Stand Still, and I will read to thee

- John Donne
CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

The telling of stories is the oldest of all the arts. But its latest form, the novel is of recent origin. It came to India a century and a quarter back. In such a short time it made its niche not only in the houses of people but also in their hearts. The first Indian English novel *Raj Mohan's Wife*; written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, was published in 1864. Since then, the story of the Indian English novel is one of evolution in terms of themes and style and modes of narration. This evolution is brought about by the “Big Three” namely Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. The others who contributed in a rich measure to the growth of the novel are Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and so on. Owing to their variety of experiments in themes and techniques, the Indian English novel today has firmly established itself on its native grounds. As a critic observes the Indian English novel has come of age. The maturity attained by the Indian English novel can be profitably compared with the novel of any Commonwealth country in the post-colonial period.

The novel, no doubt is the most famous literary form of art today. "In our civilization it is compared to the epic of primitive ages, the drama of the Athenians of Pericles, and the essay in the age of Queen Anne." During the last two hundred years it has grown into the most appropriate vehicle for giving artistic expression to human experiences. Of novel, Henry James once wrote:

There is no impression of life as manner, of seeing and feeling...
which the plan of the novelist may not offer a place. In so doing, writes Lewis A. Coser, they have provided their readers with an immense variety of richly textured commentaries on man’s life in society, on his involvement with his fellow men. Literature, though it may also be many other things, is social evidence and testimony. It is a continuous commentary on manners and morals.

The inter-relationship between social transformation and creative imagination, i.e. literature, is a complex one and can be looked at in more ways than one. The relation between society and literature is two-fold. While society inspires literature in establishing its various norms, in order to understand a society, it becomes important to study its literary works which gives an insight into its culture. The study of society through literature demands a deep understanding of the socio-economic, political and cultural life of the people living in a particular milieu. Milton Albrecht talking about three kinds of association between literature and society, says:

Literature reflects accepted patterns of thought, feeling and action including the patterns of expressions and society’s unconscious assumptions. It innovates giving expressions to emerging themes, that may not yet be definable in literal terms. It is one instrument of social control, serving the purpose of maintaining or of changing the inherited patterns.

Literature, thus, is a powerful medium which can express every aspect of society. It has various forms like fiction, poetry, drama and prose, but novel has established itself as the best medium to express the society. Laurencen and Swingwood glorify novels in these words:

Thus the novel as the major literary genre of industrial society...
be seen as a faithful attempt to recreate the social world of man's relation with his family with politics, with the state; it delineates too his role within the family and other institutions, the conflicts and tensions between groups and social classes. In the purely documentary sense, one can see the novel as dealing with much the same social, economic and political textures as sociology.

From the perspective of society, literature is useful not only in reforming society but also in improving it. Roger D. Spegele discusses the uses of novel, the first use according to him is;

Critical, that is, the analytical and usually realistic examination of a society's claims and practices. The second is ethical an attempt to clarify the moral values implicit in particular ideas and behaviour. The third is therapeutic, in the psychological sense of achieving a higher level of self knowledge. And the fourth is conceptual, the use of the novel to construct a hypothetical model embodying some general ideas about society and politics.

Good novels deal with major socio-economic, political and cultural problems and they achieve their inner unity when a truly good novelist identifies himself with the basic social tendencies of his time. It will be interesting here to see the history of Indian English novel through the changes and evolution of trends in society and its role in presenting and affecting the trends, in this chapter.

