One

Introduction : The Age
Chapter One

Introduction: The Age

Fiction is perhaps the most fascinating form of literary genre which enjoys an eminent position amongst the Indian writings today. Imported into India in the second half of the nineteenth century from the west, it has continued to flourish over the decades for a period of nearly two centuries. According to several scholars, the Indian novel owes its origin more to the western models than to the classical Indian tradition. M.K.Naik observes:

One of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction, for though India was probably the fountain-head of story-telling, the novel as we know the form today was an importation from the West (1984, 99).

To begin with, the Indian novels were no more than inept efforts of a new breed of writers, highly self-conscious of their own limitations. N.Radhakrishnan remarks:

The Indian writers found the Novel as a literary form, literally novel to them and they started experimenting, though hesitantly, in this new form. They, of course, did not have
the advantage of being born into a tradition of fiction. For them it was an acquired instrument (1984, 2).

The first experiments in fiction were made in Bengal. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, known as 'the Father of the Indian Novel', was the pioneer in publishing an Indian English novel *Rajmohan's Wife* in 1864, a work that is Indian in its theme and sensibility. This novel was followed by more than a dozen novels in Bengali which were eventually translated into English.

Rabindranath Tagore, a contemporary of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, made an enormous contribution to the growth of novel in India. According to N.Radhakrishnan, Tagore fed the Indian novel which was still in its infancy with the milk and honey of the age-old Indian culture and tradition and to him goes the credit of nurturing the infant at its most important stage of growth (1984, 4).

Tagore's fictional works entitled *Gora, The Home and the World, Binodini, The Wreck, Four Chapters, Garden and Farewell My Friend* were not only popular but also seminal in their influence on the Indian novel. Lal Behari Day's novel *Govinda Samanta* (1874), which presents the social and domestic life of the rural
India, especially as it is perceived through the eyes of the labouring class of Bengal, was a great artistic success.

Several other novels followed in a number of Indian regional languages and also in English. Chandu Menon's Malayalam novel *Indulekha* (1888) was one such work, though, essentially it was an adaptation of the Victorian novel, *Henriette Temple* by Disraeli. Sisir Kumar Das in his work *A History of Indian Literature* writes:

Critics have seen similarities between Chandu Menon's *Indulekha*, the first novel in Malayalam and *Henriette Temple* (1836) by Benjamin Disraeli. Chandu Menon was familiar with the English novel and, in fact, wanted to translate it into Malayalam. But after some serious thought he decided against it and wrote "a Malayalam novel more or less after English fashion" and the result was *Indulekha*... *Indulekha* like most of the early novels in other Indian languages is didactic and written more to instruct than to amuse (1991, 293-294).

*Indulekha* depicts the stormy course of romantic love set against the backdrop of an extremely orthodox Indian society of Menon's time. Prem Chand and Sarat Chandra are two other Indian novelists who had written memorable works in fiction in English as well as in their own regional languages.
The early Indian novelists mainly dealt with social problems written with an explicitly didactic purpose and hence, most of them ended up as nothing more than pale shadows of their western originals, in terms of plot, structure and characterisation.

The country-wide political awakening ushered in a new era in creative writing in India. As M.K.Naik observes:

By 1930, Indian English Literature was more than a century old; and yet, curiously enough, it had not yet produced a single novelist with a substantial output. And then came a sudden flowering when the Gandhian age (1920-1947) had perhaps reached its highest point of glory during the Civil Disobedience Movement of the 'thirties' (1984, 103).

In the nineteen twenties and thirties, themes such as the nationalistic aspirations, the East-West encounter, the communal problems of the sub-continent, the exploitation of the landless masses and the plight of the poor and the backward, found increasing recognition in the eyes of the new writers. M.K.Naik is not far off the mark when he observes:

Fiction, of all literary forms, is more vitally concerned with social conditions and values, and at this time, Indian society galvanised into a new social and political awareness, was bound to seek creative expression for the new consciousness and the
novel has, in all ages, been a handy instrument for this purpose (1971, 57).

The Indo-Anglian fiction of the 1930s is dominated by novels written on political themes. In fact, several Indo-Anglian novelists themselves were active participants in the cause of the freedom struggle and were personal witnesses to several of the unfolding historic events of the time. The first successful attempt at the recreation of the struggle for freedom in Indian fiction was achieved by K.S. Venkataramani in two of his early novels entitled Murugan, the Tiller (1927) and Kandan, the Patriot (1932).

