CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Literature is an art which expresses human feelings like delights and perils beyond national and linguistic boundaries. It is something that reflects the society and makes the onlooker think about his own self and soul and allows him to enjoy beauty and experience life. It employs language as a medium to appeal to the readers of diverse nature. It is an embodiment of language and people in relation to their culture and tradition. By and large human sentiments remain the same throughout the world despite the fact that the whole world is split into different countries with multiple races, languages, religions, politics and culture. It introduces one to a new world of innovation, knowledge and experience. It commonly refers to the works of creative imagination which is abundant in the works of poetry, drama, fiction and non-fiction.

The novel became a popular genre during the Victorian period. Poetry and drama took new turns and children’s literature arrived in this period. English literature since 1901 moved towards modern, post-modern and 20th Century literatures. D.H.Lawrence, H.G.Wells, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, Eugene O’Neill, T.S.Eliot, Ezra Pound, Margaret Atwood, Salman Rushdie and many more are enlisted under modernism. Post-modern literature is a continuation of the experimentation championed by the writers of the modernist period and a reaction against the ideals embedded in modernist literature. The increase of globalisation has allowed European literature to expand rapidly and so the Asian, African and other national
literatures are brought under one roof – World Literature. Writers like Agatha Christie, J.K.Rowlings, C.S.Lewis and J.R.R.Tolkien, writing either on crime or on fantasy themes, rule the 20th Century literary world.

Jhumpa Lahiri, Calcutta (Kolkata) based, London born, Rhode Island author, is a diasporic writer. She writes in American English with Indian flavour. The American literary world celebrates her as an American author. She has been appointed by the US President, Barack Obama, as a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Her inheritance as an Indian writer and the acceptance of the American literary world as its own have made her a global writer. Her inherited literary world, India, has its own glory and history and the influence of this world in her writings is remarkable. A few among the literary geniuses who created history are: Raja Rammohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Toru Dutt, R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Arunthathi Roy and Nobel Laureates like Rabindranath Tagore and V.S.Naipaul. In order to understand Lahiri’s perception of India and its literary excellence, the researcher feels that it is essential to have a knowledge of the Indian writers and their contributions to various genres like prose, poetry, drama and fiction. In this chapter, the researcher has made an attempt to give, in a nutshell, the development and growth of Indian Writing in English, the establishment of diasporic writing and also Lahiri’s prominence as a diasporic writer.

Among the world literatures, Indian Writing in English is a distinctive literature which has occupied a prominent place. It refers to the literary contributions of writers in India who write in English but whose native language is not English. It is an artifact of multilingualism and multiculturalism. Indian writers, writing in English, express, through their writing, the sense and sensibilities of India in different perspectives using varied themes like history, politics, science, romance and social reforms.
Indian literature spreads the history, heritage and culture of India across the
globe. A brief exploration of Indian Writing in English and an understanding
of the major contributors to Indian literature would help one to observe this
literature in a multifaceted perception.

Indian Writing in English comes under the broader realm of post-
colonial literature. It is a historical encounter between the two cultures –
oriental and occidental – for about two hundred years. A seed, now popularly
known as Indian English Literature, was sown in India in 1793 with the
publication of *Travels of Dean Mahomet*, a travelogue by Sake Dean
Mahomet. Raja Rammohan Roy (1774-1833) gave a new beginning to
modern Indian literature. He was the bridge between the East and the West.
He was called the first of oriental occidentals in modern India. He tried to
combine the best in Indian culture with the best in Western culture. He is
considered the first among the modern Indian prose writers. Most of his prose
works are controversial in nature. Regarding his contribution to Indian
Writing in English K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar (1995) writes:

Rammohan Roy, although he could be named as the first
of the Indian masters of English prose, was great in so
many fields that he belongs to Indian history more than to
mere Indo-Anglian literary history. (33)

The contributions of Rammohan Roy were a stepping stone to his
contemporaries and successors like Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Kashi
Prasad Ghose, Hasan Ali and Michael Madhusudan Dutt. The 19th Century is
said to be the period of renaissance in India as there were great literary and
social revolutions.

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809–1831) is generally considered
to be an Anglo-Indian due to his mixed Portuguese descent. But he was
passionate for his native Bengal and considered himself Indian. His love for
India is best articulated from his poems like *To India My Native Land*. Inspired by the beauty of the Indian landscapes and the river Ganges, he started writing poetry. He has written many wonderful poems in English, among which *The Fakir of Janghira* is considered to be the most important. As a poet, his writing career was much influenced by the Romantic English poets Shelley, Keats, Byron and Scott. His poems always carry a message of patriotism.

Kashi Prasad Ghose (1809-1837) is one of the first Indians to publish a regular volume of English verse. He is remembered as one of the founder-pillars of Indo-English literature. He has contributed equally to Indian writing in English with that of Derozio. His *The Shair and Other Poems* finds a place in the Indian literary history. He was the editor of an English weekly, *The Hindu Intelligence*. His poetry is noted for its ethical quality and it abounds in originality and conventional descriptions.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873) was a teacher, journalist and translator. His first poem in narrative form, published in English, in 1849, *Captive Lady and Visions of the Past*, exhibits the influence of English Romantic poets on him. Influenced by the English way of life and European literature, he mastered several oriental and occidental languages. Besides Indian languages like Bengali, Sanskrit and Tamil, he was fluent in classical languages like Latin and Greek. He had also mastered modern European languages like French and Italian. He is recognised for his novelty in creating an innovative poetry – merging Bengali language and stories with Western styles and forms. This new form represented the beginning of the modern Bengali literature. Dutt was the pioneer of Bengali drama and famous for his poems along with his essays. He also instituted blank verse, a unique style of composing poems. After a row of success, he penned down *Hectarbadh* in

The first half of the 19th century became known as the age of prose. Journals and periodicals appeared in most of the Indian languages and eventually they became a sound base for the rise of the novel in 1860s. The latter half of the 19th Century gave a new beginning to the Indian English novel with writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Toru Dutt and Romesh Chandra Dutt.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894), also known as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, is one of the greatest novelists and poets of India. He is an excellent story-teller and a master of romance. No Bengali writer has ever enjoyed such spontaneous and universal popularity as he. He first wrote poems. Then he wrote a novel in English, *Rajmohan’s Wife* (1864) and it became the first Indian English novel which set the stage for the emergence of novel as a form of literary expression in India. Rabindranath Tagore’s *Jana Gana Mana* became India’s National Anthem in due course. He mentioned on several occasions that he desired very much that Bankim Chandra’s *Vande Mataram* should become the National Anthem of free India. In 1928, he said in an interview with Mulk Raj Anand, that he shared his ‘ideas of inheriting the past – if made relevant for the present!’ In this respect Tagore considers Bankim Chandra as his master.

