Socio-economic classes, like castes, hold a very vital place in India. In an under-developed but steadily developing country like India, the rigid and uncompromising stratification of the classes is bound to change under the impact of the evolution of a new socio-economic order consequent upon Independence. One striking feature of these classes in India is that they were largely based on caste distinctions and considerations, especially during pre-Independence times, but the emergence of Gandhiji on the national horizon as the most potent Indian leader paved the way for the further socialist pattern of society and consequently, in the post-Independence India, the complexion of the entire class-structure underwent a radical and comprehensive change. The neglected bottom-dogs received the serious and earnest attention of the new democratic government and efforts were made to narrow down the margin between the haves and havenots. The intellectual, idealistic aristocracy of freedom-fighters and nationalistic social servants came to the forefront. This meant the prominence, to a great extent, of the middle class. Preaching and practising Gandhian principles and ideals invested
social servants with a social status all their own. Since the mid-fifties, however, the irrepressible craze for the Westernized - at first Anglicized and then Americanised - way of life has given rise to a new type of materialistic aristocracy of 'hollowmen'. These and such other Indian socio-economic classes could not but be of genuine interest to the author of such a deeply-involved socio-literary form as the novel.

Indo-Anglian novelists observe with deep concern and dismay the general conditions of the Indian peasant's life. He is proverbially poor and suffering is the badge of his tribe. He is superstitious, fatalistic and tradition-bound. He rashly squanders money on marriages and funerals alike, even by incurring huge debts which virtually mean the slavery of a lifetime. Over and above the vagaries of the rain god, his suffering is aggravated by the forces of exploitation, such as, the landlord, the moneylender, the village priest, the trader, the lawyer and the Government official. In the midst of all these woes, he stands boldly like a picture of endurance, but when he has to face evacuation his spirit is shattered and he feels crushed. Indo-Anglian novelists have depicted the life of the peasant with true understanding and sympathy.

No Indo-Anglian novelist can afford to ignore the
Indian peasantry, but Mulk Raj Anand is the pronounced pal of the proletariat. He presents the sufferings of peasants with righteous indignation, but his extreme preoccupation with it often impairs his objectivity. This didactic tone is noticed even in *The Old Woman and the Cow*. Gouri acquaints Refique Chacha and Panchi with Dr. Mahindra’s progressive and sympathetic views about the Indian peasantry. She quotes his words:

"Where there is poverty, there is a money-lender, a priest and a landlord - and God is always on their side."

Lal, in *The Village* by Anand, also finds the rustic a victim of numerous agencies of exploitation. There could be a change but - as Dr. Mahindra regrets - the peasant fawns on the Khaddar-clad men. Add to these miseries, the drought, the gambling, the borrowing, the squabbling and squandering and to cap all, the drinking and the wife-beating! Dr. Mahindra traces the remedy to education alone! So does Lalu in *The Village* and rebels against the village mores. Thus, Anand is consistently advocating modernity and spread of education in pre-Independence as well as post-Independence times. This is almost a typical picture of the Indian peasantry except for political overtones.

Kamala Markandaya shows that poverty is the badge
of the tribe of peasants and, therefore, a growing family also means growing problems. Rukmani, in *Nectar in a Sieve*, says that they have to go short of many things. Milk, curds and butter are items of luxury. It is consoling to know that they do not have to go hungry like other less fortunate peasant families. Anand Lall, in *The House at Adampur*, shows the plight of the peasants at Harbanspura, a representative Indian village, which is gripped in the relentless feudal structure and the old people dominating the panchayat thought that they are in league with God or the Guru and that the rain comes only because of them. Pritam Singh relates the story of their woes: "So...you see, brothers, on our head is always an endless crisis: unploughed land, less grained, less income with which to pay the land tax, the attachment of our farms, and, of course, less food to eat. Where does it all stop?" Markandaya also underlines the inevitable state of poverty the Indian peasant is perpetually subjected to. A foreigner simply cannot understand it and gets exasperated at it. Kenny, in *Nectar in a Sieve*, tells Rukmani how he can bear the folly and the poverty of the peasant class with difficulty. He adds he could only take the peasants 'in small doses'.

The peasant loves his land more dearly than his own life. Separation from it is another death. The failure of rains is a great tragedy, indeed. It might mean no
crops, no money, inability to pay the rent of the land, evacuation. Nathan, in Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, is in a tight corner. Poverty and famine are his companions, when there are no rains. He is prepared to sell whatever he can: "...but if the land is gone our livelihood is gone, and we must thenceforth wander like jackals."  

Anand brings out that a peasant's life is insecure and uncertain, for it largely depends on the mercy of rains and the drought brings about all-round degradation. In *The Old Woman and the Cow*, Rafique Chacha describes the misery of drought realistically and exhorts Panchi not to give up faith because a drought is not a personal crisis. Starvation has dehumanized people who would sell even their daughter. The damage to land is great but that, to men, was greater which means the loss of courage and manhood itself.  

Markandaya shows how the ravages of drought sap away the joy and energy of a youthful peasant. Nathan, in *Nectar in a Sieve*, comes to brood over all this. Then come the rains, mockingly, ironically. The peasant's lot is a sad one. His hard work cannot improve it. The failure of rains might ruin him. Nathan is a peasant representative and his woes are, more or less, typical of his class. "Fear constant companion of the peasant. Hunger, ever at hand to jog his elbow should he relax. Despair, ready to engulf him, should be falter. Fear,
fear of the dark future; fear of the sharpness of hunger; fear of the blankness of death." Anand also shows in The Old Woman and the Cow, how peasants, wrapped in lethargic tedium, are resigned to their fate, when one drought succeeds another with clock-like, merciless monotonv. Panchi feels revolted about the drought and abuses the Brahmins foretelling lies about KARMA. He thinks that the Congress government is not doing the job well, because big schemes for water and power supply would mean contractors getting richer and increasing crops of bribes, and, in the meantime, there would also be many more mouths to feed - that was Karma! Panchi is harsh on the exploiter class who does not directly kill the peasants but sucks their life-blood up slowly, invisibly. Markandaya indicates that the peasant has to depend far too much on Nature's moods. Excessive rains and droughts both harass him. Nathan and Rukmani, in Nectar in a Sieve, have their own share of troubles. They see the rising waters with deep concern. Nathan remarks that the rains have destroyed their work and that they will have little food that year.