The great trio of Indo-Anglian novelists Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, began writing during this historic period that saw the charismatic leadership of Gandhi. Beyond any shadow of doubt, all their great works are imbued with an impressive patriotic fervour and admiration for Gandhi. Raja Rao's Kanthapura (1938), Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable (1935) and The Sword and the Sickle (1942) and R.K. Narayan's Waiting for the Mahatma (1955) - to name a few, are some of their novels that deal with the dominant political theme of the age and exhibit the tremendous impact of Gandhian ideology. These writers have also written
novels depicting the miserable condition of the socially down-trodden, the coolies and the exploited in India.

Besides the above mentioned great trio, there have been also several other Indo-Anglian novelists of high repute, like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Arun Joshi, Balachandra Rajan, Chaman Nahal, K. Nagarajan, K.A. Abbas, Khushwant Singh and many other Indian writers, who have written novels which are totally Indian in thematic design and treatment. Though the genre of the novel as such is alien to Indians, it got itself acclimatized quite soon in the Indian soil catering to the sensibility of numerous Indian readers.

Women writers too have made their mark in Indian fiction in English. As early as the 1870s, Toru Dutt wrote two novels namely Bianca (1878), an unfinished romance in English and Le Journal Mademoisella d'Arvers (1879) in French. However, only towards the closing phase of the Second World War did women novelists of quality begin to emerge enriching Indian fiction. These women novelists invariably tended to depict the Indian social life in their novels and deal
mainly with the problems of women in the male-chauvinistic Indian society. According to K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, "Of these writers, Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala are unquestionably the most outstanding" (1985, 438). These two novelists have an impressive corpus of fiction to their credit.

Apart from these two major women novelists, there have been many other women novelists too, vying for recognition on account of their distinctive talents and individual style. The emergence today of such creative women artists, marks a significant development in the growth of Indo-Anglian fiction. N. Radhakrishnan highlights this interesting development, drawing our attention to quite a few women writers:

The most significant development in the history of Indo-Anglian literature of the post-independence period is the emergence of a powerful group of women writers. Santa Rama Rao, Anita Desai, Mrs. Sahgal, Nargis Dalal, Veena Nagpal, Jai Nimkar, Maya Balsa, Padmini Sengupta and Venu Chitale are prominent among them (1984, 166).

It is as a writer of political novels of the age that Nayantara Sahgal figures among the "powerful group of women writers", thereby also proving herself to be an outstanding exponent of contemporary politics in
India. Nevertheless, it should be stressed here that politics is just one of Sahgal's major concerns, as she is equally devoted to the cause of Indian women's quest for self-identity and development.

Indo-Anglian literature abounds in a rich variety of feminine themes ranging from the portrayal of conventional women to the struggles of the emancipated 'new' women, reflecting in the process, the changes that have been taking place in the status of women in society from time to time. Patterned on the mythic models like the *Ramayana* and the 'Puranas', the woman figuring in some of the early works in Indian literature, emerges often as passive, submissive or docile, alluring and abetting the male of the species to continue to play the dynamic role in life. However, the problems of the suffering Indian wife were presented as early as 1864 in the first Indian English novel *Rajmohan's Wife* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, which presents a melo-dramatic narrative dwelling mainly on the trials, a long-suffering, middle class Hindu wife undergoes, at the hands of her domineering, callous husband. Since then, it is the image of woman that has continued to draw considerable attention from the writers of Indo-Anglian literature.
In the India of the post-Independence period, the conventional and tradition-bound society gradually began to evolve along more radical lines, due to the spread of education. Suddenly, the average Indian woman became more and more conscious of her status and rights as an individual and began to develop considerable social awareness. Some of these hypersensitive and highly individualistic women defied male domination and became increasingly vociferous in registering their protests. Thus the image of the woman in recent Indian literature is vastly different from that of the novels of yore which viewed woman often "as 'an evil counterfeit', 'a weak vassal'" (Suneel 1995, 9). The image of the emerging 'new' woman in literature is no longer that of a silent sufferer, but a courageous individualist engaged in a constant quest of her own identity. The Indian woman figuring in the post-Independence fiction also struggles for a more equitable and just role in life.