Bankim’s real contribution to the development of Indian fiction is that he adopted an alien form and medium to a theme which was essentially Indian and he never became a slave to the Western tradition of storytelling. In his novels, he seeks reconciliation between the two views of life. Though *Rajmohan’s Wife* cannot be considered as a remarkable novel, it inaugurated a long series of novels to come. As a great writer Bankim remained an
inspiration throughout his life for many later novelists and poets such as Tagore and Sarat Chandra Chatterjee.

Toru Dutt (1856-1877) is one of the most extraordinary women in India’s literary history and Hindu culture. She is one among the writers who brought literary fame to India from Bengal. In her brief life of 21 years, she brought out an impressive body of work, the most notable of which are *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876), a translation of French verse into English, and the posthumously-published *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882), a translation of Sanskrit verse into English. Toru has also written essays for *The Bengal Magazine*. She wrote two novels, *Bianca*, or *The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878) and *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers* (1879) which were published posthumously of which *Bianca* was incomplete and was published in *The Bengal Magazine*. E.J. Thompson writes about her that she remains one of the most astonishing women that ever lived; fiery and unconquerable of soul. Her poems are sufficient to place her in the small class of women who have written English verse that can stand. James Darmesteter, a French scholar and critic pays a befitting tribute to her:

The daughter of Bengal, so admirable and so strangely gifted, Hindu by race and tradition, and an English woman by education, a French woman at heart, a poet in English, prose writer in French, who at the age of eighteen made India acquainted with the poets of French herself, who blended in herself three souls and three traditions, died at the age of 21 in the full bloom of her talent and on the eve of the awakening of her genius, presents in the history of literature a phenomenon without parallel. (Gupta 1968:11)

Raj Lakshmi Devi wrote *The Hindu Wife* (1876) and it was followed by Toru Dutt’s unfinished novel *Bianca* or *The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878). Romesh Chandra Dutt (1848-1909), Toru Dutt’s cousin, wrote all his novels in Bengali and translated two of them into English, *The Lake of Palms* (1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra* (1909). He translated into
English the verse from *The Ramayana, The Mahabharatha, The Rig Veda, The Upanishads*, Kālidāsa’s *Kumarasambhava* and Bharavi’s *Kiratarjuniya*. His three later novels, *Thoder Mall, Shivaji* and *Pratap Singh*, were translated into English by his son. All these novels, either written or translated into English, shaped the readers’ interests and motivated many a later writer to choose – the long-sustained piece of prose fiction – as their creative medium. Srinivasa Iyengar (1995) writes the turn from Toru Dutt to Romesh Chandra Dutt as:

To turn from Aru and Toru Dutt to Romesh Chunder Dutt is like passing from the bud and the flower to the ripened fruit: from Erato and Melpomene to Clio and Calliope: from Ushas, rosy-fingered and short-lived, to the toiling Sun on the ascendant: from infinite promise to impressive achievement. (44)

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is the most outstanding figure in Bengali literature and it was his *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*, the much-admired of his poems, which won him the Nobel Prize for literature in 1912. Though Tagore is known as a great poet all over the world, he is also a novelist of prominence. Apart from poetry, musical dramas, dance dramas, short stories and novels, he wrote essays, autobiographies and travelogues. Of his prose, his short stories and novels are highly regarded. The novel *Gora* projects Tagore’s vision of the individual in renaissance India. The novel *Choker Bali*, considered to be his first success, was translated into English as *Binodini*. It deals with the plight of a young widow and presents a deep psychological study of its characters. *Ghare-Baire*, translated as *The Home and The World*, is a study of the revolutionary Bengal of 1905.

Tagore’s stories are mostly based on the life of a commoner. His non-fiction abounds in history, linguistics and spirituality. He also left numerous drawings and paintings and songs for which he himself wrote the music. In 2011, Harvard University Press collaborated with Visva-Bharati
University to publish *The Essential Tagore*, the largest anthology of Tagore's works available in English, to mark the 150th anniversary of Tagore's birth. Amartya Sen speaks of Tagore and his works as:

... anyone who knows Tagore's poems in their original Bengali cannot feel satisfied with any of the translations (made with or without Yeats's help). Even the translations of his prose works suffer, to some extent, from distortion. E.M. Forster noted of *The Home and the World* that "the theme is so beautiful," but the charms have "vanished in translation," or perhaps "in an experiment that has not quite come off". (Sen 2011)

Another star in Indian literature is Manmohan Ghose (1869-1924). He is the elder brother of Sri Aurabindo. He had education at Manchester and Oxford. His first collection of poems, *Primavera*, was praised by literary scholars at Oxford. On reviewing this collection, Oscar Wilde remarked that the temper of Keats and the moods of Mathew Arnold had influenced Ghose to write such wonderful lyrics. His play, *Perseus the Deliverer*, made him a notable craftsman among English scholars for the choice of words and rhythm. His poems often reflect his longing to return to England, a place where he had spent twenty-two years of his life.

Sri Aurabindo Ghose (1872-1950), one of the outstanding figures in Indian writing in English, contributed a lot to Indian literature. His *Songs to Myrtilla* was published in 1895 and *Urvasie* in 1896. His use of Miltonic diction and Epic similes in his works is remarkable. His poem *Love and Death* is written in blank verse and the theme is based on an ancient Hindu legend with a remarkable resemblance to the Greek legend of *Orpheus and Eurydice*. Aurabindo’s *Savitri* is considered to be the most outstanding work in Indo-Anglian literature. *Savitri* is in three parts, divided into 12 books and 49 cantos. Ghose worked on it almost for about fifty years. In his *A History of Indian English Literature*, M.K.Naik (1995) observes that:
Savitri was continuously revised by the poet almost till the end of his days and shaped into an epic of humanity and divinity, of death and life divine. A sort of poetic philosophy of the spirit and of life, and an experiment in mystic poetry cast into a symbolic figure. (52)

Sarat Chandra Chatterjee (1876-1938), popularly known as the Immortal Wordsmith throughout Bengal, contributed his novels in the same style as Bankim and Tagore. He stood for equality between Hinduism and Islam. His masterpiece, Srikanta, written in four parts, was translated into English. Throughout his novels Sarat identified himself with the cause of the downtrodden and boldly portrayed the tears and agony of the lower, middle and the have-not classes. The piercing realism of Sarat’s novels influenced many later writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Babani Battacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Kamala Markandaya, Kushwant Singh and a few others who depicted Indian life in all its socio-cultural, economic and political complexities advocating the cause of the downtrodden.

