CHAPTER–VII

CONCLUSION

It has been my endeavour in the earlier chapters to attempt a systematic investigation of the genesis and the growth of the Hindi and Indian novel in English relating them to the emergence of the novel as a genre on the Indian literary scene under changing socio-economic-cultural conditions. The study aims at understanding history of the Hindi and the Indian novel in English in terms of natural emergence and perceives a basic continuity in the creative process which has formed their growth. It is obvious that a study of this kind should help one steer clear of theories suggesting a simple transmission of this genre from the West through the imitative tendencies of the English-educated Indian writers and oft-repeated easy generalizations and arbitrary chronological classifications which have blurred and distorted one’s impressions of the works of pioneers and early writers.

In tracing the genesis of the Hindi and the Indian novel in English, the study seeks to establish the view that their rise was but a significant first phase in the development of the novel as a genre in the Indian literary scene as their emergence was not an accident nor the outcome of the imitative impulses of a few writers but a steady and natural process set in motion in the various parts of the country almost simultaneously, by a number of socio-economic changes and re-orientations which, largely originating in Bengal, spread to the other parts of the country. The most significant of these changes were the emergence of the individualistic social order, the rise of the middle classes, spread of
education, the development of the printing and spread of journalism, the birth of the age of reason and the liberation from the tyranny of custom and blind faith, the emancipation of the Indian woman, and all the great social and socio-economic changes and re-orientations which brought about the rise of the novel in England in the eighteenth century.

Many literary historians hold the view that the novel as a literary form came to India by a simple transmission from the West and that its emergence should be explainable from in terms of a process of ready adoption of the Western form. But none of the earliest novels either in Hindi or in Indian English are imitative of the English models which the writers of this period might be expected to have followed. Neither Rani Ketki ki Kahani, Shyamaswapna and Bhagyawati in Hindi nor Govinda Samanta, Rajmohan’s Wife, Bianca and An Unfinished Song are imitative of the English novel of the West. Thus the Hindi or the Indian English novel followed its own pattern of gradual evolution under a set of socio-economic conditions and did not appear on the literary scene all of a sudden under the impact of the Western literature. Neither were all the early Hindi and Indian English novel works tales rather than novels but were the novel of the Indian kind. Thus Shyamaswapna is attributed to be the first novel of the Indian kind in Hindi while Govinda Samanta and Rajmohan’s Wife can be credited to be amongst the first novels of the Indian kind in Indian Writing in English. In the same manner Pariksha Guru and works of Premchand in Hindi and the works of the triumvirates in
Indian Writing in English can be classified into the category of the novel of the English kind.

The novel is an essentially alien form and the form itself is related to the Western concept of society and the place of the individual in that society. As in characterization, so in form, the Hindi and the Indian novel in English has to adapt itself to its own basic philosophy of life and in them is found a variety of bold experimentations with form. Thus these works become allegorical pictures of India, the rural India which one finds in the villages. The fact can be confirmed with Govinda Samanta, Kanthapura, Godan, The Village and Two Leaves and a Bud among others.

The initial work of Indian Writing in English and the Hindi novels share a striking similarity in their form, content and style. Most of the novels which appeared showed a predilection for romance, dream and poetry, not to speak of adventures and escapades of an incredible sort. The reassertion of realism in the novels of Indian Writing in English is observed to come with the publication of sketches like those of Malabari and Nagesh Vishwanath Pai. As a pioneer of journalism in India, with a writer of sketches, with a satirical and reformistic purpose and as a ‘pilgrim reformer’, Malabari pioneered the evolution of the English prose fiction in India in a manner comparable to that in which Addison, Steele and Goldsmith pioneered it in eighteenth century England. Nagesh Vishwananath Pai, on the same lines opened up new dimensions of creativity in the little town of Chakmakpore, and anticipated Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. Parallel to these realistic sketches romances like
Padmini, The Dive for Death, Sarala and Hingana, and The Love of Kusuma also made their appearance. Hindi novel too has a fair mix of the fancy and fantasy with the magical works of Chandrakanta and Chandrakanta Santati by Devkinandan Khatri and Thakur Jagmohan Sinha’s Shyamaswapna and works of realism such as Shraddharam Fillori’s Bhagyawati. Surprisingly the journey of both the writings begins initially with realism and later gets digressed towards romanticism. Lala Srinivasdas’ Pariksha Guru and Lal Behari Day’s Govinda Samanta the contenders for the first novel in Hindi and Indian English respectively of the kind of the West are realistic depictions of the contemporary prevailing conditions. But as they move ahead both the writings diverge towards fancy and fantasy.

The lack of women novelist in the pre-independence Hindi novel is striking as the pre-independence English women are sizeable in number from Toru Dutt, Cornelia Sorabji, Sewantibai Nikambe and Krupabai Sathainathan. The women represented in these works are essentially of Indian sensibility, endowed with the traditional feminine qualities of sincerity, love and resignation. The autobiographical element in these novels, the transition from a concern with objective social reality to an exploration of the feminine sensibility find its echo in the works of these women writers and they established their position as the forerunners of the Indian literary tradition in Indian English literature.

These first generation women novelist depicted women that were traditional in outlook and resigned to their fate. Under the influence of the
popular British writers, these writings tended to be imitative while some focused on the idealization-reformation zeal. On the whole these women writers wrote mainly to voice their concern and sympathy for the suffering of Indian women rather than to censure the society. Hence there was no room for anger, irritation or tension in their works despite intense sociological and reformatory motivation.

