The first thing that strikes even a casual reader of the novels discussed, is the realism found in them. Raymond Williams had an interesting comment to make on what constitutes realism. 'The centenary of 'Realism' an English critical term occurred but was not celebrated in 1956. Its history in these hundred years, has been so vast, so complicated and bitter that any celebration would in fact have turned into a brawl. Yet realism is not an object, to be identified, pinned down, and appropriated. It is, rather, a way of describing certain methods and attitudes, and the descriptions, quite naturally have varied in the ordinary exchange and development of experience.' Apart from literature the term has been used in philosophy, painting and science also.¹

In literature too, various shades of realism can be seen, as for example, objective realism, photographic realism, critical realism, socialist realism and social realism. Talking about the varied possible interpretations of realism. Legouis Cazamian in A History of English Literature says: 'Realism in art is not a method but a tendency. That is to say, something of a variable and relative
nature, which can manifest itself in very diverse forms, and is
difficult to gauge according to any fixed standards. It can be said
to constitute the fundamental element to which one can trace back
as it were, the attitude of a writer; it is an effect as well as a cause;
it is subservient to ideas, to motives of sentiment and principle, and
these motives can be extremely different in character. There is
scarcely any aesthetic intention which, if logically developed, may
not lead to a more or less accentuated form of realism.²

The term social realism has been used in Indo-Anglian
writing. It is a term somewhere between critical realism and
socialist realism. It advocates the depiction of life in an entirely
honest manner without prejudice and glamour, and at the same
time, it is accepted as the offspring of Marxism. Unlike 'stark
realism' which suggests a purely scientific and impersonal depiction
of objective reality, in social realism the author is involved. Abbas
refers to the celebrated revolutionary writer and critic Ralph Fox
who sacrificed his life for the sake of his cause, and says that the
definition given by him in the novel and the people is the best
definition of Social Realism: 'The revolutionary task of literature
today is ... to bring the creative writer to face with his only
important task; that of winning the knowledge of truth, of reality ...
[he] must always engage in a terrible and revolutionary battle with
reality, revolutionary because he must seek to change reality. For him, his life is always a battle of heaven and hell, a conflict of Gods dethroned and Gods ascendant a fight for the soul of man'.

Any work conforming to the tenets of social realism should depict the social forces, their influences over the lives of individuals, and the process of change taking place in the society. It should also portray the dynamic relationship between the individual and society.

Social realism, then, is the acute awareness of the social forces that surround the individual, their power to influence the lives of men and women – for better or for worse – and the overall interaction of the individual and society. This relationship is creative and dynamic, for in the process not only the individual’s character and destiny change but the individual helps to change the social condition.

The commitment of a writer in this case is to depicting social change in whatever direction it is taking place. There are instances of writers betraying revolutionary romanticism but that does not constitute the central core of social realism. Abbas too, seems to share the view of Manim Gorky about associating realism and romanticism.
The first Indian English novelist, who opened the ground of realistic Indian novel in English is K.S. Venkatramani [1891-1951]. His characters include peasants, beggars, fisherman, police constables and young idealistic patriotic intellectuals. Gandhi is a predominant influence and he expresses, through his characters, an ardent urge for the reconstruction of the society.

Elena J. Kalinnikova quoting Venkatramani’s description of an Indian beggars says, ‘The Indian beggar is the most interesting of the ragamuffins of the world. Amongst the numerous progeny of poverty he is the oldest’.5

The arrival of Mulk Raj Anand on the Indo-Anglian literary scene is truly the beginning of social realism. Abbas mentions it in his essay on Social Realism and change: ‘But it was left to a young Indian writer, then living in England, and writing in English, to publish a novel that may be said to be the harbinger of social realism in Indian literature’.6

The ‘Young Indian writer’ is none else than Mulk Raj Anand and the novel described as ‘harbinger of social realism in Indian literature’ is *Untouchable [1933]*. The novel depicts one day in the life of Bakha, a young sweeper as the hero of a novel that puts him apart and above the host of writers in Indo-Anglian literature, ‘In
what exactly the novelty of Anand’s humanism consist? First of all it is to be seen in the writer’s love towards working people. The man of labour has won a lasting place in Anand’s creative work. His first protagonists are sweepers, coolies, and plantation workers. The characters are a phenomena in Indian literature.7

Placing Mulk Raj Anand in the tradition of the great pioneers of Realism like Balzac and Emile Zola, K.R.Srinivas Iyengar places him even above Sharatchandra and Premchand in the realistic depiction of the lowest of the low.