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) was the first woman to contribute for life time. She depicted contemporary Indian life and events. She began writing at a very early age. Her Persian play, Maher Muneer, impressed the Nawab of Hyderabad and as a result she got a scholarship to study in Europe. It was Edmond Gosse who convinced Sarojini Naidu to stick to Indian themes - India's great mountains, rivers, temples, social milieu - to express her poetry. Her first volume of poetry, The Golden Threshold, was followed by The Bird of Time and The Broken Wing which attracted huge Indian and English readers and made her the greatest poet of the age. Her lyrics have perfect structure and an exquisite finish. Her handling of various metres and stanza forms are impressive. M.K.Naik (1995) observes:

Her best poetry is not just a faded eco of the feeble voice of decadent romanticism, but an authentic Indian English lyric utterance exquisitely tuned to the composite Indian
ethos, bringing home to the unbiased reader all the opulence, pageantry and charm of traditional Indian life, and the splendors of the Indian scene. (69)

The period between the two World Wars was facing nationalistic movements in India. The winds of change were blowing steadily across the nation. The freedom movement was raised from every corner of India under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. The importance of Gandhi in Indian literature is significant. He generated a new generation of literature which was later known as Gandhian literature. Gandhi influenced both language and literature directly and indirectly. The Gandhian movement led to the removal of untouchability, women awakening and religious reforms which had great influence in Indian English literature. His autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth* (1925), is one of the imperishable classics in Indian literature. This book is a detailed account of his personal life and experience expressed with frankness and honesty.

The second half of the 19th Century novels continued to appear mostly written from Bengal, Chennai and Mumbai. Majority of these novels are social and historical modelled on the eighteenth and the nineteenth Century British fiction, particularly Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Sir Walter Scott. Indian novels in English were written from various parts of India with varied pictures of life and land. After the First World War, it was found that some of the novelists were influenced by the ideologies that challenged capitalism and colonialism. This ideology is the background in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand. After Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Mulk Raj Anand proved himself to be the novelist of social consciousness in the long list of later Indian novelists. He, along with R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao, inaugurated the genre Indian English Fiction. These three are the ‘Triple Pillars’ of Indian Writing in English and this trilogy is known as ‘Big Three’ in the Indian literary history. An
introduction without these three in any research in Indian Writing in English would be incomplete. Anand’s *Untouchable* is the forerunner of the genre, Indian English Novel. Both his novels and short stories projected the life of the poor and the downtrodden in the day-to-day Indian society.

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) was influenced by Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. He also read Tolstoy, Freud and Jung. His reading of Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* and Dostoevsky’s *The Possessed* awakened in him the possibilities of the epic novel. During his stay with Gandhi in Sabarmathi, he wrote his first novel, *Untouchable*, in 1935. The publication of this novel brought him immense eminence. He puts forth the ugly realities in the life of the untouchables. Like *Untouchable*, *Coolie* (1936) also projects the class distinction between the rich and the poor. The novel is remarkable for its humanism. Anand’s style of using Hindustani words is outstanding. Humour and absurdities of human life are finely worked out in this novel. *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) describes the pathetic plight of the labourers in the Assam tea plantations. On his publication of *The Triology*, consisting of three novels with the same hero as protagonist, K.N.Sinha regards it as a comprehensive mature work showing development in the art of the novelist, embracing the immensity and variety of life and portraying the chief character in action over a period of several years. K.N.Sinha considers *The Road* (1961) as a brilliant piece of writing and *Death of a Hero* (1963) as an epic of modern India covering the incidents which are fresh in memory. Anand’s pictures of poverty and of the wretchedness and misery caused by poverty are most vivid and most poignant. Like Prem Chand and Tagore, he identifies himself with the pains and pangs of people expressing their heart beats in impassionate utterances.

R.K.Narayan (1906-2001) has occupied a supreme place among the novelists of India. Among the European writers only the greatest ones have
enjoyed his reputation although their mother tongue was English. His works have been translated into several European and Indian languages and he has won a considerable audience in Britain and America. His artistic creation has won universal acclaim and recognition. His English is simple and direct. Like Wordsworth’s Lake District, Hardy’s Wessex, Margaret Laurence’s Manawaka, the locale of Narayan’s novels is Malgudi and its surroundings. He has written about fifty-one short stories and twelve novels. Iyengar (1995) writes of Narayan’s art of creation and his fictional town Malgudi:

Narayan’s is the art of resolved limitation and conscientious exploration: he is content, like Jane Austen, with his little bit of ivory, just so many inches wide: he would like to be a detached observer, to concentrate on a narrow scene, to sense the atmosphere of the place, to snap a small group of characters in the atmosphere of the place, to snap a small group of characters in their oddities and angularities... ‘Malgudi is Narayan’s ‘Casterbridge’ but the inhabitants of Malgudi... are essentially human, and hence, have their kinship with all humanity. In this sense, ‘Malgudi’ is everywhere. (360)

R.K.Narayan is a novelist of common people and common situations. His first novel Swami and Friends (1935) deals with the school life of the protagonist, Swaminathan, whereas his second novel The Bachelor of Arts (1937) captures the feelings of a young man and his conflicting ideas about love and marriage. The English Teacher (1945) is a psychic, mystic and spiritual study of some part of Indianness. It is a remarkable piece of art full of unexpected things. The Dark Room (1939) is a lament on the disharmony of domestic life. The title character in Mr.Sampath (1949) is a great living character in the history of Indian Writing in English. Waiting for Mahatma (1955) is a political novel based on Mahatma Gandhi’s struggle for independence. The Guide, published in 1958, raises a few probing questions among the readers about human motives and actions, problems of appearance and reality and the man and the mask. His another novel The Man-Eater of
Malgudi (1962) is a blend of realism, humour and irony. His other works include The Vendor of Sweets, The Painter of Signs and The Financial Expert.

Narayan is a writer of average emotions. Anti-social elements or physical violence do not find any place in his fiction. He does not indulge in sensations. He believes in domestic harmony and peaceful relations. He is the only major writer in Indian writing in English free from didacticism. He has no desire to preach, to advise or to convert. Jhumpa Lahiri speaks of him that his short stories have the same captivating feeling as his novels and he provides the reader something which novelists struggle to achieve in hundreds of pages. She further says that his abilities classify him as belonging to the pantheon of short-story geniuses that include O.Henry, Frank O'Connor and Flannery O'Connor (Lahiri 2006a).

The last of the ‘Big Three’ is Raja Rao. He is a close contemporary of Mulk Raj Anand and R.K.Narayan. He is influenced by the sage Sri Atmanand to whom he has dedicated his novel, The Serpent and the Rope. If Anand is committed to expose social injustice, Raja Rao’s interest is in exploring the spiritual essence of India and Narayan’s effort is to be a pure artist. William Walsh (1993) writes:

If Anand is the novelist as reformer, Raja Rao is the novelist as Metaphysical poet, Narayan is simply the novelist as novelist. (6)

Raja Rao (1908-2006) is not a prolific writer like Mulk Raj Anand and R.K.Narayan. He has written just four novels beginning with Kanthapura. Iyengar (1995) writes of this novel as:

A village, picturesque region, an epoch of social and political change, a whole complex of character and motive, reason and superstition, idealism and cold calculation, are spring up before owe eyes demanding recognising and acceptance: it is almost a tour de force. (392)
Raja Rao’s focus is on the freedom struggle, the exploitations of day workers and the relationship between India and Europe. He has not only broken new grounds in the Indian novel written in English but has also Indianised the novel. He writes in his introduction to the first novel, *Kanthapura* that:

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in a foreign language…. We cannot write like the English. We should not…. Our method of expression has therefore to be a dialect which will sometimes prove to be as distinctive or colourful as the Irish and the American…. The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression. (Davies 2003:151)

*The Serpent and the Rope*, published in 1960, is a highly complex and many-sided novel, which dramatises the relationships between Indian and Western cultures. *Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) is a metaphysical comedy that answers philosophical questions posed in the earlier novels. The major theme of all his fiction is the search for the truth; man’s search for ultimate values.

