Chapter I

Introduction

India is a country held together 'by strong but invisible threads... About her there is the elusive quality of a legend of long ago; some enchantment seems to have held her mind. She is a myth and an idea, a dream and a vision, and yet very real and present and pervasive'

Jawaharlal Nehru

1.1. Social Concerns

The rise of the novel in the Indian context is in keeping with the social predilections of the novel in all societies. The establishment of the novel form in the 18th century in England is attributed to the post-industrial rise of the middle classes, and the Marxist critic Georg Lukacs refers to it as the bourgeois epic, which mirrors the complex totality of society. The Indian novel, too, - both in bhasha, (to use the term coined by Ganesh Devy (1993) for the vernacular) and in English – after the post-1857 reformist agenda of both the British government in India and progressive social thinkers from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to M.K. Gandhi, has uniformly focussed upon social problems in need of resolution. As a result, themes ranging from the status of women, the practice of sati, child marriages, inequities in the social system, especially caste hierarchies and untouchability, the conflicts between westernisation and indigenous value
systems, the dichotomy created in the Indian mind by colonial education, the status of the relationship with the colonisers and the developments in the freedom struggle have been depicted. This is particularly true of the work of the three ‘great’ Indian English novelists – Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand, who began writing in the 1930s, a time when the influence of M.K. Gandhi was at its peak and nationalist fervour had reached almost a fevered pitch. So, in spite of his basically philosophic inclinations, Raja Rao remains rooted in his social milieu, and at least, one of his novels, *Kanthapura* (1935), is a product of his direct affiliation with Gandhian ideology, as is Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1936). R.K. Narayan’s depiction of the myriad nuances of a changing social order in small town Malgudi not only captures the spirit of the age, but because of his gift for satire also subjects it to gentle ridicule. This happens, especially, when he explores the gap that exists between professed idealism and its actual manifestation, as in the case of Jagan’s Gandhian principles in *The Vendor of Sweets* (1936). In the 1980s, too, the social concerns of the novel are evident in its over-riding apprehensions regarding the state of the Indian nation after about thirty years of independence. Many of them, like Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1980) and Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) positively serve warnings about the bleak future of Indian democracy,
with the hope that remedial steps would be taken before the situation goes completely out of hand. These are, what Meenakshi Mukherjee calls, 'predictably pan-Indian' themes and can be related to the location of the Indian English novel, since its inception, in a language which has national and international currency, a dominant power position and an urban-centred, middle- and upper-class sensibility. Mukherjee also points out that this concern with larger, macro social issues results in 'a homogenisation of reality, an essentialising of India, a certain flattening out of the complicated and conflicting colours, the ambience and shifting relations that exist between individuals and groups in a plural community' (Mukherjee 2000:172).

1.2. 'Civil' and 'Political' society

Sociological concepts and data, therefore, can be a great help in analysing the social concerns of the novel, especially in the light of researches by scholars like M.N. Srinivas, A.M. Shah, Neera Desai, Andre Beteille and others into institutions like family, caste, community and society as a whole. These researches reveal the extent to which novels mirror or critique or valorise certain norms and institutions. However, a larger framework, which subsumes some of these categories can be of far greater value in forming the ideological base of such an inquiry. One such
framework that can be instrumental in providing the framework for this
study is that of 'civil' society and 'political' society by Antonio Gramsci.

Gramsci speaks of civil and political society in the context of his
inquiry into the nature of fascism and his theory of the state. Even though
the demarcation between the two is not made overtly anywhere in his
writings, both of them are clearly related to his idea of hegemony. Civil
society is governed by hegemony, or leadership by consent, rather than
force, - and, by extension one may relate it to customs and traditions
which govern the informal structures of society, as against its formal ones.
Formal structures are those governed by the rule of law, and a strong
element of coercion is present in their administration, - even though
coeperation works best only when a social group aspiring to power has
already established its hegemonic role. The state, therefore, is the ultimate
political society, and 'state/political society is contrasted to civil society as
moments of the superstructure' (Hoare and Smith 1996:208). The nation,
which is the emotional equivalent of the state, epitomises the hegemonic
and coercive roles of an institution, whereas institutions like the family
and community, and to some extent even, class, may be viewed within the
ambit of civil society. Each of the units is a constituent of the other, they
mediate on one another, and are finally responsible for the construction,
creation and sustenance of the nation-state which draws its ideology from
all of them. Therefore, an attempt to study the construction of the nation and questions of national identity in the novels of the 1980s inevitably includes a study of family, gender, class, community and political and historical concerns.

