CHAPTER - 1

ORIGIN, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL
The genesis of all literature lies in the instinctive human urge to express the drama of human experience. It was this urge which gave rise to the oral narrative tradition across the globe. With the growing sophistication of the written medium, the same urge found a more complex, subtle and fuller expression in formal literature. The development of the Indian English novel provides an interesting illustration of how this urge to express has taken a genre from the earliest phase of imitation through an intermediary phase of assimilation to reach a phase of authentic self-expression.

The novel as a literary phenomenon took roots in India a little more than a century ago. The development of formal prose began with the western impact on Indian culture. As a result, western classics were at the outset translated. A little later, followed works which were either imitations or inspired by western models. The novel proper begins with Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s first published work in English Rajmohan’s Wife in the year 1864. It was a significant start for the Indian English Novel. The presence of mystery and suspense casts it in the mould of romantic novels. Bankim Chandra was a master of the romantic as well as the historical novel. But at the same time he was no stranger to comedy or humour either. His novels The Poison Tree and Krishnakantha’s Will deal with social problems, a recurrent theme in Indian fiction. It is quite evident that his historical novels were inspired by Scott’s historical romances. His chief
pre-occupation is with patriotism, thus making the novel a means of political education. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is rightly considered the father of the novel in India. Krishna Kripalani is right when he estimates the role played by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee:

It was Bankim Chandra who established the novel as a major literary form in India. He had his limitations, he too was romantic, effusive and indulged a little too freely in literary flashes and bombast and was no peer of his great contemporaries, Zola and Dickens, much less of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. There have been better novelists in India since then, but they all stand on Bankim’s shoulders.¹

Other writers too took the lead and started producing novels in English. Notable among them were Rajaiakshmi Devi’s The Hindu Wife (1876), Toru Dutt’s Bianca (1878), Kali Krishna Lahiri’s Roshinara (1881) H.Dutt’s Bijoychand (1888) and Kshetrapal Chakravarthi’s Sarata and Hingana. K.R.Srinivas Iyengar’s remark that these novels "have for us today no more than an antiquarian or historical interest"² may not be acceptable as they played a vital role in quickening the literary renaissance all over the country.
The next important figure on the literary scene was Rabindranath Tagore. He came like a colossus on the Indian literary scene. He exerted a tremendous influence on the minds of the people with the choice of his themes. Tagore started by first imitating Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, till he found his own voice with Choker Bali. To Tagore goes the credit of nurturing the infant genre at its most important stage of growth. He brought a new force into the form as embodied in Gora, The Home and the World, Binodini, The Wreck, Four Chapters and Farewell My Friend. A significant fact of the period was that with Tagore, the growth of the Indian English Novel and novels in regional languages in India developed almost on parallel lines. Tagore’s novels helped the Indians to rediscover themselves and also created a new awareness about their culture. Tagore translated some of his Bengali works into English which helped in laying the foundations of the India English Novel. His novels are mostly novels of ideas. He adapted the novel genre to depict the inner changes in the lives of characters in relation to time and space. Tagore’s influence is all pervading, as can be seen in the novels of his successors Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and a score of others. Sarat Chandra and Premchand carried the novel a little further by extending its range. Their preoccupation is with the downtrodden and the destitute. Their realistic and bold depiction of the misery of the lower classes foreshadows the best fiction of Mulk Raj Anand in English.
The arrival of Gandhi on the national scene in the 1920s galvanised the nation into tremendous activity. Gandhi's inspiring leadership turned the independence movement from a merely political struggle into an emotional experience. Commenting on the independence movement, Meenakshi Mukherjee says, "It was an emotional as well as an ideological experience spread over a much longer period of time than any other nationalist movement in history." The coming of Gandhi did not only set the political scene alight but the literary scene also erupted into tremendous activity. Simultaneously, regional literatures too played a prominent part in shaping the sensibility of the Indian English Novel. The arrival of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R.K. Narayan, aptly termed 'the founding fathers' by William Walsh, on the literary scene gave the Indian English Novel a new vigour and direction. Commenting on their decisive contribution, William Walsh says that the three writers are:

... distinguished not only for their own work but as the inaugurators of the form itself since it was they who defined the area in which the Indian novel in English was to operate, drew the first models of its characters and themes and elaborated its particular logic. Each used his own version of an English freed from the foggy taste of Britain.
Another significant development with the advent of Gandhi on the political scene was the middle class taking an avid interest in creative writing, which earlier had been the monopoly of the upper classes. Ordinary people suddenly found that their own lives could be made the theme of literature. To quote M.K. Naik on the subject:

It is no mere coincidence that there came a sudden flowering of Indian fiction in the 1930's - a period during which the star of Gandhi attained the meridian on the Indian horizon. Under the leadership of Gandhi, the Indian struggle for freedom, already more than a generation old, became so thoroughly democratised that the freedom consciousness percolated, for the first time, to the very grass roots of Indian society, and revitalized it to the core. It is possible to see a close connection between the growth of nationalist consciousness and the development and rise of the Indian Novel in English. Fiction, of all literary forms, is most vitally concerned with social conditions and values, and at that time, Indian society, galvanized into a new social and political awareness, was bound to seek creative expression for its new consciousness and the novel has in all ages been a handy instrument for this purpose.
The writers were quick to respond to Gandhi's call. However, the handling of the theme depended on the writers' individual perceptions and sensibilities. Novels like K.S. Venkataramani's *Kandan the Patriot*, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Mulk Raj Anand's *The Sword and the Sickle*, *Untouchable* and *Cookie* were novels written during the storm and stress of the freedom movement. There were also novels that took up this theme after independence like Khwaja Ahmed Abbas's *Inquilab* (1955), Manohar Malgoankar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), Nagarajan's *Chronicles of Kedaram* (1961), Nayanatara Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy* (1952) and Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966). In all these novels Gandhi is depicted as a multidimensional force. He appears directly as a character in some novels or as a driving force represented by an idealised character. The Gandhian theme of 'Back to the villages' and the struggle for freedom found eloquent artistic expression in K.S. Venkataramani's *Murugan the Tiller* and *Kandan the Patriot*. These novels created a sensation in the thirties. As K.R. Srinivas Iyengar says, "Kandan gained in importance because it was the very image of the excruciating times we were passing through." Venkataramani himself had introduced *Kandan the Patriot* as a novel of new India in the making and dedicated it to the unknown volunteers in India's fight for freedom. His other novel *Murugan the Tiller* spreads the Gandhian message of economic emancipation of the poor. Raja Rao strongly identifies himself with the Gandhian movement, and gives it
passionate expression in his novel *Kanthapura*. *Kanthapura* covers the movement of Gandhi in the 1920’s, and ends with the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1931. Choosing a garrulous old woman as his storyteller, Raja Rao uses a small village as a symbolic representation to depict the gathering storm on the political horizon. Moorthy the protagonist is a Gandhian in both thought and principle. The trials and tribulations of the simple villagers participating in the freedom struggle are captured vividly, with the description alternating between the serious and the comic. The flexible pattern of the novel gives the novelist the room to weave together the allied threads of the Gandhian revolution, such as propaganda against evils of drinking, exploitation of coolies, the evils of superstition and other social evils. C.D.Narsimhaiah aptly sums up the focus of *Kanthpura* when he says, "The entire action (in the novel) comes out as an artist’s enactment of Nehru’s image of the impact of Gandhi on the Indian scene together with a hundred particulars that illuminated many hidden spots in the life of the country during that period." Inspired by Gandhi, Mulk Raj Anand wrote *Untouchable* in which he highlights the age-old evil of segregation of an entire group of society based on their profession, a problem against which Gandhi fought all his life. In his other novel *Coolie*, Anand presents the world of proletarian misery and wretchedness. Anand’s subtle strokes and the intensity with which he projects his protagonist Munoo, has put the young hero on par with some of the heroes of the novels of Charles Dickens. His third novel in the trilogy *The Sword and the Sickle* introduces
Gandhi as a character. The novel deals with the peasant boy Lal Singh being taken from his North Indian village and a life stifled by suffocating layers of custom and religion, into the ferocity of the great war in Europe and then back to India and a new political awakening. The novel traces the development of Lalu against the background of the developing political situation. Events are represented through the protagonist Lalu's consciousness.

In the novels written on the same theme after Independence, there is a certain amount of distancing. Inquilab by K.A.Abbas is an important novel which falls into this pattern. Gandhi appears in person in this novel. The protagonist Anwar is shaped directly by the forces of history. Events of national importance are presented through the point of view of a young man who grows up and comes to maturity in the third decade of the century, the hub of the freedom movement. Anwar forms the central consciousness of the novel; his development is determined by events of national importance. All the major political incidents between Jallianwala Bagh and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact are brought into focus by involving the protagonist in each crisis. Manohar Malgoankar’s A Bend in the Ganges is panoramic in scope and epical in aspiration. It is crowded with events from modern Indian history, beginning with the Civil Disobedience movement of the thirties and ending with the post-partition riots in the Punjab. It captures the human drama against the background of a crowded
national calendar. R.K.Narayan deals with the Gandhian theme for the first time in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. The novel introduces Gandhi as a person and not as a symbol. Gandhi’s presence in this novel is not remote and does not border on the supernatural. He is rather presented as a warm human being who touches two young lives and transforms them. There is a marked difference in the handling of the theme in these later novels. A certain amount of detachment creeps into the narrative, as the experience is not immediate. Significantly, in these novels Gandhi is humanised and is not an awe-inspiring figure any more. The point of focus here is more on the human relationships rather than the historical struggle. Commenting on this difference Meenakshi Mukherjee says:

In these novels written in the Nineteen- fifties which deal with the same theme, a noticeable distance between the author and the events has crept in, although this does not necessarily result in a better artistic realisation of the theme. In *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *Chronicles Of Kedaram*, the novelists are detached enough from the course of history to treat Gandhi casually as a human being or an idea rather than as an overwhelming symbol, and concentrate on weaving stories of human relationships which only marginally touch upon the struggle.
After a bitter and prolonged struggle India did get her freedom finally in 1947. However, a pall of gloom encircled the celebration of freedom, as the partition perpetrated on the country took its full toll. Serious writers now turned their attention to give expression to the partition carnage. Commenting on the subject K.R. Srinivas Iyengar says, "After the advent of freedom, the more serious novelist has shown how the joy of freedom has been neutralized by the tragedy of partition."\textsuperscript{9} Khuswanth Singh's \textit{Train to Pakistan}, Chaman Nahal's \textit{Azadi}, Raj Gill's \textit{The Rape}, Bonophul's \textit{Betwixt Dream and Reality} Padmini Sengupta's \textit{Red Hibiscus} are novels which try to capture the shock and misery of a people who suddenly found themselves belonging to two countries.