In writing of the pariahs and the ‘bottom dogs’ rather than of elect and the sophisticated he [Mulk Raj Anand] had ventured into territory that had been largely ignored till then by Indian writers. For all their nationalistic fervour, Bankim Chandra’s novels were but romances distantly imitative of Scott with a historical or mystical slant; Tagore was chiefly interested in the upper and middle classes, and Sharatchandra in the lower middle classes; and Munshi Premchand chose his themes from peasantry and humble folk of Uttar Pradesh. None of them cared to produce realistic or naturalistic fiction after the manner of Balzac or Zola. It was Anand’s aim to stray lower still than even Sharatchandra or Premchand ... and so he described a waif like Muno, in Coolie, an untouchable like Bakha, an indentured labourer like Gangu, and set
them right at the centre of the scheme of cruelty and exploitation that held India in its vicious group.\(^8\)

Commenting on the overall contribution of Anand to Indo-Anglian writing, M.K. Naik in *A History of Indian English Literature* says, 'The strength of Anand's fiction lies in its vast range, its wealth of living characters, its ruthless realism, its deeply felt indignation at social wrongs, and its strong humanitarian compassion'.\(^9\)

Hand in hand with Mulk Raj Anand marched Khwaja Ahmad Abbas with the difference that while Anand concentrated on fiction Abbas was blown with the wind to journalism, to film criticism, film script writing and film direction. In spite of the fact that Abbas is better known for his films and journalism, it is surprising that Abbas has to his credit more than twenty two works of fiction, five of these being short story collections and the rest of them are novels.

Abbas shared the vision of his friend Anand and tended to portray reality in its social content. His first novel appeared in 1943. *Tomorrow is Ours* depicts protest against religious prejudices, problems of the relations of castes. The so-called untouchables are
depicted by Abbas as deeply human and talented and his protagonists have sincere love for them.

Poverty and hunger are recurrent themes in Abbas and he has got a unique talent to weave them in the very texture of his works. In this very novel the producer of dances. Ajoy Kumar Bose, acts as an exponent of his ideas, ‘what are your mythological dance dramas, but propaganda for worn out superstitions about gods and goddesses? ... I would like you to dance the dance of hunger and death. Let the groans of the oppressed and the downtrodden be heard in the tinkle of your bells, let the demons of capitalism; and imperialism and fascism, the real demons who menace this earth, let your heroes and heroines be the common men and women fighting these demons in the great battle for the liberation of humanity’.10

Another memorable figure in the tradition of social realism in Indo-Anglian literature is Bhabhani Bhattacharya. His first novel So Many Hungers [1947] is set against the background of Bengal famine of the early forties and the Quit India Movement. It deals with the theme of exploitation, political, economic and social. The novel deals with So Many Hungers - hunger for food, money, freedom, expansion, human dignity and self-respect. ‘Of these several hungers the novelist has succeeded best in dealing with the hunger for food, and scene depicting the havoc wrought by famine
Among the rural poor in Bengal constitute some of the finest examples of social realism in Indian English Fiction. 11

Among the Indian novelists in English, Anand occupies a pivotal position by virtue of the magnitude of his literary output and his achievement. He is the messiah who is interested in portraying the oppressed and working for them.

Anand is famous chiefly as a writer of sociological novels. His novels deal with some of the most glaring social evils, which include untouchability and the exploitation of labour. Anand’s picture of poverty and of the wretchedness and misery caused by poverty are most vivid and most poignant. By vividly forcefully describing the sufferings of the people Anand appears before us as an uncompromising critic of the whole class of the perpetrators of injustices and cruelty. Every novel of his seems to have been designed by him to arouse the social conscience. There is hardly any ugly or depressing aspect of Indian social life, which has not been attached by Anand in his novels. He is the leading practitioner in India of the novel of protest.

Mulk Raj Anand is a humanist in literature if ever there was one. Briefly and simply stated, a humanist is a lover of humanity, a champion of the rights of human beings, a castigator of tyrants,
exploiters and evil-doers and a supporter of all movements and all campaigns which aim at the amelioration of conditions of life for human beings and at the eradication of evils which destroy human happiness and retard the progress of individuals and of mankind at large. However, being a cultured person, a humanist does not become rabid or fanatical or unbalanced in his opposition to evil and injustices.

Humanism may be regarded as Anand's very religion. He appears in his fiction as the champion of suffering humanity. In novel after novel, he has given expression to his compassion for mankind through his sympathetic portrayals of the victims of injustice and persecution. His commitment to humanism constitutes the very foundations on which his novels are built.

All his novels depict the miserable life of the labouring class, the sufferings and miserable condition of the backward classes and Anand's aim is to rouse the conscience of the richer classes in order to bring about some kind of amelioration in living standards of the downtrodden.

