Religion and philosophy constitute the very bedrock on which Indian life is founded. The Indian concept of religion has evolved in the course of thousands of years and is based on the salient values of the Vedic culture. It comprises the four stages (ashramas) of Brahmacharya-ashrama, Grihasthashrama, Vanprasthashrama and Sanyasashrama, pursuing the goals of Artha, Kama, Dharma, Moksha. Satya was accepted as the highest fundamental value of righteous life. Dedication and self-mastery were ancillary to the pursuit of truth. Action without Yajna resulted in unhappy involvement and, therefore, the elimination of the ego was imperative for a spiritual life. Yajna meant sacrificing of untruth and self-indulgence. Tapas meant a process of purifying body and mind for the worship of God, through the sublimating influence of Scriptures. This sort of spiritual discipline would unfailingly ensure the integration of human personality and the realisation of Self.

The law of Karma and Resurrection is a distinctive contribution of Indian philosophy. Karma is not fatalism as is misunderstood by an average Westerner. This principle is founded on the belief that the accumulated merit of actions performed in earlier lives is carried
forward in the account of our next life. Man cannot completely abandon action but he can abandon his involvement in desires and actions to be spared from the consequences. This is much easier preached than practised. In a modern, materialistic, complex world such as ours, this idealistic way of thinking and living very often leads to the confusion of perspectives. A mere observance of certain rites and rituals, traditions and customs would degenerate into hollowness, hypocrisy, mechanical and soulless worship and prayers and sometimes also into blind fatalism, suicidal indifference, listlessness and inertia, criminal otherworldliness, material insufficiency, handicap and abjectness, and masochistic repressions of desires. The average modern Indian hovers between faith and faithlessness owing to the criss-cross currents of ancient Indian traditions and the materialistic modernity. The illiterate cling to the dogmatic creed and the highly educated, especially the foreign-returned, are preyed upon by scepticism and even atheism. This aspect of Indian life should naturally be regarded by the Indo-Anglian novelist as full of absorbing interest in view of the modern complexities of human life caused by the relentless grip of materialism, the spirit of questioning within, the sense of inescapable isolation and doom and the crisis of faith and character.
Indian novelists in English have commented on the nature, need and scope of faith in Indian life. Faithful devotion is an important aspect - just as spiritual knowledge and righteous action are - of the triple-columned super-structure of men's religious life. Faith sublimated by sacrifice becomes an eternal beacon-light to guide the wavering. Khushwant Singh draws a picture of the brave faith of the last warrior Guru, who had sacrificed everything but his sense of self-respect and justice. Even the valiant Sabhrai, in I shall not hear the nightingale, feeling shaken at the grim possibility of sacrificing her son Sher on the altar of faith and justice, struggles to sustain her faith by meditating constantly on Guru Govind Singh. "There was a man. He had lost all his four sons and refused to give in to injustice.... She was a Sikh; so was her son. Why did she ever have any doubts?" Khushwant Singh also depicts the anguish of a soul in doubt in an hour of crisis. Sabhrai's mind is vexed about the suggestion - which is accepted by the other members of her family - that Sher should give the names of his accomplices to the police and get the King's pardon. She doubts whether her faith is lost. In fact, she tells Sher that the Guru wishes that he should not give the names of his friends. This shows how the devout regard duty to be greater than love and how faith fortifies them with a superhuman endurance. Shakuntala Shrinagesh also
expresses the agony of a moribund woman realising the need of faith in life. In *The Little Black Box*, Sarala regrets that she does not have the simple faith of her mother - it would have been her spiritual prop when Death is about to lay his icy hand on her.* "I am a creature with a mind but without a soul; would to God that I had an iota of her faith now!" This reminds us of Marlowe's Faustus and his agonised lament over 'Paradise Lost'. Kamala Markandaya illustrates how a man's faith returns to him under the impact of a dramatic experience. Dandekar, in *A Silence of Desire*, is deterred from smuggling away the silver lampions placed before the tulasi due to his compunctious conscience. When he explains to his daughter Lakshmi that he has tripped over the lampions, she apologises to the tulasi. Dandekar's conscience is relit by this innocent holy sight. "The tree is not God, he whispered, but it is a symbol of God. With shaking hands he trimmed the wicks and lit the tiny flames." K. A. Abbas dramatises the snapping of the thread of faith in the heart of a tender boy. In *Inquilab*, Anwar, fortified with faith that God grants innocent children's prayers promptly, prays to God soulfully in Juma Masjid for his sister Anjum's recovery. That night be goes to bed consoled, to be awakened before dawn to find Anjum dead. He feels that prayers are futile. "As those bitter thoughts came
rushing to his mind, something snapped within him. It was faith.⁵

Kamala Markandaya asserts the faith of the saintly souls that no person’s service would be unwanted by God. In Possession, when Anasuya tells the Swamy that with his family, country and the life he leads, he would be a misfit in the religious environs. The flame of the Swamy’s faith is undimmed “One can never be,” he said, “a misfit in the service of God.”⁶ Khushwant Singh tenderly shows how a true worshipper ultimately rises to the stature of being the worshipped. Sabhrai, in I shall not hear the nightingale, collapses — under the tension of the conflict regarding Sher — never to recover, after instilling into her people a new strength of faith. The wavering Buta Singh says that they should live up to Sabharai’s ideals of truth. Their way of life must be such as hers — guided by the Guru’s words.⁷ Man can invest his life with such a profound significance that his journey would be from mortality to eternity. Markandaya shows how this religious training helps man in tiding over evil temptations in life. Mrs. Peabody, in Possession, apprehends that Val’s growing attraction for the Americans would cause his spiritual degradation, were he to raise his creations above himself. But Anasuya is sure that Val, with his religious background, would never do that.⁸
In India, religion is regarded as the last refuge of the hopeless and hapless who fervently worship God and offer prayers. Rukmani and Nathan, in Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, desires to have more children and, therefore, her mother and Rukmani pray earnestly and long, but Rukmani's fortitude is shaken and she bitterly feels that the Gods had no time to listen to all complaints. The picture of a man lying prostrate before his deity, in repentance or gratefulness, is a touching—but not unusual—scene in India. The narrator, in S. Y. Krishnaswamy's *Kalyani's Husband*, is moved to see Kalyani, who feels humble, because despite her vanity, the goddess has graciously awarded Shekhar as husband to her—prostrate, without any restraint, before the Mother. In S. P. Dhanda's *Surgeon Goes to War*, Diwan, who has emerged triumphant in the epic struggle with Pakistan and has lost Usha and gained Mumtaz, expresses his profound gratitude to the Almighty. In D. Surya Rao's *The Two Visions*, when Jagdish returns to her bosom, Kamala's first thought is her gratefulness to God. The impact of religiousmindedness of the devout even on those who are indifferent to religion is indicated by R. K. Narayan and Chaman Nahal. Raju, in *The Guide*, cannot help regretting how he would not see again his mother sitting before the pictures of God and lost in meditation in the corner reserved for worship. Arun, in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, conjures up a very moving
picture of his father Lala Kanshi Ram's steadfast faith in Lord Krishna. When all things around him seem to be falling apart in the cyclonic weather of post-independence communal holocaust. His daughter Madhu's slaughter shattered Kanshi Ram's psyche. He shuns all social contact but does not give up one thing - his prayer. After the chanting of hymns, he would get engrossed in 'silent' prayer, when Arun, sceptic and bored, witnesses "on his face, like a caravan passing, a whole fleet of emotions". Khushwant Singh stresses one significant spiritual truth: man must pray to God for himself, there can be no proxy in prayers. Sabhrai, in I shall not hear the nightingale, resents Buta Singh's suggestion to engage a professional reader for a complete reading of the Grantha Sahib. She says she would do it on her own.