Jhabvala shatters the hypocritically romantic picture of culture-enthusiasts' conception of the Indian village life. Prof. Hoch, in To Whom She Will, suggests that the cultural pageant must show the beauty of village life -
the village women at the well, the grace of their movements, their simple dignity and their rhythmic gait. Dr. Mukherji hesitantly remarks that they must also show 'village women in labour with the female scavenger standing by with a piece of glass to cut the navel cord.'

The contrast between the romantic and the realistic attitudes to the peasant is well brought out here. Khushwant Singh shows how affluent city-dwellers treat poor peasants rudely and raise a wall of mutual prejudice between them. In *Train to Pakistan*, the leader - almost a boy - of the band of four Sikhs, who comes to Mano Majra to ignite communal hatred, speaks to Meet Singh and the lambardar with shocking impudence. The villagers note that he is one of those educated city-dwellers who, as they know, always adopt that tough, superior tone, while talking to poor, simple and unlettered peasants whose age or status does not deter them from their supercilious vociferations. Administrators in India, as Markandaya shows, are held in awe and esteem and are equated with Mai-Baap - mother and father - especially by the peasant and the lowly, who are gentle and pliable: resigned to anything and fatalistic enough to endure anything. In Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire*, Chari, when approached by Dandekar to take steps against the Swamy, thinks all this about peasants who, when evacuated, would leave the land in a defeated, craven way.
Anand shows that farmers could ill afford to be involved in forced labour - begar - in honour of victor's hunting orgies in *Private Life of an Indian Prince*. They resent it. The disgruntled elements like revengeful relatives of the native rulers and the communist guerillas take them within their fold.\(^{14}\) Buta, in the same novel, also illustrates the ugly situation caused by begar, which was like a great plague in a good many of the former native states whose rulers became highly unpopular with the peasantry. This reminds one of how the peasant Sukhua, in Anand's pre-independence novel, *The Sword and the Sickle*, has his day like the proverbial dog and attacks his landlord, shouting, "The old days have gone.....The old days have gone."\(^{15}\) This proves that Anand's views on forced labour, indicative of the compassion for the peasant, are consistent.

Markandaya describes how the impoverished peasant comes to town, thinking that suitable jobs would be available there merely for the asking. A mirage of job-hunt is the last straw on the camel's back. Ravi, in *A Handful of Rice*, has gloriously dreamed of settling like a prince in a city, but he is quite disillusioned owing to compulsory fasting and running hither and thither like a criminal afraid of the police and bearing the pin-pricks of the haughty rich.\(^{16}\)
Jhabvala brings out the spiritual quality of the Indian peasant in *A Backward Place*. Clarissa shows the sketch of an old peasant to Etta and comments on the Indian peasant who, in her opinion, resembles the Russian peasant, as delineated by Tolstoy, in respect of 'strength and earthiness'. She, however, emphasises the difference of culture. "Only of course the Indian peasant has a sort of spiritual quality about him, a divine yearning which raises him — don't you feel that? — above his own earthiness."\(^{17}\)

Indo-Anglian novelists analyse the master-servant relationship. Domestic servants become the confidants of their masters during their long and trusted service by their obedience and efficiency. The insolent mentality of the master is contrasted with the sad lot of the menial. The Indo-Anglian novelist does not leave anyone in doubt as to with whom his sympathy lies. Raja Rao comments on servants and obedience. Zoubie, in *The Serpent and the Rope*, has a supreme gift of humour and she can make people work. Even Marie, who has been sad, lazy and irritable after Lezo's departure, works like a willing and happy slave. Rama remarks: "Servants like to obey those who really know what is right and what is wrong."\(^{18}\) Jhabvala points out how good and faithful domestic servants often enter the innermost recesses of their employer's heart.
Sometimes, they offer greater understanding and sympathy than even relatives. Kusum, in Get Ready for Battle, has no secrets from her servant, with whom she would discuss anything. She feels that he is very understanding and has thorough grasp of life’s complex problems.\(^\text{19}\)

Jhabvala artistically juxtaposes the aristocratic, snobbish high-brow mentality with the pathetic lot of the poor servants slaving for them. In A Backward Place, Mrs. Kaul, a superficial, wealthy lady, has pretensions to culture and luck to get a high honorary position. She wants to modify and raise culture but is unfeeling and blind to her own servants suffering in their own hells of existence.\(^\text{20}\) Jhabvala kills two birds with one stone inasmuch as she conveys her disapproval of the hypocritical ways of the aristocrat and also expresses her regard for the common man.

Khushwant Singh indirectly expresses his sympathy for the domestic servant in I shall not hear the nightingale. Champak complains against Mundoo to Sher Singh, indicating the crude appetite of her carnal cravings. Sher says that the problem of domestic servants is piteous. They are overworked, underpaid, underfed and underclothed, abused and beaten and disgracefully dismissed at will.\(^\text{21}\) Jhabvala too shows her sympathy for servants. In Get Ready for Battle, Sarala Devi criticises her son Vishnu’s ways but his wife Mala does not respond. Mala espies the servants peeping at this domestic melodrama and rebukes
servants them harshly. To Sarla, this is unthinkable. Nearly a decade's separation from affluent life has made her forget the usual harshness shown to servants in such opulent circles. She leaves pained. She says, "You must not shout at poor people. You must always respect their feelings."  
Nayantara Sahgal shows her intense sympathy for menials with utmost economy and simplicity but with great effect. In *A Time to be Happy*, Roshan Masi is a wealth-worshipper. She addresses her servant Ramdin as 'Are Kambakht' almost as a rule. The narrator says, "As a youngster I thought his name was 'Are Kambakht'".