There can be no doubt then, that Anand has a definite social and moral aim in the writings of his novels. Anand does not believe that an artist should live in an ivory tower and should indulge in
fanciful dreams about the joys and delights of human existence. Anand is no believer in art for arts sake. He is a believer in using art as a vehicle for the advancement and progress of human society.

Anand does not stop merely with the portrayal of human problems. As a responsible artist he suggests various solutions to the different problems carefully refraining from imposition of any kind. As said earlier, Anand is certain that the cause of all human misery is 'man's inhumanity to man'. A careful study of Anand's novels reveals to us his vision of life. His masterly treatment of social evils and the solutions that he suggests for all the problems. A thematic study demands a discussion of the solutions. Anand arrives at and the artistic illustrations of the same.

Thus, Anand's approach and solution are always positive. He suggests a hopeful solution in every novel either explicitly or implicitly. Anand is prolific in output, committed in his outlook and vigorously demonstrative in technique and style. As a writer of fiction, Anand's notable marks are vitality and a keen sense of precision and actuality. He is a realist in so far as he is concerned with the iniquities and idiosyncrasies of the human situation and with the underdogs and the socially oppressed individuals. Anand has labourious and ideological preoccupations, which make him emphasize the universal against the particular, the familiar against
unfamiliar. Anand prefers 'The familiar to the fancied avoids the 
highways of romance and sophistication and explores the bylanes of 
the outcaste and the peasants, the sepoys and the working people.'

Anand is irresistibly drawn by social motives, and his attitude 
to life is so particularly dominated by socialist theory that it is 
difficult to bypass or isolate his commitment. But when his 
imagination burns and the dross of propaganda is consumed, there 
yet remains a residue of artistic energy and power. He is 
passionately concerned with the indignities of poverty and the 
cruelties of caste, with the roofless plight of orphans, untouchables 
and labourers. When he writes in the angry reformist way, about the 
personal sufferings induced by the soulless economic system and 
the hierarchical stiffness of the social custom, one can feel the 
impact of the visionary urge and conviction behind the sociological 
rage. The basic structure of Anand's novels is naturalistic; the 
deterministic patterns of the milieu and circumstances combined 
with a defiant humanism define his fictional work. Anand's realism 
has a sociological stance.

Anand accepts the sociological approach almost with a 
religious fervour. So strong is his sense of commitment to this creed 
that he is not ashamed to admit that he is using literature as a 
means rather than an end itself. He defines his 'operative
sensibility' in his *Apology for Heroism*. 'Any writer who said that he was not interested in *la condition humaine* was either posing or yielding to a fanatical love of isolationism.'

He claims to be a realist who, 'allows his insight to be conditioned by time, the place and circumstances of his age' and thus affiliates himself with the 'progressive' writers of contemporary Indian literature. Like Premchand and Yashpal, he is determined to unite with a view to discovering the causes of the mental and material chaos in India and the world and of his own failure of his generation. He is obviously 'committed to commitment outside the merely aesthetic scope of literature and accepts the doctrine of 'art as the criticism of life'. Anand says, 'If the ultimate purpose of the novelist is to understand man, to intensify his emotion, to arouse his consciences to create the condition for the experience of 'Rasa' or a flavour of beauty, then his total consciousness including all his faculties and experience are what the raw material of human life likely to be involved in the creative process. And it is only through the imagination that ... the raw material of human life can be illumined and transformed, only then can the new poetry of the novel form become a kind of criticism of life.'
Anand thus gives his novels a socialist slant; with his missionary zeal to ameliorate the lot of the havenots and a desire to bring about radical social change, he is the enemy of the status quo. Anand inveighs against society which denies the individual his worth and self esteem and suggests rapid changes in the society. Anand is naturalist in the portrayal of the current social scene. Anand tends to be a utopian in his conception of the future society in which he hopes, all that is destructive of human fulfillment like class, caste, creed and convention is overcome and eliminated. As M.K. Naik observes, 'As a modern Indian writer, Anand is very much conscious of what he describes vividly as 'the double burden on my shoulders, the Alps of the European tradition and the Himalaya of my Indian past'. Hence, the confrontation between tradition and modernity is one of the chief themes in his work. His upbringing and intellectual development have, however, led him on the whole, to place greater emphasis on the need to revolt against the delayed aspects of the Indian tradition than on the acceptance and upholding the finer elements in it'.