Most Indians are large-hearted and catholic-minded in affording the maximum liberty to others to follow their own religions. They show universal tolerance and understanding. India absorbs any foreign religion and believes that all religions are equal. The rural folk are generally orthodox and, therefore, they might behave fanatically but, by and large, they tolerantly respect all religions. Indo-English novelists have brought out this Indian sense of regard for all religions. Nayantara Sahgal offers pertinent observations on Hinduism, its
all-absorbing catholicity and yet its permanence, in This Time of Morning. Kailas ruminates about the contr­
raries - or the paradoxes ? - of Hinduism : it has metaphysical depth, but it also has the blots of untou-
chability, ignorance and superstition. India has been the home also of Jews, Christians and Muslims and has let them practise and propagate their respective religions. Sarat Mitra, who is drawn to the new learning, does not even think of conversion. Macaulay had fore­
cast the disappearance of Hinduism, but it is never to be. Hinduism is nourished on subterranean, perennial springs of omnipotent hereditary faith. ".....they, (the Hindus) honoured the gospel of Christ as they had that of the Buddha before him, and remained Hindu."16 Nayantara Sahgal evokes a good image of the naive but devoted pilgrims and their respect for all religions. The narrator, in A Time to be Happy, asks Behari if Behari's mother would like to have a necklace blessed by the Pope of Rome. Behari, with the characteristic religious tolerance of the simple folk, asserts : "In the eyes of God, all faiths are one."17 In Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan, Iqbal asks Bhai Meet Singh whether they like the American missionaries preaching Christianity in their village. The Bhai replies calmly that everyone is allowed to follow his religion.18 It is painful to think how these placid crystal lakes of religious catholicity were dirtied by beastly communalism
at the time of the Partition. Khushwant Singh, again, brings out the religious generosity of the orthodox. Shunno in, *I shall not bear the nightingale*, goes to Hindu temples just as she goes to the Gurudwara. She respects Brahmins and cows as also the Muslim fakirs and gives alms to all beggars, irrespective of their creed or community. 19

Indians are generally tolerant, but politicians and priests ignite the fire of fanaticism in them and then there is no stopping. Mascarenhas explains that all religions are equally good and advocates mutual tolerance and understanding. In *Sorrowing Lies My Land*, when Tab solaces Babush that God may take Vasant and Bagoo to Heaven, Babush asks how they, being Hindus, can go to Heaven. Tab replies that Heaven is not the monopoly of any one religion. 20 Zeenuth Futehally poses the crisis of a broadminded person besieged by fanaticism. In *Zohra*, whenever Zohra cannot echo Bashir's vehement tirades on other religions, he believes that Zohra's Muslimness is diluted. Zohra disowns her Muslimness, if to be a Muslim is necessarily to be fanatic. 21

"The Gita is the treasure-house of philosophic wisdom of Hinduism at its best. The teachings of the Gita have been absorbed into the very fibre of all Hindus - the literate and the illiterate. Anita Desai quotes profusely from the Gita to unfold the churning in Maya's
soul in *Cry, the Peacock*. She shows how the Gita can soothe the anguished souls. To fill the rift between Gautam and her, Maya turns to seek her solace in the Gita from the magnificent words about the *Sthitpragnya*, extolling serenity. Hollow scriptural recitation may breed monotony. The scriptural wisdom, culled from the hundred-petalled soul-flower, must be absorbed in a mood of total surrender and serene receptivity. Anita Desai tries to assert the applicability of the precepts of the Gita. Gautam tells Maya that he has not driven her away from the party but has saved her from its boredom. Maya says that she wants to be with him. He then quotes the famous verse from the Gita, preaching freedom from all attachment, the root of longing, anger, delusion, loss of memory, loss of discrimination and perishing. Maya furiously reacts, saying that she wants love. It is natural to recall Romeo’s retort to Friar Lawrence – "Hang up philosophy, unless philosophy can create a Juliet!"

Anita Desai analyses the sense of isolation and futility in the light of ancient religious wisdom. Monisha, in *Voices in the City*, reflects on how Nirode’s work and failure in life has been influenced by the teaching of the Gita. Nirode has worked without regard for the fruit of action, detachedly; but he is involved with mother and the past and that is the end of peace. She wants to caution her doomed brother to cast away
involvement and 'be totally empty, totally alone'. Anita Desai subtly unfolds how the dispassionateness of a saint is almost akin to resignation, vacuity, indifference to mundane interests - a sort of physical indolence but along with it there should be spiritual vigilance too. Arun Joshi, in The Foreigner, suggests that detachment does not mean running away from action.

Sindhi has started his adolescent life on a note of detachment. He loses much from his fear of getting involved. He has to pay a high price for realising that life means action, detachment from the dross of fear, anger, pride, lust. He analyses his failure thus:

"Detachment at that time had meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it. The gods had set a heavy price to teach me just that." This type of psycho-analytical philosophising is a gift of post-Independence fiction.

R. Prawer Jhabvala shows how difficult it is for the religious to preserve a balance between the spirit of action and that of resignation. The Gita exhorts one to be active, but then the burden of the Hindu religion is to surrender to the Lord's wish. Sarala Devi, in Get Ready for Battle, cannot do anything worthwhile to help the poor people of Bundi Busti. The serene atmosphere on the bank of the river washes out the filth of
frustration from her mind and makes her feel pure, blissful and free. But the regret is - the more she has tried to be free in life, the more she has got involved in the futile strife. 

Nayantara Sahgal too punctuates the philosophy of her characters with the teachings of the Gita, particularly, the doing of the duty without expecting any reward. Trivedi, in Storm in Chandigarh, tells Dubey about the relative philosophy of non-violence and duty. Not to fight because one recoils from bloodshed is cowardice. Men, like Arjun, have to go forward into battle. Mrs. Sahgal also shows how the Gita lesson can be admirably enlarged so as to appeal to all religions and communities by Swamy Satyanand for forging a true and united national front. The Swami, in This Time of Morning, observes that the battle of Kurukshetra symbolises the struggle between good and evil which all Indians have to fight to serve their land. Their religion is no hurdle; only, their faith is a must. Religion should not be a gulf for separating people, but a bridge for uniting them and yet, ironically enough, this ancient, wise, pre-eminently religions sub-continent gave birth to a theocratic nation - Pakistan! B. Rajan quotes Lord Krishna's admonition to Arjuna, towards the end of his The Dark Dancer: Krishnan thinks of it "as a condition to which his life could work, even through the repetitions and frustrations."
He who seeks freedom,
Thrusts fear aside,
Thrusts aside anger,
And puts off desire:

Truly that man is made free for ever...."30 B.

Rajan has performed the artistic miracle of conjuring up the images of the spiritual growth and of the stature of Krishnan.

