Critical evaluation of contemporary creative writing has its own advantages and disadvantages. Given the cultural, intellectual, and academic climate of opinion that has been prevailing in the study of Indian writing in English, it is seldom easy to evolve a viable and valid criterion of critical assessment. Exclusive and absolute formalism may compel a critic to ignore the cultural matrix that has made the Indian novel in English possible. On the other hand, a complete disregard for the formal considerations of the Indian novel in English may convert any critical assessment into a documentary review of creative writing which deserves to be considered creative writing. In short, a reassessment of contemporary creative writing ought to be a happy fusion of the claims of art and the claims of relevance. A study of the self, the family, and society in the novelists under review seems to be a pragmatic, if not a scientifically exact, critical approach, in the sense that it helps us explore the themes of the writers and their creative articulation.

The Indian novelists who constitute the subject of this study have been active practitioners of the form. Since the short-story in Indian writing in English may be considered an
autonomous field of enquiry in itself, I am constrained to focus my attention exclusively on the novels of Rajan, Raja Rao, Narayan, Arun Joshi, and Anita Desai.

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