CHAPTER I

A Survey of Indian English Literature with Reference to Novel and Short Story
I: Introduction:

The present thesis investigates the thematic concerns in the works of Rohinton Mistry, Ardashir Vakil, and Farookh Dhondy. All these writers are Parsis and through their literary compositions attempt at recreating the Parsi world. This work aims at entering the horizons of the Parsi literary scenario. However, as a matter of convenience, only a few of the literary works of the above mentioned writers have been included for study and encompassed in this thesis. A brief review of the life and literary output of these three writers is attempted, since it is significant to comprehend the artistic vision of these writers.

Rohinton Mistry, Ardashir Vakil and Farrukh Dhondy are all self-made artists and prolific writers. Their literary output speaks volumes of their life and experience. Another distinctive feature about these writers is the fact that they are all immigrants and live away from their motherland. Being Parsis, they have faced a double displacement. The first time they were forced to leave their ancestral land (motherland), Persia, due to the invasion by the Arab conquerors. They fled and landed in Diu, off the coast of Gujarat in India, about 1200 years ago; and this became their new home. The second displacement was out of choice; that is they migrated to other countries in search of greener pastures.

As a matter of fact, these writers have all traversed far and wide, with an awareness of different people and their culture.

Their status as doubly displaced men brings about disporic tendencies in their writings too. At the very core of their writings is a quest for identity, struggle for survival and an urge for recognition.

The title of this research being

“A Study of the Thematic Concerns in the Works of Rohinton Mistry, Ardashir Vakil and Farrukh Dhondy”,

it is necessary to understand certain concepts in a better light.
A **theme** is a subject or topic on which a person writes or speaks. The Illustrated Oxford Dictionary defines the term **thematic** as

*Of or relating to subjects or topics.*

Similarly the term **concerns** is defined as

*A matter of interest or importance.*

As such this research work aims at exploring all the issues/subjects of importance and which arrests the interest of the writers. This has been done by taking up a few novels of the above mentioned writers. A collection of short stories by Rohinton Mistry has also been included for study.

In view of the same, the present chapter has been devoted in comprehending the **Indian English literature** in a better light, with an all-sided study of Novel and Short Story.

**I:ii Survey of Indian English Literature with Reference to Novel and Short Story:**

Literature being a social institution is channelised through the medium of language. Literature being a social creation goes on to represent human life. It evolves with social, cultural, economic, political and ethnic structures too. This assumption can be validated by a closer analysis of the literary works produced by Indian writers writing in English. At the very outset, it becomes necessary to acquaint with the term ‘Indian English Literature’. Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia defines it as:

*Indian English Literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English*
language. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora.

(http://en.wikipedia.org)

M.K. Naik defines it as:

*A literature written originally in English by authors of Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality.*

(Naik 3)

Naik further states that neither Anglo-Indian literature, nor literal translations by others can legitimately form part of Indian writings in English.

Indian English literature is recognized through terms such as *Indo-Anglican literature, Indo-English literature, Indian Writing in English,* etc. It has been known as a Janus-faced literature as it is believed that it is born of cross-fertilization between two faithful cultures—Indian and European. Meenakshi Mukherjee calls it as twice born literature. Sir Jadunath Sarkar in his book *India Through the Ages* states:

*The contact with the Western mind stirred the soul of India, ushering in the renaissance which is regarded as ‘the greatest gift of the English’ to India.*

(Sarkar 52)

The writers of the Indian English literature try their best at presenting an authentic version of the social, political, cultural and economical realities through various literary forms such as novel, poetry,
essay, short-story, auto-biography, biography, drama, travelogues and criticism.

A few prominent writers who shine luminous in the galaxy of the Indian English literature are Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan. The list goes on to include Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Shashi Deshpande, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Rohinton, Mistry, Farukh Dhondy and the like.

M.K. Naik opines:

*Indian English literature is an interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and stagnant and chaotic India.*

(Naik 01)

Indian English writing is also believed to be an inevitable product used to express sense and sensibility, by and large formed by the nativization of the English literature. Earlier, Indian writings in English was not taken seriously by both Indian and foreign scholars. It was criticized as ‘immature’ and ‘insignificant’ with the fate of ‘destined to die young’.

It is important to trace the origin and significance of the Indian English novel. In the initial stage, Indian English novels were charged with ‘imitation’ and ‘immaturity’.

R.S. Pathak justifies this by commenting:

*Most early novels in English by Indians were almost invariably imitative and immature. Quite a*
few of them turned out to be only relations of the
novels written by the Victorians.

(Pathak 10)

I:iii The Early Indian English Novel:

The early Indian novelists were accused of being stereotypical in themes and for their uncertain grip over the new language. No doubt the Indian English Novelists were at every phase in their literary career strongly influenced by literary trends dominant in the Euro-American or British world. However, they beautified whatever they borrowed and made it an apt channel through which they could express themselves perfectly.

The publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s novel *Rammohan’s Wife* in 1864 proved beyond doubt that the Indian English novel bounds in bulk and variety. It was a very mature seat of writing.

However, novel as a creative art touched great heights and spread to unknown zones, with the literary talent of ‘The Big Three’ – Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan. ‘The Big Three’ contributed substantially to the Indian English coffers and enriched it too. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar states:

These early novels have for us today no more than an antiquarian or historical interest.