Bankim gained mastery over romantic and historical novels, when he was a young boy. Later, disturbed social conditions of the Bengalis inspired him to write about the sufferings of the widows in Hindu joint families. The social condition of Bengal was worst at that time and perhaps it paved the way for political, social and
literary renaissance in Bengal. Gradually, the tide of renaissance spread all over the country and a strong wave of patriotism helped in the creation of *Anand Math* which gave India its National Anthem - *Vande Mataram*. "The mantra had been given", said Nambi, at the time of the partition of Bengal, "and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism." 5

Since the time of Bankim Chandra, Patriotism became a significant theme for a long time and its embodiments could be seen in themes like Indian nationalism. Muslim separation which ultimately made Pakistan, brutal communal violence etc. It was the time of rapid political changes. Every movement was made towards one aim, i.e. to drive out the British Government from India. These movements largely affected social life along with political life and thus, it became the theme of literary writers. These writers were also patriotic members of the society, so they were easily influenced by the ideology of Gandhi, Nehru and other political leaders. Anand Shanker Ray, a famous Bengali novelist observed this change and its impact on novelists and their themes. "When Bankim wrote," he said, "the chief question was how to restore the national self respect. In Rabindranath's time it was how to bridge the East and the West. In this dynamic age, it was how to identify ourselves with the common people." 6

The history of Indo-English novel itself proves this statement because these are the themes, we find prominent in subsequent novelists. Rabindranath achieved success with *Choker Bali* and then wrote *Binodini*. After the publication of *Geetanjali* Rabindranath became popular as a prophet of the religion of man. Influenced by the twentieth century revolution he wrote *The Home and the World* and *Four Chapters*. These novels tell us about the politics of the day and M. R. Anand's *The Sword*
And the Sickle also describes the politics of the time.

By this time, the consequences of the First World War had been stirring the conscience of the world. Its impact can be seen in the contemporary Indian English novels along with the literature of the world. This experience among the novelists, became more and more marked as the freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi gradually spread all over India. The period between the two World Wars, was the Gandhian age in India. Because of its importance in the history of India as well as in the history of Indian novel it requires some attention here.

The First World War ended in the general feeling of frustration in India. Cruel, violent repression of the various movements by the furious British Government not only resulted in the resentment of Indian public but on the contrary, it also strengthened the wave of patriotism in them. At this crucial moment, Mahatma Gandhi came on the national scene as a saviour of the people and as K.R.S. Iyengar puts it, "The whole nation awoke from its suspended animation and felt the blood streams of a new life coursing through its veins." This experience was national in nature. As Samres C. Sanyal says;

It traversed boundaries of language and community. Such a national upsurge has served to establish Indo-Anglian literature as our essential part of Indian literature.

People were shattered and lacked in faith as a result of the two World Wars. They badly needed peaceful life this time. Growing suppression of different freedom movements by the British Government was already increasing the desire for inde-
pendence in the people and at this juncture, when the inner peace of the country was being disturbed by the divide and rule policy of the Britishers, Gandhi came on the political scene of India with his unique weapons of Satyagrah and Civil-disobedience. Through these two simple but powerful weapons he proved a success in uniting the nation. For the first time Indians had got a true leader to follow and a wave of expectation spread all over the country.

In such tumultuous background, a bulk of Indian writing in English was published with the variety of political themes and styles. Since Gandhi's weapons were simple, they attracted the rural lot of the country and this also led literary writers chose rural India, for their field of writing. This period is known for the rise and development of the rural novel, the novels of the tillers of the soil and slum dwellers. In a predominant agricultural country like India the problems of the village are the problems of the nation. By this time, most of the writing was made towards the urban life of India and village realities were rarely dealt with in the novels. As its English predecessors, the Indian novel was also following the path of historical romances. Now with the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi every member of the society started paying attention to the social reality like the poverty, serfdom and untouchability. Writers helped Gandhi in their own way, by presenting these problems to people in general and sometimes by providing solutions to them. All the social problems were exposed in their nakedness in the novels like Venkatramani's Murugan the Tiller and Kandan the Patriot; Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable and Raja Rao's Kaithapura.