Anand's realism is based on the naturalistic assumption that a writer must go beneath and beyond the social surface in locating and exposing to view the forces and causes of the real human condition. The novelist must identify, describe and interpret these
forces as the real reality. Anand views himself as an activist conscious of the role he has to play in effecting changes in the social consciousness. He tries to purify the experiences of his tribe by demonstrating and propagating the remedies for the social ills. As a writer committed to his creed, Anand has a 'double role to play' he has to tell the tale and again convey his philosophy but most of the time he never becomes purely propagandist although he imparts the intensity and energy of propaganda to his fiction. In a letter to M.K.Naik, Anand has resented the charge of propaganda labelled against him. He observes, 'if the attempt to discover the meaning of life in any given human environment is propaganda, then I am a propagandist, otherwise it is an expression which I define as an enactment of body-soul drama of human beings, through the imagination'.

Mulk Raj Anand gives an impression of being a committed writer not only because of the themes and their treatment in his novels but also because of his role in founding the Indian progressive writers association in spreading the progressive writers' movement to almost all the Indian languages and his support to the leftist place movement. He does not deal with the lives of aristocrats and wealthy as Bankim Chandra and Tagore do, nor does he describe the lower middle classes and peasants like
Sharatchandra Chattopadhyaya and Premchand do but selects his characters from the very bottom of the society and delineates the dregs—Munoo the waif, Bakha the sweeper, and Ganga the indentured labourer. Before Mulk Raj Anand no writer had attached any importance to these characters and they were considered in Indian society as non-entities.

Mulk Raj Anand himself says about his choice, in the special preface to the second Indian edition of *Two Leaves and a Bud* : 'All these heroes, as the other men and women who had emerged in my novels and short stories, were dear to me, because they were the reflections of the real people I had known during my childhood and youth. And I was only repaying the debt of gratitude. I owed them for much of the inspiration they had given me to mature into manhood, when I began to interpret their lives in my writing. They were mere phantoms ... They were flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood, and obsessed in the way in which certain human beings obsess an artist's soul. And I was doing no more than what a writer does when he seeks to interpret the truth from the realities of his life.

To Bhabhani Bhattacharya, his conscience prompted him to highlight the evils of society and thereby arouse the social conscience of his readers. He is of the opinion that, once this kind
of awareness is brought about, man will definitely change his attitudes and act more compassionately and responsibly as a good citizen. Bhattacharya is concerned with the moral and social uplift of the people. And is against all forms of exploitation of man by man.

Bhattacharya is interested in establishing a perfect society. His dream of the ideal society, is derived from Gandhian vision of Rama Rajya: A society which is a healthy society, which is free from the oppression in which everyone will enjoy all types of freedom and live in harmony with one another. His greatness lies not only in the realistic portrayal of life but also in the vision of life which he conveys through it and which we all seek to enter.

Bhattacharya seems to be following the example of Mulk Raj Anand who made a breakthrough in Indian novel writing, by focussing his creative vision on humble folk. Just as Mulk Raj Anand employs his fiction to reform the condition of the poor. So does Bhattacharya. He reflects the suffering as well as the hopes and aspirations of the masses in each of his novels. Bhattacharya picks up the problems of mass man and mass experience as subject matter for his fiction and his primary concern is always the fate of the exploited, the downtrodden and the forgotten. He believed that all the sufferings of man emanate from the oppression of man by
man, of the weak by the strong and of the innocent by the cunning. As a literary artist and social historian, he has been concerned with a provocative moral vision of a meaningful life for his fellowmen. In novel after novel, he exposes and attacks the social evils of contemporary society, and exhorts his fellow citizens to a more compassionate concern for human welfare. It is this aspect of his writing which brings him closer to those western writers who were committed and wanted something beyond the aesthetic satisfaction of writing.

Bhattacharya has something to say to his countrymen. He is a humanist like Anand. He has a message to convey to them. He rejects the dictum – 'Art for Art's Sake'. He wants to break this hard cocoon and wants to reveal the actualities to the large public. He believed firmly that my novel must have a social purpose and it must make man aware of exploitation of all types, prevailing in society.

Bhattacharya while sympathizing with the victims of exploitation does not give up all hope. He is of the opinion that they can be encouraged to be conscious of their birth right to live as human beings and to stand up for this. He can't help condemning the exploiters and sympathising with the exploited. The artist in him is ready to meet the demands of life as well as art, making his
novels present a convincing interpretation of life and an aesthetically pleasing experience.

Social themes selected by the author, give him plenty of scope to draw our attention to the exploitation of man by man leading to untold misery and suffering. The novelist hopes to awaken the conscience of those that exploit the weak and at the same time rouse the exploited to stand for their rights. But he does not advocate revolution or expect overnight miracles. He knows that these changes will take time. But he is confident that they will ultimately come. He has made all his protagonists instrumental in achieving this goal. But he makes it amply clear that man has first to change his own self before he can change his society. Only a man of good morals and civic sense can build a society based on justice and good will.