The foreigner has always been drawn to Hinduism - to commend or to criticise; he could not remain indifferent to it. Indo-Anglian novelists interpret Indian philosophy and religion to foreigners in a manner which reveals a degree of self-confidence and this is a post-Independence feature. Arun Joshi examines the philosophic theory of illusion as held by Hindus from the viewpoint of a foreigner. June, in The Foreigner, remarks in reply to Sindhi's saying that death imparts a new realistic dimension to love that in his - Hindu's - world, everything is illusion. Sindhi clarifies: "Birth and Death are real. They are constants. All else is variable. In the rest you see what you want to see. According to the Hindu mystics there is a reality beyond all this...."31

Raja Rao explains, in The Serpent and the Rope, the philosophy of the concept of duality. He also interprets the symbolism behind the serpent and the rope. Rama tells Madeleine that the world must be either
unreal or real. From the standpoint of illusion one might look at the reality and one's eyes would then be so wrapped up in Maya, Illusion, Serpent, that one would feel for oneself and also the rope to be a serpent. The Guru would point out that it is only a rope and then one would be disillusioned. Raja Rao's predilection for the Vedantic philosophy is quite evident.

The doctrine of *Karma* is one of the most vital points of Hinduism. It accounts for the theory of rebirth and cycle of lives. It links up the past lives with the present one as also the present life with the future ones. It imparts meaning to the chain of events and actions and renders them more acceptable. Nagarajan elucidates the philosophy of *Karma* in *Chronicles of Kedaram*. Koni feels that it was 'the crystallised wisdom of the ages'. This is the core of Hindu philosophy: life beyond life - a series of lives and the law of *Karma* operating all through lends the semblance of justice to our deeds and happiness and which otherwise would often seem to be grossly meaningless and unjust and cruel - 'a tale told by an idiot!'. Shakuntala Shrinagesh expresses all the grimness of the preordained course of life - grooping about in the bog of regret, frustration, fatalism and death. Sarala, in *The Little Black Box*, ruminates on the futility of human struggle against an inescapable pattern ordained for each individual. Raja
Rao expounds the significance of self-realisation, of introspection and of conquest of one's destiny, *Karma*, by surrendering one's actions to God. Rama, in *The Serpent and the Rope*, reflects that Destiny is 'a series of psychic knots', which can be undone by travelling inwards. The going inwards is the true birth of the Brahmin - to stop life and look into it and bathe in his inner Ganges. Then could he become absolved of his sin. "Sin is to think that in acting you are the actor; freedom, that you never could be the doer or enjoyer of an act. In the Ganges of such a life destiny dissolves and you sail down to your own ocean." R. K. Narayan refers to the Indian belief in the working of *Karma* in human life. Raju, in *The Guide*, is arrested on a charge of forgery. Rosie does not sympathise with Raju in his predicament. She chastises him: "I felt all along you were not doing the right things. This is *Karma*. What can we do?" B. Rajan shows, through the prism of modernity, the Indian attitude to the philosophy of *Karma*. Krishnan, in *The Dark Dancer*, defends the position of the British regarding the Partition riots. He says he is not more forgiving than the Medical Officer and his ilk, who need the camouflage of fate. The belief in *Karma* is every Indian's instinct as well as excuse. Our belief in fate is often tainted either by dejected indifference or aversion to change. The narrator, in Nayantara
Sahgal’s *A Time to be Happy*, explains to McIvor how a forthright sensuality exists side by side with a stark and stoic renunciation in Indian life. McIvor remarks that this getting the most of life does not accord well with the Indian fatalistic approach of *karma*. The narrator elucidates that *karma* merely means living your life and doing your duty and that the past, present and future lives are all interlinked. Veena Paintal’s *Serenity in Storm* presents naively the traditional picture of woman seeking her shelter in Providence. Roshni has to sacrifice her love for Deepak in the interest of her father’s life. She seeks the age-old solace of *karma* and surrenders her will at the feet of Rama, because duty of *karma* was the sum-total of perfection in life. Muthu, in Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner*, and the Chacha, in Ved Mehta’s *Delinquent Chacha*, Naga-bhushanam, in D. Surya Rao’s *The Two Visions*, and Thakur Singh in Mulk Raj Anand’s *The Road*, also firmly believe in and assert the all-important role of *karma* in man’s life. They hold that man is only the instrument, the will is the Lord’s. This shows how an average Indian’s mind is deeply coloured by traditional religions and philosophical thought.

R. K. Narayan employs his subtle irony to indicate that even the educated try to explain away anything beyond their ken with the help of the doctrine of *karma*. In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, when Sriram’s granny comes
back to life, the Doctor is baffled and apologetic and admits that miracle is enough to make one believe in soul, *Karma* and all that. Mulk Raj Anand makes his pretentious priest expound the philosophy of *Karma*. The priest in *The Road*, says that the untouchables 'were condemned by their *Karma* to work out their doom' in dirt. He suggests a purificatory ceremony which Thakur Singh resents but cannot escape from. The priest says: "Always they will remain tainted by their past deed, but you are twice-born...." The concept of *Karma* is sometimes misused for excusing one's weaknesses, failures, blunders and sins.

The doctrine of the cycle of resurrection is another aspect of the doctrine of *Karma*. 'Here and now' is not everything. Death is not the end of life, but the beginning of another. This life is one arrested stage in the perennial flux of Time. This rationalises the concept of sin, suffering, penitence, redemption. Undeserved happiness and unhappiness can only be accounted for with the help of this doctrine of Hinduism which has gone to the very roots of the mental and spiritual make-up of the majority of Hindus. Anita Desai refers to the doctrine of resurrection. Gautam, in *Cry, the Peacock*, wonders at Maya's conception of life as one brief episode. He also wonders how Maya, a Brahmin, can hold such an Occidental view, because the traditional Hindu view is that the spark of life sheds a constant glow. To be
tethered to this cycle would be regarded as fatalism, but its logic cannot be ignored - 'one incarnation acting upon the other' like 'autumn following summer'. This doctrine of rebirth invests life with a new meaning, a new sense of responsibility and challenge. Anita Desai again discusses this problem. Maya asks Gautam the meaning of death, and then, whether he believes in an afterlife, in the permanence of one's soul, and the resurrection of one's body, in different forms: if so, one might die in any manner, for any reason and any number of times, Gautam remarks, a shade caustically, that he does not believe in the Christian theory of damnation. R. K. Narayan gives an oddly humorous twist to the philosophy of Reincarnation. In The Man-eater of Maloudi, some religious-minded persons tell Vasu to leave the procession and Kumar alone because a stampede might cause the deaths of many innocent persons. Vasu cynically retorts that if they really believe in the philosophy of rebirth, they should not feel so deeply perturbed; if one died, one would be reborn. Moreover, he adds, the Melas (e.g. The Kumbha Mela) also contribute towards keeping the population within manageable limits. Vasu's logic is queer but compelling. It is time such mammoth Melas were reassessed and remoulded in the new context of a rapidly changing world.