Rural modes and manners characterise the art and theme of Shanker Ram's Children of Kauveri. K.S.Venkatramani's novel enshrines Gandhian philos-
phy. His *Murugan the Tiller* and *Kandan the Patriot* stand respectively for Gandhian economics and Gandhian politics. Murugan tries to provide a solution for the problem of rural India by building a self sufficient village community depending entirely upon the land for its basic needs. Kandan represents the greater nobler and moral sense of the Indians to free themselves of the British rule. Though, in both of the novels we find Utopian setting yet they influenced people because they ended optimistically and some where fulfilled the dreams of the Indians. Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* covers the Quit India Movement of the early forties, and so retains significance. The influence of Gandhi was so keen on the people that R.K. Narayan and M.R. Anand made him a character in their novels *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *Untouchable*.

The partition left its unforgettable marks on the lives of the people of the Punjab and Kashmir. Many novels represent the painful reality of this life. Khushwant Singh's *A Train to Pakistan*, Manohar Malgaonkar's *Distant Drum* and *A Bend in the Ganges* tell us the origin and resultant suffering of the two nations. Sanyal observes in this connection, "such Indian themes have emerged to form recurrent patterns in Indo-Anglian fiction and the patterns were popular in the following years."

After the Industrial Revolution in England, the new technological advances took place in Europe and it shrunken the world small. Other nations at different continents welcomed these new technologies because they were directly related to economic progress and luxury of life. Indian people were also not untouched by the wonders of this new technology and it found its way to India. The knowledge of the English language had made it easier and the young generation welcomed English thoughts, ideas and styles with technologies. But the old generation still was tradition-oriented.
and rejected the imported ways of moderns. This provided the theme of the cultural conflict between tradition and modernity in Indian English novels. As every phenomenon has two faces. Indian writers too, saw it from two different angles. Some depicted the jolt received by Indian traditional life by the acceptance of western culture, the adoption of western scientific techniques, industrialization of the village. On the contrary others saw a new awareness, a sense of urgency, a flair for practicality and an alertness in thought and action with the arrival of modernity.

The Indian novel in English of the twenties had two prominent themes. The first, and the most significant of them is the theme of conflict between tradition and modernity. The most prominent writers who exploited this theme with very success are Dhan Gopal Mukherjee, Hari Singh Gaur and Nagrajan. Incidentally it may be observed that none of them is an established writer, because their creative output was meager. Dhan Gopal Mukherjee in his My Brother’s Face is obsessed with the attrition of Hindu values and anarchy, that was setting in. Sir H.S.Gaur’s His Only Love portrays the conflict between two generations. Modern social scientists would call it the generation gap. Nagrajan’s Athawar House is set in South India and portrays the social conflict or the class conflict. This is one of the earliest novels, where inter-caste marriage takes place.

The second group of writers pioneered by M.R.Anand addressed themselves to the economic conflict between the rich and the poor. Naturally the village community where the exploitation of the poor by the rich is more pronounced, is brought into the spectrum of the themes of conflict. While in the former group modernity is identified with the loss of time-tested Indian values, the latter group identifies modernity with progress, prosperity and industrialization.
The politico-economic atmosphere completely changed in 1947. The changed politics and economy affected the sociology of the contemporary society. With the liberty of nation came the liberty of life, consequently it propagated the liberty of thinking. It was also the turning point in the history of women in India. It was the beginning of the process of emancipation for them. Due to changed socio-economic, socio-politic situation they came out of the four walls of the house, saw the reality of the outer world and did let the people know their experiences through their writings. We find tremendous change in the Indian English novel as women enter the literary scene.

While telling of stories is the oldest of all the arts, women are called first and "natural story tellers even when they don't write or publish." The first Indian women novelist in English was Torulata Dutt who wrote an English and a French novel before she died at the age of twenty one in 1877. Toru Dutt's Binaca or The Young Spanish Maiden and Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers lack in depth and insight into the problems of life and betray her own immaturity and inexperience of life in all its dimensions. That's one of the reasons why Toru Dutt is better known as a poet than as a novelist.