(Iyengar 315)

There was no looking back since the 1930’s. Certain definite pattern or a well defined format was being followed. The novel gradually began to progress. From the infancy stage of imitation it grew past and progressed into realistic to psychological to experimental novels. The
novelists and short-story writers such as S.K. Ghose, S.M. Mitra, Raj Laxmi Devi, Kshetrapal Chakrabarty, A. Madhaviab, S.B. Banerjee, Sardar Jogendra Singh, Bal Krishna, T. Ram Krishna, Cornelia Sorabjee, K.S. Venkataramani were the writers who were experimenting to provide recognition to the Indo-Anglican fiction.

I: iv Various themes:

The Indian English novels abound in myriad themes. These novelists could practically write about anything under the sun. A variety of themes were dealt with and portrayed / presented in an authentic manner.

Talking about the themes Meenakshi Mukherjee in her article ‘The Anxiety of Indianess’ states:

_The themes handled by the old generation of these novelists in English had for a long time remained predictably pan Indian: the national movement, partition of the country, the clash between tradition and modernity, Faith and rationality or similarly time-worn cliches of east-west confrontation, disintegration of the joint family, exploitation of woman, etc. In this project they were defining ‘Indian’ concerns as against or regional issues._

(Mukherjee 83)

The early novels were more idealized in tone; however after the world war, it became more realistic. An intentional attempt was made to portray the sorry plight of the down-trodden. Casteism, gender relations,
historic / political / social reforms also found its way into the literary discourses. The real India was being portrayed. Another aspect that greatly influenced and impressed the novelists was the Gandhian ideology and ethos. Themes of nationalism and the contemporary social situation were very finely depicted.

Pondering upon the same M.K. Naik very aptly states:

**Indian English literature of Gandhian age was inevitably influenced by the epoch-making developments in Indian life. A highly significant feature is the sudden flowering of the novel during the thirties, when the Gandhian movement was perhaps at its strongest.**

(Naik 118)

This theme finds its way in Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable*, R.K. Narayan’s *Swami and Friends* and Raja Rao’s *Kantapura*. Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* is compact and artistically enriching. It explores the evils of race /caste on the adolescent mind of the low-caste boy in a lyrical style. R.K. Narayan’s *Swami and Friends* is a delightful account of a school boy. The story is narrated characteristically, with ironic flavour to the title. Raja Rao’s *Kantapura* deals with the impact of Gandhism on a South Indian village caught in the malestrom of the freedom struggle of the nineteen thirties. This novel is thought to be the finest evocation of the Gandhian age in Indian English fiction.

After 1950’s the focus of the Indian English novel shifted from the public to the private arena. Meenakshi Mukherjee justifies this by very aptly stating that renunciation as an ideal has always existed in the Indian mind. She states:
As against the 1930s Indian novel in English which shows the concern with national or social problems, the 1950s and 60s Indian novel in English has distinctively private tone. It is introspective, and the individual’s quest for a personal meaning in life is its main theme.

(Mukherjee 204)

This was a generation where the individual began to search for the self. This quest attained a great significance and it was found in the most complex and varied forms too.

It is the writer’s identity and the many paradoxical tensions which energizes and gives shape to his narratives. His works mirror the social and political themes with all its contradictions. These contradictory aspects could be symbolic of self contradictory physical and psychological pulls.

This is further justified by well known critic C. Paul Varghese, who in his book, Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English states:

They renounced the larger world in favour of the inner man and engaged themselves in a search for the essence of human living.

(Varghese 124-25)

This aspect of the thematic concerns in the Indian English novels is brought out more clearly by Viney Kirpal. He recognizes and
distinguishes two types of themes prevalent in the Indian English novels. According to him,

……beginning in the 1950s two types of themes prevail in the Indian English novel. These are: (i) the search for self-identity in a meta-physical or ethnic sense as in the novels of Raja Rao, B. Rajan and Kamala Markandaya; and (ii) the introvert’s probing in to the subconscious mind as in Anita Desai’s novels.

(Kirpal 66)

There was a phenomenal growth and proficiency in the literary works during this period. One could trace elements of self-assurance, self-assertion and also a very personal / private expression. Sudhakar Pandey and R. Raj Rao in their introduction to The Image of India in the Indian Novel, 1960-1985 state:

……in the 1960 that the sensibility of the Indian writers in English crystallized in to what may be called a post-independence sensibility marked by an expression of the private voice.

(Pandey and Rao foreword)

This generation produced a lot many remarkable writers like Kamla Markandeya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaoakar, Shasthi Bratta, Ruth Prawer Jhabwala, Arun Joshi, Khuswant Singh, D.F. Faraka, Nirad C. Choudhari, Sudhin Ghosh, Ahmad Ali, Attia Hussain, Balchandra Rajan and Santha
Ram Rao. Women novelists like Anita Desai and Nayantara Sehgal contributed in altering the face of the Indian English novel and as in the words of R. S. Pathak,

*Sowed the seeds of future development.*

(Pathak 11)

Anita Desai portrays aspects of loneliness, alienation and ‘vain attempts to establish bridgeheads of understanding’. Her greatest asset is her ability to evoke the changing aspects of nature matched with mortal (human) moods.

Nayantara Sahgal preferred to deal with political themes. Against the backdrop of the newly independent India, she exposed the social and political incongruities and realities. Her female characters are modern and involved in the quest for sexual freedom and self-realization.

Arun Joshi and Chaman Nahal who stand as a counterpart to these women novelists are worth exploring. Arun Joshi delts and explores problems of detachment and involvement, indifference and commitment, solitude and communion intellect, energy and integrity all fused together and he attempts at identifying one in relation to the self, the society and humanity at large. The problems of the post-independent India and the implications of the East-West encounter find its ways in his writings.