Every Indian is a born fatalist. At least it used to be so until recently. On account of the spread of
education and the spirit of self-confidence after Independence, unhealthy and blind fatalism is questioned. The Indian attitude now seems to swing between a willing and philosophic acceptance and a passive acceptance of suffering as ordained by the forces of fate. Apart from the tranquil acceptance of God's will by the devout, there are the morbid and the frustrated who wish to lay all their failures at Fate's door. Raju, in R.K. Narayan's *The Guide*, tells Velan that still the time is not ripe for solving his sister's problem. Velan agrees, saying that fate cannot be changed. Raju remarks that they can at least understand it. Later, Raju says, "What must happen, must happen; no power on earth or heaven can change its course..." Markandaya shows how Indian peasants are fatalistic and stoic in facing the miseries of life. Old Granny, in *Nectar in a Sieve*, earns her own livelihood in her miserable but uncomplaining manner. She tells Rukmani that such a life is not unbearable, because one gets used to it. The doomed islanders, in Marath S. Menon's *The Sale of an Island*, the peasant pilgrims, in Bhabani Bhattacharya's short story "Pilgrims in Uniform", The Manager of the hotel Riviera, in R. K. Laxman's *Sorry, No Room*, Sarala and her mother-in-law, in R. Prawer Jhabvala's short-story "The Aliens", and even Dandekar - a fairly educated man in Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire*, indicate that even in today's India, the sky of life is often overcast with
clouds of fatalism as of yore in Greece.

There is an acknowledgement of the forces of fate, but also a determination not to yield — Aamir Ali expresses a modern sentiment nourished in the Gandhian era. In Conflict, the strain of fatalism threads through different situations in Shankar's life and home. His going to Bombay is regarded by his people as ordained by fate. At the end of the novel, Shankar is firm in facing the battle of life. He says, "It is no use crying over spilt milk. What was written in our destiny had to come. I will not repine. I will rebuild." M.V.R. Sarma points out how difficult it is for a modern intellectual to find solace in God, when his fate assumes an adverse colour. Gopalam, in The Stream, is shocked by Swarna's 'cruelty'. He is a fence-sitter and as such neither an atheist nor a theist and cannot possibly reconcile himself to the state of a blind fatalist.

Anita Desai asserts the importance of moral values in life and lands the spiritual values of silence and solitude. Nirode, in Voices in the City, tells Amla that any sane person would try to protect his conscience. One might have success after success or failure after failure — one has to reach the bottom. In the latter case, exposing oneself to complete darkness, complete isolation and agonies would be unbearable and also
pointless. "All this fighting to carve out a destiny for oneself. It's nothing compared to the struggle it is to give up your destiny, to live without one - of either success or sorrow..." This spirit of fatalistic resignation is born of frustration and philosophy - a sort of Existentialist quest for ghostly tranquillity.

Idol-worship holds an important place in Hinduism and it is criticised by others rather severely. Indo-Anglian novelists refer to it from different and new angles. They explain its significance from a broader viewpoint. Bhabani Bhattacharya points out that the meaning one attributes to an idol makes it go beyond the qualities of wood, clay, plaster, marble, stone etc.

In *A Goddess Named Gold*, Mira's Grandma explains that not the face of the actress - who played the role of a goddess - but the power that moves the human beings into a feeling is important. She comments analogically, "We make a Devi with clay, stone and the image gives us a feeling and so it becomes more than its material, it becomes a goddess. We worship what is thus created, not the wood or clay." This is a simple but sound defence of idol-worship. Some persons stop at the images only and fail to read them as symbols. They go crazy over symbolism in literature, but miss or skip it in religion. Kamala Markandaya depicts one form of idolatry viz., the worship of the tulasi by Hindu women. Sarojini, in a
Silence of Desire, worships the tulasi, but Dandekar's attitude to it is one of indifference. He regards it as a plant only but also accepts it as a symbol of God whom no man can visualise without the aid of symbols. He criticises non-Hindus, especially Christian converts, who attack the idolatry of Hindus and denounce cows, snakes, plants as idols but exempt paintings, prints and statues. "And yet he had to concede, it was a fine point, the difference between the reverence due to a symbol and to its actuality; between the tulasi tree and its maker."

Markandaya has portrayed with subtlety the quasirational attitude of the hesitant, malwesternised Hindus to their religion. Manohar Malgonkar presents two extreme viewpoints with regard to the idolatry of Hindus. In A Bend in the Ganges, the tandav state of Shiva symbolises for Aji the dance of destruction of evil and to the sophisticated modern youth Gian, it is 'a relic of some barbaric ritual'....Gian, however, is reminded that it is not the time for harbouring casual thoughts about the family deity who has brought them good. Gian compulsively chants - 'Om namah-Shivay'. It is difficult to deny the charge that our religiousness is based on selfishness and fear, and it is, in the words of C.E.M. Joad, 'the cup-board love' of God.

The traditional rites, rituals and ceremonies should be reassessed and empty and dead ones must be
discarded because ultimately these are meant for man and are only a means, but that should not be done for the sake of novelty or just implementing some reforms. Anita Desai discusses the value of scriptural dictates. Gautam, in *Cry, the Peacock*, tells Maya that the orthodox, who lament the disappearance of traditions, should grasp the real meaning of religion and refrain from performing the empty rites regarding birth, marriage, death. Bhabani Bhattacharya wields his irony against the traditional Hindu belief about funeral rites, in *Music for Mohini*, when Bistu's body cannot be traced after his being drowned in the temple-pond and this makes the performance of the funeral rites impossible and his soul, therefore, would not find rest. Mulk Raj Anand also criticises the mourning ceremonies and suggests the interaction between the old Agakhani religion and the Arya Samaj. Dev Dutt, in *Morning Face*, is impatient with the long drawout ceremonies indulged in by the coppersmith brotherhood. Women gossip and men get drunk and their children suffer. "Our religion has just become ritual and decadence! Custom! And the Arya Samaj is not able to do very much about it!" It is true that abstract principles of religion must be made acceptable to all by rites, rituals and ceremonies, but it should not go to the extent of vulgarisation and subversion of its basic values and concepts. B. K. Karanjia points out how the deadly iron framework of the ceremonial religion provokes young hearts into resentment...
and would some day stifle religion itself. In More of an Indian, Kersasp cautions Piroja and Burjor with asperity how, by their rigidity, they are abetting the aversion of the young to their religion, namely, the Parsi religion. How ironically true that only the zealots kill their religion! To be narrow-minded is to be blasphemous.

S. Menon Marath tries to assess the sacrificial rituals in the light of the awakening of a new social and spiritual conscience - a positively post-Gandhian and post-Independence influence. Marath shows how the truly religious aspire to mortify flesh and conquer senses - a reaction to sacrificial orgies. Chandu Memon, in The Sale of an Island, mortifies his flesh because his faith in the violent sacrifices and rituals is shaken.

Festivals, the props of tradition, evoke fervour and love for religion in men. Padmini Sengupta indicates, in Red Hibiscus, that the Durga Puja festival, full of gaiety and pageantry, is an all-Bengal affair. Even the Dases, who are Brahmos, participate in the celebrations with gusto. Santha Rama Rau suggests how some upper-class persons, reformers and intellectuals in the modern age disapprove of the festivals. In Remember the House, Baba's father says that the celebration of religious festivals "merely perpetuates prejudices and breeds an entirely unjustified sense of self righteousness." This sounds queer but not false. An easy self-righteous-
ness would be far from being religious. This is a characteristically modern, post-Independence sentiment coloured by a growing sense of secularism.