The novels of R.K.Narayan portray a wide range of women characters from the conventional to the rebellious. His novel The Dark Room presents the conflicting demands of tradition and modernity made on the female protagonist Savitri. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar
rightly calls the novel "a study of domestic disharmony" (1985, 370). By the side of the female protagonist, Ramani, her chauvinistic husband, stands as a colourless foil. Eventually, Savitri expresses her righteous anger in unequivocal terms, by quitting her husband's house as Nora does in Ibsen's A Doll's House. But unlike Ibsen's protagonist, Savitri returns home after a while, for the sake of her children, thereby enhancing her own stature at home as an extremely loveable and admirable mother figure. In two of his later novels The Guide and The Painter of Signs R.K.Narayan presents through Rosie and Daisy respectively, the new emerging woman in India walking out of her unhappy marriage finding fulfilment in her own profession or career.

Similarly, Mulk Raj Anand's novel Gauri portrays Gauri as a defiant protagonist who finds the entire world around her hostile and uncongenial, as an individual. She is even driven to the point of deserting her home in protest as she finds it impossible for her to bear her husband's taunts any longer.
The theme of the modern woman's existential struggle to establish her own identity in order to assert her own individuality surfaces quite often in the novels of the Indian women novelists, as can be observed in the works of Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal.

As a novelist, Kamala Markandaya is intensely aware of the impact of the socio-economic forces on contemporary woman. Her novels portray the psycho-dynamics of a large repertoire of women evolving in the emerging Indian society. In her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, the protagonist, is presented as a victim barely managing to survive in a South Indian village. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar describes Rukmani as a woman of sorrows:

Rukmani, the narrator-heroine is also a Mother of Sorrows. She receives shock after shock: for example, her husband Nathan's infidelity, her daughter's sacrificial going on the streets to save the family from starvation, the death of the child Kuti, the ejection from the house (1985, 438).

Sarojini, in Kamala Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire* is torn between tradition and modernity. As Sarojini who is ailing from a tumour seeks some kind of faith
cure from the 'Swamy' in his village retreat, she is suspected and spied upon by her husband Dandekar. Her immediate relatives cannot cope with a crisis stemming from the growing gulf between their fundamental beliefs and those of this new woman. While Sarojini remains consistently, and deeply, orthodox in her faith, convinced of its total beneficence, Dandekar seems to hold modern ideas which either question or reject the older notions and practices of religion.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala presents a wide spectrum of women hailing from diverse sections of society, often at the global level. Her Get Ready for Battle, for example, is the story of Sarala Devi, a middle-aged woman fretting under Gulzarilal her oppressive, materialistic husband who is counting on nothing but his wealth and her obedience. Finding it impossible to live with him any longer, she quits even without any formal divorce from him, to live as a social worker.

The existential plight of women in a male-dominated society is effectively presented in Anita Desai's fiction too. Her women characters are in perpetual quest for some meaning or value in life. Mostly, they fail in their quests and get obsessed with their inner
world, their sulking frustration and the storms within. Maya, in Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock*, inhabits a world full of morbid fears and turns neurotic, and eventually psychotic, because of her failure to establish a cordial or satisfactory relationship with Gautama, her husband. In *Voices in the City* Monisha's self recoils in disgust at the critical attitude of her in-laws when she fails to conceive. According to K. Meera Bai,

> Monisha flutters like a caged bird seeking freedom, privacy and trust. When she finds that it is a choice between death and mean existence her decision becomes easy (6.1 (1994-95): 138).

Being unable to stand the strain of living in her husband's house, Monisha decides on the recourse to suicide. Thus, Anita Desai's women refuse to yield and find it difficult to compromise. They usually do not protest openly against uncongenial surroundings but prefer death to a life of misery, ending up often, in isolation and loneliness.

Unlike Anita Desai's women, Nayantara Sahgal's women put up a good fight against a hostile environment. The conventional women like Maya and her
mother-in-law Ammaji in *A Time To Be Happy*, Mira in *This Time of Morning*, Nadira in *A Situation in New Delhi* and Lulu Croft in *Plans for Departure*, suffer silently but the 'new' women in Sahgal's novels are determined to live with self-respect and dignity as the female protagonists, Rashmi in *This Time of Morning*, Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh*, Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* and Bhushan's mother in *Mistaken Identity* exemplify. Becoming aware of the injustice meted out to them in their marital lives, they all rebel against the existing moral codes. Walking out of their homes, they break the bonds of marriage sanctified by tradition. Jasbir Jain, while discussing the emergence of the 'new' woman in Sahgal's novels, remarks:

"Nayantara Sahgal is deeply concerned with the need for freedom, for women to become aware of themselves as individuals.... Nayantara does not view her women as wage-earners or career women but mainly -- as wives, daughters and mothers -- and it is in these roles that they wish to experience freedom and to become aware of themselves as equals (1994a, 30)."

