Chapter 1

Introduction

Indians have been speaking, reading and writing English since early nineteenth century when with the growth of the British Empire and expansion of civil administration, the use of English as a language of government gained increasing importance. Eminent men notably Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Lord Bentick and Lord Macauley propagated and accelerated English education in India. English was used as the medium of instruction in all prestigious institutions and universities and enabled the Indian students to come into contact with the western thoughts and philosophy. The Universities produced students and professors who could speak and write English with fluency. The wealth of English literature dazzled the minds of new intellectuals. By the end of nineteenth century the projection of philosophical speculations through drama and poetry was popularized by Swami Vivekanand, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore. The writings of these writers cast a spell of India's hoary past and rich classics and her ancient culture on the minds of Englishmen the Indian writers wanted to interpret Indian religion and philosophy and rich spiritual heritage to the West.

Further, English became the means of communication not only among Indians themselves but also between foreign countries. Besides this, the educated Indian was eager to put before these country men the wealth of English Literature with its new techniques, new forms and new outlook on life and thus he wanted to enrich the literature of different regional languages of India. All the western forms of literature like the novel, biography, tragedy, comedy, the essay and the lyric with their sub divisions were the mould into which the spirit of awakened India poured itself. Indian writing in English was but manifestations of the new creative urge in India. It is often
referred to as the Literary Renaissance in India. The exhausted and almost shapeless native soil, received rich fertilizer from the west and out of this fruitful union, a new literature was born.

Eventually, the earliest writings of the Indians in English were in prose and were limited to the drafting of a well turned out speech and pamphlet on social reform. From drafting of speeches and report writing the advance to literature is a big stride. India, at least in the field of Fiction was yet to make a beginning. Epics, lyrics, dramas, short stories and fables had their respective histories, going back to centuries. The prose of a non fictional nature existed in abundance but it was motivated by extra-literary impulses like political protest or social reform. The novel, the genre of imaginative literature which gives artistic form to the relationship of man and society, was conspicuously absent till the mid 19th century. Early Indian English Fiction appeared when Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott had become classics and Dickens had written most of his novels in England, when in France, Belzac and Alexendar Dumas were in their graves and in Russia, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy published most of their important novels. The delay in the development of prose fiction in Indian Literature has often been related to the late emergence of the historical sense among Indians. It is impossible to write a good novel today that remains suspended out of time and space, it must have a definite location in temporal and spatial reality. Therefore, even if Indian English Poetry could be written by Indians in the Victorian idiom fashioned by a sensibility molded by the Alien culture, the emergence of genuine Indian English Novel presupposed historical and geophysical awareness of the Indian situation. A novel by an Indian writer demands direct involvement in the values and experiences which are valid in the Indian context, and the same was absent in the early generation of educated Indians, who took either to
creative writing in their own regional languages or to social reform and political organizations.

Hence, the novels in the regional languages slowly led to the growth of Indian English fiction. It was in Bengal that literary renaissance first manifested itself, but almost immediately afterwards, its traces could be seen in Madras, Bombay and other parts of India as well. "The Western breeze blows sometimes directly and sometimes - and more significantly indirectly – its velocity chastened in the ample spaces of Bengal." (Iyengar, 319).

Indian English fiction though the last to make its standing among various branches of Indian English Literature, first made a diffident appearance in the nineteen twenties, but later on gradually gathered confidence and established itself in the next two decades. The momentum it gained has not subsided, and more novels have been published in the sixties than ever before. This increase in number baffles and dazzles in the light of the fact that there were hardly half a dozen Indian English novels before 1920 and a few more before independence. Before 1947, the year India became independent; the English models were the major outside influence on the Indian novel. The pre-independence Indian English fiction subtly depicts the great national movement, the struggle for independence, the patriotic fervors and reformatory zeal of many Indian social reforms, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, K. C. Sen, Dayanand Saraswati, Ani Besant, and Surendra Nath Banerjee etc. The novelists like Khwaja Ahemad Abbas, Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan espoused the sense of nationalism and patriotic feeling. Gandhiji's call for struggle was significantly reflected in the novels of pre-independence India. As the period was marked by changing literary characteristics and varying themes and tones, the
literature of protest, of dissent, of unrest and of remonstrance naturally came into being.

It is evident from the novels of Anand who carried on the tradition of Tagore and Premchandra, Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra to heights unheard of before and brought the form of the novel in tune with the latest developments in England and Europe. His novels like *Coolie* and *Untouchable* present his lifelong crusade against social injustice, oppression and all forms of dehumanization.

These novelists of the "Heroic Age" as called by K.R.S. Iyengar reveal a clear print of Gandhiji's ideas and themes, some like Venkatramani used Gandhiji's teachings directly while Anand just touched them from a different angle. Some like R. K. Narayan would depict the middle class man of south India while authors like Raja Rao and D. F. Karka portrayed the heroic struggle and sacrifices of the Indian fighters for freedom in the early stages of the national movement. These novels, while they do not sing of the victory of independence, sing of the victories small and great achieved on the social and political front by soldiers of civil disobedience. Therefore, these novels are full of the spirit of enthusiasm, joy and hopes. As they were written in the age of great ideals, their heroes were designed to symbolize these ideals. No where in the novels were they permitted by these novelists to deviate from the narrow path of duty and sacrifice.