Mulk Raj Anand aptly emphasises that conscience is the very prop of religion and that, in this context, even an orthodox, superstitious creed would be preferable to iconoclastic, immoral, blasphemous modernity. Babu Ram Chand, in Morning Face, procures a job for Harish and ironically asks his wife 'to feed some more brahmins' and pray to her 'false Gods'. She asks him not to mock at her gods before the children. Krishan feels that but for the ritualistic morass in which his mother is enmeshed by the selfish priests, she is more moral than his father, in spite of her superstitions, because of her living conscience. Anand, with his characteristic proletarianism, depicts, in the short story, "The power of Darkness", how the superstitious people of Kamli oppose the developmental plans of the Government owing to their belief that it is an insult to the goddess Kamli, and how the Government is also callous to them. Bhattacharya also describes the blind faith and superstitiousness of the common folk in backward villages in India, in Music for Mohini, because they do not allow Shiva's pond in Behula to be cleaned on account of an aged crocodile supposed to be a devotee of Shiva. R. K. Narayan illustrates the grip of religion on some people. Ravi, in Mr. Sampath, who is unhinged in mind due to frustration in love, is subjected to the
ruthless tyranny of exorcism. Srinivas feels rebellious at first but he then philosophises that nothing whatever matters in the context of the timeless flux of Time. In Manohar Malgonkar’s *Combat of Shadows*, the superstitious semi-aboriginal village folk refuse to inform Winton about the mad elephant, who being an incarnation of Ganesh, cannot be killed. In such a superstitious climate as this, religious devotion would be based on fear instead of love.

Indo-Anglian novelists feel righteously indignant against socio-religious hypocrisies and hoaxes, gullibilities and atrocities. They show how people deceive and cast off deception, when deception becomes an unbearable spiritual burden. They worship their gods out of fear and not love; selfishly and not selflessly to expiate their sins but to commit new ones. Religious vows are reduced to sheer bargains. All this comes in for relentless criticism. Evidently, these novelists have derived benefit from the post-Gandhian religious, social, economic, political and moral revaluations of life. Bhabani Bhattacharya is severe on the goosey Indian people who are easily cheated by any hoax in the name of religion. B-10, in *He Who Rides a Tiger*, suggests to Kalo, a Kamar, to cheat people by playing a fake priest and mint money. Food-supply for the soul was a regular trade and with necessary salesmanship he can make the spirit-starved eat out of his hands. His words are a tirade against the
hypotheses of conventional religion: "The temple is a market and the priest a dealer. People are always ready to pay well or feeding the inner man!" The novelist clearly suggests, later in the same novel, that one caught in a spiritual hoax has no option but to shatter the hoax or be shattered by it. Kalo boldly confesses that he, who is not a Brahmin, has made Shiva's abode and that he does not know any Mantra and Tantra. He knows the sacrifice he has to make. But he has to. Even when he rides the tiger, he knows he has to kill the beast. Bhattacharya exposes the two dark layers in which religion is often shrouded — hypocrisy and deception. He shows that blind forces of orthodoxy might be momentarily defeated, but never fully demolished. Kalo kills the tiger he is riding. Motichand — and also others — cannot do anything to him. Motichand feels that Kalo will surely be punished by God. Perhaps the novelist wants to suggest that the religious hypocrites are incorrigible.

R. Prawer Jhabvala brings out ironically how people read the Gita, but do not translate the sacred precepts into action. Moreover, even when some people contemplate religiously there is a sub-conscious strain of the mundane in their mind. In Get Ready for Battle, Vishnu and his mother Sarala Devi each has a different thing weighing on the mind: he is perturbed over the rumoured divorce of his parents and she is worried about the slum, Bundi Basti. Vishnu starts reading from the Gita and reads and re-reads.
Sarala Devi says sorrowfully: "...you are beautiful as Krishna and strong as Arjuna. But your conduct is that of a little merchant's son." The Gita verses, full of divine wisdom, radiate Hindu homes, but sometimes the philosophic gravity and fruitfulness are lost. Anita Desai's caustic views on religion are expressed through Monisha, an aesthete in the land of Midas, in *Voices in the City*. In New Market, Nonisha sees the merchants worshipping Ganesh and Lakshmi for fortune and wealth. She goes on ruminating on the unaesthetic idols in the selfish, greedy and cut-throat commercial environment.

Huthi Singh hints at the fear - almost Greek - of the gods and their wrath and curses and the religious hypocrisy of some persons. In *Maura*, Panchi brags that she is not afraid of losing what she has, owing to Ritha's entry into the haram. She is then afraid that her audacious words may be mistaken by the gods for a challenge. "In the presence of her friend, the ominous words could stand. One's god was in one's heart." It is true one's religion is an internal concern, but it should not be used as an instrument of self-deception. Kamala Markandaya suggests that mostly people believe that one worships when one lacks something or suffers for something. Dandekar, in *A Silence of Desire*, is perturbed to see Sarojini praying to the tulasi tree so intensely that one may imaging that her very life depends upon that prayer.

Bhabani Bhattacharya severely criticises the
religious hypocrites who wish to reap profit from their religion - the margin between charity and merit. In A Goddess Named Gold, the Sethji asks the Elders to inform the Brahmin about the special puja. He remarks that the amount does not matter, what matters is the devotional feeling. This principle was, of course, in tune with the Sethji's niggardly nature. Nergis Dalal exposes the religious hoax of some fake sadhus who wish to create sensation and deceive the religious-minded simple folk, but in the modern times they are often brought to book. In Minari, a Sadhu promises the sight of a cobra with the jewel which will fetch a lot of money to a person. A small boy exposes the source of light which is not the jewel, but a glow-worm. With the advent of freedom, some persons at least have started thinking independently. This rational approach is opposed to blind worship. But still India is patently the land where deception can flourish in the name of religion.

Indo-Anglian novelists have frankly censured religious fanaticism leading to tyranny. Frenzy and violence in any form when priests and rulers and followers of a religion attempt to establish the superiority of the religion they follow, religious intolerance is the result. This brings in its train armed encounters of different degrees and innocent bloodshed. R. K. Narayan suggests how one religion sometimes becomes an instrument of torture and destruction for another. In Waiting for the
Mahatma, Gandhiji and his followers do not care to know whether the orphaned children from Bengal and Bihar are Muslims or Hindus. Names often are labels for religion and so they give them names of flowers and birds. This is very true. Names proclaim communities and religions and sometimes cause riots. This is a Gandhian sentiment. Nayantara Sahgal observes that the partition riots had nothing to do with religion; they were the outcome of man's primitive frenzy. Harpal, in Storm in Chandigarh, does not think that the partition riots are communal because religion has no part in their dealings with one another. "It was more like the clock turned back to a primitive century. Men had always wanted power over each other's minds and religion had been only one weapon in their hands." It is true that a riot is incited more by frenzy than faith, but this frenzy is the result of a mistaken sense of religion. B. Rajan suggests how the light of duty cannot be extinguished by dark forces of fanaticism and duty must of necessity transcend the communal prejudices and perils. In The Dark Dancer, the M.D. has to admit the cholera-stricken Muslim to the Hospital, at the instance of Krishnan and Kamala, in spite of his own communal prejudices and his genuine apprehension of a communal flare up. Nayantara Sahgal brings out how violence in any form is the violation of the very fundamental principles of religion. Dubey and Saroj, in Storm in Chandigarh, are discussing
how Gyan*s strike over the Chandigarh issue, which has nothing Gandhian about it, breeds insecurity and imperceptible decay. Dubey says: "A monolithic slab of antiquity had survived the ages. A way of life, wrongly called a religion, lay embedded in it. Against it the intellect insignificance." Lambert Mascarenhas indicates that tyranny cannot go well with religion and no amount of church-going can vindicate cruelty. In Sorrowing Lies My Lands, Tab bluntly tells the the Regedor that the Portuguese rulers do not know a thing about the religion. He says that Salazar, who deprives others of their inherent rights of free speech and free discussion, is a tyrant and that he does not think Salazar knows even the rudimentary principles of Christianity. The show of religion is often a clock for hiding barbarity. Mascarenhas, again, has brought out the distinction between bigotry and devoutness. Tab and Ema deeply love each other and yet differ about their religious attitudes. She asks him not to talk of God and religion in a 'contemptuous and familiar manner'. Tab would explain that religion means much more than church-going and saying prayers. He would ask, 'Is n't God everywhere and isn't He with us? So how do you expect me not to be familiar with Him?'