India got independence from the British imperialistic power in 1947. The post-independent era is commonly termed as post-colonial period. The term ‘colony’, in general, represents colonised countries like India by the imperial power. Colonialism in literature is very much traced from the end of the 18th Century to the mid 19th Century. Colonialism, in literary history, is a study about the literature produced during the period under the British Empire. Colonial literature in Indian Writing in English is the period between Raja Rammohan Roy and Indian Independence. During this period, one could see tremendous development in all the fields, including literature. As discussed in the previous pages, Indian writing in English gradually evolved through ages and reached its height with the ‘greats’ of Indian writing in
English whose main focus in their writing was to fight against social injustice and social reconstruction. Those ‘greats’, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao, contributed much both in the pre-independent and post-independent periods.

Indian Writing in English found a new dimension during the post-independent period. The terms ‘post-colonialism’ and ‘decolonialism’ have much meaning and are widely-discussed throughout the world in world literature. On getting freedom from the colonial rule, the post-colonial people thought of having their identity. So, they raised their voices against past exploitations and oppressions and attempted at establishing their identity. The question of identity, irrespective of their profession, religion, region and nation, was important for each.

In the Indian context, the researcher means post-colonialism in a narrower sense that the period after independence is marked as post-colonialism or post-colonial literature. Post-colonial literature reflects, in a great variety of ways, the effects of colonialism. Post-colonialism in Indian writing in English is a continuous process of throwing away the Western ideals and thoughts and the emergence of the new consciousness and cognizance. Post-independence in Indian Writing in English is marked as a period of heterogeneity. The pre-independent literary ideologies of colonialism, nationalism and modernity were encountered and overwhelmed by the post-independent writers in a strikingly different way. The writers of this period made use of Indian expressions and phrases with English expressions and phrases in order to reflect the blending of the Indian and Western cultures as such is the outcome of the post-colonial Literature. English literature was once exported throughout the empire, through schools and colleges; now the writing from former colonies is being exported to
Britain. Salman Rushdie rightly puts it as ‘the Empire writes back to the centre.’

Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Kushwant Singh and Arun Joshi focus on specific socio-political problems whereas women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Sashi Despande, Bharathi Mukharjee and Nayantara Sahgal lay their focus on feminist perspectives, socio-political and personal problems. Some recent novelists like Arunthathi Roy, Shoba De, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Kiran Desai, Rohinton Mistry, Githa Harrihan, Mukul Kesavan, Raj Kamal Jha, Vikram Chandra and Amitav Ghosh highlight post-colonial issues such as ignorance, illiteracy, starvation, poverty, suffering and humiliation in more specific ways.

After the 1950s Indian English fiction, similar to its western counterpart, shifted its focus from the public to the private sphere. Mass destruction in the two world wars, caused by nuclear weapons, brought envy, unrest and boredom all over the world. These absurd situations gave rise to psychological disorders and loss of moral values in humanity and ultimately disturbed man’s mental peace and harmony and brought discomfort, depression and frustration. World literature, pertaining to this ethos, started to deal with the different gloomy facets of modern society. The Indian novelists, however, could not remain aloof from these currents and, henceforth, they were not exclusively concerned with the exploration and interpretation of social milieu and dealt with new subjects of human existence and man’s quest for self in all its complicated situations. This shift of focus in Indian writing in English is clear particularly with Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Chaman Nahal, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal who explore the agonised existence of modern man in their writing.
Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004) belonged to the pioneering group of Indian women writers who made their mark not just through their subject matter but also through their fluid, polished literary style. She is most famous for her novel *Nectar in a Sieve* which introduces Western students, life in rural India and the changes that occurred during British colonisation. Indo-Canadian poet and academician, Uma Parameswaran, who has studied Markandaya's composition and interviewed her, is of the opinion that she is a pioneer member of the Indian Diaspora and her best novel, *The Nowhere Man* (1972) foreshadows many diasporic issues with which we are preoccupied today. In Markandaya’s fiction Western values are typically viewed as modern and materialistic and Indian values as traditional and spiritual. Some of her other novels include, *A Silence of Desire, A Handful of Rice, The Coffer Dams, Two Virgins, Pleasure City* and *The Golden Honeycomb.*

Anita Desai, born in 1937, is one of India's foremost writers. Indian novelist, short-story writer and children's author, Anita Desai is indeed a name to be considered in the field of literature. She is known for her insightful portrayal of the inner feelings of her female characters. Many of Anita Desai’s novels explore tensions between family members and the alienation of middle-class women. In her later novels, Anita Desai wrote on varied themes such as German anti-Semitism, the demise of traditions and Western stereotyped views of India.

Arun Joshi (1939-1993), a novelist and an indrawn individual, belonged to the pre-Rushdie era. That was the time when Indian fiction in English had not strengthened a reputation in the West and its chances of success at home were poor. Joshi, basically an industrialist, cultivated his love for literature only in his spare time and found a place among the notable writers of India writing in English. He has authored five novels, written mainly during the 1970s. His themes are identical with most other
contemporaries and his characters vividly replicate the conflicting nature and characteristics of the post-colonial individual. Joshi published *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* in 1971, his most famous work, three years after his literary debut, *The Foreigner*. *The Last Labyrinth* won Arun Joshi the Sahitya Academy Award, India's most prestigious literary prize.

Chaman Nahal, born in 1927, is an award-winning Indian novelist. His novel *Azadi* (1975) is a compelling narrative of the divisive effects of partition in 1947. This novel is widely regarded as his finest work. The division of the novel into three parts, *Lull, Storm* and *Aftermath*, makes it clear that the novel is about the silent atmosphere before the announcement of partition, the horrible incidents caused by the partition and the pitiable conditions of the uprooted refugees after the partition (Gunasekaran 46-53). However, the remarkable feature of the narration is the tragic effects of the partition.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (1927-2013), born in Germany, lived in India for 24 years from 1951. Jhabvala’s early works in India dwell on the themes of romantic love and arranged marriages and are portraits of the social mores, idealism and chaos of the early decades of independent India. Writing of her in the New York Times, novelist Pankaj Mishra (2004) observed that:

She was probably the first writer in English to see that India's Westernising middle class, so preoccupied with marriage, lent itself well to Jane Austenish comedies of manners.

feature India as a setting where the characters search for spiritual enlightenment to come out of the materialistic pursuits of the East.