Bhattacharya shows and shares his sympathy with his characters, especially the underdog. His sympathy is immediately aroused, when he sees the wretched and miserable condition of the humble folk who, in spite of their heroic struggle fail to make any headway in life. It is the life and fate of these poor souls that he explores, together with the causes that are responsible for their downtrodden conditions and the ways and means by which their lot would be ameliorated. Bhattacharya feels that it is a little kindness,
a little concern arising from genuine human values that can transform life and make it worth living.

Bhattacharya does not exhibit anger like Anand - Rational anger. He is a Marxist only to the extent that he is deeply concerned with improving the life and fate of the underdog of society, but his methods of bringing about a change in society are diametrically opposed to those of the Marxists. He does not believe in class war or revolution, which is the stronghold of the Marxists. His protagonists are both realistic and idealistic, striving to transform society into something better, by touching the conscience of the people.

Bhattacharya is acutely aware of the social forces that surround the individual, their power to influence the lives of men and women for better or for worse - the novel in his hand becomes an instrument to bring about an awareness of social reality, with a view to dealing with the problem of social change and to hastening this process in order to ameliorate the lot of the common man on the street. He sets about pleading for the underdog and victims of the present social order. His irrepressible enthusiasm to see the world shaping to his ideals and the dream of raising the nation to the dizzy heights of glory and peace are the vital concerns of Bhattacharya. His novels take up these concerns. He seems to be
more sensitively aware of the social realities of contemporary life than other writers of his time, with the exception of Anand.

In Bhabhani Bhattacharya the depiction of hunger appears quite predominant. That is why he has made the low-born Kalo his protagonist in *He Who Rides a Tiger*. Bhattacharya depicts the impact of the changing times on all sections of society as well as his vision of a bright future. In this respect his art is a valuable contribution in transforming the society. He is interested in changing the conditions of the downtrodden by making them assertive and at the same time wants to change the heart of the exploiters by making them merciful, so that both the sections will be educated in the right direction. Bhattacharya is fully conscious of the writer's dual responsibility to life and art. There is a world of difference between the intellectual committed by his creative and humanitarian concerns to educate his fellowmen and the propagandist who is unable to commit to any true thought by his action. The fact that most great books do advocate reforms does not mean that the author is a propagandist. In fact it is in the nature of life and literature that the passions and emotions of an author centre around issues of social importance in their contemporary life.
Kamala Markandaya is to some extent a slightly different type of a novelist although in her concern for the weak she is similar to Anand or Bhattacharya. She knows that hardship and suffering are the lot not only of the poor peasants but also of manual labour. The novels of Kamala Markandaya have sociological interest as they allude to several features of Indian society. It must be said that one refreshing features of her novels is that they transcend the barriers of religion and caste. The novelist is simply not interested in a person's caste and she does not emphasize regional characteristics. As a keen observer of life in India, she must certainly have noticed the continuing hold of casteism and regionalism on our society, but as an artist and as a thinker she has exercised her right of selection and dealt with her characters as individual human beings or as Indians and not as representatives of any narrow section or creed. It may confidently be said that the India of Kamala Markandaya is a united India with a culture and soul of her own.

The novelist recognises the evils and deficiencies in Indian life and society and warns her countrymen against a slavish imitation of the West. She does not offer any ready-made solution to the many problems facing the country.
Kamala Markandaya depicts in her fiction, human beings whom one usually meets in one’s day-to-day life. She is a social realist who projects the tumult, tension and turbulence of the present day world with a tragic vision. The values and attitudes depicted in each of her novels are the reflections or the ‘mental images’ of our age with all its complex and diversified human life patterns. In her fiction, we get the picture of a mini India, depicting its traditions and cultural values, social attitudes and economic conditions.

Markandaya’s themes characters are drawn from different sections of society. Her fiction is not confined to a particular class of society. What strikes us in her fiction is her broad outlook and her ‘humanistic concern’ or her ‘sensitivity to suffering’. She is opposed to social injustice and is sensitive to any sort of suffering caused to human beings. She exposes the harrowing experience and mundane conditions of men and women, particularly of women due to certain social customs, attitudes and values. She wants to stress the need for eradicating these abhorrent conditions which demoralise people. By taking note of these fictional experiences many of our present day conflicts can be avoided in future. And her characters are a ‘standing warning of tragedy for us. Her sincerity
and deep involvement in social problems and her concern for the suffering multitude is obvious in her works.

In Markandaya's hands, the novel matures to have a serious theme, a vision, living characters and a supple style. In dealing with the Indian family life in particular she is both selective and evocative. Her characters range widely from the illiterate poor peasant women to the educated westernised city women as also the British women in India. Her characters will survive among the most memorable creations of Indian fiction in English.