The attainment of independence on 15th August, 1947, brought about a new era of hope, growth and development. During the first 25 years of Independence, the newly emerged Republic was confronted with unexpected and contradictory experiences. The thrill of joy at the end of a long and horrible struggle was lost into the tears and pains which emerged suddenly on the face of the nation owing to the sudden but tragic outburst of communal violence in the wake of partition. Later, the
problem of the rehabilitation of large number of refugees and the merger of the princely states ending the unlicensed freedom and luxuries of Maharajas and Princes created as big upheaval in the society. The slogan of abolition of untouchability and equal rights of all classes uttered and practiced by Gandhiji brought a stormy change in the social status and life standards of the down trodden and underprivileged class of society. The shift in attitude towards women in the wake of feminist movement generally proved a boon to the fair sex, hitherto treated as an inferior entity. The migration of peasantry in search of jobs to urban cities raised another problem of alienation. The conflict between modern scientific growth and traditional rural values, religious malpractices and superstitions versus scientific progressive view points, shook the modern man. The growing indiscipline and discontent among students due to the defective and mechanized educational policies have further changed the Indian's attitude towards life.

As a result of these developments, the Indian English Novelist's of the post independence period have manifested different trends as compared to their predecessors. Though the novel relates the momentum it had gained during the Gandhian Age and continues to reflect the pre-independence trends also, yet it further probes more deeply and comprehensively into the social, political, economic, religious, cultural and educational milieu of the Nehru period. For the time being, some Indian English Novelists turned away from political issues and focused their attentions on personal problems of the individuals or on social themes of a universal kind. The end of the Second World War brought a harvest of new talents in fiction which has altered the whole picture of Indian English Literature as it existed before 1947. After Independence however, Novelists in India have shown themselves susceptible to the influence of American and European models, and also models from
the oriental countries. After the advent of Independence, the more serious novelist has shown how the joy of freedom has been more than neutralized by the tragedy of the partition, how in spite of the freedom there still exist corruption, inefficiency, poverty oppression and heart rendering miseries of the poor owing to the widening gap between the rich and the poor, how after the establishment of the popular democratic government the evils have continued to regain and remain uncured. After the departure of the British the traditional villain of the novels, the novelist found new villainous problems in society. He was shocked when he felt how Indians have lost their high ideals and values of life and how narrow communal, linguistic and casteist ridden passions have flared up in stead of emotional integration as expected." The novelist witnessed the Agonizing spectacle of a divided house with a deceptive floor and a precarious roof" (Iyengar, 320). Chinese aggressions in 1962 and Pakistani innovation in 1965 created a new mass-awakening and sense of unity and dedication for the cause reminiscent of the Gandhian age.

The post independence Indian English novelist had to appeal to the heterogeneous community, people of diverse ethnic religious and cultural backgrounds. For this purpose he chose themes emerged to form recurrent patterns and major trends which were more easily discernable in post-independence Indian society than in that of pre - independence India. That is why the range of the novel widened and the various features of Indian society economic, political, religious and cultural were exhaustively covered by it. Hence, the Indian English Fiction changed relations of land owners and landless peasants, the impact of industrialization on the life of common man and the hired laborers, and the changed economic structure of the country after the decay of feudal rule- are some important economic problems depicted by the novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Jhabwala, Mulkraj Anand,
Manohar Malgaonkar and others. On the political plane, the influence of Gandhi's enigmatic personality on the national psyche and especially on the national movement, has been powerfully treated by R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Nagarajan, Khwaja Ahemad Abbas, Jhabwala and others. Besides it, the horror of partition, communal violence and blood shed finds its powerful voice in the novels of Khushwant Singh and Manohar. Other aspects such as reorganization of princely states, the impact of foreign invasions, political corruption, nepotism, and Indo-British relations are dealt predominantly in the novels of Anand, Malgaonkar, Nayantara Sehegal already well established and growing both in variety and stature—not only retained the momentum of Gandhian age, but also flourished to its fullness with wider ramifications.