After Toru Dutt there were few women novelists who tried to depict the social reality in their novels but they are not very significant here, because they do not contribute to the glorious history of Indian English novel written by women.

It is, however, only after independence, that women novelists of quality have begun enriching Indian fiction in English. There have been remarkable changes in themes and style in fiction written in the 1950's. These changes reflect the fast changing...
"The increasing westernization of the younger generation, growing industrial and capital oriented pattern of economy, changing family set-up and relationships are some factors that have radically changed the Indian society and have brought with them psychological traumas and tensions." This modernised world has found reflection in the works of contemporary Indian English novelists. Though men and women both have depicted these situations in their novels yet;

In several significant respects, the women novelists are closer to the earthly reality, to the subtle nuances of social behaviour, to the complex structure of man's and women's inner life, and to the use of a language that varies from the pedestrian and prosaic to the poetic ornate.

The first generation Indian women novelists in English, have one common fact in their life. They are all highly educated and liberated women. Many of them are widely travelled and have been exposed to a variety of cultures in different societies that has helped them to escape "the narrow grooves of a highly stratified and traditional society." Further, their cross-cultural exposure has made available to them the themes other than the conventional ones. Many of them have written about the East-West themes, in particular the ambivalent love-hate relationship between the two cultures. Closely associated with this theme is the theme of alienation or the loss of cultural identity, experienced by expatriates and immigrants. These themes have been dealt with great perception by Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal.

South Indian by birth, and married to an English man Kamal.
Markandaya, is quite familiar with the interactions of the two cultures and their resultant identity crisis. Kamala Markandaya’s novels are known for their complex theme of India’s quest for identity, discovery of itself, in the post-colonial scenario. Markandaya’s novel Possession is predominantly of the East-West confrontation theme. Caroline Bell, inspite of her aristocratic arrogance, appreciates the art of Valmiki, a painter by avocation from South India. When she takes him to England inspite of his rural background, adjusts himself amazingly to the life style of the West. When she finds him reformed and westernised, she tries to possess him on physical as well as cultural and spiritual planes. H.M. Williams interprets this as the symbol of the British trying to possess India. Valmiki struggles against her attempts to possess him and tries to find his identity. In this attempt, he falls in love first with Ellie and then with Annabel. Inspite of this emotional and physical identification with the western society, Valmiki feels alienated. H.M. Williams observes at this point, “Valmiki becomes the artist lady Bell intends 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 returns to India”12. He returns to India well trained in his art but with a wounded soul. The story of Valmiki and Bell has some political overtones and suggestions.

The daughter of the Jewish-German parents Ruth Prawer Jhabvala came to India as an adult in 1951, just after her marriage to an Indian architect. Having experienced the impact of India on Europeans and Americans, she speaks of the cycle of emotions every European living in India undergoes. She observes;

First stage tremendous enthusiasm everything Indian is marvellous
second stage - everything Indian not so marvellous, Third stage every­thing Indian abominable.13
"In her Esmond in India", says Meera Bai, "Esmond seems to have passed through all these stages". In the beginning he considers himself an authority on Indian culture. He teaches Hindi to the wives of foreign ambassadors. He organizes excursions to historical places acting as an important guide. Esmond, here reminds us of R.K. Narayan's Raju the guide. Like Raju he acts as a guide to people visiting historical places. He falls in love with Gulab. His initial romantic love transforms into hatred for his wife and for the country in which he has lived long and loved most. His growing alienation makes him feel oppressed. The identity crisis makes him totally alienated to the family and the Indian society. He feels a sense of community and affinity when he meets an English girl Betty. The novel is a portrayal of the East-West conflict and the resulting sense of estrangement and alienation.