The fictional world of Markandaya is a world of conflicts: The east vs the west, individual vs individual, individual vs society, once race vs another, ideal vs real, materialism vs spiritualism, colonised vs coloniser, innocent and ignorant vs shrewd exploiters, old generation, vs new generation, the cruel vs the compassionate, high heeled vs low heeled and town vs countryside and so on. The novelist passionately protests against unequal distribution of power, privileges, property and social resources and against racist and sexist evils on behalf of the affected humanity. She deplores the inhuman ravishment of the village [of Rukmani and Nathan] in the name of progress by raising a tannery [owned by an Englishman] which symbolised the eternal agony of environmental and ethical pollution, pitching industrialism against the peaceful
pastoral countryside. Markandaya develops her concerns through symbolic description of agonisingly slow and protracted construction of the hospital bedevilled by the problems of finance, labour and thefts on the one hand and on the other the flourishing construction of the tannery swallowing the land of poor peasants.

Through her novels Markandaya protests also against war which fills everyone with shadows and fears and a sense of tragic fury gathering across the seas. The writer throws a word of caution against the evil of a violence which the day would unloose.

Ravi [the protagonist of *A Handful of Rice*] the rebel, protests against wholesale acceptance of life as a culture for the breeding of suffering because he is 'physically wild with rage' at the system. He does not subscribe to the fatalistic acceptance of suffering as do the older generation and he thinks that a few positive steps can make life worth living.

Clinton, in *The Coffer Dams*, disdains the native Indians whom he does not consider as human beings. Krishnan says in rage that they are brushed off by the Clintons because, 'they are experts and we are just beginning'. In this manner, Markandaya protests against racially induced superiority complex of the Britishers which generates inferiority complex on the other side.
These conflicts originate in her sensitivity concerned with the sufferings generated by the harrowing perils of grim existence perpetuated by economic, historical, socio-political and attitudinal accidents. Due to these ostensibly floating ideas, which at times seem to be deliberately forwarded by the novelist herself, and her tragic vision permeating her works the elements of protest caused by her personal involvement with the problems pertaining to the present social order, has eluded the attention of the critics.

Avadesh K. Singh comments: 'Beneath the crust of corpus of her writings which may be taken as different essays on 'socio-literature', a title which Markandaya herself would have preferred, lie the undercurrents of her concerns and her protest against social, political, racial, and economic imbalances'.

In her paper entitled, 'On Images' presented at a seminar, Kamala Markandaya has expostulated her ideas about socio-literature. She begins with castigating certain pre-conceptions that human beings form about others and express themselves in images that condition their behaviour to each other'.

In the perspective of Markandaya's own statement it becomes quite clear that her novels are an endeavour to portray her concerns, and she used the novel as a platform for expressing her protest
against the existing pre-conceptions, prejudices and spree of dispossessing the downtrodden by a few privileged possessors. Her novel *Nectar in a Sieve* seems to be another tale of perpetual exploitation and prejudice and portrayal of the typical Indian trait of resignation in the face of suffering.

Among the women novelists in Indō-Anglian literature who have attempted to project the image of Indian consciousness and social problems, especially of the rural folk and changing traditional society, and east-west encounter, the name of Kamala Markandaya stands foremost. She attempts to articulate the national impulse and cultural change. Therefore, both by virtue of the variety and complexity of her achievement and as a representative of a major trend in Indo-Anglian novel, Kamala Markandaya merits special attention.

Among Kamala Markandaya’s novels, *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* fall in line with Bhabhani Bhattacharya’s *So Many Hungers!* and *He Who Rides a Tiger* and to some extent with Anand’s *Untouchable.* The main concern here is hunger starvation, poverty and portrayal of the oppressed. Her novel *A Silence of a Desire* is a novel which also falls into this category but here the conflict is between traditionalism and modernism. Dandekar’s modern views are in conflict with his wife Sarojini’s traditional ideas.
In Kamala Markandaya's novels the problem of caste is not as serious or acute as one finds them in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabhani Bhattacharya, because her pre-occupations are mainly hunger and starvation. In her novels hunger eliminates religious and caste considerations and places people on simply the human level. The poor people, poor peasants, tribal people do not remember their caste or creed. They live, work and demand food together, eat from common garbage heaps or charity kitchens, sleep over common roads and streets, demonstrate and protest together without ever entertaining the ideas of religion or caste. In fine, unjust and irrational and avoidable suffering, by whoever it might be, is what moves her to write.