The basic trend of social realism earlier propagated by Mulkraj Anand has been continued by novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Mulgaonkar and Khushwant Singh. The Gandhian pity and compassion for the poor and afflicted section of society, various schemes for their welfare abolition, of age-old system and social discrimination, are the major issues raised by the novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Ruth Prawer Jhabwala. Problems, like the disintegration of joint families and the re-interpretation of woman's position in society have been depicted in the novels of R. K. Narayan, Nayantaran Sahgal, Kamala Markandeya and Jhabwala. The problem of alienation caused by the process of urbanization has been raised in the novels of Markandaya, Arun Joshi, Anita Desai and B. Rajan. In the economic sphere, the unjust distribution of wealth, the poverty of the rural classes is dealt by Sahgal and Chaman Nahal. The more sublime and loftier issues like religion, myths ancient Indian culture and modern education system get their ample coverage

Technically, the post independence Indian English novelists exhibit a tendency for experimentation in technique and style. The most recurrent narrative technique has been that of the first person point of views. Moreover, a large number of novels are autobiographical in methods if not in substance. The use of images, symbols and myths from scriptures and epics is a major aspect of these novels. The stream of consciousness technique of novel has been successfully employed by Raja Rao and Anita Desai and Shakuntala Shri Nagesh in her *The Little Black Box*. In other ways also there is going on the guarded experimentation in the form of the novel. The most important of these are the zigzag narration jumbling the past, present and future to charge the novel with suspense and powerful characterization on the basis of purposeful inconsistency to reveal the inner man, and a functionally experimental prose style to meet the needs of a writer whose mother tongue is not English.

It can be emphatically stated that the novelists of the post independence period have succeeded in projecting growing trends of change in attitude, outlook and aspirations of a nation committed to improve the lot of crores of people living below poverty line subjected to economic constraints and orthodox social obligations. The curious coalition of multi-dimensional historic vicissitude, western impact, Marxist obsession, Gandhian enlightenment and the echoes of industrial advancement form the fabric of most of the great contemporary novels. These novels powerfully voiced the dismay and disillusionment, economic inequalities class-discrimination, social and communal prejudices, political chaos and religious superstitions and orthodoxical view points that come to govern the destinies of men and women in every sphere of existence in the nation re-born out of the throes of slavery and serfdom. What Walter
Allen said about the contemporary English fiction is also true of Indian English Fiction, “Contemporary novels are the mirrors of the age, but a very special kind of mirror, a mirror that reflects not merely the external features of the age but also its inner face, its nervous systems, coursing of its blood and the unconscious promptings and conflicts which sway it” (Walter, Reading a Novel 18).

As a new branch of Indian English literature, the post-independence Indian English fiction is still exploratory in form. The awareness of its possibilities has enhanced the quest. There has been an increasing output of really literary novels in the years of independence. And more novels have been published in the sixties than ever before. In this period known as "Nehru Age" Indian English Fiction has planted its roots firmly in the ground. Meenakshi Mukherjee makes a significant remark in this context, “It may be noted that while in most Indian languages the novel form may boast of nearly a hundred years of development, in the case of Indo Anglian fiction, the Entire development has been telescoped into a span of less than 40 years” (Meenakshi, 21).

Even if the creative experiment in the form has not been widely undertaken the large built of the novel demands proper investigation and interpretation of its various aspects of the contemporary ethos.

Not withstanding, the general limitations of the Indian English Novelists of the Post independence period, it is gratifying to note that the novel is a living and evolving genre and is trying in the hands of its practitioner, a fusion of form substance and expression that is basically Indian, yet also bearing the mark of universality. Apart from the major novelists mentioned above, there are many more writers of fiction with substantial corpus to their credit in the post independence period. With a growing interest in Indian English literature there has been a sudden
spurt of fiction - notable among these are – B. K. Karanjia , Timeri Murari, Saros Kawasjee, Bunny Ruben, Narendra Pal Singh and many others in the eighties and also many new faces had emerged on the fictional scene. After the publication of Salman Rushdie's international success and magnum opus, *Midnight Children*, a generation of young Indian English Novelists eagerly followed his footsteps- Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh and among women novelists Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Bharati Mukherjee, Rama Mehta, Manju Kapoor, Arundhati Roy, and Kiran Desai have given new tones, tenor and content to English Fiction and have earned considerable fame for their fictional contribution. New reviews and magazines, critical studies and journals have been published in this field. Not only new novels and criticisms are appearing but new times are being explored, and new trends and forms are emerging- "That as long as novelists continue to write critics will continue of access the work, is as much a truism as saying that as long as there are mountains, mountaineers will climb them" (Meenakshi, 215).

Although the Indian English fiction began as a “hot house plant” it has taken firm and deep roots in the Indian soil. Realism is both its roots and foliage. We have been living for two decades and have become acutely conscious of the fact since 1955-through the death throes of modernism and the birth pangs of Post-Modernism. The kind of literature which had arrogated to itself the name “Modern” with the presumption that it represented the ultimate advance beyond it newness was not possible and whose moment of triumph lasted from a point just before the First World War, is dead, and i.e. belongs to history and actuality. In the field of the novel, this means that "the age of Proust, Mann and Joyce is over, just as in verse that of T.S. Eliot, Paul Valery, Montalo and Saferis is done away with" (Jha 354).
If literature is the most powerful, subtle and inclusive use of the language, then it is only when language has been organically nourished that the life of art may be distilled from it. In a more contracted way one can say the English novel in India which began in the 1930s required, as well as the novelists an idiom for its expression.