The daughter of a German mother and Bengali father Anita Desai is rightly circumstanced to portray the emotional upheavals of Indian immigrants in England. Her novel Bye Bye Blackbird focuses on this theme through the character of Dev. Dev is disillusioned by the gulf between his expectations and the realities he has experienced. Parallel to his story, is the contrasting experience of Adit, who lives a complacent and contented life with his English wife Sarah. But at some point in the narration even Adit longs for re-living of Indian experience. The contrast between Adit and Dev gets intensified when ironically Dev decides to go back to homeland. By another stroke of irony Sarah feels alienated in her own society. K. Meera Bai rightly observes her as a "victim of cultural schizophrenia", where she is unable to meet with any demand. She finds herself incapable of weaning herself from her English upbringing and she is unable to accept totally the culture of Adit's. So, we have a set of three characters, each of whom is torn between the pulls and pressures of the culture of the
homeland and attractions of the alien land.

Thus, these novels show that when one fails to understand his needs and reality around, he has to face an identity crisis. This has been shown through the character of Valmiki in Kamala Markandaya’s *Possession* and Esmond in Ruth’s *Esmond in India*. Dev and Adit in Anita Desai’s *Bye Bye Blackbird* face the crisis but come out of it when they realise what they need. Sarah in the same novel suffers a lot because she is capable of neither detaching herself from her English self, nor willing to accept totally her husband’s country. These creative writers not only depict the society as it is but also contribute in forming its positive norms to achieve the goal of self satisfaction, self evolution.

India, inspite of her variety and complexity, is a cultural unit. She has an image of her own culture. When we talk about the portrayal of the image of India, we really mean the realization of her culture and its rich heritage. This rich heritage of India—spiritualism—is that part of the philosophy of her life, which not only differentiates her from the West but also makes her supreme. Renunciation of worldly possessions and selfish motives, is the foundation of Indian religion and culture. Therefore, the recurrence of the ideal of renunciation is frequent in Indian English novel from Bankim down to present day. It was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who for the first time in his novel *Anand Math* introduced ascetics. Then embodying high ideals of renunciation and sainthood Raja Rao produced *Kanthapura, The Serpent and The Rope* and *The Cat and Shakespeare*.

The theme of asceticism in women writers was first taken by Santha
Rama Rao, in her novel *Remember the House*. Renunciation of worldly life and search for the other worldly existence are themes quite in tune with Indian tradition and setting. In *Remember the House* the protagonist here is a mother, not a young woman even to her emotions and physical passions. The mother in the novel has lived her normal life and reaches a stage where she feels compelled by her impulse to renounce worldly attachments. Living with her guru in a far away reclusion in Kerala, she attains a measure of spiritual bliss. Generalising the importance of the theme of asceticism, Sanyal says:

This is a fundamental and all pervasive ideal of Indian life, an ideal that transcends the boundaries of language and culture and permeates all levels of society.¹⁶

The theme of spiritual attainments is perfected in Kamala Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire* and *Possession*. In *A Silence of Desire* the saffron robed ascetic called Swami occupies the centre stage. Sarojini becomes his devoted disciple while her husband is characterised by his western scepticism. Swami is often visited by crowds of people, who throng there for peace, bliss and faith cure. Sarojini has pure unmixed faith in Swami's spiritual powers. Swami is portrayed here as a benefactor who has given shelter to number of people crippled physically or wounded spiritually. When swami leaves the place Sarojini takes the separation in her stride with poise and equanimity.

For a long time the woman has been treated as a slave by her husband. After the marriage her only concern has been to do household works and bear children. She has been considered rather a maid-servant than an equal counterpart to her husband. But when educated women, due to socio-economic crisis came out of the house, the world around her made herself aware of the potentialities other than cooking and
house keeping. This new awareness awakened woman to realise her new place and position in family and society and made her conscious of her own individuality. This new woman has been trying to ascertain her rights as a human being and seems determined to fight for equal treatment with men. Women who are conscious of their emotional needs are striving for self-fulfilment, rejecting the existing traditions and social set up and longing for a more liberal and unconventional ways of life. In the traditional Indian society, these women very often face the dual morality, hypocrisy and male chauvinism, in the process of self-achievement. This struggle is not only in the outer world but it has also entered their inner world. The most affected area of life, that has under gone a tremendous change is that of man-woman relationship. The new woman’s conception, that she is a being, neither an appendage of man nor an addition to him, has worked two fold in her life. While, on the one hand it has made her bold enough to fight for her rights, on the other hand it has fostered the ego of women which results in lack of communication. It has failed to build a companion relationship between husband and wife and thus, has resulted ultimately in alienation.