Poverty is one of the major thematic concerns of the Indian novel and naturally, therefore, the Indo-Anglian novel reflects the problems of the lower classes in detail. It is difficult for the lowly to maintain self-respect but the poor generally help each other. Famine means starvation and destitution for them and yet in the midst of privation and deprivation they sometimes display nobility of behaviour and dignity in suffering. They have to fight all sorts of social injustice and cruelty and sometimes this leaves deep scars on their souls which cry for revenge. They sometimes betray their low breeding, when they wreak their revenge against persons of the upper class despicably. In pre-Independence times, it was all a tale of woes, but now, after Independence their class-awareness has united them to rebel and hit back. The Indian novelist in English
observes their struggles with sympathy and interest.

Malgonkar shows how the poor find it extremely difficult to maintain their self-respect. Winton, in *Combat of Shadows*, regards his coolies as slaves. These coolies do not forget to hit back, when the rare opportunity comes, if it ever does at all. Gauri plays the informant to compel Winton to witness his wife in the arms of Eddie."\(^{24}\) Bhattacharya indicates how the poor are generally more sympathetic and helpful to the poor than the rich. In *A Goddess Named Gold*, the poor Meera wanted money for the uplift of her fellow-beings. The Seth wants it to increase his personal property. Both want the new wealth but their objectives are quite different."\(^{25}\) Despite her aristocratic sophistication, Nayantara Sahgal offers her unstinted sympathy to the simple poor folk in search of God. She does not look down upon their pilgrimages fraught with discomforts and dangers and their idolatry which is rather out of religious fashion now in secular India. The narrator, in *A Time to be Happy*, refers tenderly to Bihari's mother's disarming worship of God, "How many there must be like her, I thought, not the priests and the pandits, but the lowly and the unlettered, yearning toward God, clinging vine-like to their faith and sustained by it through all their troubles."\(^{26}\)

Malgonkar suggests that breeding often tells. Jugal Kishore, in *Combat of Shadows*, convinces Winton about his
power to get all the labourers to strike work. Winton feels revolted at the news that Jugal Kishore is to contest a by-election to the Assembly, backed by all the Labour Unions, supported by the Congress, because Jugal Kishore is crooked, indecent, corrupt and immoral. He had offered even his niece Gauri to Winton as his mistress. Winton himself may not be morally irreproachable, but sometimes, these low class men are really low. Kanak Chand, in Malgonkar's *The Princes*, also reminds us of the same thing. Malgonkar shows that a phenomenal rise from a coolie's position to a ministership is a very heady experience and if there is no corresponding moral growth, one might indulge in an orgy of selfish piling of wealth. Jugal Kishore as Minister of Plantations accepts a thousand rupees per mensem as hush-money. To resent Winton's resentment of Jugal Kishore, Sudden caustically remarks that they do not grow morals on their plantations. Upstarts coming into power cannot resist bribes - perhaps that is one of the chief dangers before a new, bureaucracy-based democracy. Also, in *The Princes*, Kanak Chand, as a minister, tauntingly says that the person who wielded the whip - i.e. Hiroji - is no more. Kanak is conceited and impudent, taking his revenge like a sheep. Abhay, true to his father, brings his crop down on Kanak and avenges his father.

Bhattacharya brings out how starvation means the debasement of self and this is why we find some poor
people growing increasingly selfish as the degree of hunger rises. Onu, in *So Many Hungers*, is a good boy, always ready to share his gifts with others. He is not at all selfish and yet 'hunger has debased his warm and innocent spirit'. Hunger has made him a hoarder. Hunger has also made Samarendra a hoarder, the hunger of more and more money, though it means more and more deaths of his unfortunate compatriots. Bhattacharya shows the overall effect of famine on the destitute, in its physical and moral aspects. It would mean that death would claim two to three millions of poor people. A physically shattered race would grow up in the ninety thousand villages of Bengal. Vastly greater still would be the inner degradation. In *So Many Hungers*, Rahoul remembers the ugly stories of 'deadened emotions'. A mother was reported to have kept on eating her food with her dying baby in her lap. The author's sympathy is expressed thus: "It was too much to hope that the burning experience would leave no scars on the spirit." Bhattacharya explains the psychological phenomenon of conversion of a destitute into a criminal. In *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Kalo, tortured by hunger, steals bananas and is arrested. The magistrate bluntly asks him why he or even his daughter has to live. The irony is devastating and the undercurrent of sympathy quite warm.

Bhattacharya shows how a crisis sometimes arouses in the poor a supreme sense of nobility in the midst of
degradation of human spirit. In *So Many Hungers*, the whole of Bengal is down with famine and one could afford to part with life but not with figs obtained at the risk of life itself, yet Onu shares his with Robi, remembering that Robi, too, is a bread-winner of his family. This is a moment of rare self-sacrifice, raising humanity in its own eyes. Unappeased-hunger is the worst enemy of man. Bhattacharya illustrates the stark realism of life. Famine-struck destitutes who flock to Calcutta, egged on by a deceiving hope, find life more difficult. Onu is driven to the point of begging or licking traces of food. One big boy, who is licking one side of a jam-tin snatched from a dog, generously asks Onu to lick the other side. This is indeed a great triumph over self. Bhattacharya demands from us a tribute of tears for the victims of the famine. Again, in *So Many Hungers*, a fisherwoman, who cannot bear the misery of her starving child, is about to bury the baby-boy alive, but Kajoli's mother intervenes. It is cruel to keep the child alive and not to arrange for his milk; she then has to give away her best cow Mangala in gift, though the parting is very pathetic.