Nayantara Sahgal was born in 1927 into one of India’s most prominent political families. Well-acquainted with Indian aristocracy - her uncle was Jawaharlal Nehru, her cousin Indira Gandhi and her mother an ambassador to the United States - Nayantara Sahgal first wrote *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (1954), an autobiographical memoir about her youth. Her novels bring out Sahgal as a writer with feminist concerns seeking the independent existence of women.

Indian writing in English, before India’s independence, focussed on the themes of national freedom and social reconstruction. Post-colonial writings mostly dealt with the themes of east-west encounters, alienation and self-identity. In fact, the contemporary Indian literature in English heavily relies on the literature coming from the post-colonial writers living either in India or in British ex-colonies but were born and bred in colonised countries. The novelists during 1980s and 1990s have taken new dimensions in bringing out the key attributes and strength of Indian English fiction. During this period, Indian novelists earned honours and distinctions not only in India but also abroad. Their major focus is on social issues, economic instability, psychological problems and alienation. Also, this period faced a gradual transition from the public world to the private world.


Ruskin Bond (b.1934), an Indian author of British descent, is regarded as the country’s greatest children’s author of all time. Most of his works reflect his love for India in a refined and mellifluous writing style. The New York Times has written about him that his books are filled with the smells, sights, sounds, confusion and subtle organisation of ordinary Indian life which almost resemble the crowded and comprehensive Indian bazaars.

Vikram Seth, born in 1952, is perhaps most widely known for his novel in verse, The Golden Gate (1986), a satirical romance, which records the lives of two young Indian professionals in San Francisco. Sustained by its success, Seth wrote his second book, A Suitable Boy (1993). The novel was a big hit in India and abroad despite its length and earned comparison with Leo Tolstoy, Charles Dickens and George Eliot. India’s most renowned contemporary writer and journalist, Khushwant Singh, commented on Seth’s work in this novel that he (Khushwant Singh) lived through that period and could not find a flaw and it really was an authentic picture of Nehru's India. Seth’s another novel, An Equal Music (1999), is also a romantic one and the most impressive aspect of this novel is the way in which music is conveyed through language.

Amitav Ghosh, born in 1956, is celebrated in the literary world for his works on fiction, travel writing and journalism. He is well-known for constructing complex narratives by blending fiction and history and for his extreme themes that go side by side with post-colonialism. His long list of achievements includes books like The Circle of Reason (1986), The Shadow Lines (1988), In an Antique Land (1992) and Dancing in Cambodia. The Glass Palace, published in 2000, is the most famous of his works. This novel very emotionally touches the economic issues in Burma and India and the
unstable political situations affecting the personal lives of people living in these nations. *The Shadow Lines* is a moving testimony of the modern state of violence which can only be partially transcended through one’s imaginative efforts to live beyond the brutal reality of national borders with the sense of rootlessness. *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996) is described by India Today as a kind of ‘mystery thriller’ and *The Hungry Tide* (2005) explores the notion of the unexplored landscape geographically and the unexplored human heart psychologically.

Chetan Bhagat, born in 1974, is an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology, India’s foremost university for Engineering sciences and research. He arrived on the country’s literary scene with a knock through his debut novel *Five Point Someone* which was later filmed as *Three Idiots*. At present Bhagat’s novels enjoy the greatest readership throughout the country. His latest book, *Revolution 20-20* (2011), became an instant bestseller which captures the loudly rebellious tone of the present day Indian youth. In 2010, Bhagat was also selected by the Times magazine as one of the hundred Most Influential People in the world. *The New York Times* called him the biggest selling English language novelist in India’s history in 2008. His other notable works are: *One Night at the Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States* (2009), and *What Young India Wants* (2012).

Shobha De (b.1948) is among the eminent novelists in India and she is recognised as Indian Jackie Collins. Through her brilliant writing skills and innovative ideas she was able to mark the difference from other Indian writers. Much of her writing is based on the various aspects related to Indian urban lifestyle. She is dissatisfied with the behaviour of the Indian youth which is clearly visible in her novels and articles. Her novel, *Starry Night*, brings out the dark corners and painful sores of the present society and this work is counted among the best-sellers. The novel, *Sisters*, brings out the dark side of the Mumbai business world and its insensitive sway in the life of an individual. *Socialite Evening* (1989), Shoba De’s first novel, pictures the Mumbai high society, the lives of bored housewives trapped in loveless marriages and the elite group trading their culture for Westernisation and materialism.

Shashi Tharoor (b.1956), a prolific author, columnist, journalist and a human rights advocate, in his award-winning novel, *The Great Indian Novel* (2000), has given rebirth to the epic *The Mahabharata* with fictional but highly-recognisable events and characters from twentieth-century Indian politics. He has lectured widely in India and is often quoted for his observations that India is not an underdeveloped country and in the context of its history and cultural heritage, ‘a highly developed one in an advanced state of decay.’

Recent writers in India, such as Arundhati Roy (b.1961) and David Davidar (b.1958), show a direction towards contextual relevance and rootedness in their works. Both the writers integrate geography and politics in their narrative. Arundhati Roy, a trained architect and the 1997 Booker prize winner for her *The God of Small Things*, calls herself a ‘home grown’ writer. The book is a description of how small things in life affect people's behaviour and their lives. Davidar’s *The House of Blue Mangoes* (2002) was greeted
with acclaim throughout the English speaking world and was eventually published in 16 countries and translated into as many languages. His second novel, *The Solitude of Emperors*, published in 2007, is based on his experiences as a journalist and the outrage he felt at the communal riots that took place in India during 1990s. *Ithaca* (2011), set in the world of international publishing, is a fascinating insight into the world of publishing.

In 1985, he became one of the founding members of Penguin in India and edited or published authors like Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra and Rohinton Mistry.

Aruni Kashyap (b.1984), writer and translator, based his first novel *The House with a Thousand Stories* (2013) on the society and psyche of the people of Assam at the backdrop of chaos and unrest. This novel announces the arrival of one of the most original voices from India's North-East.

Indian Writing in English is an honest institution of expression to the native intellects who wish to bring out their contemplations in a foreign tongue, English. Indian English has become a novel source of cultural expression and a voice in which India converses regularly. Indian writers contributing to world literature is flourishing gradually and the whole world looks at the array of emerging writers like Upamanyu Chatterjee, Anita Nair, Mukul Kesavan, Raj Kamal Jha, and Gita Mehta, from this Asian subcontinent who lift the world with a powerful breeze, with due respect.

The post-colonial migrants, irrespective of their origin, construct an identity which is accommodated by the countries of their adoption. The Western discourse dominates their critical reasoning and reflects in their works of art in relation to the characters and setting. Indian writers, living abroad, have established a remarkable vision of their mother country amalgamating the voices of the bread-winning country. Remarkable among them are Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh, Bharathi Mukharjee,
Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Shashi Tharoor, Anita Desai, Agha Shahid Ali, Amit Chaudhuri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Meena Alexander, Sujata Bhatt, Suketu Mehta, Shyam Selvadurai, Kiran Desai, Monika Ali and Jhumpa Lahiri. They have settled in America, Australia, Britain, Canada and elsewhere in Europe. Though they are publishing their works abroad, whether they like to be called the writers of the Indian descent or not, critics and reviewers often associate and identify these writers and their writings with Indian writing in English. These diasporic writers differ among themselves in many ways. They show their difference in the choice of their themes, points of view and narrative technique. However, they are unique in expressing their nostalgic outpourings. These diasporic writers, especially the post-colonial writers, deal with issues like partition, patriotism, nationalism, exile, ideas of homeland, rootlessness, identity crisis and cultural disorientation.