Anita Desai mainly dwells on the predicament and dilemma faced by the urban middle class, her prime concern the exploration of the inner selves of her women protagonists. She explores and portrays kin bonds from the viewpoint of a psychologist. Her fictional world is located in the corridors of human consciousness. She is almost obsessively concerned with the dark uncannily oppressive, inner world of her intensely introverted characters, *Voices in the City* [1965] deals with a wife's suicide, symbolising Calcutta as the city of death and corruption. In *Cry the
Peacock, Bye Bye Blackbird, Fire at the Mountain, and Where shall we go this summer, she comments on violence and aggression in society.

R.K. Narayan’s novel The Financial Expert [1952] is an ironic exposure of people’s love of money because of its great power and its tenuous stability when obtained through unscrupulous and foul means. Narayan approvingly cites the golden bourgeois dictum, ‘All the virtues attach themselves to Gold’ and shows the consequences of its unbridled operation. In Guide [1959] Fraudulent holy men and a preponderance of hoax and hypocrisy in India’s social ethos underline the theme. It touches the fringes of the problem of hunger and draught because of the absence of rain.

K.A. Abbas’s Inquilab [1955] vividly recaptures the most dramatic incidents during India’s struggle for freedom in the second and third decades of the present century. It is a powerful indictment of the artificial barriers created by man in the name of caste, class, race and religion and of anti human forces of repression and ‘tyranny masquerading as democracy’.

Conflicts could be found at many levels. If the conflict is of a psychological nature, the protagonist himself is presented in his own inner struggles. B.Rajan’s Dark Dancer [1959] explains this Krishan the protagonist has returned from abroad after a long stay.
there. He is advised by his parents and well wishers to take up a government job. Further they want him to marry a girl of their choice. They have picked the girl because, though the dowry brought by her would not be very attractive, she is of impeccable pedigree, with good connections in the government administration. Krishan marries this girl Kamala. He joins the non-cooperation movement for the country’s freedom and injured in a police lathi charge. At a demonstration he is arrested and imprisoned after sometime. When the country has become free, giving rise to widespread violent communal riots, he is again wounded. But while passing through his grim national ordeal he undergoes a personal ordeal which brings to him the realisation of his wife Kamala’s real work and his mismatch with his English wife Cynthia - this also enables him to realise his own self as well as his identity as an Indian, rooted deep in the soil of India.

Arun Joshi, in The Strange Case of Billy Biswas [1971] gives an aerial view of the drought caused hunger, eliminating comprehensive, detailed pictures. For Ruth Prawer Jhabvala hunger is an identifiable object characteristic of India, good enough to be paraded in its typical uniform.

Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan remains the most comprehensive description of the catastrophic human situation at
the time of Partition. Mano-Majra, a remote village in the Punjab, serves as the fictional setting of Train to Pakistan. Although traditionally devoid of political consciousness the village emerges as a microcosm of India. As Hindus and Sikhs battle their Muslim brothers for a political stronghold in the nation, so the villager's traditional ways of life progressively dis-integrate into selfishness, mistrust and cruelty. The divided country symbolises a transition in civilisation from spirituality to secularisation, a transition that necessarily entails great physical and spiritual agony. The realism of Khushwant Singh is securely rooted in his native state Punjab. In his novels, he goes closer to what is termed as 'Stark reality' His first novel Train to Pakistan [1956] shows the impact of partition on a border village with pitiless realism.

The train functions as a multi dimensional symbol. It is a dynamic force, which transports multitudes of persons to various destinations. Life in Mano Majra is rhythmically paced by the arrival and departure of trains: the whistles and sounds are signals for rising, for prayer, for work, and for rest. In the impersonal and dehumanised process of historical change the train suggests the miseries and privations of innumerable human beings, their rootlessness and severance from the earth: 'The upheaval of a civilisation thus transmutes the symbol from dawn and creation to
darkness and death. Through the ghost like appearance of a mechanistic power without a headlight and bearing corpses - lies a prophecy of destruction of humanistic values.\textsuperscript{29}

\textit{Train to Pakistan} deserves a high position in Indo-Anglian literature. The effects of a complex and heartfelt situation assumes new meaning by creative and imaginative intensification. The author's objectivity in the treatment of theme and event, his skill and insight in the delineation of characters and his vision of humanity - the power and the glory, all align him with the finest novelists in the English Language.

The wound of spring by Marath Menon embraces a number of important social themes, of which caste is dramatically the most central. The author's statement that \textit{The Wound of Spring} is a story of a Nayar family of Malbar in southern India and his explanatory references to the matriarchal family system of a tharawâd [homestead] give some idea of the extent to which localised social setting is an important background to the novel. The Madathil Tharawad into which the central character [Unni] is born symbolises the precarious state of the Nayar joint family at a time when it is tenaciously trying to maintain the old traditions of solidarity, loyalty, subservience and duty. The novelist shows how the old family code is broken up as a result of internal insurgence and
changing social patterns: by the uncompromising orthodoxy of the ancient ways and beliefs; by the disintegrating effects of jealousies, rivalries and antagonisms in the absence of strong cohesive leadership and by the modern generation's desire for independence.