Bhattacharya suggests that the Gandhian era has been a crucible for the transformation of traditional values. The concept of morality is not steady like the northern star; it does undergo change in every new age. But the new concept of our age is highly revolutionary. As seen in *So*
Many Hungers, in the days of famine a girl would not mind even selling her body to alien soldiers and raising money to give food to others. What is the meaning of the body’s idle sanctity? The author’s comments are full of socio-ethical significance: "She had sold her shame, the convention-bound moron would so decry her, she had abused the body’s sanctity. But Rahoul, walking out of the lane, felt as though he had glimpsed the sanctity of the human spirit, and was dazzled by too much richness and beauty."  

Mulk Raj Anand shows how the down-trodden are inspired to fight back, when threatened or insulted. It is injustice to bear injustice. The new religion is to fight for one’s rights. In Private Life of an Indian Prince, Buta, the shikari, refuses to be underpaid, insulted, abused. In olden days, Buta would have pocketed the rebukes of His Highness servilely, but now 'he had been caught with the spirit of the new times'. He tells Victor boldly: 'No more begar, Maharaja.' Gandhiji helped the lowly in imparting a new meaning to life. He made them aware of self-respect.

Bhattacharya indicates that no one likes to be considered as lowly. Contempt begets contempt. The only thing is—the reflex action does not always find vent, owing to conscious, virtuous suppression or submissive helplessness. In He Who Rides a Tiger, Kalo’s conscience is
roughened due to constant humiliation and suffering. His ego, like a snake hit on the head, wishes to take its revenge on the society which ill-treats him. He perpetuates a huge deceit and poses as a Brahmin and the Magistrate, who had asked him why he and his daughter had to live at all, comes and touches his feet. This is Kalo's revenge. Of course, Lekha refuses to be an accomplice, morally speaking.38

Mulk Raj Anand sympathetically depicts how a poor woman has to put up with the worst type of social injustice. To escape from her brother-in-law Jaswant's evil designs on her, Lajwanti, in the story of that name, runs away to her father who returns her to her in-laws - the prey is helplessly handed over to the heartless hunter. She attempts suicide, but the pull of life is greater - she cannot do both, live and retain her virtue. Her confessional words are a piteous cry: "...there is no way for me...I am...condemned to live."39 Attia Hosain also expresses her compassionate attitude towards the poor through a similar situation in *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. Nandi's father Jumman believes that Nandi has slipped and, therefore, complains to Abida, who asks Mohsin to take up the matter. Mohsin, who himself had once made vain passes at Nandi, starts abusing her very roughly. Nandi's anger, like a volcano, explodes into scorching truth: "A slut? A Wanton? And who are you to say it? Who would have made me one had I let you?"40 Laila's championing the cause of Nandi and her righteous
outburst against the overbearing injustice of a man of higher class, blinded by frustrated lust, shows the sense of female independence, dignity and courage - this being a distinctive contribution of the Gandhian magic touch and of post-Independence times.

Markandaya, in A Handful of Rice, suggests how the poor wish to do away with the foolish and useless traditions. Appu does not mind getting low payment for his work. Ravi, a representative of the new generation, poor yet revolting, simply is not ready to bear it. He resents the exploitation by the idle rich of the poor but clever workers such as Ravi. "There had been, there was, his sense of outrage that they should grow rich at his expense: he and his ilk perennially scratching round for living, while they sat still and waxed fat on huge peremptory margins."

The Indo-Anglian novel portrays the woes and the aspirations of the untouchable with scrupulous understanding. It shows how the caste Hindu perpetrates miseries on the untouchable and refuses to share work with him in Government projects. The novelist's sympathy is won by the untouchable who shows endurance and courage despite all odds in life. The change in the condition of the untouchable before and after Independence is quite evident. The portraiture is fairly impartial, because it exposes the class-snobbery of even the bottomdogs who do not wish class-
distinctions to be wiped out altogether and yet they wish to climb higher on the social ladder.

Mulk Raj Anand criticises the unjust and cruel attitude of the caste Hindu to the Untouchable. In The Road, Bhikhu and other untouchables lose their homes which are set on fire by Lachman and Sajnu; this is an example of the suffering perpetrated on the down-trodden. Bhikhu displays dignity in his suffering. His conviction is that through work alone would he be liberated from life’s suffering. The utmost displeasure he conveys is: "Who ascends on the heads of the lowly will surely fall." Anand also shows how the people belonging to higher classes do not wish to share work with the lowly. This class-snobbery has its sway despite the worsening financial condition of the people of higher social status who, in The Road, do not like to touch the stones cut by the Untouchables and thus they keep aloof from the work of construction and earning. "The superior ones did not want to pool their labour with the low caste ones."

In the short story 'Old Bapu', once again, Anand has his favourite subject-matter - the travails of an Untouchable. 'Bapu' is made old before his time by the cruel world and fate. He loses his parents very early and his half bigha of land is - smuggled neatly from him by his crafty uncle. Though only, fifty, he looks seventy. He does not wish to die though worklessness and consequent starvation would kill him. The pan-biriwallah's warding him off like a monsoon fly
indicates Anand's sympathy indirectly expressed for the downtrodden. "Don't break my glass by showing it your ugly old face!" Ruskin; Bond's sympathy for the Untouchable is economically but effectively expressed in The Room on the Roof. Rusty is asked not to play with the sweeper boy, because it is unhygienic. Mrs. Harrison has warned him not to dream even of such a thing. His boyish mind keeps on wondering: "With whom, then could the sweeper boy play?" Padmini Sengupta shows how the prejudices of the caste Hindu against the Untouchable are diluted under Gandhian influence. In Red Hibiscus, Bimal's mother, a fighter for independence, asks Kusum to go with Bimal and save Rasmi from the drunken fury of her weak, jealous husband. "We must help these poor people; or else what is the point of our fighting for freedom?"