The priestly class generally has been severely dealt with by Indo-Anglian novelists. Their faith in the genuine holy man is unquestionable, as pointed out
by Prof. K. R. Chandrasekharan in respect of Markandaya's holy men, especially the two Swamys in *A Silence of Desire* and *Possession*. This cannot be accepted in case of priests who are on a lower plane. Their avarice, vanity, impudence and lust are relentlessly exposed. Most of them are believed to be mere mercenaries and even addicted to "bribes". R. K. Narayan depicts the impudence of priests as well as their power through their being near to God through Margayya's ambivalent attitude in *The Financial Expert*. He wants to come into quick money and so he squanders money on all the fantastic things as suggested by the old priest, but he does not get money as promised. The young priest's rudeness enrages him. Narayan shows how Margayya's mind is divided between his indignation at the impudence of the priests and his fear at displeasing the priests who live in the proximity of God. Mulk Raj Anand presents an ugly facet of priestly life - double dealing in addition to hypocrisy, flattery and avarice. Suraj Mani, in *The Road*, is what a priest should never be. He causes a split between Thakur Singh and Dhooli Singh and rules. He tells the latter: "God has become Dardyanarayan, become incarnate in these chamars!" Suraj Mani excels himself when he sanctifies 'the phenomena of caste Hindus and outcastes working together' and quotes from the Gita regarding the equality of all - truly, Dhooli Singh is a *Karma-Yogi*. It is remarkable that Anand's hate of
priestly class has not become diluted even in post-Independence times. The hypocritical, lecherous priest in Untouchable is a fit ancestor of Suraj Mani in The Road. Huthi Singh comments on the dwindling status of the priests, some of whom have become hurdles in the path of progress. In Maura, it is announced that one new grand temple will be built in honour of the Prince's birth. Hanut resents this. He knows that the priests are at the root of all that. He decides to curb them, because they have become the 'preserves of tradition', the cobwebs of conventionality. Hanut conveniently forgot that the princes themselves were not less obstructionist in the country's progress than the priests! Malgonkar shows how man attempts to better his socio-religious status by purchasing religious sanction, by 'bribing' the priests. Prince Hiroji, in The Princes, obtains the right of wearing the sacred thread and offering prayers like Caste Hindus from the Gokarn priests by paying for the repairs of the Durga Ghat at Gokarn and by giving costly gifts to the priests, to the chagrin of Abhay, a representative of the New Age. The author's analysis of the different attitudes to religion as shown by the people of old and new generations have scientific dispassionateness. The priestly class is generally believed to be selfish, greedy, not ready to work hard.

Indo-Anglian novelists have commented on inter-community marriages. The difference in religions followed
by the couple would pose problems, but not always. Raja Rao delves into the mysterious interplay of two religions in The Serpent and the Rope, finds a linga from the Durance and installs him, with Madeleine pouring holy water on Shiva's head. She says Rama will make her a Hindu. Rama remarks that the gods have no caste, creed, community, country. They are man's conception. Romen Basu shows how people are reluctant to bring a girl of another religion into their family. Karun's family, in A House Full of People, is a compact family and even with the advancement of education and modernity in the family, he cannot accept Chitra, a Christian girl as Ranjit's wife and the others definitely cannot. Despite one's general indifference to religion, it does have its sway on one's sub-conscious in many cases. B.K. Karanjia makes, as it were, a plea to Parsis to be more accommodative even by way of gratefulness, in matrimonial alliances. Kersasp, in More of an Indian, concedes that the Parsi religion would not have survived, had Hindus not given them asylum. Still Kersasp has been unable to convince himself about allowing inter-marriage. And now both his children - Jamsu and Shirin - are determined to marry out of their community.

Bhattacharya shows how morality and religion - at least to some - are not always separable. Satyajit, in Shadow from Ladakh, asks himself if his defeat is due to
the breach of a basic principle viz. *Brahmacharya*. If
the mind wanders, suppression of the body is harmful -
Gandhiji has said. This indicates that religion should
be practised in thought, speech and action - as the Gita
enjoins us to do.

How closely religion and art are related to each
other is indicated by K. Nagarajan, who brings out a
subtle point that our love for God is deepened by the
artistic environment of the abode of worship. Koni, in
*Chronicles of Kedaram*, remarks how Vasu likes the temple
of Kedareswara better than the god inhabiting it. He
comments on Vasu's analysis: "Kedareswara exploited His
environment. Doubtless a crude way of putting it but he
(Vasu) unwillingly came nearer the truth that God is what
man makes of Him." 89

Khushwant Singh indicates that one of the reasons
why the Communists have been unable to hook the simple
villagers is their lack of religious faith which is
repellent to the rural folk. In *Train to Pakistan*, when
Iqbal talks about removing the princes and the landlords
to give meaning to freedom, Banta Singh asks him whether
he is a communist, because some other comrades also have
talked similarly - 'to drain the sacred pool round the
temple at Tarun Tarun and plant rice in it'. 90 Religion
has deeper roots in the hearts of Indians and atheism
and blasphemy would not be at all welcome to them.
Santha Rama Rau discusses the problem of imparting religious instruction in educational institutions. In Remember the House, Krishnan tells Baba that it would be difficult to teach Indian children about the motherland without teaching them religion which constitutes the back-bone of India's greatest literature, music, art and even politics. He warns that they have to distinguish between religion and superstition and philosophy and mythology. He says, "One must teach them religion without involving oneself in the forms of worship themselves...."

Mulk Raj Anand expresses his 'revolutionary' ideas regarding religion, exploitation and the New Age in The Old Woman and the Cow. Gauri relates how Dr. Mahindra believes that the poverty of the peasants give birth to the triple agency of exploitation - priests, landlords and moneylenders and God is always on their side. "Education," Gauri says, quoting the big Daktar, "education will make us masters of our destiny - not religion." This is a characteristically modern sentiment, questioning the blind worship and asserting human values that can shape man's destiny.