The hardship and suffering involved in resisting, defying and breaking an established social order as can be seen in the case of a woman fighting for divorce and the resultant alienation between parents and children, form a vital thematic content of Sahgal's novels.
Sahgal, in fact, presents a new perspective on the concept of virtue, as she considers virtue as the quality of the heart which cannot be identified with mere physical chastity. Jasbir Jain quotes Sahgal's words in the following passage:

I try to create the virtuous woman -- the modern Sita if you like .... Their virtue is a quality of heart and mind and spirit, a kind of untouched innocence and integrity (1994 a, 116).

In the realm of Tamil literature too, the alien art form of fiction took roots atleast in the last quarters of the nineteenth century. Till then, puranic stories in Tamil were rendered only in verse form, as can be seen in the great epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Samuel Vedanayakam Pillai (1826-1889), 'the father of modern Tamil novel', wrote his first novel in Tamil, Pratāpa Mutaliyar Carittiram (The Life and Adventures of Pratapa Mutaliyar), in 1879 with the main purpose of entertaining and educating his readers. Vedanayakam Pillai himself writes in his preface to the first edition of the novel:

My object in writing this work of fiction is to supply the want of prose works in Tamil and also to give a practical illustration of the
maxims on morality contained in my former works (qtd. in George 1984, 693).

His next novel Cukunacuntari Carittiram (The Life Story of Sugunasundari) (1887) turned out to be also the second novel in Tamil. In Vedanayakam Pillai's, fictional works, the social life of Tamil Nadu of his time functions as the inevitable backdrop of the narratives. His novels were followed by Guruswamy Sarma's Prēmakalāvatiyam in 1893.

Then came Rajam Iyer creating a new saga in the evolution of Tamil fiction by serializing for the first time in Tamil, his novel Kamalāmpāl Carittiram (The Life Story of Kamalambal), in the monthly journal Viveka Cintāmani from 1893 to 1895, and later he published it as a novel in 1896. The novel depicts the life-style of South-Indian Brahmins. The work employs colloquial dialect in order to render a realistic picture. Madhaviah's novel Patmavati Carittiram (The Life Story of Padmavathi) too appeared as a serial in the journal Viveka Cintāmani and was published as a book in 1898. Both Rajam Iyer and Madhaviah aimed at social reform through their remarkable social novels. In the first decade of the twentieth century Madhaviah wrote two
more social novels, namely Vijayamārttāntam and Muttumēnāṭci in 1903.

Pandit S.M.Natesa Sastri, a contemporary of both Rajam Iyer and Madhaviah, enriched the Tamil fiction with his novels Tiṇa Tavālu, Cantracēkaran and other novels. Another novelist of this period K.Suriyanarayana Sastriyar known as Parithimar Kalaiñar wrote his novel Mativāṇan as a serial in 1897 and it was published as a novel in 1898.

After this period of Madhaviah, there was a long spell of inactivity in the field of Tamil fiction for nearly thirty years. The novels written during the interim period were meant for filling the idle moments of readers and they never aimed at any social reform. Thus, there came a group of novelists like Vatuvur Duraiswami Iyengar, J.R.Rangaraju, Arani Kupuswamy Mudaliar, Tamilvanan, and Vai.Mu.Kothai Nayakiammal who all made themselves busy, simply translating and adapting the western detective novels, under the influence of western writers like Reynolds, Horace Walpole and Dumas. Dr.R.Dhandayutham in his Tarkāla Tamil Ilakkiyam (Modern Tamil Literature) calls this
period as marking "the nadir in the history of Tamil fiction" (1973, 36).

Despite the stagnation of this period, however, there emerged writers like K.S.Venkataramani and Va.Ramaswami, popularly known as Va.Ra., who paved the way for the revival of Tamil fiction. K.S.Venkataramani wrote novels depicting the struggle for freedom under the leadership of Gandhi. In his novels, propaganda and artistry attained a happy, harmonious combination. Va.Ra. wrote novels propagating the rights of women and supporting re-marriage of widows. Like Madhaviah's novels, his novels Cuntari (1917) and Vijayam (1934) centre around the problems faced by widows in the conservative society of Tamils.