Anand brings out how even the Untouchables do not wish to redress their grievances for good by removing the tyrannies of class-discrimination, but they also are interested in ascending the higher rung of the social ladder. Laxmi, in The Road, advises her son Bhikhu to prepare the way for promotion to a higher class in the next life by spreading the message of love for everyone and everything. The irony of the wish is palpable. It amounts to a daughter-in-law wishing to be a mother-in-law instead of abolishing the latter's tyranny. "Love everyone and everything....Then through our good deeds shall we rise from our low caste and
It is not surprising that in an economically backward
country like India, beggars are an inseparable part of the
scene. Markandaya touches on the problem of beggars cursorily
but nonetheless with artistic objectivity. Though the
author has sympathy for beggars, she does not miss to
describe the evils of begging as a profession — simulation
and craftiness of beggars flourishing owing to the simple-
minded faith and goodness of people. Dandekar in A Silence
of Desire, observes that there are many beggars and their
constant appearance almost everywhere makes one a little
impervious to their whines, threats, curses and blessings —
their professional cleverness. It is difficult to disting­
uish between the real and the fake ones; in fact, sometimes
the fake ones appear more real than the real ones like the
proverbial imitator of Charlie Chaplin. Markandaya shows
how difficult it is to resist the beggar’s appeal however
hardhearted you feel you have become. The suppliant voice —
pathetic or posing — does play upon your sense of justice,
morality and charity. Jhabvala also deals with the beggar
problem, incidentally, from the viewpoint of foreigners.
They would have rarely come across any thing quite similar
to this quite usual Indian phenomenon in parks, bazaars,
trains — almost anywhere and everywhere. Mr. Hochstadt,
in A Backward Place, asks Clarissa to ignore the beggars.
The Hochstadts believe that ‘it was no use giving any of
them anything*. If one is charitable, one should send money to charitable institutions, because giving alms to individual beggars might amount to pouring water into a bottomless pit. Jhabvala presents a cinematic picture of the begging scene thus: "So, come lepers in handmade carts, starving mothers with starving babies, crippled children or deformed old men. Frieda hardened her naturally soft heart against them..."49

Indo-Anglian novelists have not bestowed as much attention on the middle class as they have on the lower and the upper classes, because the one makes a demand on their sense of compassion and the other on their sense of satire. However, they analyse middle-class sensibilities, attitudes, traditionalism, idealism and socio-economic concerns.

Kamala Markandaya illustrates how a man of the middle class is usually entangled in his socio-economic anxieties. Family love is an invigorating restorative for him. He grows so used to it that he fails to notice its bliss and his absolute dependence upon it. When it crumbles, he also does so. Dandekar, in A Silence of Desire, feels all this when Sarojini, affected by a mysterious disease and the Swamy's mystic, compulsive magnetism, drifts away from him like a stray summer c*budlet. His modern sensibility has denied to him the solace of fatality. Suffering is his lot, unacceptable yet inevitable.50 Markandaya evokes a very sensitive picture of a middle class family with all its bliss, loss
of bliss, expectancy, suffering, atonement, redemptive restoration of love. The same novelist also shows that middle class persons are complacent about their ethical beliefs - so would one think from Shastri's attitude in *A Silence of Desire*. He tells Dandekar that the latter's recent strange behaviour has caused a ripple of censorious comment in their colleagues regarding Sarojini having an affair. He, however, smugly adds, "Of course, you know, and I know, that Hindu woman of our class simply don't have love affairs." 51

Jhabvala illustrates the belief that it is easier to break the bonds of caste but well-nigh impossible to take liberties with the time-honoured class-distinction. Radha, in *To Whom She Will*, patiently tries to impress upon Amrita's mind that they, being modern, do not care for community and caste but class is still important in negotiating a marriage. 52 Transit from one class to another may not be difficult, materially speaking, but to disown or to adopt a peculiar cultural make-up is not very easily possible, because breeding tells. In *Train to Pakistan*, Hukum Chand's later rise cannot obliterate his past habits and limitations as a member of the lower middle class by birth and breeding. As remarked by Khushwant Singh, District Magistrate Hukum Chand's style of smoking betrays his low breeding in contrast with the sub-inspector's sophisticated manners. 53

Malgonkar shows how a lower middle class family some-
times averts a monetary crisis but has to sacrifice morality. In *Combat of Shadows*, Ruby is destined to walk into the trap of the wolfish Winton, who offers her a tempting job. It is all so sordid. The Mirandas cannot turn down such an offer which ultimately wrecks Ruby's prospects of marital happiness. To avert the moral downfall resulting from monetary inadequacy is a stupendous job.

Jhabvala points out difficulties of middle class idealist's life - Ram Nath, in *Esmond in India*, is not successful from the viewpoint of the world, yet his middle class sensibility deters him from giving in to the materially rich. He does not make money, he does not grieve. His sense of self-respect is unflinching. At the same time, he does not blame Har Dayal for accepting another way of life. An idealist's life is crowned with strange rewards. Self-sacrifice lends a rare charm even to material insufficiency. It means spiritual height. Ram Nath lives in an uncomfortable house - the floors cracked, the distemper faded and the furniture almost non-existent and yet there is an aura of a living martyr's past glory around him. Against this backdrop Har Dayal's opulence loses its glamour. "It was a respectable poverty, bohemian, intellectual."