Unni runs away from the tharawad and its strife only to plunge into the midst of anarchy on a large scale. He is captured by a marauding band of moplaha, who loot and murder in retaliation to Hindu persecution. When the Moplahs are attached by the army Unni is injured and taken prisoner by the soldiers who assume that he is an enemy. He effects an escape and his life is saved by the untouchable Kandan family who nurse him back to health. He falls in love with their untouchable daughter, Cheethu, marries her much to her parent's caste-conscious alarm and returns to the tharawad where he and Cheethu are ostracised by all except Parvathi Amma, Unni's mother. His elder brother, the autocratic Govindan, self-styled head of the tharawad arranges to have Unni beaten up as a reprisal for his caste defection. Unni resists and is murdered.

Thus the novel's setting and action constantly keep before the readers' attention the tradition versus modernity theme. This theme is the backbone of the novel's social meaning, which is in the main dramatically implied rather than bluntly stated. Both Unni's
involvement with the Moplahs and his death draw attention to the problem of violence in society, and indicate some ways in which the problem results from the failure of the past to adjust to the present and from the vested interest resistance to social reform.

Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* [1961] is another novel worth mentioning. Mulk Raj Anand says of the novel. 'In her novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, however, she has revealed herself as one of the most talented pioneers of the novel in Indian English literature sensitive, urbane, and courageous who has confronted the being in situations of a purdah lady, and broken through the existential world where she was hemmed in on all sides and removed to opaque veil of her anguish to suggest the mystery of an Indian woman in the light of the 'burning and melting' of her body soul in a creative work which will shine forever.

Nayantara Sahagal's themes, characters and views are the result of her own disillusionment, clash of ideas and values. She writes about people, incidents and situations very familiar to herself and educated Indians. No wonder she writes about the anguish, dilemma and the complex intricacies of the so-called affluent aristocracy with ease and fluency. Her characters are true to life. In this respect, she is a representative of all women, who are
struggling to emancipate themselves. She writes about the changing social conditions and their influence on the lives of the individuals.

Being fully aware of a married woman's present status in India, Nayantara Sahagal brings forth certain moral issues. Her emphasis is mainly on social evils, which oppress women. She has carried out a logical analysis of social problems like unsuccessful marriages in which woman is made to lead her doomed life. Mrs. Sahagal has obviously portrayed it through her characters. Her novels *A Time to be Happy* [1957], *This Time of Morning* [1965], *Storm in Chandigarh* [1969], deal with her concern for the woman's problems arising mainly out of unhappy marriages, problems arising in life because of it, suppression of her individuality and religious beliefs and practices. The theme of oppression is manifested in different forms.

The post-Independence period has thus seen the advent of a number of writers, articulating their impressions on more current topics: prominent among them has been Mulk Raj Anand, though already an established writer by this time, whose two post-Independence social novels, *Old Woman and the Cow* [1960] and *The Road* [1961] are discussed here since they express the theme of the necessity of emancipating women and the untouchables from the shackles of blind tradition, humiliating servility and unjust social
oppression; The other two prominent writers have been Bhabhani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya. A panoramic view of their works, tells us that, they are fully aware of what they are writing about, their authenticity assures them recognition. Their achievement may not have been consistent, but they do come up with significant tales of woes and sorrows that beset a large chunk of the Indian population.

Anand's *Untouchable* was the first full length novel of protest and his novels as well as. Those of Bhattacharya and Markandaya, in the post-Independence period have sustained the tempo generated by it. All these three have been novelists with a mission. A mission which is purely social. More than artistic concerns they desired to portray the oppressed, with a view to educating both the exploiter and the exploited. Their wish is to see the emergence of a homogenous society. A society free from exploitation. By portraying the predicaments, agonies, sorrows, sufferings, they draw our attention to the plight of the downtrodden, oppressed people. They have projected life as they saw it. Their work is no propaganda. As writers they are wholly committed to seeing a better world emerging around them, a world where, everyone, irrespective of differences in birth or status moves about rubbing shoulders with one another, 'with their heads held high' in a spirit
of camaraderie and equality. They can at best be termed writers with a reformist zeal and it is this aspect of their writing that highlights their contribution.
References


4. Ibid., p. 33.


6. Ibid., p. 38.

7. Ibid., p. 100.


16. Ibid., p. 176.

17. Ibid., p. 122.
18. Ibid.