It was in the 30s however, that the Indians began what has now turned out to be a substantial contribution to the novel in English, and one particular suited to their talents. To three of these writers belongs not only an intrinsic distinction but the peculiar importance attaching to inaugurators, they are R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, and Mulk Raj Anand. It was these three who defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate:

They established the suppositions, the manner, the idiom the concept of character, and the nature of the themes which were to give the Indian novel its particular distinctiveness. Each of them used an easy, natural if old-fashioned idiom, which they succeeded in freeing the foggy taste of the British inheritance. (Ford 334)

Of the Indo-Anglian novelists, only M.R. Anand and R.K. Narayan have shown a stern consistency of purpose. They have managed to hold on to the chosen course and each has now to his credit a corpus of creative fiction of sufficient bulk and quality to merit serious study. They comprise between them, the North and the South, extension and concentration, vigor and urbanity, vitality and artistic reticence. With Anand, political action took the form of writing novels. He wrote of the people, for the people and as a man of the people. His early novels reveal an aim and a sense of direction. He was associated with the Progressive Writers Movement in India and after the war; he finally returned to India and settled down in Bombay. For about two
decades he edited Marg, a high class journal devoted to the Arts. The leftist Peace movement found an ardent supporter in him. There are several novels and collections of short stories and chief among these are Untouchable, Coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud, The village, and Across the Black waters.

Like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan too has somehow managed to remain a writer. He is a rare thing in India today, a man of letters, pure and simple. He is one of the few writers in India who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve pursuing with a sense of dedication to achieve technical perfection. There is a norm of excellence below which Narayan can not lower himself the novels written by him are Swamy & Friends, Bachelor of Arts, The Dark Room, The English Teacher, Mr. Sampath, The Financial Expert and Waiting for the Mahatma. His Guide has been filmed also he has been translated into several European and Indian languages. Narayan is the art of resolved limitation and conscientious exploration. He is content like Jane Austen with his “Little bit of ivory” just so many inches wide. He would like to be a detached observer, to concentrate on a narrow scene, to sense the atmosphere of the place, to snap a small group of characters in their oddities and angularities. He deals with the problems of the middle class people of the Indian society. He explores the inner contraries of the mind, heart and soul; catch the uniqueness in the ordinary, the tragic in the prosaic. In Narayan’s novels, there is generally a plight, an uprooting a disturbance of order – followed by a return, a renewal, a restoration of normalcy.

Roughly contemporary with M.R. Anand and R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao makes with them a remarkable trio, affiliated with them in time and sometimes in the choice of themes but not in his art as a novelist or in his enchanting prose style. (Iyengar, Indian Writing in English 334)
If Anand is the novelist as reformer, and Narayan is the novelist as moral analyst, Raja Rao is the novelist as metaphysical poet. A novelist and a short story writer, he too is a child of the Gandhian Age. His four books up to date are the novels *Kanthapura, The Serpent and the Rope, The Cat and Shakespeare* and *The Cow of the Barricades*, a collection of short stories. Raja Rao’s heart is effectively attached to his immutable ancient moorings with the strong invisible strings of his traditional Hindu culture. In appreciating a philosophical attitude in experience as character or characters he does draw on psychological types deriving from the collective consciousness of a people in a Jungian Sense.

Dr. Bhabani Bhattacharya’s novels – *So Many Hungers, Music for Mohini, He who rides a Tiger, A Goddess named Gold, Shadow from Ladakh* and *A Dream in Hawai* form rather an impressive achievement. Bhabani Bhattacharya is strongly influenced by Tagore and Gandhi and this shows his affinity with Anand. He is the architect of the social realist of the period. He believes that art must teach, but only by virtue of its being a vehicle of truth. He is convinced that a novel must have a social purpose. It must place before the reader something from the society’s point of view. While each of Bhattacharya’s novels has an unmistakable social purpose, only occasionally does he succeed in achieving “a vivid interpretation of life”. (Nayak, *A History of English Literature* 213)

Manohar Malgaokar is a realist who believes that art has no purpose to serve except for entertainment. In quick succession, he has published four novels in five years *Distant Drum, Combat of Shadows, The Princes and A Band in The Ganges* and later, *Spy in Amber* and *The Devil’s wind*. He has also written two film scripts – *Shalimar* and *Open Seasam*. Malgonkar’s novels are neatly constructed and entertainingly told narrative which present limited view of life and human nature seen
through the eyes of a hard-boiled man of the world for whom there is little to admire and respect in human nature – a man for whom love is mostly equated with sex and the flesh and its appetites are more real than the finer perceptions of the mind and the heart and the larger concerns of human life.