The East–West encounter is also poignantly dealt with by Chaman Nahal, but it is the pains of partition which touch him to the core.

**I:v The Novels of the 80s:**

The 1980s marked a distinctive period for the Indian novels in English. There was a significant growth / development where novel as a literary genre flourished. A lot of promising work was published and all
of a sudden Indian novels in English caught the attention of the reading public. There was an urge to know more by the ‘not so frequent’ readers too. Viney Kirpal very beautifully comments on the novels of the 80s in an introduction to the edited book, *The New Indian Novel in English*. He states.

_Suddenly, since the 1980s there has been a bursting forth of Indian novel like myriad flowers on a laburnum tree. In this significant decade, a gorgeous collection of several magnificent Indian novels seems to have garnered, almost overnight. In the past, important Indian novels have been produced but their appearance has been marked by lengthier interval. In the 1980s, however, not less than two dozen notable novels have already been produced and more continue to be published._

(Kirpal XII-XIV)

There was a marked distinction between the earlier novels and the novels of the 80s. They tried to do away with the complexes and constraints that bound the earlier novelists.

R. S. Pathak aptly observes:

_During the one-and-a-half decade……….which speak eloquently about originality and unprecedented inventiveness of these novelists along with their capacity of doing away with all_
New issues/themes were tackled with marked confidence. They experimented with new techniques and approaches. Untouched layers of life with all its experiences were being explored. The canvas was no longer restricted to the particular; it was generalized, vast and comprehensive.

The novels of the 1980s can broadly be classified into the following streams of fiction-- politico-social, historico-social, quasi-feminist and fiction dealing with identity crisis. In the same way, the writers can also be analyzed under four distinct groups. According to Nilufer Bharucha, from her, article “The Charting of Cultural Territory” the four groups of writer’s are-

1. Ethno-religious / minority discourse
2. Diasporic discourse
3. Feminist discourse and
4. Political /ideological discourse

It is very evident that the 1980s created a landmark in the history of the Indian English writings. There was a marked growth and development in respect to the Indian English novel. The novels written during this period broke away from the norms set up by the writers of the earlier period by experimenting with new forms, themes, techniques and language. There was a deep concern and awareness regarding the Indian sub-continent. Varied and complex narrative techniques like the experimental, confessional, interrogational and polemical methods were used. These novels did not border on sentimentalism or idealism. Issues
such as national and international politics, displacement/dislocation and marginalization, urge to express one’s self gained top slot.

This is very aptly stated by Viney Kirpal in his introduction to the book *The New Indian Novel in English*. He states:

> the characters are at once more cosmopolitan, deregionalized citizens than in the earlier Indian novel. There is an awareness of the large world. The new Indian English novel is not the exhaustion......but is one of tremendous creativity, dynamism, hope and confidence.

(Kirpal Introduction)

As a result, at this stage, the novel form earned honour and distinction in the Western academic world and got related to the large world demanding serious attention, classification and analysis.

Among the writers of this generation, the most notable is none other than the ‘King of Controversies’ Salman Rushdie. He ushered in a new trend of writing and used a ‘hybrid language’ to represent the vast canvas of India. Rushdie practised word-play, magic realism and surrealism to nativize English language. His novels portray the changes affecting the social life of modern India.

Rushdie’s magnum opus *Midnight’s Children* heralded a new era of Indian English fiction and extended the horizons and the scope of Indian English novel.

To quote Shashi Tharoor:

*Midnight’s Children is the novel that labeled a generation and liberated a literature.*
All the literary output that followed were strongly impressed and influenced by *Midnight’s Children*. A post-modernist vision combined with an Indian style was being adopted. The New York Times refers to Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Farookh Dhondy and Rohinton Mistry and others as ‘Rushdie’s Children’ for their conscious efforts at redefining English prose using subcontinental myths, humour and themes. V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Vikram Chandra, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Sobha De, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee, Amit Chaudhary, Diva Karuni express their creative urge in the form of fiction and earn world-wide reputation.

The works of Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry deal with multiple variance of history and political. They aim at establishing the official version of the same. Their protagonists are self-conscious of the things happening and use lapsed memory as a device to de-stabilize meaning.

Amitav Ghosh is the finest writer among those who were born out of the post *Midnight’s Children* revolution in Indian writings in English. The image of changing India, politically and socially, cast a deep shadow on Ghosh’s writing. His *The Circle for Reason* marks a definite break with the traditional themes; *The Shadow Lines* and *Antique Land* deal with history; *The Calcutta Chromosome* is a gothic science detective story and *Dancing in Cambodia* imaginatively renders the evolving of a nation for South Asian countries Cambodia and Burma in their post-colonial phase.
R.S. Pathak in the Introduction to his book *Modern Indian English Novel in English* distinguishes novelists into two categories following Salman Rushdie’s steps. He states:

> Among ‘Rushdie’s Children’ themselves there emerge two clear-cut groups of novelists: those who treat literature as a thought-about effort, and those who regard literature as amateur self-expression. Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Allen Sealy, Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga and Farookh Dhondy belong to the first group while Upamanyu Chatterjee represents the other. Despite their individual differences, however, these novelists display what Shelly calls in a different context ‘a family resemblance’.

(Pathak Introduction)

Not to forget are Bomen Desai, Amit Chaudhary, Gita Mehta, Dina Mehta, Gita Hariharian, Kiran Nagarkar, Arun Joshi and others whose works demand serious attention.