1.3.1. The Novel and the Nation

In a significant essay, ‘The Anxiety of Indianness’, Meenakshi Mukherjee has pointed out that ‘the novel as a genre has traditionally been implicated in the construction and consolidation of the idea of a nation’, adding that ‘the novel in English has ... been visibly concerned with ... defining a national identity’ (Mukherjee 2000:173-174). Even though the concept of the nation has been problematised following the work of Benedict Anderson (1993), who views it as an ‘imagined community’, Aijaz Ahmed (1994) for whom the valorising of the nation in the orient is a postcolonial relic and the subaltern historian Partha Chaterjee (1993) who regards both nation and its corollary, nationalism, as ‘derivative’ discourses, it cannot be forgotten that it is these two related ideas that have been of immense value in the early stages of decolonisation, when they served as the main impetus to colonised countries in their respective freedom struggles; and which prompts Frantz Fanon to look upon nationalism as ‘the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere
of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence …' (Ashcroft 1995:155). The idea of the nation, thus, becomes even more relevant in the context of novels – like the Indian English novels of the 1980s – which consciously set out to retrieve the history of colonisation, decolonisation and the struggles towards nationhood of India, through an interface between the personal histories of its protagonists and important moments of political/social history in the making of the nation. Thus, the narrator of The Great Indian Novel confesses

This is the story of the India I know, with its biases, selections, omissions, distortions, all mine ... Every Indian must forever carry with him, in his head and heart, his own history of India

(Tharoor 1989:373)

The subjectivity inherent in this notion of the Indian nation finds an echo in the works of Rushdie, Sealy, Gita Mehta and the other novelists of the decade; and what is more significant and to the point, it points to a pluralistic vision which subsumes within itself the mind-boggling heterogeneity of India. As Tharoor himself says in an essay, 'Unity, Diversity and Other Contradictions'

'... the singular thing about India was that you could only speak of it in the plural. This pluralism emerged from the very nature of the country; it was made inevitably by India’s geography and reaffirmed by its history.'
There was simply too much of both to permit a single, exclusionist nationalism.

(Tharoor 1997:51)

So, though Meenakshi Mukherjee critiques the Indian English novel as being inevitably 'pan-Indian', the concept of 'Indianness' that emerges, for all its homogeneity and uniformity, is also inscribed by the pluralities that inhere in it, and the novels make a strong case for according these pluralities primacy within the definitions of the concept of Indianness. The uniformity of portrayal may be viewed as the result of the class-bonding of the novelists, all of whom belong to the less than two percent of English-speaking, English-educated, urban-centred, upper-class elites, whose unitary vision of India, for a long time was identical with the India envisaged by Jawaharlal Nehru. The fissures and gaps that break this unitariness emerge from the hegemonies created by structures of family and community.

1.3.2. 'The Anxiety of Indianness'

Amongst the commonest anxieties of the English writer in India has been his/her sense of alienation from the 'masses' of the nation by virtue of class, education and language, and the suspicion with which
his/her work is viewed as being far removed from the 'actual' and the 'real' concerns of Indian society. Thus, in the words of Svati Joshi:

The literary productions of the urban elite writers display the anxieties of fragmented subjectivities, a sense of cultural displacement or unbelonging, a search for an identity in the usable culture or tradition, but little engagement with the social and ideological issues pressing upon their own situation.

(Joshi 1991:24)

The work of the Indian English writer, in India, therefore, continues to be suspect, in spite of the hype and recognition it has garnered in the international arena; this has resulted in a conscious and deliberate attempt on the part of the writers to prove their 'Indian' antecedents by focussing upon ethnically recognisable themes and subjects which seek to replicate an image of India that has been nurtured by the urban elites. Ironically, this vision is also viewed as flawed, and because of the heavy stereotyping and 'received' notions that it perpetuates, it ends up catering more to the same international audience rather than establishing the roots of the Indian writer. So, in terms of language, it may lead to the gross over-Indianisms of Mulk Raj Anand or Khushwant Singh; in terms of content it may result in the loaded, elaborate descriptions, complete with glossary and annotations in the manner of Raja Rao. As Meenakshi Mukherjee points
out, the Indian English writer carries 'the larger burden of culture, tradition and civilisation' (Mukherjee 2000:168). And

when it comes to English fiction originating in our own country, not only does the issue of Indianness become a favourite essentialising obsession in academic writing and the book review circuit, the writers themselves do not seem affected by it, the complicating factor being that English is not just any language – it was the language of the colonial rulers and continues even now to be the language of power and privilege.'