R. K. Narayan expresses his conviction that the class distinctions must go. Rosie, in *The Guide*, tells Raju that she belongs to the class of temple-dancers, looked upon as
public women. Raju remarks that it is an old notion. He says he does not believe in caste or class. "Things have changed. There is no caste or class today." Raju's uncle makes it quite clear that Rosie, a mere dancing girl, cannot be admitted in their family. Thus, Narayan shows how the traditional middle class notions regarding the classes are rigid: one may risk estrangement from one's class. He indicates the dramatic conflict between the two forces of tradition and modernity in this respect. Markandaya indicates how ironical it is that even those engaged in the experiments of rural living could not fully understand the village life and how difficult it is to wipe out our sense of class-distinctions and social stratification. Ansuya, in Possession, asks Val whether he has gone to live with the Swamy, when Val is practically ostracised by his people. Val comments on her 'middle class attitudes' which insist that one must live in house or dwelling in specific company. She realizes that 'it was preposterous to apply those standards to such spiritual nomads as the Swamy and this boy.' Narayan shows how middle class social sensibilities are touchy and orthodox and yet this timidity or rigidity about caste or religion is tided over by one's sense of hospitality. Raju's mother, in The Guide, is perplexed how she should be accommodating a 'Rosie' in her home. There is something unusual about the name, but she has to be treated. "A guest was a guest even though she might be a Rosie." Malgonkar comments on the Englishman's opinion
of middle class Indians. Winton, in *Combat of Shadows*, appoints Ruby as senior to Sarkar, thinking that Sarkar, a typical middle class babu, will not hit back. This assessment does not flatter our sense of self-respect as Indians. 61

The upper classes come in for severe treatment in the Indo-Anglian novel. Their class-snobbery and prejudices against and unjust attitude to the lower and the middle classes are bitterly exposed. Their opportunism and meanness are contrasted with the idealism of the middle and the lower classes. The upper section of Indian Society - with its high-brow whirligig of parties and club-life - full of pretension, hypocrisy and hollowness is held up to ridicule. The upper classes and their opposition to social reformist activities, their indifference to national and patriotic movements, their hypocritical and selfish social welfare work, their craze for being on various committees, their anglicised and westernised education and ways and their rootlessness - all these are dealt with in an unsentimental and critical manner.

Nayantara Sahgal brings out the hollowness of upper class life in a half-cynical, half-pained manner. In *A Time to be Happy*, at a party at Trent's Sanad finds that though there is a war on, there is also a famine gaping, the guests - all English save Sandd - with supreme unconcern, bestow all attention on drinking, tennis, polo, fishing and weather and, of course, eating course after course of expensive food. Sanad observes: 'It was like a never never
land of inanity, deliberately sealed and barred against an intelligent awareness of the real world. Jhabvala also shows how some sophisticated parties are unIndian in spirit and servile in manner, lending intellectual veneer to sexy inclination. The party at Toto Sdxena's, in Get Ready for Battle, exhibits the luxurious wallowings of the inane wealthy. Men and women are sitting intermingled—drinking and smoking and enjoying harmless, sexless flirtation. Here is Devil's plenty—Gogo, Toto, Ushi, Iqqi, Premola, Pitu, Shila, Chuchu, Kimi, Bablu and Bibi. Truth has to account itself and, therefore, it sometimes becomes aggressive, intolerant, overbearing. Sarala, in Get Ready for Battle by Jhabvala, is fed up with Vishnu and Mala's comfortable but lifeless living. She tells Mala: "...You have padded yourself with all the comforts of life and now it is only comforts for you and no more life." Gautum also accuses Vishnu of living luxuriously in a meaningless and spineless manner: "You have always been soft in the lap of luxury provided by your father and have been content to roll in it, like an unborn child in its mother's womb, without even wishing to be born into the real world." The opiate of wealth drugs many people into lassitude, passivity, inertia.

Jhabvala shows how wealth makes men successful, practical, complacent and sometimes even cruel. Idealistic life appears senseless then: they think it idle to talk of ideals. In Esmond in India, Shakuntala, a sort of dreamer,
tells Amrit that he is not aware of the cultural values of life as their father is. Amrit, in the typical, blustering manner of a well-fed, successful man, replies that he cannot afford the luxury of ideals. He adds: "Ideals we can leave to people who have nothing better to do in life." Jhabvala's biting irony shows how thick-skinned the wealthy sometimes become under the coating of self-centredness. Har Dayal, in *Esmond in India*, stands out as a representative of wealth-grabbing opportunists, turning like a weather-cock, in the direction of selfish gain. Though before 1947, he upheld private values, now after 1947, he devotes himself to the Public Cause. Conversion based on conviction and entailing suffering and sacrifice is one thing and changing attitudes like a turncoat, crossing the floor like a brazen mercenary is quite another. Jhabvala indicates that some wealthy people sacrifice their idealism for materialism. Har Dayal has grown very rich. He has pretensions to art and culture. But he cannot forget his past when he had really felt one with the idealists like Ram Nath. He feels he is cut off from the main current of active, useful, purposeful life. He is afflicted by the pangs of self-torture, when he compares his life with that of Ram Nath. "He had felt then that somehow the main stream of life was passing him by and he was washed up on a ledge like some almost inanimate jelly fish." The one curse that sometimes accompanies material prosperity is hollowness, disillusionment and loss of ideals - the deathless regret of having missed something
larger than montonously luxurious and rather insignificant life.

Jhabvala brings out the contrast between the idle upper class life and the idealistic middle class life. In *Esmond in India*, Hdr Dayal and Ram Nath, Amrit and Narayan - self versus service - the two forces in life are at combat. Hdr Dayal worships the Goddess named Gold and Amrit is a chip of the old block. Ram Nath is a self-abnegating idealist, exhorting by self-practice the virtue of simple living and high thinking and Narayan is the most faithful reflection of his father Ramnath. Amrit feels that there is nothing wrong in amassing wealth and enjoying luxuries in life. Only those who cannot have these speak of simple living. But Shakuntala is wiser than Amrit. She has grown increasingly aware of the empty glamour of their luxurious living and ignoble thinking. She does not mince matters: "What is the use of our motorcars and nice clothes and jewels and all our servants if our lives are without purpose and we have no ideals to guide us?" Nayantara Sahgal shows how the opulent and anglicised Indians feel cut off from Indian life. Sanad, in *A Time to be Happy*, feels that he is midway, belonging to two worlds - or to neither? - because his education, upbringing and sense of values do not allow him to be Indian. McIvor tells him that the representative of India is not Sanad, but the poor peasant. Sanad himself feels that he has very little in common with his countrymen. Jhabvala
indicates how the active love for the lowly separates a woman from her materialistic, wealthy husband. Gulzari Lal, in *Get Ready for Battle*, is talking about a divorce, but Sarala Devi's mind is preoccupied with the compassionate thoughts for the unfortunate dwellers of the Bundi Busti. Their ways are now entirely different, even opposite. She tells him ironically how by society he means people having cars, bungalows and club life and, to him, only they are human.\(^2\)