Arundhati Roy, an outstanding Indian novelist, won the Booker prize for her only novel *The God of Small Things*, ‘a wonderful creation’. This novel is created on a vast canvas of memory, most of which is centred on her childhood in a Kerela village. The novel also shows Roy’s sound acquaintance with the socio-economic as well as churning political process of the state. This is also a clever experimentation in style, freely combining fact and fiction.

During recent years, Kiran Desai has emerged as a modern international expatriate novelist. She lived in India until she was about
fourteen, and then migrated to New York and Kalimpong, and thus experienced dislocation, displacement and cultural clash. In her novel, she writes of the cultural hybridity of the post colonial migrant and the expatriate condition of hybridity. Her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* deals with her own situation of migrancy, expatriation and alienation from the mother country.

**I:vi Short Story:**

The short story is considerably a minor form of literature. The lack of interest shown by the writers towards this form of literature makes the history in English in India non-cognizable.

M.K. Naik observes:

*Short story in English in India is a by-product of Indian English novel.*

(Naik 116)

Murli Das Melwani in *Theme in Indo-Anglican Literature* states:

*The short story is the most flexible form of writing and thus eminently suited to portray the variety of Indian life.*

(Melwani 23)

Short story as a literary form is best suited to depict Indian life with all its sights and sounds, colours and variety, texture and smells.

A brief study and review of the Indo-Anglican literature clearly indicates that writers of the pre-independent period dealt with
themes/issues related to the social, economic, political and cultural situations.

It is very important to understand what a Short Story in English is. The term short story first appeared in *The Oxford English Dictionary (supplement of 1933).*

*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defines it as:

> Short story is a piece of fiction that is shorter than a novel, especially one that deals with a single event or theme.

(Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary)

*Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines it as

> A kind of prose fiction distinguished from the novel and the novelette (novella or novella) by its compression and intensity of effect.

(Encyclopaedia Britannica 1188)

M.H. Abrams defines it as:

> A Short story is a brief work of prose fiction, and most of the terms for analyzing the component elements, the types, and the various narrative techniques of the novel are applicable to the short story as well.

(Abrams 193)
The chief purpose of the short story is to entertain the readers. The writers of the pre-independence movement gave vent to their ideas, feelings and emotions through their literary output. They could fully project their ideas through the form of fables, parables, legends and mythologies. They needed a bigger canvas and greater space to express themselves, which a short story could not provide.


Some of the well known short story writers are Bankim Chandra, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Sarat Chandra, Rajendra Singh Bedi and others.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Cornelia Sorabji, a Parsi lady and an Advocate, published *The Purdah, The Sun Babies: Studies in Child Life in India*, *Between the Twilights: Being Studies of Indian Women by One of Themselves* and *Indian Tales of the Great Ones among Men and Women and Bird-People*.

According M.K. Naik:

*Her short stories are the studies of mostly Hindu and occasionally Parsi life, both, princely and plebian circles……..a mixed collection of stories, anecdotes and character-sketches.*

(Naik 110)
Cornelia Sorabji’s stories are written in a sympathetic tone and reveal an undercurrent of social reform.

The Gandhian era saw many writers devoting themselves to this form of writing. Short story reached its zenith during this period. Some of the themes that acquired great significance are those dealing with the rustic life, social reforms, tradition versus modernity, and the plight of the women in the traditional Hindu society, non-co-operation, illusion/imagination versus reality, Indian versus the West, etc.


Manjeri Isvaran professed the theory of the short story in *A Madras Admiral* as follows:

*A short story can be a fable or a parable, real or fantasy, a true presentation or a parody, sentimental or satirical; serious in intent or a light-hearted diversion; it be any of these, but to be memorable, it must catch in casual, invest a moment with the immensity of time.*

(Isvaran Introduction)

Isvaran’s short stories present illuminating glimpses into human psychology and are remarkable for variety of characters and situations they present.
Three major novelists, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao made productive contribution to this form. Mulk Raj Anand confesses in his preface to *Indian Fairy Tales*:

> Although, I have taken in much new psychology in to my writing of the short story, I have always tried to approximate to the technique of the folk tale and influence of these fairy stories have always been very deep on my short fiction.

(Anand Preface)

Anand’s short stories deal with individual and group psychology. They widely range in mood and tone, presents stark realities of men and women crushed by overwhelming forces and mark strong social awareness that shows his understanding of the complex social forces. He also deals with the clash between tradition and modernity.

R. K. Narayan retells known ancient legends with ironic touch and throws light on human psychology, where as Raja Rao talks of ancient legends in traditional style. He mixes ancient myths and legends with Gandhi’s life. Further, he deals with feminine principles.

During Post-Independence period, the status of the short story continued with the same status as it was during the period before Independence. Kushwant Singh, B.Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Chaman Nahal, Arun Joshi, K.N. Daruwala and others caught the attention of the readers. In addition, women short story writers like Ruth Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Nergis Dalal and others arrested serious consideration.

B. Bhattacharya retold striking incidents from Indian history and showed interest in psychological issues. Khushwant Singh dealt with
several aspects of modern Indian life such as bureaucracy, anglicized Indians, all with a touch of satire. Manohar Malgaonkar provided diverting glimpses of the world of activism including several areas such as army life, espionage, hunting, mining, smuggling, treasure-seeking and film making. It appears that Malgaonkar is more interested in the surprise ending than involving in social problems.