The realism of Khuswant Singh is of an earlier variety. He has declared that his “roots are in the dunghill of a tiny village” (Nayak, *A History of Indian Literature* 220) and his fiction reeks with the odour of his roots. He appears to take a markedly irrelevant view of Indian life and character. His first novel *Train to Pakistan* unfolds the impact of partition in a small village on the Indo-Pakistan border. *I shall not hear the Nightingale* presents an ironic picture of a Sikh joint family illustrative of different Indian reactions to the freedom movement of the forties, including double dealing, posing and treachery. His other novels worth mentioning are *Delhi*, *The Company of Women* and *Burial at Sea*, besides a host of other books and stories dealing with religious, social and political issues of the country. His chief concerns appear to be the betterment of the people as a whole.

The strength of the modern literary imagination lies in its evocation of the individual's predicament in terms of alienation or quest for identity. Modern age is not only an age of anxiety as well as where ”man suffers not only from war, persecution and famine and rain but from inner problem- a conviction of alienation, randomness as and meaninglessness in his very existence”(Fuller, *Man in Modern Fiction* 3). The contemporary man is constantly in search of a way in which he can with dignity confront a universe which has become disjointed, purposeless and absurd because the traditional values have become suspect and yet there is nothing to take their place. The problem of alienation and quest for identity permeates the post modern Indo-Anglian fiction. Most of the Indo-Anglian novelists after fifties show concern about
the inner problem of their protagonist resulted due cultural alienation, social alienation or self alienation.

Kamala Markandeya presents the mental agony of an Indian in the alien land in her novel *The Nowhere Man* through the metaphor of house which is seminal to its structural design. Pitted against the sacked and deserted Chandru Prasad House in India stands the new house bought by Shrinivas in England. It never takes its name and remains No. 5 and its inhabitants are called the people of No. 5. In the absence of this identification in England, the house remains just as edifice of brick and mortar. Vasantha, a typical Indian woman refuses to assimilate the culture of her adopted land. A handful of Indian soil and a bottle of the holy water of Ganga she keeps and uses- assume a symbolic significance for her. In her rootlessness and alienation she longs for the way of life she would live for. She traces her identity in her culture and soil.

Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife* has Dimple, the chief protagonist who wants 'to break through traditional taboos of a wife.' She wants an independent identity rather than to be known as Amit Das Gupta's wife. She aspires for freedom and love in marriage. But this begins her indignation, grief, resentment, peevishness and alienation, for it portrays the psychological phobia and the resultant destructive tendencies of that condition in Dimple Das Gupta, a young Bengali wife who is "sensitive enough to feel pain, but not intelligent enough to make sense out of her situation and breaks out"(Ford 245). *Wife* takes the psychology and geography of displacement in its tense pursuit of disaster. Dimpal is entrapped in a dilemma of tensions between American culture and society and the traditional constraints surrounding an Indian wife, between a feminist desire to be assertive and independent and the Indian women to be submissive and self effacing. The individuals delineated
by Bharati Mukharjee is disenchanted lonely thinker searching for ethical significance in the smallest of things, struggling for identification with race or class or group and incessantly striving to seek answers to this existential questioning.

Ruth Prawer Jhabwala is the Indian approximation to Joseph Conrod, but hers is a feminine contemporary urban sensitivity in contrast to the masculine Victorian novelist beyond the seas. In the world of her fiction, human beings appear always a little bit ludicrous. The pathetic rootlessness of the foreigner in India and the tragic –comic rootlessness of the Indian who has become too westernized to feel at home with his own people the singular drama of confrontation between the old and the new, the alien and the native the national habit of constant glorification of our Great Culture and History and our sustained denigration of the present all invite her amused attention and precise observation. She projects her vision through her novels like *The Nature of Passion, Esmond in India, The Householder, Get Ready for Baule* and *A Backward Place*.

Nayantara Sahgal is a prominent Indo-Anglian novelist – who through the portrayal of variegated female characters and dramatization of "real life like" conflicting situations, marital tensions domestic traumas, undertakes the quest for female identity in her fictional works. She is not only a sensitive woman artist writing in India but is also gifted with keen observation and an artistic imagination and has also been subjected to these problems in her own life, thus lending the quest theme a peculiar note of authenticity and immediacy. Sahgal’s culture fictional corpus revolves around these twin themes, first – the political one, that India is passing through a transitional period and second- the lack of communication between people, especially between husband and wife results in unhappiness, loneliness alienation and prevents human fulfillment. The novelist herself makes it clear that each of her novels "more or
less reflects the political era we are passing through” (Jasbir 193). But along with the political theme, she also portrays the modern Indian woman's search for individual freedom and self-realization. There is a happy blend of two sensibilities in her work – the sensibility of an artist and the sensibility of a humanist.