The earliest novel on the theme of partition was Khushwant Singh's \textit{Train to Pakistan} (1956). It deals with the eruption of violence between the Sikhs and the Muslims in a small village Mano Majra along the newly established Indo-Pakistan border. The carnage is seen through the eyes of the Sikh and Muslim community, who inspite of having lived peacefully together for several centuries, suddenly turned enemies. Paradoxically, Khushwant Singh has used all his imaginative power to present a truthful picture. The result is that the horrors of partition are exposed in all their stark nakedness. William Walsh comments, "The objectivity, detachment and impartiality makes the horrors it describes ... with all their madness and ferocity all the more convincing, all the more devastating. There is no

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merciful mist shrouding these accurately reported calamities." The other important partition novel is Chaman Nahal’s Azadi. The novel is built around the family of Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant of Sialkot. Interwoven with it is the story of his son Arun, his aspirations and disappointments. The maturity and the balanced depiction of the carnage of partition gives Azadi a refreshing tone. The novel traces the origin of the trouble and moves to the final outrage in a tone devoid of sentimentalism and melodrama. Another important aspect of this novel is its experimentation with technique. The multiple narrator technique, used here for the first time, is a novel attempt in Indian English fiction.

After independence came a process of reconstruction and rebuilding the nation. With the country striking a positive note in both domestic and international affairs, the period between the fifties and sixties was a productive period especially for literature. The independence movement as a motive force of the Indian English Novel is replaced by a search for newer themes, in keeping with the emerging sensibility and concerns of a re-defined nation. Consequently, many of the novels deal with the East-West encounter, which obviously is a result of the unacknowledged colonial hangover. The protagonists struggle to find a place between two cultures, one inherited and the other acquired through education and other influences. The theme, however, is not new to the Indian English Novel; as early as in 1909, Sarath Kumar Ghose wrote a novel called The Prince of Destiny.
dealing with this inter-cultural theme. The theme is brought out through the predicament of the protagonist when he has to choose between an English girl and a native Indian princess. During the Gandhian era, this conflict was more on the social level. But in the novel of the sixties and seventies, the predicament is on a personal level, leading to a crisis of identity. This private search often constitutes a quest for a satisfactory attitude towards the West, and for a realistic image of the East that would at the same time be emotionally valid. To quote Meenakshi Mukherjee, "This search has taken varied and complex forms. At its lowest, it has often descended into sentimental chauvinism and neurotic rejection, at its highest it has attempted a integration of personality, a revaluation of all values." The typical Indian philosophical ideal of renunciation is explored in many novels as an answer to the search. It is impossible to definitely categorise the novels since there is the inevitable overlapping of the themes in the novels. Several major novels were published during the period. To name a few: The Serpent and the Rope, The Cat and Shakespeare, The Guide, The Man-eater of Malgudi, The Silver Pilgrimage, Shadow from Ladakh, Cry, the Peacock, Voices in the City, Sunlight on a Broken Column, The Foreigner, The Coffer Dams, A Bend in the Ganges, Chronicles of Kedaram, Too Long in the West, The Dark Dancer, Storm in Chandigarh etc.
A small note on the representative novels would illuminate the theme. Attai Hossain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, cast in the autobiographical mould, deals with the heroine's quest for her personal destiny as a result of the impact of the West on her. The West in this novel appears explicitly in terms of ideas rather than of persons. The resolution to her predicament is achieved through marriage. The conflict between the two cultures of East and West is nowhere so obviously spelled out as in Nayanatara Sahagal's first novel *A Time to be Happy*. The protagonist Sanad Shivpal's social background is the cause for his feeling of alienation and rootlessness. His predicament is once again solved when he marries the unsophisticated, non-westernised daughter of a college lecturer. In Balachandra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer*, the protagonist Krishnan's alienation is due to the conflict between the western influence and the native reality. The resolution of Krishnan's East-West dilemma hinges on his choice between Cynthia and Kamala who are representative symbols of the two cultures. Ultimately he resolves his predicament by embracing the traditional ideals of this country symbolised through Kamala.

The East-West theme moves into a different realm and assumes a depth and meaning not achieved in Indian English fiction with Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*. The novel is deeply philosophical in tone and metaphysical in demeanour. The protagonist Ramaswamy's predicament is resolved when he realises that he needs a guru to sort out the serpent
from the rope. The solution, however, is a personal one. Here we see the theme of renunciation coming into prominence. This theme of renunciation can be best illustrated through R.K. Narayan's *The Guide*. The novel traces the development of Raju the protagonist; the worldliest of men is transformed in the course of the narrative into a sanyasi. In Bhattacharaya's *He Who Rides a Tiger*, a marked change can be noticed in the tone and tenor of these novels. The sixties novel reflects a recognisable change in national sensibility, expression and literary form. As against the novel of the thirties which shows concern with national or social problems, the novel of the sixties has a distinctly private tone. Commenting on the latter, Meenakshi Mukherjee points out that it is "introspective and the individual's quest for a personal meaning is its main theme."  