Chaman Nahal’s recurrent theme is the partition and its aftermath. Arun Joshi writes about rustics, middle class and war and its impact. Ruskin Bond writes about pets, animals, abnormal children, restless adolescents and frustrated old men, which has always been his favourite areas. Sasthi Batra and Ruth Jhabvala deals with East-West encounter, complex personal relationship. Anita Desai deals with the world of men. Meenakshi Mukherjee in Twice Born Fiction states in this regard as follows:

Anita Desai is a rare example of an Indo-Anglican writer who achieves that difficult task of blending English language to have a purpose without either a self-conscious attempt of sounding Indian or seeking the anonymous elegance of public school English.

(Mukherjee 191)

Jai Nimbkar explores day to day life in India. Thus it is apt to quote Madhusan Prasad’s opinion about Indian short story in English.

He opines:

As a matter of fact, the Indian English short story is no way inferior to the short story of any of the
country. Most of the short stories are proudly comparable with best continental short stories is an evidence not only of their thematic and technical maturity but also of the confident care with which the English language is being handled.

(Prasad 67)

During recent time, the short story writers dealt mostly with middle class life. They hardly are seen enriching and understanding life and human nature. Old short story writers continued to write but among new writers are Farookh Dhondy, P. Lal, K.N. Daruwala, Jayanta Mahapatra, Rohinton Mistry, Shashi Tharoor, Makarand Paranjape and many others. Among women writes even Anita Desai and Ruth Jabvala continued to write but the new category of short story, which appeared was not merely about not life in India, but abroad. These diasporic/ expatriate stories focus on the identity of expatriates and hybridity.

Farookh Dhondy is largely autobiographical while he deals with life in Poona cantonment in the fifties. Keki Daruwala shows interest in race relation during colonial days.


Amit Chaudhary and Makarand Paranjape experimented with the form itself. It is worth quoting Paranjape here who states:
My stories.........they are stories about writing
stories.........the nature of the creative process
itself.

(Paranjape Afterward)

Jhumpa Lahiri and Shashi Despande’s concern is the problems of relationship and adjustment. Bharati Mukherjee’s stories depict the life of an immigrant, the position of women in India and East-West encounter. Dina Mehta highlights Parsi identity. Gauri Deshpande reveals the powerlessness and poor self image of the average Indian women. Again Shobha De explores middle class. She has earned a respectable place along the Indo-English novelists in a short while. She has earned worldwide acclaim for *Starry Nights* (1990), *Sisters* (1992), *Strange Obsession* (1992), *Sultry Days* (1994) and *Speed Post* (1999) and has also edited three popular magazines Stardust, Society and Celebrity. Suniti Namjoshi tries to give voice to the subaltern and undermines patriarchcal hegemony.

I:vii Diaspora:

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines the term Diaspora as:

*The movement of the Jewish people away from their own country to live and work in the other countries.*

(Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary)

It refers to the movement of people from any nation or group from their own country.
The offspring of an area who have spread to many lands.

(Mcgraw-hill.com)

The dispersion or spreading of something that was originally localized.

(www.cogsci.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn)

The term also carries religious, political, philosophical and eschatological connotations. The above definitions can be applied to the Parsi community and their migratory movement. The earlier Diasporas were often products of forced migration. They were constantly on the move trying to get away from economic hardships, social/ political persecution and sometimes religious discrimination. The second group of migrants was those who voluntarily moved to other countries in search of greener pastures. There were yet others who left to other countries for higher studies. Marriage was yet another factor that encouraged migration.

I:viii Writers of the Indian Diaspora:

Gurubhagat Singh, in his essay “Expatriate Writing and Problematic of Centre: Edward Said and Homi Bhaba” states:

Expatriate Writing in its theory and practice is the work of the exile who has experienced unsettlement at the existential, political and metaphysical levels.

(Singh 21)
This migratory movement creates a new person whose mental setup works with two epistemologies. He is faced with two centres: the external or the modern, and the integral or the personal. At the very outset, what an immigrant experiences is a sense of dislocation. This dislocation takes place at the mental, cultural and spiritual levels. He undergoes a dual process of both merging and standing out, as and when necessary. In spite of the many years in the West he still carries the brand name ‘expatriate’ and the fugitive Indian personality keeps haunting him.

The expatriate occupies a marginal or borderline status. Sitting on the periphery of the past, he allows the future to take its course. This sense of marginalization results in an identity crisis. This sense of insecurity and fear of extinction prompt the expatriate in his attempt at self-defining and redefining himself.

The immigrants encounter racial discrimination which results in pain and frustration. Shame, anger, feeling of neglect, depression, desperation, etc. come out vividly in the works of the Diasporic writers. The immigrants undertake a voyage of self-discovery. Having exhausted all their energy trying to locate themselves they undertake an odyssey back home. Wanting to do away with the ‘grafted existence’ they step in to a zone discarded long back.

The writers of Indian Diaspora have greatly enriched the English literature through their literary output. Diving deep into the realms of imagination, they aim at re-inventing India through the measures of mythology, the beats of ancient legends, the complexities of another civilization, cultural assimilation and nostalgia.

Even as they seek to locate themselves in the new culture and land, they yearn for the past and the homeland. The vastness and complexities
of the homeland with all its multitudes- multiple truths, multiple realities, multiple crises and the vast Indian diversity are brought out very vividly.

Some of the characteristic features of the Diasporic writings are as follows:

- Dislocation
- Identity crisis
- Disillusionment
- Alienation/ Isolation
- Insider/ outsider view
- Feeling of intense loss
- Nostalgia/ Reminiscence
- Racial discrimination
- Autobiographical elements

Some other re-occurring diasporic themes are- inability to adapt to the new world, impossibility of going back home, tracing one’s roots and the like.