Shashi Deshpande moves further and catches on the subtle complexities of the individual mind. Like other women novelists, she, too, has the female tone, her feminism does not go beyond creating woman as an individual. She possesses a keen insight into subtleties of human behavior, probes oneself more than the other self, in search of meaning and purpose of life and analyses why and what an individual is? The question of identity with which Shashi Deshpande deals is as old as human nature. The chief concern in Shashi Deshpande's novels is evidently self-assessment, which she presents through naturalistic technique – there is fear to face oneself, i.e. the want of moral courage and possible loss of happiness even though illusory and there is a way to elude this fear and gain one's own self that fear doesn't exist at all. In her novels such as *If I Die Today, The Dark Holds No Terror*, and *Come up & Be Dead*, she is in search of meaning and purpose of life in relation to the individual’s existence. Deshpande has shown her potential as an analyst of human psyche in her novels. Her essential merit is shown in delineation of characters who are individuals pitted against social absurdities. Herein she comes closer to the existential view of life.

Anita Desai is the first to explore the modern Indian sensibility rather than the outer world of action. She has added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian women writers in English fiction. Her forte is in the exploration of sensibility – the peculiar kind of Indian sensibility. Since her preoccupation is with the inner world of action, she has tried to forge a style supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever
and fretfulness of the stream of consciousness of her principal characters. Anita Desai delineates in her novels the problems and plights of alienated individuals caught in the crisis of associated with in a changing society. She excels in highlighting the miserable position of highly sensitive and emotional women, tortured by a humiliating sense of neglect, of loneliness and of desperation. The existential problem of alienated self finally emerges to be the central theme of her novels. She represents therefore "a set of new attitude and themes" in modern Indian novel in English. Her first novel *Cry, the Peacock*, presents the story of Maya, a young sensitive woman obsessed of a childhood prophecy of disaster, whose extreme sensibility is rendered in terms immeasurable loneliness. Her second novel *Voice in the City* is a tragic exploration of personal suffering of Nirode, Monisha and Amla. Nirode's suffering arises out of the feverish sensitivity Monisha's suffering arises out of marital maladjustments and Amla's suffering is too like her brother's. *Bye, Bye Blackbird* is an authentic study of human relationship bedeviled by cultural encounters. Desai presents the problems of the immigrants in England who suffer from alienation and rootlessness due to the cultural alienation in an alien land. Adit and Dev feel alienated and lonely in the company of her Indian husband and his friends. She finds losing her identity by marrying an Indian husband. Anita Desai's fourth novel *Where shall we go this summer?* unfolds the theme of alienation and in communication in married life. Sita and her husband Raman are two diametrically opposite and two irreconcilable temperaments which is the cause of their maladjustment in their marital life resulting in to the problem of alienation and loneliness.

In an essay entitled 'Books' Joseph Conrad discusses the novelist's craft. While recognizing that the genesis of the creative process is inseparable from the artist's
initial perception, he cautions the artist not to restrict himself to the experience of his own imagination in violation of the actuality of human experience:

In truth every novelist must begin by creating for himself a world, great or little, in which he can honestly believe. This world can not be made otherwise than in his own image; it is fated to remain individual and a little mysterious, and yet it must resemble something already familiar to the experience, the thoughts and the sensations of his readers. (Joseph 6)

The artist while creating his own world must be cautious lest, he forces his own sensations into some too convenient a pattern. That is, he might not project mere reality, Conrad recognizes a reality beyond the phenomenal world, a reality which the artist could imagine and capture by giving a consistent form to the shapeless facts of actual human existence.

Arun Joshi's fiction conforms to Conrod's conception of the novel. Joshi recognizes a reality beyond the mere phenomenal world a reality which the artist could imagine and capture by giving a consistent form to the shapeless facts of human existence. The source of most of Joshi's novels is actual experience. Joshi, the artist, however is not content merely to restate experience in a coldly scientific manner. He feels a need to shape it, a need to discover the reality which lies hidden in the actuality of his own life.

For Joshi, fiction is neither a source of entertainment nor an instrument of publicizing some sets of ideas. Unlike Mulkray Anand, he does not use his genius for propagating any political or social creed, nor does he escape from the world of human struggle and seek aesthetic relief in an imaginary place as R. K. Narayan does. Joshi does not write fiction according to a formula, rather he grapples with the moments of
acute trying situations in human life. He experiments with the medium of literature for studying man's predicament, particularly in the light of motives responsible for his action and the reaction of his action on the psyche." My novels "are essentially attempts towards a better understanding of the world and myself."(Reply to M.R. Dua)

Joshi's fictional world is revelation of a world where man is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence. His search is directed at the inscrutable region of uncertainty. This effort of his makes him a great artist of psychological insight. Reading Joshi's novels is not always a smooth experience; there are moments when one is assailed by doubts and questions. There is "something" that attracts one's attention and then grips. Joshi delves into the inner recesses of human psyche where he finds instincts and impulses a work; he seeks a process of the apprehension of reality which may lead him to the world of the core of the truth of man's life. He realizes man's uniqueness and loneliness in an indifferent and inscrutable universe.