Compared to the 60s there was no great spurt of activity in the 70s. But still some significant novels were produced—Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and *The English Queens*, Arun Joshi's *The Apprentice*, Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli*, Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Black Bird*. The East-West conflict, the search for identity and the theme of renunciation continue. It becomes evident that an inevitable overlapping of themes take place in these novels, thus making it difficult to deduce it to one fixed theme. In all these novels one notices that retreat is presented as a possible solution to the dilemmas of human life; this can be seen most prominently in Arun Joshi's *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*. One comes
to the conclusion that the novel of the sixties and the seventies operates within a limited range and affords easy solutions. The reasons for the reduced output in the seventies are not too hard to see. Historically and politically, the nineteen seventies were one of the most turbulent decades in Indian history. The general decline on all fronts, the debilitating wars with Pakistan and finally the Emergency declared in 1975, put a severe check on national progress. The declaration of the Emergency dealt a deathblow to the Indian sensibility.

This taste of totalitarianism for a short time awoke the casual Indian from his slumber and lethargy. Having come so perilously close to losing his freedom, the Indian realised that from now on he had to play an important role in the making of history. As Viney Kirpal aptly puts it, "The sudden realization of the reality of history in which the individual has an important role to play is reflected in the novel of the 1980s". Thus the attempt by the individual to take an active role in the making of history is the important theme of the novel of the 80s. The quest for identity is now against the background of a larger world; cosmopolitanism is the new reality. The new protagonist belongs everywhere; he is a cultural traveller and has the ability to merge into all cultures, coming to terms with the broadening horizons of modern experience. The novel of the eighties exemplifies this theme. At this stage it would be worthwhile to recapitulate the tremendous contribution of the big three before elaborating on the novel.
of the eighties. Mulk Raj Anand's explosive style of writing clearly left an indelible mark on the consciousness of a nation perpetrating atrocities on the less fortunate in the name of caste and religion. Starting with Kanthapura which dealt with the freedom movement Raja Rao moves on to show his metaphysical concerns in The Serpent and the Rope and The Cat and Shakespeare. The range of his contribution to the Indian English Novel can be summed up in his own words:

...Starting from the humanitarian and romantic aspect of man in Kanthapura and The Cow and the Barricades—both deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, I soon came to the metaphysical novel, The Serpent and the Rope and The Cat and Shakespeare based on the vedantic conception of illusion and reality. My main interest increasingly is in showing the complexity of the human condition, and in showing the symbolic construct of one human expression. All words are hierarchic symbols, almost mathematical in precision, on and of the unknown.14

R.K. Narayan's contribution to the Indian English novel has been exemplary. Starting with Swami and Friends, his first novel published in 1938, to The Painter of Signs in 1993, he has captured the Indian
imagination for well over seven decades. By his choice of themes and a unique style of presentation, he has carved a niche for himself in the crowded literary scene. His protagonists are all ordinary middle class people and the family constitutes the hub of his preoccupations. Commenting on the thematic concerns of Narayan’s novels, William Walsh says, "The family, indeed, is the immediate context in which the novelist’s sensibility operates, and his novels are remarkable for the subtlety with which family relationships are treated." Thus in all his novels The English Teacher, The Bachelor of Arts, Waiting for the Mahatma and The Painter of Signs, Narayan explores a variety of relationships within the family. Commenting on the plot of his novels Walsh says, "The novels plot the rise of this intention onto awareness, its recognisation is a crisis of consciousness and then its resolution."

Thus Mulk Raj Anand with his concern for the destitute and the down trodden, Raja Rao with his metaphysical preoccupations and Narayan with his depiction of socio-comic aspects of everyday life of ordinary people, put together a wide panorama of life. The recapitulation would be incomplete without the mention of G.V.Desani. When his novel All About H. Hatterr was published in 1948, it was considered a curious aberration. The irreverence with which the English language was used, the alteration in syntax and the manner in which it was presented made it a peculiar novel since it did not conform to predominant mode of his contemporaries,
'the big three'. It is written in what Anthony Burgess says, "whole language, in which philosophical terms, the colloquialisms of Calcutta and London, Shakespearean archaisms, whinings quack spiels, references to the Hindu pantheon, the jargon of Indian litigation, and irritability seethe together." Salman Rushdie acknowledges the tremendous influence of G.V.Desani on his writing. Viney Kirpal commenting on the turbulent political scenario of the nineteen seventies says that "the 1970s were a gestation period for the shaping of the new Indian sensibility." However, the whole body of Indian English novels really do not anticipate the novel of the eighties. The content and the form of the novel of the eighties are unique.

The sensation of the eighties was the arrival on the Indian literary scene of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. It not only shook the very foundations of the Indian English Novel but also took the literary world by storm. Makarand Paranjape sums up accurately the impact of the novel: "This momentous book really jolted the very foundation of the Indian English Novel. Its energy, self-indulgence, irresponsibility, disorder and cockiness really shocked the daylights out of the staid form of the Indian English novel."  

The daring innovation in terms of both theme and technique in *Midnight’s Children* set the tone for the new novel of the eighties. And since then, there has been a steady output of novels, each being accorded
critical acclaim. The novel of the eighties recognises the plural nature of society and the importance of national integration. It thus reflects the reality of the mixed Indian tradition. The thrust in the new novel is on synthesis, an awareness of compelling plurality. The scope of these novels is trans-national and trans-continental. The East-West conflict projected in the novel of the 60s is now a thing of the past. Now cultures mingle, as is evident when characters of different nationalities interact with ease. As a result the whole world is projected as one big home. The new individual is more cosmopolitan and deregionalised than in the novel of the 60s and 70s. Some of the important novels of the 80s are Midnight’s Children, Rich like Us, Plans for Departure, Baumgartner’s Bombay, Shame, The Circle of Reason, The Bubble, Sunrise in Fiji, The Shadow Lines. These novelists with their choice of themes and techniques share the vision and objectives of other post-colonial writers. These post-colonial writers do exactly what Times International terms as their mission "to bring energy and outsider’s freshness into the closed and almost airless rooms of English Literature."