V.S. Naipaul (b.1932), a Trinidadian by birth, Indian by descent and British by choice, began his career in the 1950s. He is recognised as one of England's best-living writers. He is a person who belongs to the world and is usually not classified under Indian Writing in English. His novels, set in developing countries, are known for their pessimistic and cynical tone. He is best known for his novels *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), *In a Free State* (1971), *A Bend in the River* (1979), *A Way in the World* (1994) and *Half a Life* (2001). *A House for Mr. Biswas* is an imaginative account of the Indian experience in Trinidad based on his father’s life and his own youth. During his visit to India, following the publication of this novel, to his dismay, he found only the displacement due to colonialism which had stripped him of any contentment there. He received the Nobel Prize in 2001 for his novel *Half a Life*, a story about an Indian immigrant to England and then to Africa. The novel *Magic Seeds* (2004) is set as a continuation to *Half a Life*. *The Mimic Men* (1967) is the result of his feelings of alienation, his disregard for both
England and Trinidad, and his sense of responsibility as a post-colonial writer. *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) is a blend of fiction and autobiography.


Bharati Mukherjee was born in Calcutta in 1940, moved to Britain with her family at the age of eight, later lived in Canada as an expatriate and finally settled in the United States as an immigrant. She writes elaborately about the plight of Indians in America before globalisation got its forward
motion. Since she is an offspring of alienation at every stage of her life, her works mainly focus on the themes of identity crisis, exile, alienation, expatriate feelings and immigrant issues. Mukherjee’s earlier works, such as *The Tiger’s Daughter* and parts of *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, are her attempts to find her identity in her Indian heritage. *The Tiger’s Daughter* is about a young girl named Tara who returns to India after many years of being away and witnesses a different India.

Meena Alexander (b. 1951) was born in Allahabad and her family moved to Sudan when she was five and had higher education in Britain in Nottingham University. Her multifarious cultural experience structures the theme of self-identity in her poetry and novels. Her autobiography, *Fault Lines*, points to the boundaries and the struggle for root in a different culture. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (b. 1956) is an Indian-American author and poet. Her works are largely set in India and the United States and often focus on the experiences of South Asian immigrants. She writes for children as well as adults and has published novels in multiple genres including realistic fiction, historical fiction, magical realism and fantasy.


Sunetra Gupta (b. 1965) was born in Calcutta and spent her childhood in Africa, graduated in Princeton, America and is now teaching in


Immigrant writers like Shiv K. Kumar, Uma Parameswaran, Pankaj Mishra, Balachandran Rajan, Lavanya Sankaran, Irwin Allan Sealy, Farrukh
Dhondy, Firdaus Kanga, M.G. Vassanji, K.S. Venkataramani, Shiva Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri and many more, are still contributing to the world literature. All these writers relate their works in one way or the other with their root and this particular characteristic identifies them with the Indian diaspora. Diaspora, for them, is not the food to choose but the soul within and it is an unconscious outpouring which they themselves could not hold back.

Jhumpa Lahiri, one among the diasporic writers, carries with her the strikingly fresh Indian sensibility abroad and lets it out through her fiction in an impressive form. Since she herself is the child of immigration and multiculturalism, she could portray the characters both in the light of native and alien culture. Deeply felt by the importance of family relationship and attachment with the relatives in the home country, Jhumpa has experienced the trauma of failing to find her identity in the new land where she could never have a sense of belonging. Though these displaced realities and self-imposed exile are in many ways a calamity, this existence acts as a stimulus and enables Jhumpa to excel in fiction writing.

Born as Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri on 11th July, 1967, in London, Jhumpa Lahiri is the daughter of Bengali Indian immigrants. When she was three, her family moved to Kingston, Rhode Island, a state of New England region in the United States since her father took his job as a librarian at the University of Rhode Island. When she began kindergarten in Kingston, Lahiri's teacher decided to call her by her pet name, Jhumpa because it was easier to pronounce than her good name. Lahiri graduated from South Kingstown High School and received a B.A., degree in English literature from Barnard College, affiliated to Columbia University, in 1989. Then she received an M.A., degree in English, M.F.A., in Creative Writing, M.A., in Comparative Literature and a Ph.D., in Renaissance Studies from Boston University. Later she taught Creative Writing at Boston University and the
Rhode Island School of Design. In 2001, Lahiri married Alberto Vourvoulias-Bush, a journalist, who was then a Deputy Editor of *Time*, an American weekly news magazine. Lahiri, after a contented life in Brooklyn, New York, has shifted her residence to Italy where she wants to explore more about the human characteristics in a new atmosphere. She has been living in Rome for a year with her husband and their two children, Octavio (b.2002) and Noor (b.2005). She tells in an interview the reason for her decision to move to Rome:

*I came to the U.S. when I was two years old, and while I’ve observed close at hand what it means to be an immigrant, I’ve never had to get to know another country in which I clearly don’t belong and to speak in a second language and to do all of those things that my characters do and that my parents did and that my husband, Alberto, has done. I felt that there was something missing. So I convinced him to quit his job and off we went. And it’s been the most incredible year of my life. (O’Grady 2013)*

Lahiri published her first book, a collection of nine short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies* subtitled as *Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond* in 1999. It won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award in the year 2000 and has sold over 15 million copies worldwide. It was also chosen as The New Yorker's Best Debut of the Year and is on Oprah Winfrey's Top Ten Books List. The stories are about the lives of Indians and Indian Americans who are caught between the culture they have inherited and the ‘New World.’ This book was translated into languages like Persian, Swedish, Bengali and Polish. *(wikipedia 2009)*

*The Namesake* (2003) is Lahiri’s first novel. It was originally a novella published in *The New Yorker* and was later expanded to a full length novel. It explores many of the same emotional and cultural themes as her Pulitzer Prize-winning short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies*. Moving between events in Calcutta, Boston, and New York City, the novel examines
the nuances involved with being caught between two conflicting cultures with highly-distinct, religious, social and ideological differences. A film adaptation of the novel was released in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and India in March, 2006. It was directed by Mira Nair. The Namesake was published in Bengali under the title Samanami. (wikipedia 2011)

*Unaccustomed Earth*, a collection of short stories, published in 2008, deals with the lives of Indian American characters and their mixed cultural environment. It was listed as number one on the *New York Times Book Review* list among the hundred Best Books of the year 2008. It also won the 2008 Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award.