In the post-Independence period the Indo-Anglian novelists appear to be more critical even of their own religion which shows their impartiality. B. Rajan points out the distinction between Islam and Christianity on the one hand and Hinduism on the other. In The Dark Dancer, Krishnan ironically asks if he can have Cynthia in the
next birth. Kruger innocently comments that she cannot be a Brahmin by then. Krishnan thinks that Muslims and Christians are much happier than Hindus. B. K. Karanjia thinks deeply about the Parsi religion and its exclusiveness despite its closeness to Hindu customs and ceremonies. Kersasp, in More of an Indian, tells Ashok that the resemblance between their religions is ritualistic and superficial and that Parsis are true to the core of their ancient religion. He agrees that the reasons why their faith does not welcome converts are not religious but circumstantial. Theirs being a small, dwindling community, each Parsi has not only to be a practitioner of his faith but also its protagonist. This frank discussion is a peculiarly post-Independence gift. A Parsi author, for the first time, examines and interprets his religion dispassionately. Kamala Markandaya indicates the differences in the Eastern and the Western attitudes to religion through the examples of Rukmani and Kenny in Nectar in a Sieve. Kenny tells Rukmani that it is useless to suffer in silence and that there is no grandeur in want or in endurance. Rukmani reflects that it is weak to cry out at every step for help and that man's spirit must help him rise above his misfortunes. "What profit to bewail that which has always been and cannot change?"

The Indo-British encounter resulted in the spread of Christianity, boosted by conversions. Indo-Anglian novel-
ists have surveyed this aspect with interest and excitement and the picture that emerges is fairly impartial. As far as the faith and sincerity of these missionaries are concerned, the novelists do not have to say much against them. But their activities are regarded with distrust and dismay to the extent that even missionary schools and other institutions are regarded with suspicions by many Indians.

There were conversions for different reasons—considerations of material advancement, of love and marriage, of reaction to social boycott—besides the genuine ones.

Kamala Markandaya regards Kenny, the missionary and his benevolent medical and social service in Nectar in a Sieve, in a spirit of admiration. She, however, presents both sides of the shield through the missionary Hicky in Some Inner Fury. Apart from his narrow-minded conversionist frenzy and his white man's burden and his false witness against Govind, Hicky is an unassuming, sincere missionary as is seen in his establishment of the orphanage and school. Premala is struck with it, but Hicky simply says: "We work, and pray, and our prayers never go unanswered."  

The general notion of dislike for missionary schools is reflected in R. K. Narayan's The Guide. Raju refers to his father's dislike for the Albert Mission School. "I don't want to send my boy there; it seems they try to convert our boys into Christians and are all the time insulting our gods."  

Hilda Raj traces the social and religious environment
in India when the missionaries were struggling to convert Indians to their faith. In The House of Ramiah, the missionaries have a moment of despair and think that their efforts are futile. Moreover, the Hindus are suspicious of the Christians, who, they feel, flourish because of the British rule. They are oblivious of how the missionaries have been suffering. This is the view of the missionary activities from the Christian angle. Hilda Raj accounts for the spread of Christianity and the conflict in the mind and life of missionaries born of their encounter with 'heathen and 'pagan' Indian religions. In The House of Ramiah, Jackson's efforts are rewarded when he finds the untouchables, wounded by social boycott, seeking shelter in Christianity for recognition as humans. But converts from other castes are rare. There was something wrong about these conversions, because they primarily appealed to the sense of material progress. However, it was a good antidote to the malaise of untouchability. Fortunately for Hinduism, Gandhiji realised the perils of social injustice and ostracism and endeavoured to solve the problem. Hilda Raj tries to show the interaction between love and religion and that conversion must have the solid foundation of conviction. Jagannathan, in The House of Ramiah, writes to his beloved Thilakam's father, Paul Nayagam, that though an indifferent Hindu he would not like to change his religion. But he wants to escape from a marriage arranged by his parents which he
can do by becoming a Christian. Jagannathan later does sacrifice his religion on the altar of love - how self-contradictory is Jagannathan, or Hilda Raj for that matter? This also indicates the effect of modern revaluation of community - considerations.

Mulk Raj Anand contrasts the sectarian proselytization with the traditional Hindu liberalism in *The Old Woman and the Cow*. Miss Young informs Colonel Mahindra that she wishes to take Gauri to the Ludhiana Mission, but he warns her that he will not brook Gauri's compulsory conversion. Mascarenhas is a frank critic of Christianity and conversions to that faith in Goa. He takes special pains to clear out the cobwebs of the ritualistic, priestly, conversionist fatalism strangling Christianity. He seems to think that unconvincing conversions and pompous rituals had harmed Christianity in Goa. He lays bare the hypocrisy of Portuguese Christianity, bloodied by compulsory, persecuted conversions. Tab, in *Sorrowing Lies My Land*, remarks ironically that they are thankful to the Portuguese for bringing Christianity to them in Goa. They had burnt temples, mosques and many men and women in Goa. Terrorisation and persecution were rampant in the name of religion. "Evangelisation had been used as a cloak for crime and robbery and butchery and murder." Few conversions have a truly spiritual basis. Compulsory propagation and spread of religion would surely result in degeneration. How it is easy for Christians to assure the converts of the Christian
ideal of equality but how difficult it is to really consider
the converts on a par with themselves is shown by Mascarenhas. Ema, in *Sorrowing Lies My Land*, admonishes that she
Laxmi that she is not worthy of marrying Antonio. Laxmi demands why Ema has talked of all being equal in the eyes
of God. "Are we to have one type of Christianity and
practise another? If so, why did you make me a Christian
at all?" R. Prawer Jhabvala shows deftly the inter-
action between the Western and Eastern faith, while depict-
ing the repercussions of the East-West confrontation.
Bhuaji, in *A Backward Place*, has deep faith in God and Judy
echoes her sentiments, but her faith is a vague, easy faith,
because she has inherited a mistrust of the pious. Later,
in Bhaui's company, she acquires Indian religious suscep-
tibilities and reiterates Bhuaji's faith that God provides.
This is the Indian way of conversion. Deep faith, touching
and tender, - and not tempting half-starved people - is
the real weapon of the missionary.