In a lighter vein, the magazine remarks: "For centuries Britons set up their institutions in the wilds and brought their culture to the world; now the world is bringing back the wilds to British institutions." 

The three authors studied in this thesis occupy a pre-eminent place among the post-colonial novelists of the eighties. Commencing their writing career in this momentous decade, they constitute a distinct group which
exemplifies the essence of the novel of the eighties. A study of their novels would thus provide an invaluable insight into the startlingly new developments in the Indian English Novel.

That the most unsuspected arrival of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* on the literary scene in the year 1981 changed the very contours of the Indian English Novel has been already mentioned. The impact of the novel on them can be best understood in the assessment of Klaus Borner, "It was something like a Copernican turning point in the history of literature and ideas." Panoramic in its scope, the narrative moves geographically through three nations and chronologically through six decades of the turbulent socio-political phase of the sub-continent. Though the novel teems with a vast array of characters, the protagonist Saleem Sinai’s centrality is never in doubt. The course of his quest for identity is used as a means of drawing in the entire history of the sub-continent in its most significant phase. Rushdie puts into *Midnight’s Children* virtually all of twentieth century Indian history, starting from the Jallianwallah Bagh and making its way through the Quit India movement, the Cabinet Mission, the role of the Muslim League in the partition, reorganization of Indian states, language riots, the Indo-China war, theft of the Prophet’s hair from the Hazratbal mosque in Kashmir, the wars with Pakistan, the liberation of Bangladesh and finally the Emergency. Rushdie, by a marvellous stroke of ingenuity, weaves the historical with the life of some member of the
protagonist’s family. It is this aspect that elevates the novel from being a limited personal narrative into the realms of historical and political fiction. In a significant depiction of the close intertwining of history, politics and the individual, the development of the protagonist is seen running parallel to the growth of the nation.

Divided into three parts, the first part of *Midnight’s Children* traces the family roots in Kashmir, its move to Bombay via Amritsar, Agra and Delhi and ends with Saleem Sinai’s birth; the second deals with the family’s sojourn in Bombay, followed by a shift to Pakistan and ends with the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war; the third covers the carnage in East-Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh and ends with the Emergency and its aftermath. Chronologically it can also be divided into three sections, indicating the importance of the historical factor in the narrative—pre-independence, partition and post-independence.

The narrative begins in Kashmir in the year 1915, much before the birth of Saleem Sinai. This section depicts the circumstances under which Dr. Aadam Aziz moves from Kashmir to Amritsar and how he is drawn into the maelstrom of the freedom movement. At the same time, incidents and characters are used to indicate the forces which will lead to the ultimate horror of partition. But they also suggest those positive elements which will be the saving grace in that traumatic period. The Jallianwallah Bagh
massacre intensifies Aadam Aziz’s sense of nationalism as it did with millions of Indians at that time. At the time when Muslim fundamentalist forces were raising their sinister heads aggravating communal tensions by vociferously demanding partition, characters like Mian Abdullah hold out a ray of hope through their broader vision of a brotherhood transcending communal barriers. Aadam Aziz’s involvement in the freedom struggle is unassuming but sincere and committed. With the dramatic entry of Saleem Sinai, the family connection with the history of the nation takes a more direct and flamboyant turn. He is handcuffed to history by virtue of being born at the same momentous hour of the nation’s independence. Hailed as the Mubarak by the soothsayers, his birth acknowledged by the Prime Minister himself, Saleem feels that he has a special destiny. With the special powers of telepathy he possesses, Saleem envisages a decisive role for himself in guiding the history of the new nation. His family members rather rudely ground his presumptions of being a Messiah. This paradoxically comes as a blessing as he now retreats to the privacy of an old clock tower from where he convenes the midnight children’s conference, comprising other children also born during the midnight hour and possessing extraordinary powers like himself. Saleem desires to harness their powers to guide the destiny of the nation. Dissensions by way of selfish interests and language bias subvert the lofty ideals, as a result of which Saleem’s vision suffers a severe setback. The midnight’s child who gives Saleem the most trouble is Shiva, his alter ego, the child exchanged during birth.
by Mary Pereria. During the course of his childhood, Saleem, whose face resembles the map of India, suffers many mutilations, symbolic of the fractured growth of the infant nation. Not being able to take an active role in guiding the history of the nation, doubts begin to creep into his mind leading to a crisis of identity. Constant shifting of locations also adds to this crisis. His family’s sojourn in Pakistan are the most miserable years for Saleem as he is forced to abstain from his midnight children’s conference and also becomes an innocent participant in the bizarre politics of Pakistan. Saleem’s joy on returning to Bombay is short-lived, as a sinus operation completely deprives him of all contact with the midnight’s children. He is however compensated for this loss by a superior sense of smell, which at a later stage gives him the bizarre identity of the buddha.