*The Lowland*, published in 2013, was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and was in the final list of the National Book Award for Fiction. The Communist Movement in West Bengal and the choices made by the two brothers form the core of the book. Slightly different from the previous publications which talk much about immigrant issues, *The Lowland* withstands the whirlwind of political chaos and family ties.

Her debut collection of stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, talks about her willing acceptance of the varied cultures and the subtitle, ‘Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond’, remains as a tribute to her home country. Of the nine stories, six are set in America and three are set in India. The first story, *A Temporary Matter*, presents the life of a young couple, Shukumar and Shoba, who have lost their still-born baby and this casts a shadow on their happy marital life. Unable to bear the loss and control her anger caused out of self-pity, Shoba decides to break her conjugal relationship. Here, constant recollections of India and the catastrophic end have been captured in a single frame.
The story, *When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine*, is set in Boston. Mr. Pirzada, a Pakistani, gets a passport to the US on a government scholarship. A civil war breaks out in Pakistan and he is much worried about his family left in Dacca. His longing to reunite with his family, his relationship with the Indo-American family in Boston and the ten-year-old girl Lilia’s understanding of the pain from one’s separation of family and her prayer for his reunion are brought out in a light vein. The title story *Interpreter of Maladies* draws a clear line between the second generation American Indians and the Indians living in India. Mr. Kapasi acts as a tourist guide and shares his experiences as an interpreter to Mr. and Mrs. Das. When she uses Mr. Kapasi to confess the secret hidden in her son Bobby’s birth, he feels insulted. She confesses the fact that a Punjabi Indian-friend of her husband’s is his father. Her multiple identities are the reason for Mrs. Das’ odd sexual behaviour. When the address slip handed over to Mrs. Das floats away, Mr. Kapasi is reminded of the harsh realities of life which is full of missed opportunities.

*A Real Durwan* and *The Treatment of Bibi Haldar*, set in Calcutta, are both examples of the effects of globalisation in India. Globalisation has caused many to be on the path of poverty. Both Boori Ma in *A Real Durwan* and Bibi Haldar in *The Treatment of Bibi Haldar* were a part of the unorganised, underground economy because they were paid in food and shelter instead of legal, monetary compensation. *A Real Durwan* is a beautiful synthesis of thought and character. Boori Ma, an elderly lady, the protagonist from Calcutta, is the stair-sweeper or *durwan* of an old brick building. She very often reminisces her lost royalty and grandeur. The short story concludes as the residents throw out Boori Ma’s belongings accusing her as the informer of robbers and begin a search for a real *durwan*. If Bibi Haldar in *The Treatment of Bibi Haldar* had been treated by a good doctor, her disease would have been diagnosed correctly and she would have received the right
medication. Both the women were deprived of certain basic needs which made them miserable.

In the story *Sexy*, the seven-year-old boy acts as a catalyst for Miranda to realise her relationship with Dev which is neither appropriate nor beneficial to her. This story runs parallel to her friend Laxmi’s cousin. Robin, Laxmi’s cousin’s son, ends up giving Miranda some insight into his mother’s grief and calls her attention to the more unglamorous aspects of being the ‘other woman’. This experience eventually leads her to call off her affair and mend her ways to rise up to the heights of nobility. In *Mrs. Sen’s*, the boy Eliot functions as a foil to demonstrate Mrs. Sen’s ability to assimilate into American culture. She is made known through the eyes of Eliot who finds a striking difference between the domestic life of the immigrant Indian Americans and that of his own. However, Mrs. Sen is constantly reminded of her loneliness and the calm atmosphere which is in contrast to her parental house in Calcutta which is always associated with gregariousness and noise.

*This Blessed House* explores the complications of arranged marriages and the adjustments necessitated to maintain familial relationship and a harmony between the spouses. Sanjeeve is obsessed with the Christian symbols left in their house whereas Twinkle is fascinated towards those things and considers it a blessed house. Unlike Ashoke and Ashima in *The Namesake*, Sanjeeve, the son of parents who live in India, is the first generation Indian American and Twinkle, the second generation immigrant. Bound to the marital bond and mesmerised by the beauty of Twinkle, Sanjeeve tolerates and adjusts himself to the Christian fascinations of Twinkle and gets ready to face the immigrant world which is really perplexing and challenging to him.

The final tale *The Third and Final Continent* projects a relatively positive story of the Indian-American experience. In this story, the obstacles
and hardships the protagonist overcomes are significant. He is born in Asia, travels to Europe to study and finally migrates to North America. By ending on a cultural tone of social acceptance and tolerance, Lahiri suggests that the experience of adapting to American society is ultimately achievable.

Lahiri’s debut novel, *The Namesake*, presents characters as victims of displacement, dual identities and cultural disorientation and conflicts. This is more in common with the second generation immigrants who are unable to accept either their parental identities or the existing social identity. Lahiri herself is in a state of predicament whether to be an Indian or an American. She compares the immigrants’ experience with that of her own. She thinks that the challenges faced by the parents – exile, loneliness, alienation and longing for the past – are very clear and distressing to their children. The novel begins with Ashoke and Ashima living in their Central Square three-roomed apartment, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The story narrates the series of tangled encounters the couple and their son Gogol face in the settled land.

*Unaccustomed Earth*, Lahiri’s second collection of short stories, published in 2008, deals with left-home children, their setting up of families, the struggle with scrambled and broken relationships and the demands of parenthood. The assimilation of the native and alien cultures has been replaced by the integration of two generations. The title story *Unaccustomed Earth* talks about the subtle relationship between a married daughter and her father, a widower. Ruma is married to a non-Indian. She is the mother of a young son and is expecting her second child. Her father’s first visit to her new home in Seattle is encumbered with silent tension. She is bothered that he will expect her to invite him to move in with her family but, on the other hand, his wish is not to let her know that he has a girlfriend.

In *Hell-Heaven*, Usha, looking back on her Bostan childhood, reminisces about her mother’s relationship with Pranab and realises as an
adult that her mother was actually in love with him. *A Choice of Accommodations* is told in a stream to bring out the themes of unspoken expectations of a marital relationship, the niceties of marriage, themes of companionship and loneliness and habits.

*Only Goodness* is about Sudha, a sister, who carries the guilt of her brother’s alcoholism and is forced to come to terms with it. Once she receives a letter from her brother Rahul, she is elated by the reunion with him. Ultimately his arrival leads to a dangling discord with her English husband and also questions the safety of her child. The protagonist of *Nobody’s Business* is Paul, an American student, who is in love with his Indian-American housemate, Sangeeta. His conflicting conscience and the struggle to convey his relationship with her is conveyed in an organised structure.

The second part of the book tells the stories of Hema and Kaushik under the title *Hema and Kaushik* and the entire story is divided into three parts. The story revolves around two people who, despite being childhood acquaintances and their families being old friends, lead drastically different lives. Two decades after, Kaushik's family stays with Hema's as house guests, they meet again by chance, just days before they are to enter completely different phases of their lives and they discover a strong connection with one another.