R.Krishnamurthi, popularly known as Kalki, the renowned Tamil novelist of the twentieth century, was the architect of the renaissance in Tamil fiction. Kalki's domination of the Tamil literary scene for nearly two decades was almost absolute. It was to the credit of Kalki that he succeeded in transforming almost single-handed, the reading public in Tamil, who were addicted to idle detective fiction, to become alive to the finer artistic values of novels written for

In the post-Independence era, the novelists focussed their attention towards the interior of their own society, abounding in social evils like caste-system, corruption and exploitation of the poor and the oppressed. Novelists like Akilon, Dr.M.Varadharajan (Mu.Va.), Jeyakanthan, T.Janakiraman and N.Parthasarathy are some of the novelists of this phase. Among them Akilon, inheriting the Kalkian tradition, wrote mainly social fiction, with the national struggle for freedom
Further, the early novels in Tamil are didactic and written more to instruct than to amuse. As women happened to be the worst sufferers in the India of the early nineteenth century, being denied of formal education and made victims of child-marriage and widowhood, most of the early Tamil novelists dwelt on their plight in graphic detail. Vedanayakam Pillai, through his pioneering work Pratāpa Mutaliyār Carittiram showed to the conservative Tamil society, which resisted the British efforts to educate women, how education could be an immeasurable asset to women. In this novel, Gnanambal, the well-educated wife of Pratap ends up becoming the ruler of a state and rules it efficiently with her husband's help, initiating many social reforms. Gnanambal is presented as a 'king-in-disguise', in the closing scene of the novel, perhaps in order to please the readers - especially, the males -, who were very fond of kings and queens. It is almost with an excessive romantic zeal that Vedanayakam Pillai has idealised Woman in his novel. According to Sisir Kumar, a literary historian, Gnanambal in the role of a ruler must have satisfied a section of readers. The last
section of the book presents Gnanambal as the 'king' in disguise not a 'queen' and she has been portrayed as the 'highest pinnacle of human greatness,' as the author explains in the preface, with a view to meeting the taste of the Hindu readers "who are very fond of kings and queens" (1991, 208).

It was Rajam Iyer who started the realistic movement in the history of Tamil fiction. Rajam Iyer's novel Kamalāmpal Carittiram is actually a leap from the world of subjective romance to the world of objective reality. Rajam Iyer depicts in this novel very artistically, the life of a rural orthodox Brahmin family from his unique philosophical perspective. In this work he describes the collapse of an old patriarchal joint family, owing to personal conflicts and the bane of external contact. Muthuswamy Iyer's family is torn asunder due to the jealous manoeuvrings of his brother's wife Ponnammal who spreads a scandalous rumour that Kamalampal's morals are questionable during Iyer's period of absence from home. The helplessness of a woman who tries to establish her reputation in a scandalous society is presented in the work in a realistic manner.

The realistic trend that Rajam Iyer brought into Tamil fiction was further enhanced by his contemporary
and literary heir Madhaviah. Just like what happens to Kamalampal in Rajam Iyer's novel, Madhaviah's protagonist Padmavathy in Patmavati Carittiram has a hard time as her chastity is called to question. Through the portrait of Padmavathy, the novelist shows how soon woman can become an easy prey to suspicion and a victim of scandal in society. In this novel Madhaviah also depicts the plight of a young widow Savitri, on whom the doors of re-marriage are closed for ever.

As a Brahmin, Madhaviah was much troubled at heart to see the injustice done to the women of his community in the guise of social norms and moral codes. It was the impact of the western education and the principles of 'Brahma Samaj' which was started then, that made Madhaviah question the rigid social norms. He felt especially furious at the conventions like child-marriage, denial of education to girls, the plight of widows and the stout opposition to re-marriage of widows. As women received no education, in their widowhood they were forced to depend on their in-laws who were hostile and considered them inauspicious. Being a social reformer and humanist at heart, Madhaviah stresses the need for widow re-marriage in
his novel *Muttumēnāṭci*, pointing out also the evils of child-marriage. The protagonist Muthumeenakshi is given in marriage at the tender age of nine, even before her puberty, as second wife to a thirty-year old man. At twelve, she loses her husband in a cholera epidemic. As a widow she is ill-treated and harassed by her in-laws and she runs to her brother where also she is looked down upon. Her brother's friend Sundaresan suddenly comes forward to marry her, defying the opposition of the community, but the young couple become instantly outcastes in the entire local community of Brahmins. The novel also analyses the evils of child-marriage. Muthumeenakshi's father marries at twenty, a four-year old child the first time and his third wife is a mere thirteen year old girl whom he marries at fifty. Curiously, there are blatant double standards, one for men, and another for women. While Muthumeenakshi's father marries three times, her second marriage is opposed vehemently. Madhaviah emerges through his work as a true social reformer. R.Dhandayutham considers *Muttumēnāṭci* as "the first novel written in Indian languages supporting widow re-marriage" (1977, 30).
Va.Ramaswamy (Va.Ra) also deals with the issue of widow-re-marriage in his novels Cuntari and Vijayam in the early decades of the twentieth century. Through Sundari, the narrator-protagonist, the novelist presents the miseries of a young widow in an orthodox Tamil society. In Vijayam, the protagonist gives a first-person account of her pathetic plight as a widow to the author who plays in her life, the role of a sympathetic listener. However, despite all their professed helplessness, these protagonists dare to marry again. Thus, both Madhaviah and Va. Ra. turn out to be reformists who look at the problems of women with great empathy.