The shifting of the family permanently to Pakistan a few years later is the beginning of the second stage of Saleem’s quest for identity. But disappointments on both the personal and social fronts only aggravate the crisis. To make matters worse, his central place in the scheme of all things in which he took a lot of pride is usurped by his sister Jamila Singer, who by her melodious voice becomes the darling of the nation. A forlorn and despondent Saleem takes to wandering. The war over Kashmir between India and Pakistan, for which he takes the responsibility, comes to his rescue. The war annihilates all his family members, and the silver spittcon, the family heirloom, mercifully drains him of all memory. The crisis of
identity now reaches a state of total negation. Realising his potential as a sniffer, the Pakistan army now puts him to use by assigning him the task of a sniffer dog to sniff out insurgents in East Pakistan. It is at this time that his companions in his group give him the identity of the buddha due to his appearance and enigmatic character. The group’s participation in the assault on human dignity finds its nemesis in the Sundarbans. Saleem gets back his memory there under unusual circumstances. On emerging from the Sundarbans, the group is shocked to see the carnage caused by war.

Saleem returns to India in the magic basket of Parvathi, another midnight’s child. In Delhi now, in the magicians’ ghetto, Saleem embarks on his search for an identity, now on his own terms. His attempts to enlist the help of his uncle Mustapha not only fail but the association also becomes responsible for his downfall in the end. Saleem’s last attempt in his search is through his association with Picture Singh, the snake charmer. It is through Picture Singh that Saleem is reunited with his surrogate mother Mary Pereria, now the owner of the highly successful Braganza pickle factory in Bombay. Thus the novel makes a full circle. But before this reunion, Saleem suffers one last and the most devastating mutilation at the hands of the ‘widow’. The emergency declared by the widow proves disastrous for the midnight’s children, as she perceives them to be a threat to her political authority. His alter ego once again appears in the narrative for the last time. He has played the role of Shiva of myth. His union with
Parvati is brilliantly brought out. In the end Saleem pins all his hopes on his son Aadam Sinai, Emergency’s child, who really is the son of Shiva and Parvati. Saleem is confident that the new generation would be stronger and emerge victorious in the quest. By attempting to create history, Saleem has become the beacon light for future generations.

In his next novel *Shame* published in 1983, Rushdie focusses on a fictitious country Peccavistan, which however is a thin disguise for Pakistan. It is a narrative replete with symbolism, fantasy and political overtones and yet filled with human drama.

The political and social repression unleashed by an authoritarian state is woven into the protagonist Omar Khayyam Shakil’s search for his own personal identity in such an environment. In the course of his search for identity, the protagonist moves through three distinct phases. The first phase deals with Omar Khayyam Shakil suffering a crisis of identity in Nishapur, a mansion which is the very embodiment of 'shamelessness', one of the recurrent themes in the novel. Born under mysterious circumstances, Omar Khayyam’s crisis commences right from the time of his birth. The first twelve years of his life are spent in the unnatural environs of Nishapur closeted with his three embittered mothers who teach him that shamelessness is a virtue. A voracious reader, Omar Khayyam masters the art of hypnosis even as a young boy. This knowledge of hypnosis comes
in handy for him during the most crucial stage of his life later on. In the second phase of his development, Omar Khayyam Shakil attempts to break free from the stifling unhealthy environment of Nishapur. His entry into the outside world for the first time is replete with drama. His schooldays do not pass innocuously as the lesson of shamelessness is too deeply instilled in him. His first victim of hypnosis is his hapless classmate Farah Zoraster. Quite oblivious to her suffering, he leaves Q to study medicine in Karachi.

On the professional front he gains a high reputation as a doctor, but on the personal front, he continues to lead a life of abject shamelessness. Omar Khayyam Shakil's close associate in his misdemeanours is Isky Harappa, soon to play a major role in the political scenario of the country. The personal and the political strands of the story are thus cleverly integrated. Isky Harappa's political ambitions lead him to summarily discard Omar Khayyam Shakil who now latches on to Raza Hyder, the emerging star on the political scene. Through his association with Raza Hyder, he comes into contact with his mentally retarded daughter Sufiya Zenobia, the symbol of shame in the novel. The association originally commencing on a professional note, he eventually marries her, thus completing the symbolic union of shame and shamelessness in the novel. Sufiya is simultaneously symbolic of the effects of repression on the human psyche and the indication of the ultimate destruction of such forces. The
backlash to the social and political outrage heaped on a people by successive political leaders is symbolically represented by Sufiya’s violence. Towards the end she becomes a mythic creature unleashing terrifying violence, obviously representing the nation’s outrage. The final stage in Omar Khayyam Shakil’s quest for identity involves a process of correction. In his affection and sincere concern for Sufiya, he not only discards his unsavoury identity but also forges a more humane consciousness. Simultaneously the narrative takes us through the political nemesis of both Isky Harappa and Raza Hydei. Symbolically, the narrative concludes with the destruction of Nishapur, the mansion of shamelessness, by Sufiya, the living symbol of the shame of repression.

Another significant novel The Circle of Reason published in 1986, displays like Midnight’s Children the cosmopolitanism which is characteristic of the novel of the 1980s. This novel of Amitav Ghosh deals with the picaresque adventures of the young protagonist Alu, who in his search for identity, moves from rural Bengal to the mythical Eastern ‘boom’ city of al-Ghazira and finally to El-Oued, a desert town in Algeria. The three sections of the novel constitute the three stages of the protagonist’s search for identity taking place in three different countries.