The theme of man-woman relationship has occupied the central place in almost all the novelists like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Manohar Malgaonkar, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Arun Joshi and others but women novelists seem to succeed in presenting the predicament of women most effectively. K.Meera Bai observes in this connection;

Their instinctive perceptions of and insight into women's reactions and responses, problems and perplexities, the complex working of their inner selves, their emotional involvements and disturbances help them in portraying a life size picture of the contemporary woman.
Every woman novelist sees this intricate relationship from her own angle and depicts distinguishingly in her novels. Nayantara Sahgal’s *Storm in Chandigarh* and *The Day in Shadow* reflect this theme effectively.

Sahgal’s *Storm in Chandigarh* has its primary theme the man-woman relationship focused on the life of Saroj and Inder. Their married companionship fails for want of warmth of love and understanding. Inder begins to hate her when he comes to know, through her own confessions, Saroj’s pre-marital intimacy with a friend. The four years of married life with the addition of two children comes to a squeaking halt when Inder fails to understand Saroj when she needs and longs for his love most. Her withdrawal from the life facilitates Inder’s refuge in Maya’s friendship. Saroj implicitly admits the failure of her marriage and finds honest and understanding relationship with Vishal.

"Husband wife alienation in the novels of Anita Desai is the out-come of the hyper-sensitive nature of her women and their inability to establish a point of contact with their partners."\(^{18}\) Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock* is yet another story of Maya and Gautama and their broken marriage. They seem to be incompatible emotionally, and are not made for each other. Maya is warm, sensitive and tender in emotions. Gautama is cold, rational and pragmatic. The emotional incompatibility between them works in tandem with her obsessive faith in Albino astrologer’s prophesy. Torn between these two, she becomes neurotic and fights alone her losing battle. She also experiences a strong conflict between her strong desire to live and will to die. In this emotional
conflict she kills Gautama by pushing him from the roof of the house. But soon she regresses into her childhood memories. Her mind now is crucible of emotions and memories, coupled with repentance. Unable to bear up the tragedy of life, she commits suicide.

Shobha De is one of the few Indian novelists who treats with candidness bordering on obscenity, the predicament of husband - wife relationship in the upper strata of the Indian society. Her Socialite Evenings illustrates her characteristic themes and her frank treatment of them. First, it is a story of Anjali and her husband Abe, whose marriage is star-crossed from the beginning. Anjali is known for her frigid demeanour which ironically becomes his point of attraction; and Abe is known for his ill repute, when women are concerned. Marriage does not sober them down to the happiness of marital bliss. Each of them continues his or her promiscuous life. Anjali falls for a Belgian photographer and then the young French teacher, still later a young boy of her daughter's age. Finally she lands in the lap of a rich man Kumar. Her marriage with Kumar also fails because he is a gay. She now turns to spiritualism and imagines that she is wedded to Lord Krishna.