( ibedum:168)

The homogenisation she speaks of is also viewed by both her and Aijaz Ahmed (1994) as a result of global marketing forces which demand a unitary, singular vision of the nation, since all regional and local discourses are dismissed by these forces as 'minor and forgettable'


Further, this concern for being perceived as Indian – and hence authentic, genuine and truly representative of a pan-Indian sensibility, - is what leads to vociferously defensive positions and to highly contentious claims on behalf of the Indian English writer vis-à-vis the bhasha writers, typified in the following outburst of Rushdie

the prose writing – both fiction and non-fiction created in this period by Indian writers working in English, is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than what has been produced in the 16 'official' languages of India – the so-called 'vernacular' languages during the same time; and, indeed, this new, and still
burgeoning 'Indo-Anglian' literature represents the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books.

(Rushdie and West 1997:x)

The last statement, in its exaggeration and uncritical, unevaluated rhetoric mimics Macaulay's 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia' (Young 1952:722)

'It is within these parameters of pan-Indianness/plurality, anxiety/confidence, stereotyping/actualising that this work attempts to analyse the Indian English novel of the 1980s. Inevitably, postcolonial and, because of the experimental nature of some of the novels discussed, postmodernist concerns come to the forefront in the analysis of, especially political and historical concerns. The significance of the sizable oeuvre in the genre of the novel (as against its paucity in the field of poetry) demands a negotiating stance between a total rejection of it as elitist and peripheral and an over-valorising of it in Rushdian terms. Before embarking on a study of some of these aspects, a brief look at the body of work itself may well be in place.

1.4.1. The Indian English Novel in the 1980s

Suddenly, since the 1980s there has been a bursting forth of Indian novels like myriad flowers on a laburnum tree. In this significant decade, a gorgeous
collection of several magnificent Indian novels seems to have garnered, almost overnight.

(Kirpal 1990 (b):xiii-xiv)

The excessively celebratory tone of this acclaim of the 'new' Indian English novel may now have been partially muted in the light of the multiple questions about its elitism, alienation and readership. But, the fact remains that *Midnight’s Children* did spawn a whole new generation of novelists in whose work the liberating touch of Rushdie as Makarand Paranjpe (1997) calls it is all too obvious, in their post-modern, fragmentary and self-reflexive narratives. What is even more is that many of the novelists are 'midnight’s children' themselves, i.e. they are the children of post-independence India and they have grown up in the years which marked the transition from Nehruvian idealism and socialism to the demoralised cynicism of the post Emergency era. So, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Allan Sealy, Shashi Tharoor, Firdaus Kang and Nina Sibal, whose first works appeared in the afterglow of *Midnight’s Children*, are all associated with it in terms of their post-colonial vision. their location in pre- and post-independence history of the nation and postmodernist techniques. Among those who have withstood the Rushdie-effect are novelists like Partap Sharma, and older, more established writers like Raja Rao, Khushwant Singh, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai among
others. However, bridging the gap between the two groups is the common concern in the fiction of the 1980s with politics and history, which seems to cut across the lines of the traditional and the experimental. This decade also saw the proliferation of works by women, with or without a feminist sensibility: apart from the ones mentioned above, Shashi Deshpande, Ruth Prawar Jhabwala, Geetha Hariharan, Namita Gokhale and the expatriates like Uma Parmeshwaran and Bharti Mukherjee. In terms of quantity, the bulk of this writing is truly impressive; an important aspect that Ganesh Devy (Bharucha and Sarang 1994:13) points out is that most of this fiction was published in the later half of the decade, which, in a way, diffuses the perception that this sudden spurt on fiction writing is a direct result of Rushdie’s novel. Devy goes on to indicate six social factors which may be far more relevant: the political alertness and linguistic articulateness of minority cultures in Britain, the glamour of the royal family in England coupled with Thatcherite politics, the heavy investment in promoting multiculturalism as an ideology in Canada, the feminist literary movement in India, the slow decline of nationalism as a great force in Indian literature, and the rise of the executive/administrator writer as a result of the pro-English globalised vision of Rajiv Gandhi. He also links the expansion of the Indian English novel to its institutionalisation in academy and universities. Thus, for Devy, Indian English fiction is a ‘literature of
social exclusion’ (ibidem:10), and ‘a socially restricted form, with limited linguistic resources and culturally emasculated readership’ (ibidem:18).