In the long opening section, the story unfolds in a small village Lalpukur near Calcutta, where the young orphaned protagonist arrives.
The first stage in his search for identity in India depicts the protagonist as
a mere observer of passions of various kinds. Alu observes his schoolteacher
uncle, Balaram Bose’s passion for phrenology, Reason and Pasteur. These
passions manifest themselves in various ways. His obsession with
phrenology is the beginning of an acrimonious relationship with Bhudeb
Roy, the ambitious and unscrupulous local politician cum headmaster.
Balaram Bose’s passion for reason leads him to establish the Pasteur school
of Reason, whose rise and fall is replete with drama. His obsession with
cleanliness leads him to the indiscriminate and inhuman use of carbolic
acid in the village. This obsession brings him into direct confrontation
with Bhudeb Roy. Alu is also an observer of Bhudeb Roy’s passion for
power and greed for money. At his instigation, Balaram Bose’s house is
raided by the police on two counts of harbouring terrorists and abetting
the elopement of his wife Parboti Debi with Shombu Debnath, the enigmatic
local weaver, to whom Alu is apprenticed. The innocent boy is caught in
the crossfire of two men trying to destroy one another. In the climax of the
Lalpukur section, Balaram Bose is blown to smithereens in a bizarre
confrontation with Bhudeb Roy and the police, the inevitable outcome of
his blind passions. Alu is saved by a miraculous quirk of fate, but now
branded an extremist, is forced to flee the village, shadowed by the
policeman Jyothi Das.
On the run now, Alu first reaches Calcutta and then moves to the south, always just managing to elude the police and Jyothi Das, till he finally reaches Mahe, the southern most part of India’s west coast. Alu, still trying to evade the reach of the police, decides to set sail over the Indian Ocean to al-Ghazira.

In distant al-Ghazira Alu’s search continues. This section teems with a variety of characters like Nuri, the one-eyed egg seller, Jeevavbhai Patel, the ruined business man, Professor Samuel, the eccentric accountant, Karthamma, Kulfì, who plays an important role towards the end and, the most fascinating of all, Zindi, the big-hearted madam who keeps open house and befriends Alu on the boat journey to al-Ghazira.

However the focus among the many stories and incidents continues to be on Alu’s search for identity. The episode in which Alu lies buried under the rubble of 'The Star' constitutes the most momentous experience of this phase of his search. It marks a definite movement from being a mere observer to becoming a more active participant in his own story. Miraculously rescued from the rubble, he emerges for the first time with his own definite views on the necessity of purging the world of the evils of money. His quixotic scheme to destroy this evil backfires, leading this time to a self-created disaster. Alu’s life reaches a state of stasis, symbolized by his atrophied thumbs. Rescued by Zindi, he moves along with Kulfì
and the child Boss to El-Oued to play out the last stage of his search for identity.

In El-Oued, Mrs. Verma, an Indian doctor, who gives the final turn to Alu's search, befriends the fugitive party. Brisk and no-nonsensical, she is still filled with a human warmth and concern. The manner, in which she handles the tragic death of Kulf, and overcoming all hurdles, gives the body a dignified and ceremonial burial, turns out to be the most significant influence on Alu. Ironically he picks up the most important values of life from a tragic situation—the idea that for a sane and balanced life, passion should be moderated by genuine human concern. This idea could not have been better demonstrated through the act of consigning Balaram Bose's book *Life of Pasteur* to the flames. The circle is complete.

The new cosmopolitan experience seen in *The Circle of Reason* is explored in greater depth in Amitav Ghosh's second novel *The Shadow Lines* published in 1988. The cosmopolitanism this time moves beyond being a mere geographical shift of location in the narrative to a broader examination of the inter-action of cultures, and the individual's attempt to find a place in this interaction.

The protagonist's search for identity takes place through his interaction with a cluster of significant characters who expose him to their
own individual perceptions of living in the modern world. The unnamed protagonist is positioned amidst the crosscurrents of these influences from which he ultimately manages to mould his individual consciousness.

The first section of the novel traces vividly the unnamed protagonist's childhood experiences. As a child, he is a great admirer of his strict disciplinarian grandmother. He gets his first lesson in the meaning of nationalism by the stories she relates to him of her student days in Dhaka during the freedom struggle. The other character who grows on his consciousness is his enigmatic uncle Tridib. He captures the young boy's imagination by his encyclopaedic knowledge and especially by the way he instructs him to use his imagination. Tridib opens out a new and broader world to the young protagonist, and perhaps gives him his first lesson in a cosmopolitanism which is of mental attitude rather than physical location. The contrast between these two aspects of cosmopolitanism is embodied in the character of his cousin Ila. By virtue of her father being in the diplomatic service, Ila has travelled extensively, but her lack of imagination has severely checked her perceptions of other nations and their cultures. The protagonist is exactly the opposite of Ila, in the sense that he has seen much without having travelled at all, whereas Ila, inspite of having travelled much, has seen nothing at all. The concept of cosmopolitanism is extended further when the protagonist moves to London, and with the introduction of Nick and May Price, into the narrative. Ila's ill-fated fascination for
Nick Price, a man with a dubious reputation, is used to bring out the lacunae in her brand of cosmopolitanism. Her blind fascination for a western way of life leads her into a disastrous marriage with Nick Price, a marriage she regards as an entry into the apparently liberated western society. In her desperate pre-occupation with attaining a cosmopolitan identity, she is dangerously detached from her cultural roots. The protagonist perceives that everything about her has a ring of falsehood about it. As a contrast to Ila, May Price, with her genuine commitment to social work and an intense human concern embodies an authentic cosmopolitan consciousness. The search for identity takes its final form when the narrative shifts to Bangladesh. As in The circle of Reason it is a tragic situation which delivers the message. Tridib dies a gory death at the hands of a frenzied communal mob on the streets of Dhaka thus exploding the myth of the ‘shadow line’ supposed to be separating nations. In other words Tridib becomes a victim of parochial sentiments. With Tridib’s death, an element of irrational and frenzied emotion seeps into Tha’mma’s passionate nationalism. The protagonist becomes aware of the shortcomings of such a consciousness in the context of a larger world.