The predicament of the other husband-wife pairs in the novel is not very different. Karuna, the protagonist breaks herself loose from her marital ties and falls for a married man, who is her husband's friend. The strain in husband-wife relationship is evident from their impersonal way of addressing each other. “Significantly neither the narrator nor her husband refers to the other by name, each calls the other only 'husband' and 'wife' which denotes the impersonality of one of the most informal and intimate relationship” Karuna commits adultery and evidently seems to enjoy it. She
unrestrained, uninhibited, illicit sex. Her husband Krish, himself is not free from his promiscuous habits. From the beginning they lived a strained unnatural life that finally ends in divorce. Karuna's friend Ritu has almost the same story. She also leaves her husband in search of 'real enjoyment', which she tries to find in men other than her husband. An interesting fact about these ladies is that they both advise each other against this sort of affairs but as Subhash Chandra analyses the real situation, "The reason for dissuading is not morality, it is mainly that the lover is not "husband" material (husband becomes commodity), is not rich enough to provide a life of luxury". Karuna's sister whose story is not dilated upon, divorces her engineer husband and prefers to live a lonely life of practising physician. Every marriage not only breaks but leaves the wife and husband in loneliness. By way of contrast with this, we have the story of Karuna's parents who have seen the ups and downs of life. The marriage of this old generation is based on the basic faith in the essential goodness of man and woman and therefore gives them the much needed emotional support in their old age.

Thus we see that through *Socialite Evenings*, Shobha De very realistically represents the shift of moral values regarding love, marriage and sex from middle class to upper class and from traditional to modern society.

Owing to education, emancipation, economic freedom and self awareness of women the husband-wife relationship has undergone a lot of change. Facing this change, sometimes woman has to take refuge in the domain of other men as in *Storm in Chandigarh* and sometimes she has to commit suicide as in *Cry the Peacock* and sometimes she has to come to live on her own as in *Socialite Evenings*. Whatever be the end the family suffers as values degenerate.
The emancipation of woman is not an easily accepted phenomenon. When she came out breaking hard shell of traditionalism to help her counterpart, her family, her decision was not appreciated in general. She was scorned, insulted and humiliated in the process. Then, there came a time when she had to assert herself and this assertion was labelled as “Feminism”. Though feminism was celebrated all over the world, it has no apt definition. Feminism emerged as an important force in the western world in the 1960s. This was a revolutionary movement on the part of woman as a political necessity to fight racism, sexism, capitalism and patriarchal society. Some one said, “Feminism is committed to the struggle for equality for women, an effort to make women become like men”? Alice Jardine defines it as, “a movement from the point of view of, by, and for women”. Recently it has been unanimously defined as “a concept that can encompass both an ideology and movement for socio-political change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women’s subordination within any given society.” Whichever may be the definition, feminism is essential for women’s emancipation.

The Fundamental difference in the socio-economic structure of the East and the West naturally leads to a wide difference between the problems of women in India and those in the West. The agricultural women labour force and the industrial women force who mostly live in the urban slums are economically backward. But they enjoy a greater social and sexual freedom than the middle class women. The middle class women in the society are educated and employed or they have few economic constraints. But unable to repudiate the traditional morality and embrace the new values of life and the morality of the liberated the middle class men and women live masked lives. The upper class, the aristocracy and the neo-rich break themselves free from the
bonds of tradition and live relatively free promiscuous life. Modern Indian feminism spreads across all the three categories of women in varying degrees. Chaman Nahal defines feminism as "a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome". Dependence syndrome according to him is that barrier of life which woman has to suffer throughout her life in the form of father, brother, son, religious group, society and class. She depends on these relations of life and never feels free, but whenever she frees herself from this dependence syndrome, she leads a normal life. This aspect of feminism has got a prominent place almost in all of the women novelists in English. Women writers like Kamala Markandaya, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Bharti Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande, Rama Mehta, Geeta Mehta and Shobha De and many others have written novels projecting fine feminine sensibilities. Men also believe that:

a large part of feminism experience is out of the reach of the male psyche and therefore, an authentic and sensitive portrayal of the conflict and traumas, in all their nuances ambiguities and contradictions could be achieved only by women writers.