Classifications of this body of work highlight the very deep-rooted social/sociological connections it is embedded in. Bharucha and Sarang (1994) in their bibliography divide it into three groups: Sociological fiction, Political novels, Historical/Raj novels, the Expatriate novels/short stories and Feminist fiction; while Indu Sariaya categorises it as the Politico-social, historical-social, quasi-feminist, and fiction dealing with identity crisis. Another significant fact to be noted is that the canonisation of works produced in this decade has already taken place, as shown in the near commonality of the lists compiled by the various critical anthologies produced on the Indian English novel of the 1980s. (Bharucha and Sarang 1994, Singh, 1993, Kirpal, 1990 (b), Bharucha and Nabar, 1998 to name a few), as also from the scholarly and academic work being published in various journals. Till date, however, there have been few extensive, thematic studies of the Indian English novel of the 1980s, notable, T.N. Dhar’s analysis of the history-fiction interface (1999) in the oeuvre of Mulk Raj Anand, Nayantara Sahgai, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor and O.V. Vijayan and Babu Fictions (2001) by Tabish Khair, which takes an exhaustive look at the caste and class dimensions of the Indian English Novel, by invoking the ‘Coolie/Babu’ dichotomy of Indian society.
1.4.2. **Selection Criteria in this Research Project**

The overall aim of this research project is to uncover the structures of civil and political society that underlie the Indian English novel of the 1980s—and to trace the interlinkages between civil systems like family, community, caste and class and the overarching dominant construction of the nation-state. This ‘creation’ of India is, on the one hand, deeply subjective—projecting the individual vision of mainly the first generation of post-independence born novelists—and, on the other, negotiated by the traditional systems of family, community, caste and class, forming, more or less, concentric circles, enlarging from family to community to class to nation.

The sheer bulk of the fiction published in the 1980s makes it impossible to be included within the purview of this study. The starting and the end-points taken, *Midnight’s Children* (1980) and *A Suitable Boy* (1993), happen to be the most hyped novels of this period, and it is rather fortunate that in terms of content, structure, styles and ideology they emerge almost as bipolar opposites: the self-conscious experimentation, irreverence and post-modernity of Rushdie’s work, contrasts effectively with the overt conventionality of Seth’s narrative. The one factor that binds them is the concern they share with the state of post independent India, leading them to excavate and explore family/national history, or; at
least, place family narratives within the colonial/postcolonial historical context. Thus, in *Midnight's Children, The Trotternama* (1988), *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) and *Raj* (1989), family history runs parallel to the history of the nation/community/state; and the narratives frequently prioritise the larger, all-subsuming units. In novels like, *A Fine Family* (1990), *A Suitable Boy, The Shadow Lines* (1988) and *Days of the Turban* (1986), family stories are firmly anchored in major historical events. Even an a-historical work like *English, August* (1988), presents a long, excavatory, passage in which an Englishman comes to India to retrieve his roots; and even otherwise, the very a-historicalness of Madna throws into relief the rootlessness and isolation of small-town ethos from the urban-centric, unitary vision of mainstream history and political ethos.

The other criteria for the selection of novels is that the first/second work of the writers born around 1947 has been taken up for discussion – very often, it is the first work of the concerned writer in his early 30s. Rushdie, Seth, Tharoor, Ghosh and Chatterjee belong to this category; while Das, Sharma and Gita Mehta belong to an earlier generation, who published their first work of fiction either in the late 70s or the 80s. *Raj* and *A Fine Family* fall within the same historical context of the other novels. *Days of the Turban* has been selected as one of the only two novels (the other being Nina Sibal's *Yatra* (1987)) which seek to
address themselves to the terrorist phenomenon in the Punjab – a major problem that India has had to tackle in the post independence era. The selection of Raj may be related to two factors – a novel that gives princely India its own distinct voice, and one which is related to one of the reasons cited by Devy for the proliferation of the novel in the 1980s - the glamour of the royal family in England rubbing off on its counterparts in India, leading to a glamorisation of royal dynasties.