Indo-Anglian writers after Independence interpret
religion broadly and sometimes rather loosely. Their strain
of thinking is patently imbued by a spirit of rational
questioning in the modern age. They resent blind faith and
orthodox rigidity. They often question - and some even
flout - old religious beliefs and practices. Their attitude
is not of patient or tolerant acceptance as in the age before
Independence, but sometimes bold, revolutionary and even
insolently blasphemous. S. Menon Marath dispassionately
presents the case against the mortification of the body in the name of asceticism. In *The Sale of an Island*, Chandu Menon realises that the daily round of life is meaningless and vows to snap the bonds of mundane reality. He tells Samban how one aspires to the purity – uninvolvment – of the sun. Samban retorts that was 'the insufferable conceit of faith' – he resents that the claims of life be fought back under the cloak of religion. "Creation is a mockery then, if salvation can only be attained by its denial."¹⁰⁵ This is an irrefutable piece of reasoning. If denial of self be the goal of religion, why bother about anything – life, self, reality? Religion was rarely attacked in such a ruthless manner as this in pre-Independence fiction. In *Morning Face*, when Krishnan declares that if there is a God, He must be very unkind to make Bakha an untouchable, though Bakha warns him against defying God. Krishnan expresses his terrible disdain at the injustice of the world. "To invoke His wrath, I spit on God."¹⁰⁶ This is a red light to the parents who unwillingly plant atheistic defiance in their children by their religious discord watered by the twin extremes of scepticism and orthodoxy. Kamala Markandaya brings out the sense of revolt of the new generation, sharpened by the spirit of scepticism and frustration. In *A Handful of Rice*, Ravi tells Nalini that Apu is in God’s hands. Nalini remarks that their livelihood too rests in God’s hands. Ravi bursts out that men themselves can shape their career, it is in their own hands to do so.¹⁰⁷ This new spirit is indicative of post-Independence realism and
Apart from the modern spirit of inquiry and scepticism, the Indo-Anglian novel reflects new attitudes to religion. There is a desire to supplant old, parochial and strangling traditions by new, liberal ideas. The new trend is not always towards scepticism, blasphemy and irreligion, but towards modernising and rationalising religion by liberating it from the shackles of rites, rituals, sacrificial libations, mechanical chanting of prayers and routine worship. In a word, the yearning is for humanising the orthodox forces of religion. Anand Lall interprets the new concept of religion as shaped by the modern, enlightened spirit. In The House at Adampur, when Jai asks Dev Raj, who daily and regularly worships God, what his God is, Dev remarks that Jai may not be religious in the accepted orthodox sense. "What you reject or do not acknowledge is the God of your ancestors. But that only means that you are making contact with God in your own way."108 This indicates that even the traditionally religious accept that religion does not merely mean a rigid observance of rites and rituals, but it means doing your duty sincerely and selflessly according to your lights. M.V.R. Sarma also tries to reveal the meaning of religion from the modernist angle, when Gopalam tells Joan, in The Stream, that he believes in some supreme Force, but does not like to follow the blind tenets of religion.109 Bhabani Bhattacharya shows how sometimes conventional morality should give way to a new and revolutionary
interpretation of religion. In *So Many Hungers*, a young destitute girl is reduced to baring her body before alien soldiers for feeding a laneful of destitutes to whom this 'fallen' woman is 'our own mother'. Rahoul, not a convention-bound moron, feels that 'he had glimpsed the sanctity of the human spirit'. This brings to out mind the image of Sonia, in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. She, too, sells her body but sustains her soul; maintains her family and raises even the hero from the morass of sin. This is the triumph of true religion over fake morality.

Bhabani Bhattacharya indicates that old, orthodox, religious beliefs need to be revised and so adjusted to the present age that these would be acceptable. In *Music for Mohini*, Jayadev's mother wants him to remarry, because Mohini is childless. He ridicules belief in the horoscope and wises that Mohini also scoffs at it. He urges Mohini, "Do not bow down to such insult. You are the New India. The old orthodox ways have been our yoke, have enslaved us. Let us be free."

These utterances truly reveal the post-Independence air in India. Gandhiji's bold approach to religion in the new context cannot be underestimated. His prophetic Zeal in vitalising Indian thought, liberated from the shackles of orthodoxy, created a furore and incurred the wrath of the orthodox leadership. An entire generation was nourished on this Gandhian elixir of life. Bhattacharya, through Jaydev, faithfully brings out that spirit of the New Age. Mulk Raj Anand hints at the combat between
tradition and modernity, blind faith versus catholic humanism. Victor, in *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, objects that his views contradict the entire Vedantic philosophy, when Dr. Shankar observes that there is no power transcending man. Shankar suggests that the concept of religion should be revised and enlarged. "At any rate, nowadays one's religion must become more universal and applicable to all". Dr. Shankar represents the trend of the New Age - to rationalise, vitalise and humanise all values of life, even religion.

Thus, Indo-Anglian novelists have dealt with the notable features of Indian religion and philosophy to impart a new dimension to their characters and achieve the artistic miracle of convincing and well-rounded portraits. They appear to have acknowledged the full significance of this aspect in vitally influencing Indian life. References to the inner life of a character as shaped by the ancient religions and philosophic wisdom are an artistic must for understanding and explaining the mysteries of human behaviour and action. These novelists bring out the modern spirit of questioning and scepticism but nevertheless, stress the need for real faith in life and present tender pictures of the innocent in prayers to their gods. They do not miss to mention how this faith often degenerates into fatalism. Sheer, blind fatalism is castigated but, if along with the recognition of the forces of fate there is determined preparedness to face the odds in life, it does not go unnoticed.
If the symbolic sense underlying idol-worship in India is clearly indicated, it is equally clearly stated that the hollow and obsolete rites and rituals, ceremonies and festivals be discarded or remoulded after proper revaluation; e.g., self-immolatory asceticism is not brooked. They show how most Indians, despite their orthodoxy, give the proof of their religious catholicity and magnanimity by respecting all religions. They, however, condemn religious frenzy and fanaticism, bred by priests, rulers, leaders and others by cheaply appealing to the people's sense of superiority of and partiality for their sect or religion. The priestly class comes in for severe and harsh treatment as far as its religious hypocrisies, hoaxes, vanities, injustices and atrocities are concerned and yet the genuinely holy are heartily revered. They frankly express their resentment and indignation against coercive conversions from one faith to another and yet maintain that genuine conversions should not be obstructed. Their penchant for punctuating the conversations of their characters with quotations from the Gita is evident, but, some of them, now and then, seriously attempt to comment on certain philosophical principles in a correct and subtle manner; e.g., Detachment does not mean running away from action, but life means action purged of fear, anger, pride, lust. They comment on the doctrines of Karma and Resurrection and boldly indicate that the popular Western conception of Karma as mere fatalism is delusive. The foreigner may appreciate or censure Hinduism, but he
feels so attracted to it that he can never ignore it. This analytical strain of interpreting and elucidating the principles of religious philosophy is a positive achievement of the post-Independence era.

These Indian writers in English after Independence evince a remarkable degree of self-respect in interpreting the niceties and subtleties of their faith to foreign audiences. They appear to have shed their awareness of the pre-Independence deep-seated sense of inferiority and diffidence. At the same time they are not obsessed by a sense of superiority of their special religio-philosophical contribution to world thought. A Narayan weilds his inimitable irony to expose the occasional oddity of Indian attitude to its own philosophy. Their self-criticism springs from their true scientific and rational attitude to religion and literary art. On the whole, these post-Independence Indo-English novelists interpret religion broadly but sometimes rather loosely. Their attitude, by and large, is one of rational inquiry and dispassionate reassessment; it is not one of meek acceptance as in the previous era, but it is fearless, radical and sometimes even casual or impudent. They are for establishing democratic and humanitarian values to evolve a new socio-religious conscience. There is a genuine desire to be flexible in forging new attitudes to religion to revitalise the orthodox religious values in the context of a future world likely to be more complex than ever before.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 Ibid., p. 203.


7 Khushwant Singh, *I shall not hear the nightingale*, p. 238.

8 Markandaya, *Possession*, p. 159.


19 Khushwant Singh, *I shall not hear the nightingale*, p. 56.


23 Ibid., pp. 128-129.

24 William Shakespeare; *Romeo and Juliet*, The Warwick Shakespeare, p. 56.


29 Sahgal, *This Time of Morning*, p. 182.


31 Arun Joshi, *The Foreigner*, p. 171.


34 Shakuntala Shrinagesh, *The Little Black Box*, p. 92.


37 B. Rajan, *The Dark Dancer*, p. 221.


43 Ibid., p. 194.

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100 Ibid., p. 225.

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103 Ibid., p. 133.


