Chapter - IV

CONCLUSION
Indian fiction in English is national writing with a difference. It is not like fiction written in Malayalam or Tamil or Hindi in India. Indian fiction in English is written in a language that is not Indian about a people that do not speak or think in the language; it is written for a wider audience – the English reading public, both in India and abroad. Regional language fiction, on the other hand, is written about the people who use the language, and is intended for their reading. This century has witnessed a continuous output of novels and short stories originally written in English by Indians. The future of Indian fiction in English is bound up with the future place of English in India and the relevance of this writing for Indians and those who read it outside India.

In his book, *Indian writing in English*, Prof. K.R. Srinivasa lyengar predicts a bright future for Indian fiction. He says:

"The future of Indian fiction
and of Indo-Anglian fiction,
is indeed full of promise.
Recent fiction has given ample
evidence of its vitality, variety,
humanity, and artistic integrity."1

In this regard, R.K.Narayan once remarked that the English language through sheer resilience and mobility, is now undergoing a process of Indianization in the same manner as it adopted US citizenship over a century ago, with the difference that it is the major language there but here one of the fifteen listed in the Indian Constitution. So, it has been established fairly beyond doubt that English can be adapted to meet the creative needs of the Indian Writer in English. The ‘Indianness’ in the Indian English novels reveals
the Indian character and Indian life in all their diversity and many-sidedness, to the readers abroad.

The distinctiveness of Indian English fiction, which constitutes part of its charm for its readers, is partly due to the kind of English used by the writer. The popularity of the novels of Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and G.V. Desani rests primarily on their unique use of English in them. R.K. Narayan, who is noted for his 'Clean English' writes a style which has a distinctly Indian tang about it. The distinctiveness of style which we associate with these writers is not seen in most of the novelists of the post-independence era.

David Mc Cutchion, in his book, *Indian Writing in English* (1969), points out that we read all literature not only for Aesthetic or Vicarious emotions but to learn about our fellowmen, and to the extent nations are idiosyncratic, we learn about national behaviour too.

During the past decade or so, modern Indian novel in English has acquired a new dimension. With the appearance on the literary scene of such novelists as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Namita Gokhale, Mahindra, Balwant Gargi, Balraj Khanna and others, the novel is no longer straitjacketed within the thematic bounds of caste, superstition, poverty, Gandhism and Vedanta. Our contemporary women novelists now enjoy debunking male chauvinism and hypocrisy, the younger male novelists also don't present the woman as a docile, wooden creature doomed to domestic chores. In the structural domain too, the new novelists try out bold experimentation with the form and content. For instance, Amitav Ghosh uses social anthropology and
myth as a convenient framework, where as Balwant Gargi carries verisimilitude to its utmost limits by writing a transparent auto-biographical novel - *The Naked Triangle*.

Instead of romanticising traditional values of endurance, passivity, compassion and forgiveness, the protagonist in the modern novel is shown as an iconoclast, a rebel against the establishment. Irony too has acquired a new satiric pungency as it is no longer a gentle instrument of mere entertainment.

Moreover, the contemporary Indian novel in English is no longer preoccupied with the problems which were so hotly debated in the fifties and sixties. It doesn't indulge in discursive theorising about the use of a foreign medium.

Literary studies are in the post-structuralist phase which has begun to question earlier concepts and evaluations. For example the word "classic" suggesting the importance of mega themes and portrayals of more than life size figures is under severe criticism. For the post modernist, any theme, any character, any style is regarded as appropriate. Viewed in this context of post-structuralism and post-modernism Amit Chaudhuri's novels are discourses, are writings about random experiences. The terms structure, theme, characterisation, plot have no relevance.

Since Amit Chaudhuri is at the threshold of his career it is too hazardous to draw any conclusions about his work. Any comment at best, therefore can be tentative and not firm. However, some of the positive
aspects may not be ignored. His evocation of urban scene and the characters who inhabit it are realistic. Without resorting to any exaggeration he portrays people who come alive. The families which have grand parents and grand children, their preoccupations, their mannerisms, their anxieties are described very truthfully. The children are shown to be innocent, as well as precocious. Nothing escapes their notice and it is always a participatory feeling, not detached and without feeling. The children in Amit Chaudhuri remind us that of R.K. Narayan's in *Malgudi Days*. Very few, in fact, none has pictured children the way Amit Chaudhuri has done.