No doubt, some element of randomness in the selection of novels is bound to be there; any selection, in the final analysis, would betray elements of subjectivity – a subjectivity which may also point of the richness of the work available and the difficulty in including even significant novels in the study due to constraints of time and space; thus, for example, even though this project takes an extensive look at community concerns, the novels which deal with the Parsi ethos are overlooked, mainly because a great deal of research work has already been done on them by critics like Nilufer Bharucha. Finally, it needs to be stressed that any work that is analysed or even referred to in the project is viewed as representative – and through it an attempt will be made to reconcile hardcore social systems like the joint family, caste, class, political compulsions and historical reverberations with what Jawaharlal
Nehru has called the ‘idea, the ‘legend’, the ‘myth’, the ‘vision, that India is seen to be.

1.5. An Overview

The social concerns outlined in this chapter have been taken up for discussion in the following manner:

Chapter I – Introduction

This chapter has taken up a discussion of the term ‘social concerns’, which is viewed as a broad, umbrella term, subsuming within it specific issues like poverty, unemployment, the status of women and the like; but, as already mentioned this work seeks to place the term within the larger framework of the ‘civil’ and ‘political’ society formulated by Gramsci. The proposition to be explored in the entire thesis is that the Indian English novel of the 1980s, like its predecessor, is concerned with the construction – theoretical as well as practical – of the nation, and how factors like class, family, community, politics and history mediate on one another; the superstructure of the nation and national identity emerges through the network of these structures, in the light of the problematisation of the concept of the nation itself following the work of Aijaz Ahmed, Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha.
Chapter II – Class Concerns

Class concerns become significant in the context of the Indian English novel in the light of the long-standing nativist criticism of all Indian Writing in English as being elitist and divorced from the ethos of the ‘real’ India. The hegemony of the English-speaking elites, the class created by Macaulay, the ‘Surrogate Englishmen’ (Loomba 1998), has been at the vanguard of social and political affairs in both pre- and post-independence India; it is the ideology of this class which has formed the base of the Indian nation and which has charted its destiny. In this chapter, a look is taken at the ideology of this class, which according to social commentators like Pawan Varma (1998) has failed to provide moral, political and intellectual leadership to the masses. The ‘failure’ of this class is explored in some detail in the light of Edward Said’s perception of the role of the intellectual in society, outlined in Representations of the Intellectual (1994), across three or more generations. An analysis of the lifestyles of the various classes is also undertaken, along with a look at what Paul Machery refers to as the significant silences of the text – in this case the subalterns and the lower classes. At this stage, this study draws upon some of the insights provided by the subaltern studies perspectives.
Chapter III – Family Concerns

From an overview of class concerns, this study moves on to a discussion of the basic unit of society – the family. In keeping with the idea of the nation as a pluralistic concept which subsumes various religious, ethnic and linguistic communities, the model of the nation state is obviously the joint family, - one of the structures of the civil society of India which has been left intact by the twin processes of colonisation and westernisation. The insights of sociologists like M N Srinivas, and the extensive work of A M Shah, Neera Desai, Patricia Oberoi, and others forms the base of the analysis; the patriarchal base which sustains the joint family system is seen as essential to the concept of the nation-state, too; the family, therefore, emerges as the state in microcosm. the focus on the sanctity of the family, the respect for authority, the sacrifice of individual identity, leads to the suppression and oppression of women on various levels; hence a discussion on the primacy of arranged marriages, purdah and other strategies to keep women away from the public domain becomes inevitable. The overall power of patriarchy in creating women patriarchs, who valorise and subscribe to patriarchal ideology, is also explored in the context of the novels.
Chapter IV – Community Concerns I

The next unit of society taken up for analysis is community. Community identity is central to Indian consciousness, and is a highly sensitive, volatile and politicised issue, promoting the state to enshrine and perpetuate the British policy of neutrality and non-interference in religious matters which has found pride of place in the Constitution of India as the policy of secularism. This chapter studies the overall secularist paradigm in which the novels of the 1980s are set and try to explore whether or not there is a subtle privileging of the majority Hindu community. The tradition/modernity binary which Aijaz Ahmed speaks of is traced in the context of the depiction of the Hindu community, with reference to lifestyles, the role of myths and legends, the concept of Dharma, the valorisation of tradition and caste hierarchies.