For a diasporic writer, writing is a sort of catharsis through which he explores himself. Diasporic literature becomes an intense and sentimental account of how an immigrant feels in a new land and how he retrieves his past for the present.

I:ix Minority Discourse:

Literature is a sub-system of a given culture. Culture as an organizational principle binds together the members of a community. Culture also stands to establish its separateness from and resistance to other communities.

Minority discourse is marked by an urge to adapt and assimilate, in addition to bring a culture of protest and resistance. It emphasizes on the
process of rediscovery, re-construction, and repatriation of whatever had been suppressed so long in the minority’s past.

Talking about the minority discourses and the issues they deal with, Keki Daruwala in her article “Of Parsis and the Novel” states:

_Literature, produced by minorities, shares its frustration and aspirations with the rest of the community. Yet it is conceded that each community can have its liberty space, its own claustrophobia, and its own mental ghettos. If you are writing fiction you will write about your people, your milieu._

(Daruwala 84)

It has been agreed by scholars that the minority discourse is a major source of a systematic study of a cultural contact and cultural change. The minority discourses have great significance as it enables readers to peep in to the intimate zones with reference to the community’s psyche, its socio-psychological values, its problems, predicaments and plight. Such discourses bear a stamp of a recognizable relationship that the community shares with each other and their way of life.

Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in the book _Theory of Literature_ states:

*It might be said that a work of fiction offers a case history-an illustration or exemplification of some general pattern or syndrome……..*

(Wellek and Warren 213-14)
The above statements can safely and aptly be applied to the writings of Parsi writers writing in English.

Parsi writers writing in English acquire a place of pride and prominence in the English literary scenario. They have and are enjoying a forefront position in creative English writings and their contribution towards making a better India and enriching it through their literary output cannot be ignored.

This is very aptly suggested through the words of R. S. Pathak in *Modern Indian Novel in English*, who states:

*The Indian Parsi writers/novelists have thrown significant light on the way of life of their community, which is remarkably different from that of other Indians…their admiration and love for their community, the Parsi novelists have projected its preferences and priorities, problems and ‘eccentricities’ reiteratively…their work recreate their community, which takes pride in living together, sharing collective memories and perpetuating the value of its heritage.*

(Pathak 211)

The Parsi writings help us to get a glimpse of the Parsi world which is truly beautiful and significant. The discourse brings the Parsi community which had been marginalized for a long time to the foreground. The Parsis in India being an ethnic minority very strictly adhere and try to preserve their ethnic identity.

There is no doubt that the Parsis have not left any field of creative work to which they have not contributed. They have drawn attention of
readers to the dilemma of the minority community, its identity crisis aspect of the Parsi way of life, etc. Keki Daruwala brings out three facets of the Parsi novel. According to her:

There are three facets to the Parsi novel as sociological tract, as a memory bank and as a look back on the city or the country one has left behind.

(Daruwala 84)

I: x Advent of the Parsi Literature in English:

To trace the genesis of the Parsi literature in English, in India, one finds that it is over a century old. The Parsi novelists in English can be categorized into two groups: stay-at-home writers and the expatriate writers. They deal with various themes. The themes/issues that they deal with ranges from dislocation to identity crisis, marginalization, creating one’s own space, ethnicity, racism, etc. They mark alienation, identity crisis, suffer from nostalgia, racism, unsettlement and disillusionment. Their writings also present a pretended sense of satisfaction, problems of multiculturalism, urbanization, ethnic anxieties, marginalization, the social problems being faced by the community such as declining population, the dilemma of inter-faith marriages.

V.L.V.N. Narendrakumar in the book Parsee Novel states:

Parsee novel in English, i.e. the novel portraying Parsee life, is a potent index of the Zoroasterian ethos. It voices the ambivalence, the nostalgia and the dilemma of the endangered Parsee community. In Parsee novel in English, the
‘operative sensibility’ is Zoroastrian. The Parsee novelists have forged a dialect, which has distinct ethnic characters.

(Narendrakumar 17)

The history of the Parsi writings in English began with Beharam Malbari, one of the early Indians to write in English. He published *The Indian Muse in English Garb* in 1877, *Gujerat and Gujeratis* in 1882 and *The Indian Eye on English Life* in 1895. Later, he even published pseudo-fictional works.

In the twentieth century, Cornelia Sorabji published two autobiographical works entitled *India Calling* (1934) and *India Recalled* (1936). Cornelia Sorabji, a lawyer, favourably viewed the polemic attack on Indian self-rule in Katherine Mayo’s *Mother India*. She condemned Mahatma Gandhi’s campaign of Civil Disobedience. She was a staunch feminist and extremely loyal to the British Raj. Suparna Goopta in an article “A Women Caught on the Wrong Side of History” states:

*Cornelia Sorabji is one of the early ignored Indian woman writers who have helped to carve out a path for Indo-Anglican women’s writing.*

(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

D.F. Karaka, a journalist, published his works during 1940s and 50s. Nergis Dalal published four novels in 1960s and 70s. Perin Bharucha published her work *The Fire Worshippers* in 1968. It focuses on the customs of the Parsi community and deals with the issues/problems of inter-faith marriage.
While commenting on the early phase of Parsi writing in English, Novy Kapadia in an article “The Theme of Marriage in Parsi Fiction” states:

_In the initial phase of Parsi writing in English, there was little stress on identity or the problems faced by India’s smallest ethno-religious minority community._

(Kapadia 10)

With the progress of time, the assertion of ethnic identity commenced in the Parsi fiction. Preserving one’s ethnicity that the Parsi writers religiously aimed at.

