with him. Cut off from its kind, deprived of its natural habitation and freedom, his artistic talents refuse to bloom until the crafty Caroline supplies him the necessary sustenance through the counterfeit letters supposed to have been written by the Swami, his spiritual mentor. Neither the possessive love of Caroline, his patron and mentor, nor his involvement with the Jewish house-keeper Ellie, or even his passionate love affair with young Annabel, makes him a happy man. In spite of his westernization, Valmiki is not completely cut off from his roots and identity. In the clash between materialism and Eastern spirituality, Caroline who combats for the possession of Val loses him to the Swami, whose strength sticks in his renunciation of all possessions. As S.C. Harrex has put it: It is the Swami’s non-combatant philosophy of ascetic detachment which ultimately triumphs over Caroline’s sophisticated instinct for possession” (Bai 28). Valmiki gets back on to India, to his crevice in wilderness, and his Swami on his own. Harish Raizada has observed, that “Possession poses a question as to whether India has to cut itself off its roots and shape itself in the image of the materialistic west or seek its growth from its life-giving springs of its own culture” (28). On the personal level it is a quest for identity on the part of Valmiki.

Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* and Kamala Markandaya’s *The Nowhere Man* study the problem of the immigrants. Anita Desai is said to have ushered in the psychological novel. An important phase in the growth of fiction is the gradual shift from the external world to the inner world of the individual. Anita Desai states that writing to her is process of discovering the truth that is nine-tenths of the iceberg that lies submerged beneath the one-tenth visible portion. She is adept in exploring the inner
workings of the mind and connecting it with the outer realities. But in the present novel, *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*, there is a welcome change both in theme and technique. It deals with the emotional disturbances experienced by Indian immigrants in England. Dev comes to England for higher studies. Although the milieu is familiar to him through the innumerable number of books he has read, yet he is not able to come to grips with its abiding reality and consequently feels to be an alien. The difference between expectation and reality disturbs him and makes him feel self-conscious. He cannot digest the insults and is perturbed when he is called a ‘wog’. He feels unwelcome and unwanted there. His experience in the Clapham tube station expresses his disillusionment and a sense of frustration. The terrible sense of claustrophobia he undergoes is symbolic of his oppressive feeling. While Anita Desai’s novel deals with the problem of adjustment and accommodation on the part of the immigrants, Kamala Markandaya’s novel explores the evil and ugly nature of racial prejudice. *The Nowhere Man* is an angry protest against the global problem of racial hatred. By pointing out man’s inhumanity to man, she hopes to awaken the human nature latent in him. She believes that literature can play a constructive role through the work of writers who will lay bare the very anatomy of destruction and so force a halt. *The Nowhere Man* shows the hydra-headed monster of racial hatred in all its ugly aspects and cautions that hatred would result in self-destruction. Srinivas, with his wife Vasantha migrates to England where he sets up his home. But in spite of his best efforts to adopt the country of his choice as his motherland, he is treated as an alien. The racial and anti-colored agitation that erupts in England threatens his very existence. Srinivas’s neighbour, Fred Fletcher, a frustrated youth takes cudgels against him for no reason except that he is not of their own color and race. He taunts and
tortures Srinivas to no end. Srinivas bears it all silently as a passive affirmation of his right to be there. His passive resistance infuriates the thoughtless youth. Srinivas, in the meanwhile, is affected by leprosy and has to ask his tenants to vacate his house. The death of his wife, younger son and the negligence of the other son make him terribly lonely. Mrs. Pickering who enters his life after the death of his wife Vasantha, gives him moral support, but the rejection by his adopted country wounds him mortally. He asserts himself by wearing a dhoti and walks in the streets of London bare-feet.

In Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*, Dev experiences an emotional turbulence, when he is torn by the mixed feelings of love and hatred for England. His gradual adjustment and admiration for the alien country coincides with his friend Adit’s growing alienation and disillusionment with England. Adit has set up a home in England and has married Sarah, an English girl. In the beginning she is very complacent, never bothers about being treated as an alien and in fact cannot understand Dev’s emotional disturbance. His visits to his in-laws and to his former lodgers bring a change in him. Suddenly he becomes nostalgic about and feels home-sick for India. Dev, on the other hand, also rediscovers the attraction that London holds for him after his visits to the countryside. As Dev decides to stay in England, Adit declares his intention to leave the country without bothering about the emotional disturbances now pregnant Sarah has to face. He feels happy that his son will be born in India.
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