Chapter V – Community Concerns II

In continuation of the concerns of the majority community, and as a contrast to its depiction, this chapter undertakes a study of the depiction of the minority communities within the framework of secularism and the constitutional rights of the minorities in the Indian nation. Edward Said’s concept of the ‘other’ and Homi Bhabha’s notion of hybridity become extremely useful in this context; the marginalisation of minority communities, the Muslims, the Anglo-Indians, and the Sikhs becomes
particularly relevant. The depiction of the 'double-consciousness' to quote W E B DuBois (1903), leads to a discussion of the questions of dual identity, fragmentation, exile, dislocation and a quest for a homeland. Class considerations, which impinge upon these depictions are also taken into account.

Chapter VI – Political and Historical Concerns

In a weaving together of the various strands explored in the foregoing chapters, this chapter seeks to highlight the idea that the grand concept of the nation results in a macro-depiction of the history of India, with its emphasis on events and personalities, rather than on a study of the complexities and fluidities of the historical process. The canonised version of history is, no doubt, subverted and problematised by the intervention of myths, symbols, low-brow representations in the form of diaries, letters, newspaper reports, oral narrations and a persistent use of the ironic mode in dealing with both history and fiction. But, even this subversion is carried out within the framework of a very emotional commitment of the narrative of the nation, which is accepted in toto. Of course, the plurality of the nation in terms of its community concerns and regional affiliations is taken note of, but the state remains a monolithic construct, within the parameters of which the differences are accepted and
subsumed. Further, the upper class predilections of the narrative remain intact.

This results in a uniform and predictable selection of the historical events depicted in all the novels which try to work out the fiction/history interface on a conscious level. From the advent of colonisation, the Sepoy Mutiny/the first war of Indian independence, the role of the Indian National Congress, particularly Gandhi and Nehru, in the freedom struggle, to the Quit India Movement, the Partition, the dawn of independence, the initial idealism of the Nehruvian era, the rise of Indira Gandhi, the Emergency and the defeat of Indira Gandhi in the general elections of 1977, - these are the historical happenings which are reworked almost through the consensus that they form the most significant peaks of the historical panorama. However, a deeper analysis of the historical concerns reveals that by using postmodernist strategies and magic realism, novelists like Rushdie, Tharoor and Sealy, open up spaces for a revisionist portrayal of predictable historical happenings and allow for a multiplicity of interpretations of what may be considered as mainstream history.

**Chapter VII – Conclusion**

This thesis revolves round the idea that the Indian Novel in English of the 1980s carries forward the essentially ‘nationalist’ agenda of an imaginative construction and sustenance of a modern Indian nation, in
keeping with the dreams and aspirations of the westernised, English-educated, middle classes which have shaped the Indian reality from the pre-independence stage to around thirty-five years after independence. The excavatory nature of the novels which leads to its exploration of the historical background is a result of the concern of sustaining the idea of the nation, revitalising it and warning against the forces of disruption that threaten it. The upper-caste, upper-class, patriarchal ideologies it subscribes to or subverts have been explored in terms of family, gender, community and class. They, too, valorise one single concept of the nation and have created and nurtured various hegemonies that at the same time propagate and disrupt it. One of the results of this depiction is that the issues are portrayed on a macro level, leaving silent spaces as far as the lower castes, classes and women are concerned.

The class based pan-Indian nature of the novels, however, does not prevent them from making a plea for the recognition, acceptance and assimilation of the pluralities and complexities of the Indian situation. in terms of class, community and caste. The narrowness of the vision of the WOGS portrayed indicates that there is a real need to reassess structures and attitudes which have been valorised by their identification with the middle class and to look beyond for alternative visions, alternative priorities which the multiplicity of religions, communities,
languages and ways of life that the richness of India offers. The fact that
the Indian English Novel of the 1980s has attempted to incorporate this
multiplicity in its overall unitarian vision of the nation points to the new
directions it may take in future. One of the areas that this work has
cursorily touched upon, but which has rich scope for analysis is the
contribution of the Indian English novelists to the development of a
variety of Indian English. The question open to exploration is whether
the Indian English approximates to the hybrid language used by Allan
Sealy and Salman Rushdie, or whether it conforms to the 'received'
patterns of English handed down by the colonial regime.