V.L.V.N. Narendra Kumar states:

_Parsi novel in English came in to its own in the eighties with the appearance of Bapsi Sidhwa on the literary scene. The emergence of promising writers like Rohinton Mistry, Firdus Kanga, Bomen Desai, Farookh Dhondy and Ardashir Vakil has given a new direction to Parsi novel in English. Steeped in the Parsee myth and legends these writers use English as an instrument of self-assertion. In asserting themselves, they redefine the identity of the Zoroasterian community. At the same time, they are not blind to the challenges confronting the minuscule community such as mixed marriage and demographic decline. Novelists like Karanjia and Sidhwa prefer re-_
thinking in the Parsee community where as expatriate writers like Dhondy, Kanga and Bomen Desai take a sceptial stance.

(Narendrakumar 32)

The fiction of 1980s clearly marked experimentation with the themes and presented the theme of assertion of ethnic identity. Most of the writers began their literary careers in 1980s. They are referred to as the writers of the second generation Indian English novelists.

Novy Kapadia states:

*The texts of these Parsi writers have given them and their community an identity within the dominant culture of the Indian context.*

(Kapadia 100)

M.G. Vassanji in an article “The Post-Colonial Writer: Myth Maker and Folk Historian” in the book *A Meeting of Streams: South Canadian Literature* states:

*These writers fulfilled an essential role of the writer as a preserver of collective tradition, a folk historian and myth maker.*

(Vassanji 63)

Perin Bharucha’s novel *The Fire Worshippers*, published in 1968, deals with the customs of the Parsi community, problems of inter-caste marriage, ethnic identity. Bomen Desai’s novel *The Memory of Elephants* focuses on a Parsi family living in the twentieth century. It records the history of Parsi-exodus and restores the collective memory of the
community. Firdus Kanga concentrates on the ethnic identity and delineation of the community. In his autobiographical novel *Trying to Grow* Kanga transcends the personal and autobiographical to make them impersonal. Bapsi Sidhwa’s *The Crow Eaters, The Pakistani Bride, The Ice-Candy Man* and *An American Brat* reflect the Parsi ethos, partition crisis, expatriate experiences, the Parsi milieu and social idiosyncrasies of the community, marriage, women’s problems, patterns of migration, etc. Farookh Dhondy’s works provide cross-cultural references. He stimulates a sort of cultural rethinking and divide between the east and the west. He also shows his concern for the major races and religions of the world in *Bombay Duck, Poona Company* and *Run*. Rohinton Mistry deals with socio-political issues in his *Such a Long Journey, A fine Balance and Family Matters*. Dina Mehta focuses on an inter-faith marriage. Ardashir Vakil expresses his concern for his community, marriage institution, etc.

**I:xi Indianness in Indian Writings in English:**

The issue of Indianness acquires a significant position and also becomes a favourite issue among the Indian writers writing in English. The term ‘Indianness’ refers not only to the language but goes on to convey the larger burden of culture, tradition and ethos.

Literature is a medium of expression and ever since the inception of the Indian English writings; it has been used as a means of expressing the nation’s political, historical, cultural and emotional personality. The dreams and desires, aims and aspirations, fears and frustrations, sorrows and ecstasies of the Indians are all presented in a very true to life manner.

Indian Writing in English has passed through various stages- Imitative, Derivative, Realistic, Symbolic, Modernistic and Post Modernistic. The writers of Indian Writing in English yearn to portray the Indian social reality. They express their anxiety and concern regarding
the past and present historical situation of the nation in addition to the cultural and religious metamorphosis in India.

It has been visibly concerned with defining with the national identity with an attempt to nativize the language.

Actually during the 19th century, English was not a major language of literary production. However, later the Indian writers accepted English as a medium of expression. It would not be wrong to say that the Indian Writings in English is an inevitable product of the encounter between the East-West.

Their English stems from the Indian life, culture and tradition and by all means consists of Indian cultural overtones. These writers have tried hard to bring the English language closer to the native idioms and have used it to express the Indian sensibility.

V.K. Gokak states:

*The Indianness of Indian Writing consists in the writer’s awareness of his entire culture.*

(Gokak 24)

In addition to all this, Indian writers in English through their literary output try to express their cultural heritage as well as the national awakening.

To quote K.R.S. Srinivasa Iyenger becomes necessary here. He states:

*The four areas mark the Indianness of these Indian writers. They are ‘choice of subject’, ‘the texture of thought and play of sentiment’, ‘the organization of material and the creative use of language’.*
Indian English Writings as a recognizable literary (phase) phenomenon dates back to the 1930s. This landmark was created with the publication of Raja Rao’s Kantapura. The village life, rustics and the peasant sensibility is depicted very sensitively and gracefully. It also deals as R.K.Srivastava states:

*Raja Rao’s Kantapura ia a garrulous account of primitivistic religious, political, economic and social activities of rural people……..Kantapura in India in miniature.*

(Srivastava 15)

With the impact of the Gandhian ideology on an ordinary man, the novel can very rightly be considered as the ‘sthala-purana’ or ‘Gandhipurana’. A new form of story telling was created by Raja Rao with the help of the puranic traditions. Refering to his language crisis and making his esthetics clear, Raja Rao in his Foreword to Kantapura states:

*We cannot write like English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at large world as part of us …..English is not the language of our intellectual makeup……..but not the language of our emotional makeup.*

(Rao Foreword)
Raja Rao very consciously but successfully attempts at re-inventing the Indian English idiom. He uses a hybrid kind of language. Kannada and Sanskrit are used sparingly to re-design English. He comes very close to the Indian cultural heritage by adding a new symbolic and mythical dimension to the literary form.