Nayantara Sahgal shows the indifference of the aristocratic Indians towards our efforts for freedom. Sanad, in *A Time to be Happy*, admits this to himself. Indians like him do not exert themselves at all for independence. In fact, they simply feel unconcerned. They are strangers to Indian ways and aspirations. "For him and others like him it was an academic point, interesting for the sake of argument but not a matter of vital concern."\(^3\) Nergis Dalal suggests that it is a pity that most of the aristocratic and westernised people of India are uninfluenced by the magnetic fight for freedom. Identification results from compassion or commiseration. Anita, in *Minari*, remarks that her family and friends are just like sympathetic and kindly foreigners.\(^4\) There is a section of society which keeps on nostalgically remembering pre-Independence times as 'the good old days'. Harilal, in Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy*, does not like the present which means hard work.\(^5\)
Santha Rama Rau indicates how proud and prejudiced some aristocrats are— if they are brushed by or ignored, it is difficult for them to put up with it or withdraw with dignity. Baba's father, in *Remember the House*, is offered an 'advisory job' in connection with the drafting of the Indian Constitution. He imagines that his colleagues may be small men desiring to write their prejudices in a nation's constitution. He has no faith in the fashionable talk regarding the common man. Anand Lall shows how the landed gentry look down upon 'people in professions or in business'. Shakuntala, in *Seasons of Jupiter*, asks Gyan not to write off Amrita because her father is a doctor! Gyan ponders how the people of his class are adamant in their beliefs.

Jhabvala exposes the class snobbery of some bureaucrats who are carried away by surface glamour. Mrs. Kaul, in *A Backward Place*, pays much importance to externals. At one of her parties, she does not like Sudhir's shabbily-dressed friends who converse in Bengali. Her friends are quite different from them—the elite who deserve to be present at a cultural meet. This shows the sorry state of affairs in cultural matters. The bureaucratic and imperialistic framework of administration has to be reoriented, if Indians wish to rub their shoulders with other self-respecting nations. The novelist indicates that the wealthy take to social service because most of them wish
to fill up the lacuna of their life with it. There is rarely any genuine humanitarian impetus behind it. In *To Whom She Will*, at Tarla's, such people gather and talk of social service and committee elections and remain indifferent to the travails of poor village folk. Jhabvala ironically shows again how social relief work gets entangled and even lost in the Arabian mazes of Committee-jungles. Naturally, a real social worker also would feel lost in such a climate of aristocratic hypocrisy and leisurely social service.

Attia Hosain shows how the aristocratic Muslim society, even in the forties, used to be quite conservative. Hamid, in *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, has his political prejudices and Saira has her social ones. When Kemal evinces Congress and national leanings, Hamid rudely reminds Kemal that they should proudly maintain their heritage and that he has 'no use for ingrates who enjoy privileges without accepting responsibilities'. Saira looks down upon Ameer as Raja Raza Ali's second wife's ordinary relation without breeding and she stresses that good breeding would make all the difference. Nayantara Sahgal shows how most Zamindars are reactionary and with vested interests and resent any degree of land reforms. Govind Narayan, in *A Time to be Happy*, bemoans the loss of Zamindari. His sons must have something to fall back upon. There are frequent and quick changes. His sons might wish to educate their children abroad, wish to settle down themselves abroad permanently.
He bitterly points out that he has not brought them up to fit into the sort of regime the congress is ushering in. \(^{91}\)

\(\) Jhabvala refers to how the wealthy are inclined to be Westernised. Sometimes, though they are uncomfortable in adopting Western style, they keep up their pretensions of being fashionable and uptodate. Gulzari Lal, in *Get Ready for Battle*, has in imitation, decorated his house in Western style, but when alone he likes to enjoy himself in his usual, orthodox Indian style. He is at ease in sitting cross-legged and eating lentils, puris and pickles with his fingers. \(^{92}\) The problem of foreign-educated upper class Indian youth is hinted at by Nayantara Sahgal. There is a sort of hesitancy, tentativeness, uncertainty, looseness about this post-Independence Indian new generation blossoming in foreign Universities and Indian Embassies. It is being on the horns of a dilemma - a perpetual perch on the fence, as it were. The mental climate is cloudy, grey, even dark.

In the context of self-fulfilment, and happiness of others, Rakesh and Leela, in *This Time of Morning*, are pondering over the wise words of Kalyan. Rakesh says he will work for his fulfilment, seek and discover his whole self and dedicate it to others as his contribution. Leela's mind is befogged. She is frightened about home-returning. These young persons 'were further than an ocean away from their country'. It is not possible to go unchanged from 'the regions of doubts and questioning, the tumultuous realm of ideas'. The question is how involved could one become with
Nayantara Sahgal shows how the Westernised Indians forget their ancient heritage. One of the uppermost sections of Indian society got anglicised in the process of receiving Western education. Such people developed faith in foreign labels, knowledge of English life and letters at the cost of that of things Indian. They were like a square peg in a round hole on their return from foreign countries. Harish, in *A Time to be Happy*, reflects on the advantages and disadvantages of his Westernised education and outlook. The narrator remarks: "Considering the education he and many like him had received - myself included - it was surprising that he fitted into his surroundings at all." The truth that even wealthy and anglicised Indian cannot all become English anyhow dawns upon Sanad, in Nayantara Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy*, when he is not admitted as a member to an English club. He is too self-respecting to go there on sufferance, he tells Marion. He knows in a flash that he can never be anything else but an Indian. "He did not feel that he belonged in either the British or the Indian set of Sharanpur. He did not associate himself with Indians of a lower social rung than himself, and he, certainly did not belong with the English." Nayantara Sahgal presents a foreigner's opinion
regarding the unIndianess of the elite Indians. Neil, in *This Time of Morning*, comes to know Salem and his friends. When he thinks of this smart set, he remarks that they have no solemnity or reserve he has associated with Indians. They are witty, gay, pleasantly and intelligently conversational. He finds that one cannot go on pigeon-holing people, because people are people. 86