Family as the core segment of Indian life has been very effectively presented. Caring and sharing between parents and children, between families, the participation in rituals and festivities, the anxiety and concern in times of crisis are the subject in Chaudhuri's fiction. The separations and unions mark the year. Children come from Bombay to Calcutta during vacations and go back. There are new freedom gained and the security assured but they soon are lost leading to dislocation and sense of nostalgia.

Comparisons do not help in making any assessment of Chaudhuri. Not philosophical and metaphysical like Raja Rao, not ideologically committed like Mulk Raj Anand, not ironical like R.K. Narayan, Amit Chaudhuri writes about people without mystifying. Not only does he not write in the tradition of the illustrious trio, equally well does he deny the experimental magic realism of Salman Rushdie, the political undertones of Upamanyu Chatterjee or the international themes of Amitav Ghosh, the diasporic experience of Bharathi Mukherjee and the other Bengali writers. Like the English novelist Jane
Austen whose little bit of ivory two inches wide had no space for bigger themes like alienation.

Amit Chaudhuri focuses on the society's micro unit family, a normal family whose members are not larger than life. The older people decaying and the younger growing up, the ones recalling their past and others visualising their future, are the stuff of Chaudhuri's writings. In brief it is the ordinariness, the ordinary mind in ordinary body, its simple gestures, its simple language devoid of any subtlety that makes Chaudhuri's work unique.

A Strange and Sublime Address is a short and self-contained novel. It is about a boy's discovery of Calcutta and of an extended family. It is not exactly a conventional novel. Short stories at the end of the novel form a supplement to it. It is to a certain extent a novel about joy, about different things coming into contact with each other. This novel is partly akin to Joyce's A portrait of an Artist as a Young Man.

The theme of the novella deals with the 'myriad impressions' of life etched vividly on the consciousness of Sandeep, a Bombay-based ten-year old Bengali boy. During the summer vacations he spends in the house of his youngest maternal uncle Chhotomama in Calcutta. The random and banal occurrences of his day-to-day life form the subject—baths, meals, outings, shopping, games and pranks, watching the adults' routine, rituals, household chores, and so on. The list, which may be extended in the mundane preoccupation of the stories too, almost satisfies Virginia Woolf's prescription for 'an ordinary mind on an ordinary day' and is too sensitive to be completely
ordinary. The random happenings do not offer a rationale of continuity of exterior events leading to a planned conclusion. There is no revelation, no earth-shattering change in any of the characters and life continues as usual. Commenting on the notion of the 'story', Esha Dey says: "The 'real' story with its beginning, middle and conclusion, would never be told, because it did not exist." ⁴

**Freedom Song** seems an absolutely flat title. In the novel, the characters would embark upon the minute frustrations and satisfactions of their lives. The narrative flits from mind to mind, flashes forward and backward, finding a great and casual beauty at the edge of the haphazard.

In the novel, the concept of freedom is portrayed through the main character Bhaskar. It deals with the Bengali sensibilities of two families, Khuku being the sister and Bhola her brother. Mini is Khuku's childhood friend. She stays in Khuku's house along with Khuku and her husband Shib. The story revolves around Bhola's son Bhaskar who live in Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar Road. Bhaskar is an activist involving in all the communist activities of Calcutta.

There is an intense search for a match to Bhaskar. Bhaskar's parents thought that at least he puts an end to the activist sort of life after marriage, and feels responsible to himself. But, the hope of the parents in a way is not fulfilled as he still continues to be an activist even after marriage. There are certain references to the political aspects like demolition of the Babri Masjid, and certain communal riots. Mini, undergoes treatment in Ma Sharda Devi
nursing home at regular intervals. There is a juxtaposition of Bhaskar’s cousin Mohit, with Bhaskar. While Mohit has been preparing for his joint entrance exam, Bhaskar is busy in involving himself in the arrangement of a street-play and its rehearsal along with his comrades. He successfully stages the street-play. On the whole, there is a political undercurrent in the novel.

**A New World** is a stationary novel Jayojit, the protagonist of the novel, is a divorced Bengali lecturer at a Mid-West University. He has brought his son to spend his vacation with his parents in the summer heat of their Calcutta apartment. There is no particular purpose of his visit to Calcutta. His aimless strolls through busy Calcutta show us his indifference and his alienation towards it. His father, a retired admiral, has kept English as his language to perpetuate his membership of a ruling class. His mother busies herself with the tasks done by servants. The child is busy playing his games. In a way the novel deals with the casualities of the Calcutta culture. Tim Adams rightly comments: “Like Joyce’s Dubliners, every sentence seems a small act of beauty.”

3
REFERENCES