There are certain women novelists who set the pattern of moral values and produce the replacement model to be followed by other women. Raji Narsimahan in her novel *Forever Free* sets a good example of replacement model through her character Shree. She has to suffer her husband's superstitious nature which makes her life terrible. Her husband looks strangely at those things, which she is not responsible for. For example one of her husband's convictions is that if the second toe is larger than main toe, then the woman is surely an adultress. She suffers this belief of her husband and is even not given any chance to make her points. At this juncture of life instead of following the traditional concept of Indian woman she discards her marriage and frees herself.
from the marital bond of life. If not plant then surely it is a seed in the field of Indian feminism.

Shobha De in her *Starry Nights* depicts the ruthless world of Hindi cinema where a fourteen years old child is used and exploited to become heroine by producers and directors. Asha Rani (a South Indian given this name for Bolly Wood) craves for true love throughout her life. First, she falls in love with the most famous film star of her time Akshay Kumar. He loves her but cannot marry because he is already married and can not divorce his wife. Receiving nervous breakdown from this affair she goes to Newzealand and there she is proposed for marriage from an admirer of hers. She marries him and enjoys the family life for sometime. She plans a holiday tour to India with her husband and daughter and decides to stay in India, captivated by the glamour of film life. Here she comes to know that her husband is in love with her daughter's nanny. She goes back to find out the reality and having found the truth, loses her strength, physical as well as moral.

In the end, collecting her strength she comes back to India to restart her old family studio in Madras to support her old parents and deformed sister. Now she feels existence, belongingness and responsibility to do something creative in her life. Instead of escaping from life's responsibilities or yielding to the problems of life, she chooses the right way of struggling and surviving through it.

It is not for ever that women find their place only by breaking the traditions, there are other examples too, where replacement models have been established through conformity. Conforming to the myths, one can still bring about a change.
the protagonist in Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* is an educated modern girl, married into a fantastically orthodox Rajasthani family. Inside the luxurious Haveli she is expected to observe many norms dictated by a distant tradition. She is not even permitted to meet her husband in day time. She rebels against this life in a gilded cage. She fights a losing battle against the tradition because the bonds of orthodoxy are so strong in society. With the help of her understanding father-in-law she changes her course of life and gives herself to social service in the form of educating the servants, their wives and their children against ignorance in superstition. When she is fruitfully occupied with this service, she is very much touched by the devotion almost adoration that she receives from the folk in the Haveli. Her desperation is now chastened and she looks at life from a saner perspective. She feels she has no conventions to break, no walls to shatter. The inconoclast that she was at the beginning of the story, has now metamorphosed into a willing prisoner with no complaint against life.

These women novelists, not only depict the social realities in their novels, they also construct a replacement model to be followed by the contemporary woman. Chaman Nahal worries about the bulk of women writing in the field of feminism in Indian English fiction. He says;

*Do not tell us where the woman has left. Ibsen has done a lot of damage to us in *A Doll's House*. Nora walks out but walks out to where? Let us pick up the story from where Nora walks out.*

Recent women novelists in English are, no doubt, proving themselves best to some extent by providing replacement models. The literary works of these novelists are not only the bare records of social reality of their time but in several ways they
project the future possibilities. The bright history of Indian English novel, the way their creators have treated different themes, the glorious position these novelists have got, make us see their future in the light of the statement;

Man's creative imagination even though conditioned and shaped by the entire socio-economic, political and cultural ethos, is able to create a world of aesthetics, ethical and human values that can find their relevance, albeit in a different perspective, in times to come. Though rooted in its own time, a work of art branches out into distant horizons and bears the fruit of new meanings and significance to succeeding generations.
REFERENCES


6 Ibid, 317.

7 Ibid, 203.


9 Ibid, 121.

10 Iyengar, 435.


15 Ibid, 123.
16 Sanyal, 221


18 Ibid. 171


20 Ibid. 246-247.


22 Ibid. 61.

23 Ibid. 65.


26 Nahal, "Feminism in Indian English Fiction", 34.

27 Goyal. 10.
Take away love, - and our earth is a tomb.

- R. Browning.