**I:xii Influence of the West:**

Indian writers from time immemorial were under the western influence. No doubt, they re-designed whatever they adopted to suit their own convenience and style. The best thing that they did was the nativization of tradition and language. This is evident in the poem *Introduction* by Kamala Das. She writes:

..............................................................

..........I am Indian, very brown, born in Melbar, I speak three languages, write in two, dream in one. Don’t write in English, they said, English is not your mother tongue.

Why not leave me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins, everyone of you? Why not let me speak in Any language I like? The language I speak becomes mine, mine alone. It is half English,

Half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest, it is as human as I am human, don’t you see?

(Das 141)
Among, the various themes / issues dealt with the writers of the older generation are the national movement, partition, and conflict between tradition versus modernity, East-West confrontation, and faith versus rationalism, superstition and skepticisms, status of women in the society. In short, they attempted at the totalization of the Indian culture. This was done through a dissemination of ideas that construct the field of meanings and symbols that were associated with national life and identity.

Meenakshi Mukherjee in an article “The Anxiety of Indianness (Our novel in English)” states:

The three pioneering writers who began their careers almost simultaneously in the 1930s (and continued to be productive and prolific after half a century) may have been worlds apart in their ideology, background and narrative modes, but they shared an unspoken faith in a distillable Indian reality which then be rendered through particularized situations.

(Mukherjee 84)

In The Serpent and the Rope Raja Rao constructs an advaitic brahmanic India, Mulk Raj Anand take up the cause of the paradigmatic Indian poor and R.K. Narayan presents a metonymic relationship with India as a whole.

B. Rajan, Kamala Das, Nayantatara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Shashi Deshpande and B. Bhattacharya picturized the schematic and metaphysical polarization of the East and the West.
Salman Rushdie’s novels offered the Indian readers a playful and imaginative representation of his own recent history and familiar circumstances. His *Midnight’s Children* constructs the idea of a national India that is inclusive and tolerant.

Even the writers who have settled abroad i.e. displaced, diasporic or expatriates who write about their mixed heritage with the lost country cannot turn away from the burden of India. For a writer like Bharati Mukherjee, India becomes a metaphor. Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor and other writers of the new generation show their awareness regarding the pressure of globalization and have been successful to establish their presence in the global scenario with the themes related the India. Quoting Jasbier Jain becomes necessary. She Says:

*Indian writing in English constitutes a pluralistic world wherein the colonial past, the Indian heritage, the indigenous forms, the inherited and internalized cultural values, the oral tradition, the diasporic presence abroad, the parallels with and differences from the language literatures- all these jostle with each other. Partly it is representative of a multi-cultural situation; partly Indians are no longer apologetic, on the defensive or self-conscious in their use of English use of English.*

(Jain 55)

I:xiii Conclusion:

The Indian writers writing in English portray the social and political themes with all its comparisons and contradictions. The aspects
that they portray could be symbolic of their own physical and psychical pulls. They explore further and try to understand human relationships. The political process, social institution and cultural emergence with its impact on human relationship are also explored. With each generation, they need to explore multiple dimensions becomes necessary. They frame realities and trace parallels through connections, the remembered, desired and experienced.

In this way, great many writers have been contributing significantly to the Indian English literature. Everything from the Indian exotica to the new genres is something that the writers have been experimenting with. Their literary output is impressively growing and flourishing in various markets. The literary material that the Indian writers offer is something not all countries can boast of. The ability of the writers to express in an adopted tongue is something that makes their work pulsating. Although, they write in a language which is not their mother tongue, the simplicity and grandeur that flow through their works is worthy of praise. The sheer magic of their sense and sensibility, emotions, sentiments and expression has further enriched their writings.

The Indian Writers Writing in English, therefore undergo marked stages of change. The first stage is the imitative stage which is also a utopian stage. The early Indian English writers lived in and presented only the imaginary aspects of the world around them. Very conveniently they looked away from reality/fact and even failed to acknowledge it. The utopian image that they tried to project was borrowed from the ideology of Gandhiji and his imaginary concept of ‘Ramrajya’. The writers presented the political image of the pre-independence era with politics and religion going hand in hand. The utopian arena that they portrayed gave them immense joy and contentment.
The second is the assimilative stage. The writers of this period turned inward. They grew up with the image portrayed by the earlier writers but when illusion clashed with the reality, outcome was disappointment. Dreams being shattered, the writers stopped looking outwards, began exploring inwards i.e. the human psyche. They realized that solution to problems lies within the self and not without. Thus came about the novel of introspection.

Third being the experimentative stage, the writers adopted a neural stand. They realized that things are not going to change and so decided to accept reality as it is. Thus they found new ways of accepting reality as it is. For example Salman Rushdie mocks at reality; Tharoor observes things by his international status. These writers project a history as it is and in the process, aim at rewriting, revisioning and the revisiting the same. Deep down in their hearts is a hope for the regeneration of their beloved land. Therefore three different phases show that the literary trends keep oscillating from outward to inward and again outward. However, Indian Writing in English has reached at the height which could be concluded in the words of Salman Rushdie written in his introduction to Mirrorwork (an anthology of poetry). He sums up:

*It's high time Indian literature got noticed, and it’s happening..........the prose writing –both fiction and non-fiction—created in this period by Indian Writers in English is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the 16 official languages’ of India; the so called ‘vernacular languages’, during the same time.*

(www.Amazon.com)
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