*The Lowland*, published in 2013, is Lahiri’s second novel. It is the story of two loving brothers having completely contrastive characteristics. Udayan, drawn to the communist movement, becomes a political idealist, and Subhash, his elder, gets a Ph.D., seat in MIT and moves to the States thinking to settle his life there. Unfortunate events like Udayan’s death, and Gowri’s future detail the novel. The book narrates in detail the complex emotions of her characters and the consequences of choices and family ties.
Native Visions and Alien Voices in the Works of Jhumpa Lahiri is the title of the thesis. The researcher feels it appropriate to consider this title as it closely fuses with the construction of the stories, characters and settings beyond Lahiri’s conception of exile, alienation, multiculturalism, identifying the root in a different culture and furthermore the longing for homeland. It is imbibed within every immigrant that he must strictly follow his own tradition, culture, language and religion in a settled land. In no way does he get deviated in spite of the fact that he accepts the new language and politics, becomes accustomed to the food habits and climatic conditions and gets along with the natives of the settled land. The first generation immigrants always look at the settled world with their native visions and acknowledge the alien voices for smooth survival.

For the second and third generation immigrants, there is always a confusion about their homeland. They have to accept either the land of their birth or the land from where they actually descent is still an unsettled question. The parental generation always compels them to be true to their native visions whereas their children, with no understanding about the native land and their parents’ vision of native land, go on living with a vision that they belong to nowhere. At one point of time, the vision of the settled land dominates them since they are acculturated in the settled land and they agree to accept it as their native land. Also they show no interest in the language, religion and culture of the parents and try to adjust with such aspects for the sake of their parents. For them native vision is the vision of the settled land and alien voice is the voice of the native land.

Jhumpa Lahiri has stated in an interview that she herself felt she belonged to nowhere. Born to Indian-Bengali parents in England and settled in America, it is difficult for her to identify herself with one country. At home she behaves Indian and feels Indian but in the outer world she is an American
in all aspects. But in general she wants to be known as an American. Writing is her profession and she writes in English, the language of the settled land, not in Bengali, her mother(’s) tongue. English came to her naturally and so it became her native voice whereas she uses very little Bengali and it has become an alien voice.

Like Lahiri, many of her first generation immigrant characters feel the difference and many of her second generation immigrant characters accept the difference and transform themselves to the change. Ashima, Ashoke, Moushumi’s parents, Sanjeevee, Mrs.Sen, Usha’s mother and Hema’s parents are some of the first generation Indian Americans who are successful in capturing their native visions in America. Gogol, Sonia, Moushumi, Shoba, Twinkle, Mrs.Das, Amit, Rahul, Sangeetha, Hema, Kaushik and Bela are unable to envision their native visions but can compromise themselves with the American vision which eventually becomes their native vision.

The research foregrounds the diasporic perceptions, cross-cultural experience, an introspective study of human psyche and the craftsmanship of Jhumpa Lahiri through her works. In order to bring out these aspects from the works, chiefly from the characters, the researcher has made use of the sociological, existentialistic and psychological literary approaches. The terms, ‘sociology’ and ‘diaspora’, are interrelated. ‘Diaspora’ means dispersion of people throughout the world whereas sociology deals with the people, their environment, their response to the society and their lifestyle in relation to their national, traditional, cultural and religious characteristics. The focal point in this research work is the sociological aspects of the diasporic characters, hence this sociological approach.

‘Existentialism’ is a literary theory that seeks to analyse literary works with special emphasis on the struggle to face alienation and isolation. Existentialism, in general, focuses on individual human lives and the
emotional inevitability of suffering. Primarily, existence is important to every individual. To be an individual is more important than existence but it becomes a complex phenomenon to every diasporan since he needs to survive in a dissimilar cultural milieu. In order to arrive at such individuality, diasporic immigrants negotiate their national identities with the settled nation. This negotiation, sooner or later, leads to cross-cultural orientations. Existentialistic approach is considered to be fundamental to analyse and understand the cross-cultural aspects of Lahiri’s characters.

‘Psychology’ is a word derived from the Greek word ‘psyche’. Different Greek thinkers offer different philosophy to the word ‘psyche’. The researcher does not go in depth to the exactness of the term from the concept of the Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. In accordance with the modern psychologists, the term ‘psychology’ has a simplified meaning, ‘to deal with the mind’. A psychological approach to the literary works of Jhumpa Lahiri exemplifies the mental conditions with which the characters move with one another, respond to society, decide their future, fall a prey to the environment and struggle to acculturate.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s contribution to the literary world is great. There are so many research works carried out across the globe on Jhumpa Lahiri especially for M.A., and M.Phil., degree programmes. A handful of research works has also been done for the Doctoral Degree programmes but they are comparative in nature – comparing Jhumpa Lahiri with other South Asian diasporic authors like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Monica Ali, Attia Hosain and Bapsi Sidhwa for diasporic study or with Arundhati Roy and Shobha De for feminist study. As far as the knowledge of the researcher is concerned, no individual effort has ever been made to undertake a doctoral research programme solely in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri and the researcher
takes it as an advantage and feels proud to carry out a full-fledged research on Jhumpa Lahiri.

The study is done in six chapters starting from Introduction which gives an overview of the term ‘Indian Writing in English’ and its emergence from the post-colonial period. A clear picture of the diasporic writers and their themes and settings is discussed. This chapter also makes a study of the author chosen, in terms of her literary career, themes and achievements along with her diasporic contemporaries and their major themes.

The second chapter, Diasporic Perspectives, throws light on the term ‘diaspora’. Lahiri’s perspective of diaspora, the intervention of native visions, the effect of those visions among the first, second and third generation immigrant Indians, the way of adaptations and the adjustments carried out both within and the outside world in her works are detailed in this chapter. Eventhough the chapter details the diasporic perceptions of the immigrants in the United States, much focus is laid on the first generation immigrants since their survival in the new land depends on the level of adjustment and adaptability.

The third chapter, Cross-cultural Reflections, deals with the reactions of the conflicting minds of the characters in relation to their cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds against the existing world of reality in the land of opportunities. Problems like marital disharmony, children leaving home, the state of being in-between and hybridity are discussed. Although cultural conflict is a commonly-reflected characteristic of the immigrants, the perceptions and practices of the second generation immigrants are entirely different from those of the first generation immigrants. Therefore, this chapter mostly centres round the second generation immigrants.
The fourth chapter entitled *Human Psyche: An Introspection* figures forth the psychological insights of an individual in an alien nation. The interaction between the minds of the first and the second generation immigrants encounters a trauma as the latter feels that they have neither native vision nor alien understanding. The sense of exile, loneliness, disorientation and the psychological dislocation are vividly captured.

*Craftsmanship*, the penultimate chapter, entails the prominent features of the works of Jhumpa Lahiri which is dealt with in this thesis. The details include plot construction, narrative mode, description of nature and backdrop, significance of titles, themes and values.

The last chapter, *Conclusion*, sums up the study by bringing forth the afore-mentioned discussion points in a succinct manner. Also this chapter provides scope for further research on the author chosen.