Nayantara Sahgal comments on the position of English in elite Indian circles. In the upper section of Indian society many people speak English all the time. It is like putting on another person's dress which is not quite comfortable. It is like playacting all the while. Despite good mastery of the language, a feeling of alieness persists. Rakesh, in *This Time of Morning*, wonders why most upperclass Indians speak English all the time. "We are still a Goosey Goosey Gander generation, he thought, and whatever the advantages might be, we certainly aren't ourselves." 87

Anita Desai comments on the class-consciousness of the older generation of aristocrats. In *Cry, the Peacock*, Arjun had a serious quarrel with his father because he resents Arjun's playing with the servants or their children - the persons of lower class like Mohammed and Hari. He angrily admonishes Arjun: "You are not permitted to play with the servants or their children, you know that. I have explained to you it is not fair to them." 88 Arjun's
resentment is a powerful enough seed to sprout into fighting the Negro Cause like a true rebel. Anita Desai artistically hints at the conflict between the ideologies of two generations based on the forces of tradition and revolt.

Bhattacharya brings out how patriots form a fraternity by themselves. Gandhiji's magnetic spell has brought people of various socio-economic strata on the same level. Prisons also acted as levellers. This is how Lakshmi, the richest woman of Sonamitti, in *A Goddess Named Gold*, treats the peasant woman on the level of equality. Meera's grandmother has been her guiding angel. Champa says, "Do you know, Bimla, that before the big struggle Lakshmi had been aloof from the village? Rich man's wife. In prison she became our true friend and sister." R. K. Narayan comments on the Gandhian way of life as an aristocracy in itself. Sriram, in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, comes under the spell of patriotic aristocracy - high thinking, simple living and noble suffering - as contrasted with the traditional concept of high class living based on luxury-display and money-exhibition. In the Gandhian world, there is a largehearted rivalry in managing to live in any set of uncomfortable circumstances. Sriram, used to comfortable living, finds the adjustment a little difficult, but he catches the spirit at last. The Gandhian aristocracy is poles apart from the aristocracy of the affluent. R. K. Narayan pithily expresses it thus: "Here the currency was suffering and self-mortification."
Thus, the Indo-Anglian novel reflects the problems and predicaments of the Indian society which is a three-tiered structure consisting of the lower class, the middle class and the upper class, generally distinguished on a socio-economic basis. How these classes are undergoing a radical transformation under the impact of Gandhian thought and life and of socio-economic reformist attitude and efforts of the popular socialistic, democratic government after Independence is suggested. Indo-Anglian novelists observe and analyse the change in the attitude of one class towards another. They feel that class-discriminations and tyrannies must go and they notice the younger generation's revolt against unjust, traditional class-concepts upheld by the older generation. The prejudices of conceited elite against the lowly are severely criticised and their hypocritical sense of social service is ruthlessly exposed by these novelists. They view with pleasure the emergence of a new class-awareness and the sense of unity as a class of the lower classes but do not miss to show how their minds are filled with a desire for retaliation and revenge against the upper classes. In any case, they are no longer prepared to put up with any kind of social or economic injustice. These novelists seem to sympathise with the efforts and aspirations of the lower classes for the betterment of their life and they seem to resent the hollow, luxurious and cruel ways of the wealthy. It must, however, be mentioned that these novelists have not presented as full and faithful
a picture of the travails and mental agonies of the middle class in the present context of economic stringency and hardship as one would expect.

Mulk Raj Anand, Bhattacharya and Markandaya are sworn advocates of the down-trodden and are very severe on social injustice and tyranny. R. K. Narayan is pre-eminently a novelist of the average, unspectacular middle class and, at times, invests the class with an aura of aristocracy imparted by Gandhian self-denial, asceticism and genuine social service. Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal concentrate on wealthy families and people and satirise their selfishness, parochialism, hypocrisy, injustice and tyranny. On the whole, these novelists are not impervious to the new social order that is taking shape on the basis of humanitarian and socialistic considerations.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


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34 Ibid., p. 178.
35 Ibid., p. 128.
36 Ibid., p. 194.
43 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
51 Ibid., p. 120.
53 Khushwant Singh, Train to Pakistan, p. 21.
54 Malgonkar, Combat of Shadows, p. 97.
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61 Malgonkar, Combat of Shadows, p. 67.
62 Sahgal, A Time to be Happy, p. 102.
63 Jhabvala, Get Ready for Battle, p. 81.
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65 Ibid., p. 101.
66 Jhabvala, Esmond in India, p. 56.
67 Ibid., p. 68.
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71 Sahgal, *A Time to be Happy*, p. 147.
73 Sahgal, *A Time to be Happy*, p. 146.
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78 Jhabvala, *A Backward Place*, p. 54.
82 Jhabvala, *Get Ready for Battle*, p. 34.
83 Sahgal, *This Time of Morning*, p. 71.
84 Sahgal, *This Time of Morning*, p. 71.
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86 Sahgal, *This Time of Morning*, p. 92.
87 Ibid., p. 31.
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