Born in 1939, Joshi has had a brilliant academic career. He obtained an engineering degree from the University of Kansas and a degree in Industrial Management from M.I.T. Cambridge, Massachusetts. For a brief period in 1957, he worked at a Mental Hospital in United States. After returning to India in 1962, he joined D.C.M. in a managerial capacity on the recruitment and training side. Joshi comes of an enlightened family. His father, an eminent botanist was Vice Chancellor of Punjab University and later, of Benaras Hindu University. Joshi got married in 1964 and has three children- two girls and a boy. His wife Rukmani, an eminent entrepreneur herself, "has a respect for writers and understands them".(Reply to M.R. Dua) He died of cardiac arrest in April 1993 at the age of fifty four in New Delhi.
There are a number of influences that have worked on him. First and foremost he is well aware of having been influenced by existentialist writers in general and Albert Camus in particular. He himself admits "I did read Camus and Satre. I liked The Plaque and read The Outsider. I might have been influenced by them." (Sujatha 8) His philosophical leanings, basically, are towards Hinduism. Sindi Oberoi, the protagonist in The Foreigner is pre-occupied with philosophical problems of involvement and detachment. He is the Indian equivalent of the alienated outsider of Camus. Billy Biswas goes to the forest in response to another worldly call and Som Bhaskar to an obsessive love for the beautiful. He is the most sophisticated symbol of quest, a modern version of Abhimanyu from the Mahabharat. Arun Joshi Believes that Hinduism is highly existentialist -oriented philosophy since it attaches so much importance to the right way to live. It is because of the existentialist leanings that he was led to like Hinduism and love the Bhagwat Gita, which is existential – expresses the absurdity of things. The emotions of responsibility, commitment, freedom and choice have been emphasized and Joshi strongly believes in them. He seems to have firm faith in the concept of the right way to live as exhibited in the Gita. He believes that the individual is a friend to himself if he follows the right way and a foe to himself if he does otherwise. It is this creation of personal values for him that Albert Camus speaks for when he asserts that meaning has to be created and not found, and it has to be created by the individual. It is this act that Satre hints at when he remarks that man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. Joshi, thus, firmly believes in the theory of 'Karma'. The Karmic law to him seems central – what one sows, one reaps. It is not proper to blame God for the failures. He affirms that there is no intervening agent between man and the God.
Arun Joshi reveals in his talk with Sujatha Mathai that he has been influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and J.P. Narayan. The same questioning spirit, that is common to the heroes of his fiction, makes Joshi drawn to J.P. because he was uncontaminated and became the charisma of his honesty and simplicity. So much so that Joshi was led to Jay Prakash Narayan's movement in Bihar. Joshi is attracted towards the figure of Jesus Christ and feels interested in Christian Ideology and thought. It is recorded by Sujatha Mathai that Joshi got attracted towards Jesus Christ because of his faith in humanity and honesty of his purpose. Like Graham Green’s Sarah the heroine in *The End of the Affair*, Joshi’s Anuradha, the heroine in *The Last Labyrinth*, is a saint-sinner – adulteress endowed with love and compassion. Like Sarah, Anuradha too, makes the ultimate sacrifice and gives up her lover Som Bhaskar so that his life may be saved. Joshi loves and admires a few poets of Hindi literature, particularly four among them- Dinkar, Agyeya, Sumitra Nandan Pant and Nirala.

Arun Joshi’s view of human predicament assumes an existentialist pose when he pin points that identity, human contact and meaning are all contingent on willingness to concede a basic facts of his existence. He is critical of the modern man who adores only material progress while plugging down deep into a spiritual abyss. Like Wordsworth, he is extremely sorry how and why man cares only for his worldly advancement and never thinks seriously of his spiritual deterioration. He reveals an insight in to the inner dilemma of his characters and has pointed out the absurdity of the human condition wherein the modern man is a part of the world of his own making, of his own choice.

The central experience of Joshi’s novels is crisis – some times a crisis of emotions and sentiments as in *The Foreigner* and *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, some times a crisis of ethics and allegiance as in *The Apprentice* and *The City and
The River, and some times a crisis of consciousness as in The Last Labyrinth. Joshi's chief motif in his novels is quest. We see how he works out the hopeless longings that drive all his heroes. Tilting rightly remarks that novel is a perpetual quest for reality and the most effective agent by the moral imagination of the times. Through his novels, Joshi portrays the conflict of the contemporary Indian. His novels delineate the individual's inner crisis and consciousness. He stimulated into writing as he tells Sujatha Mathai, to explore "that mysterious underworld which is the human soul" (Sujatha 12). He further writes in his novel, The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, “The meaning of life lies not in the glossy surfaces of our pretensions, but in those dark mossy labyrinths of the soul that languish for ever” (10). His characters throughout their lives in the meaningless world. They are the lost lonely questers after the absurd in the dark neglect of the soul, in the dark recesses of existence.