In the nineteen fifties, gyno-centric novels began to flood the world of Tamil literature. In these novels women are depicted as educated, quite often idealistic but almost always submissive at the end. Most of the novels centre around family lives focussing their prime attention on social problems like inter-caste marriage, dowry-system, widow re-marriage, divorce and incompatible marriage. In the novels of Kalki, M.Varadharajan (Mu.Va.), N.Parthasarathy, Rajam Krishnan, Janakiraman, Neela Padmanaban, Indira Parthasarathy and Jeyakanthan, the above burning problems are treated in
realistic, poignant tales of the middle class women and their exploitation in the hands of conventional male chauvinists. Generally their women prefer to endure patiently considerable shame and pain, till they are pushed to the very edge of their being. Jeyakanthan's women dare to resist and eventually assert their individual dignity and freedom even in the teeth of a rigid patriarchal society. Ganga in his Cila Nērankalil Cila Manitarkal (Certain People at Certain Times), defies orthodox conventions and chooses to spend the fag end of her life as her seducer's companion. More recently, women writers like Sivasankari, Vaasanthi, Anuradha Ramanan and Lakshmi have all taken enormous pains as writers, to highlight the marginalization and exploitation of women in society.

Akilon, just like his literary predecessor Kalki, presents his early novels against the backdrop of the struggle for Independence in India. While Kalki was chiefly concerned with the problems of women in high-caste Hindu families, Akilon deals with the problems of Hindu middle class women. Both the writers present women as passive sufferers meekly submitting themselves to the strict -- and biased -- social norms of their
respective patriarchal communities. Of the Tamil writers in particular, Akilon strives to make an in-depth analysis of the social problems of his age.

Thus a brief survey of the literary backgrounds of the novelists in question reveals, how both Nayantara Sahgal and Akilon are in fact contemporary Indian writers whose works reveal their wide-ranging common thematic concerns irrespective of their linguistic differences. This constitutes a primary motivating factor for a comparative study of the fiction of the two writers. Quoting Van Tiegham, Weisstein explains in the following terms the aim of comparative literature: "Comparative Literature aims primarily.... at studying the works of various literatures in their inter-relationship" (1973, 5). Further, K.Chellappan, another comparatist from India, makes the following comment in his article "Changing Paradigms in Comparative Literature: An Indian Perspective", which is extremely relevant to our discussion:

Comparative Literature as a study of literature independent of ethnic, linguistic and geographical boundaries has been a liberating and humanising force on literature itself by breaking the boundaries and focussing on the unity of human creativeness underlying the diversity of the literary events. But it is much more than a search for
sameness or oneness by juxtaposing texts. It has provided a wider perspective by making mutual illumination of literatures possible (1995, 1).

While Weisstein's observation cited above underlines the need for the inter-relatedness of the works selected for a comparative study, Chellappan's observation highlights the literary value of such a comparative analysis. V. Sachithanandan too is of the considered opinion that a true value of any work of art can be estimated only through comparative analysis:

... as a work of art inspite of its individual traits belongs to literary tradition like other works of art of the past and present, its fullest significance can be brought out only through comparison (1974, 5).

Hence, a comparative study of the works of Sahgal and Akilon has been undertaken as a research study in order to illuminate the virtues/defects of the fiction of one writer through a comparison with the merits and demerits of the fiction of the other and to arrive at a true evaluation of the works of art of each writer.