Prior to Premchand the Hindi novel were generally romances, magical mysteries of the entertaining kind and either inclined to Sanatani ideology or of its opposing reformist ideology, lacking the elements of a full fledged novel. The same applies equally to the novel in Indian Writing in English. They earlier lacked a co-relation or association to the contemporary social, political and economic conditions prevailing during their time. In the struggle for supremacy between the Sanatani dharma inclined writers like Mehta Lajjaram and others and the reformist writers, it is the reformist that triumph and Premchand provides this writing a new direction and identity with the term adarshonmukh yatharthvaad that can be translated roughly into English as “idealistic realism”. The works by earlier Hindi writers that were either entirely didactic or entirely with the purpose of entertainment are fused together by Premchand and made more realistic, entertaining, authentic and meaningful. Premchand’s views regarding the novel are vastly different than his predecessors and in the same manner the difference is manifested in the triumvirate of the Indian Writing in English too from their predecessors.
The entire phase from 1915 to 1936 in Hindi literature is so dominated by Premchand that no other writer even comes close to him in literary standards. So immense is the contribution of Premchand to Hindi literature and such a vast number of issues ranging from poverty, mismatched marriage, farmer zamindar relationship, social evils like dowry, extravagance, exhibitionism and the political issues like rejection of capitalism among others have been raised by him in his works that leave aside Hindi novel even novel in Indian Writing in English lacks such a dynamic writer representing such authentically the then contemporary prevailing conditions. He has a very comprehensive understanding of the various sections of society ranging from the aristocratic feudal characters, the poor village peasants, the women characters such as Dhania in Godan or Suman in Sevasadan, the teenagers psychology as depicted in Nirmala, the intellectuals like Professor Mehta and the capitalists represented by Tankha and Khanna in Godan. The realism, artistry and tenderness with which he has created the characters in his works is unparalleled and unsurpassed in the entire fiction.

He is the founder of a new trend in Hindi fiction. He depicted with deep understanding, the tragedy and pathos of their dark lives, their rare smiles and unceasing sorrows, their frustrations and their hopes. His works throw up strongly contrasted characters seldom seen in any other writer, surpassing the chaos of the still feudal rural setting with its profound faith in future renewal.

The major writers of Indian Writing in English appear on the literary scenario almost two decades after the arrival of Premchand in the Hindi
fiction. Premchand’s age almost ceases by the time they publish their first work. These writers too under the Gandhian influence take up issues such as untouchability, independence struggle, social vices and exploitation of the underdogs by the various forces of capitalism, communalism, racism and political forces. The long stint with Indian fiction going beyond half a century gives them ample time and scope to mature and raise vivid issues that are observed in society from time to time. Thus Raja Rao can write on diverse issues such as the struggle for independence and the social reformation pioneered by Gandhiji in his Kanthapura to such as the amalgamation of cultures and religion of the East and West, full of religious and philosophical symbolism in The Serpent and the Rope. The existing social situations are depicted in The Serpent and the Rope while Comrade Kirillov deals with the story of misguided Indian youth whose unflinching faith in communism eludes him to believe in the theory of Karl Marx. (Add the similarity in the theme of karmabhoomi and rk narayans The English teacher)

Similarly Mulk Raj Anand highlights the pitiable condition of the down trodden people in Indian society and the existing Brahmin hypocrisy. His Coolie is a picaresque novel adding some novelty to the form, highlighting the pains and predicament of the poor working people. If the Untouchable is a microcosm, Coolie is more like the microcosm that is Indian society. Two Leaves and a Bud embodies the tragic clash of interests and destiny. He is a minute observer of society who looks at every aspect which an ordinary eye is
prone to miss. He can be regarded as one of the greatest novelists of Indian English Literature.

R. K. Narayan exposes the ills of society and probes them too, but never for sadistic pleasure or for creating the feeling of disgust in the readers. His chief objective is to highlight the hypocrisy of ideals, ambitions and pride and not to guide the society in any particular direction but simply to make us realize the social evils and ills. We thus come to the conclusion that Narayan is an unidentified social reformer who is keenly aware of the various absurdities and eccentricities of society and suggests ironically the ways of their removal.

The contemporary political system plays an instrumental role in the evolution of the Indian English and Hindi novel. A critical study of the novels especially of Premchand and post-Premchand age in Hindi and the triumvirate in English makes it obvious that they are the by-product of the contemporary socio-political culture which finally shapes or chisels the intellectual make-up of the novelists. Therefore the novels of the pre-independence India in Hindi and in English broadly discuss the socio-political situation in the contemporary society. The sociological study of the pre-independence era novels establishes that the nature of the novel, primarily is political; though there is the element of historical romance too. In this way the literature or art in such a case becomes the tool in the hands of the novelist to propagate their ideological views or commitments.

The novel being the ideal form for presenting the picture of human experience, in particular the problems that beset the individual in society. The
writers of the Hindi novel as well as of Indian Writing in English are keen to reveal the socio-cultural complexities of modern India. Majority of the Hindi and Indo-Anglian novelists seem to show the verve and vigour to explore the new challenges that have emerged because of the modern technology. Therefore the responsibility of the novelist is challenging as how to respond or to treat the complexities of socio-political and cultural life of India so that the novel writing may be a mirror of the society rather than a slice of life.

The Hindi and the Indian novel in English have retained their individual identity not only in the modes of story-telling and narrative techniques but also in the values and the traditions they have been upholding and in the concept of man and his relationship to the world. The two class of fiction take up almost similar issues and their treatment varies from writer to writer and from Hindi to English literature. Undoubtedly the Hindi novel and novel in Indian Writing in English together besides adding vividness to literature enrich the readers with a better understanding of the issues faced by the people in the Indian subcontinent.