In the course of his search for identity, the protagonist realises the necessity of striking a rational balance between indiscriminate cosmopolitanism and blind irrational nationalism. The ability to imaginatively identify with other cultures while retaining one’s native
cultural roots becomes necessary in the broadening horizons of the modern world.

The third important novelist of the eighties decade Upamanyu Chatterjee's published his maiden novel *English, August: An Indian Story* in 1988, which deals with the contemporary youth's search for identity. Agastya Sen the young I.A.S. officer's sense of dislocation when suddenly transplanted from his megalopolitan background to the realities of life in a small backward town Madna is emblematic of the predicament of young Indians with similar backgrounds. Their cosmopolitan upbringing is a powerful alienating force, leading to a disturbing sense of rootlessness, disillusionment and disaffection. The narrative takes the protagonist through different stages in his attempt to come to terms with the new environment. In the course of his quest, he moves from a debilitating sense of alienation to an urge towards escapism and finally finds his own solution through a positive involvement in the compelling realities of life in this country.

Agastya's arrival in the hot, dusty, unglamorous town of Madna triggers off an acute sense of dislocation. He is jolted out of the placid, complacent attitude he had so carefully cultivated. Adding to his woes is his inability to adjust to the mindless functioning of a pompous bureaucratic set-up. In Madna, he encounters a variety of people who hold out possible ways of overcoming his sense of dissatisfaction and alienation. Finding
all these unacceptable, he takes recourse to escapism and retreats into an enclosed world of his own. As a result he is compelled to lead three lives in Madna to keep up his social and official pretences. This juggling with three lives confounds him further, leading to an acute sense of alienation.

After a certain stage, Agastaya's inability to cope with the pressure reaches a state of mental stasis. He feels that a return to his megalopolitan roots would show the way out of his disturbing predicament. Contrary to those expectations, he finds himself in further confusion when he discovers his friends in Delhi suffering from a similar rootlessness. Back in Madna, his mind opens out to positive influences. His association with Govind Sathe, a journalist who introduces him to the Bhagvad Gita, leads him to a hitherto unattempted search for solutions. John Avery's determined and single-minded devotion to a dream, Baba Ramanna's humanitarian work for the rehabilitation of leprosy patients, the devoted work of the Naxalites to create awareness among the exploited tribals and the Fisher King's determination to divine a meaning in life, are eye-opening influences. Agastaya's chance for positive action comes when he takes constructive steps to alleviate the acute water shortage in a remote tribal village. Agastaya realises that the solution to rootlessness does not lie in negativism or escapism but in positive human concern and constructive action. Having disinvested himself of his former attitude of disconcern and detachment, Agastaya leaves Madna a changed man, a man with a new vision.
Thus a historical survey of the Indian English Novel shows that the configuration of the novel has changed from time to time and found expression according to the perception of the writer. The varieties of themes which have been dealt with have been discussed in the earlier part of the chapter. The entire body of literature surveyed, though significant, does not however fully anticipate either in theme or technique the overwhelming originality of *Midnight's Children*. *Midnight's Children* gave the gamut of the Indian English Novel a thorough overhaul. Its theme and technique set a revolutionary trend bringing the hitherto insular Indian English Novel in tune with developments in post-colonial literatures all over the world. Salman Rushdie's contemporaries Amitav Ghosh and Upamayu Chatterjee have continued the trend, each focusing on certain selected aspects. These new writers have carved a niche for themselves in the sphere of post-colonial literatures. Like their fellow writers all over the world, they have moved into a trans-cultural ethos. As Pico Iyer succinctly comments:

They are something different. For one thing they are the products not so much as of a colonial division as of the international culture that has grown up, and they are addressing an audience as mixed up and eclectic and uprooted as themselves. They are the creators and creations of a new post-imperial order. English is the lingua franca; just about everywhere is a suburb of the same international culture.²³
This new sensibility and the new ethos find comprehensive expression in the novel of the 1980s. This study is an attempt to explore the manner in which the authors individually and as a group give expression to these altered perceptions. This change in perceptions has, thematically, been viewed through two particular aspects—the radically different view of the interaction between history, politics and the individual and the new dimensions given to the traditional issue of the search for identity. In terms of technique, the thesis explores the manner in which the Indian English Novel has opened out under the influence of post-colonial techniques without detaching it from its traditional moorings. It is hoped that this study of the themes and techniques of the novel of the 80s will provide significant insights into this highly challenging field.
NOTES


6. Iyengar, 324.

8. Mukherjee, 199-200.


10. Walsh, 99.

11. Mukherjee, 77.

12. Mukherjee, 198.


15. Walsh, 74.

16. Walsh, 75.

18. Viney Kripal, p-xx


21. Iyer, 51


23. Iyer, 49.