Arun Joshi honorably withdraws from the outer social reality and engages himself totally towards the exploration of the human soul, the inner psyche of the modern man. His fiction is a quest for the essence of human living. The external world and reality emerge from the consciousness of the individuals. All his heroes are both Picaroes and pilgrims – Picaroes in their wanderings and pilgrims in their search for meaning of ‘Karma’, for the life force, for attainment, for the First Cause, for the Ultimate Truth, for God. His characters are essentiality seekers; the central theme of his novels is expanded in The Last Labyrinth "Hunger of the body. Hunger of the soul. You suffer from one or the other or both.”(11)

Sindi in The Foreigner is a question after absurd wants, with a scour in the soul. He continues “wandering through the maze of his existence”(179) striving to discover the meaning of life. Billy Biswas in The Strange Case of Billy Biswas is concerned with his search for the potential divinity that is there in latent form in his
consciousness. It is this "other thing" for which he continues his quest. That "other thing" was, and is, after all, what his life is all about. Billy's becoming a primitive is a step towards his spiritual awareness, his existentialist quest for meaning and values in life. It is this quest, the doomed existentialist search that ultimately drives him to the doors of death. Joshi, through Romi, describes Billy's case so beautifully that it at once makes an appeal to our hearts. We feel compelled to ask ourselves as to what life is and where we stand and what we are? It is this for meaning in life that drives Billy to the forest and ultimately to his death.

In *The Apprentice*, Ratan out of an acute sense of alienation and a quest to understand the meaning of life undergoes the sternest apprenticeship in the world. Symbolically, he starts at the lowest – wiping the shoes of the congregation and then begging forgiveness of all those whom he has harmed. He believes that polishing the shoes of the devotees will cleanse the filth enveloping his soul, will purge him of his vanity and will bring an absolute humility and gentle acceptance of life. He pleae that there is nothing wrong to make a second start "One must try and not loose heart, not yield at any cost, to despair"(149). His existential decision to recover the lost self through an act of pretence makes him an affirmative kind of existential figure and the personal value he discovers for himself surely lends meaning to her existence.

Joshi's Sahitya Academy Award winner novel *The Last Labyrinth* depicts a fascinating exploration of the turbulent inner world of a millionaire industrialist, Som Bhaskar, whose mystical urge is presented in his incessant longing for the vitals of life and existence and who is relentlessly driven by undefined hungers which he unsuccessfully seeks to satisfy by possession of an object, a business enterprise and a woman, named Anuradha, who becomes more and more the centre of his entire existence. He is in quest of knowledge and is always guided by reason, not by faith.
He is curious to know the secret of life and tries to probe into "that core of loveliness around which all of us are built" (54). He is convinced that all the problems can be solved if one has knowledge. But surprisingly enough, his dilemma is not solved by his thirst for knowledge. It is rather aggravated by her intensely rational approach. It is Aftab who very plainly gives him the right direction and reminds him that he won't be able to understand him or any body as he is governed by logic. Joshi seems to suggest that the unwavering faith is the right substitute for rationalism. The Panda also advises him that faith can move even mountains. Life's riddles can be solved only by an unwavering faith. The mystical Indian way of life alone characterized by Geeta, Gargi, the Sufi Pir, Aftab and Anuradha can administer trust and faith in the tortured soul of Som. Gargi holds that suffering and sacrifice cleanse the soul of all impurities. Now Som notices the change coming over him. He discards Leela Sabnis, the embodiment of reason, and pines for Anuradha, the motivator into the world of belief and faith. He discloses his agonies before Gargi, Anuradha and Aftab. All of them have their answers to his quest and cooperate by extending a helping hand to him towards realization. There is a gradual development of Som's soul on the lines of faith and trust. His journey towards the temple at mountains to encounter Krishna symbolizes his attempt towards reaching his soul. The dirt and filth hindering from having visions of God are being cleaned by his suffering. Suffering and humiliation bring an understanding that helps in solving the problems of life. The novelist through the Last Labyrinth, seems to suggest that the labyrinth of life can be resolved through unwavering faith, trust, intuition life and open–hearted prayer to God that helps in leading a really peaceful

His last novel *The City and The River*, is an existentialist commentary on the absurdity of human situation. Like his earlier novels, herein, too, he continues to
explore the existential predicament of his characters in an indifferent and hostile world. One thing new in the novel is that here Joshi has widened his canvas by taking up issues that concern larger humanity rather than some individuals. In this novel too, he takes up his favorite issues of faith, commitment, choice, responsibility and identity, but the way he handles these issues is somewhat different from that of his earlier novels. Here he looks at them with the spectacles of policies and makes this novel a political satire. There are many questions in the novel. Master Bhumma goes out in search of peace of mind and after the disturbing events. The boatmen go to the river in search of their livelihood. The Hermit of the mountain seeks knowledge in isolation and he comes back to save the child for the welfare of the human race. The real quester is the Nameless—one whom the raft carries as an illegal child and brings back as an illuminated one. The Nameless-one seeks knowledge during his discipleship with the Great Yogeshwar and comes back to restore peace and order to the world around. By the end of the story, the reader receives a sense of having completed a quest. It is universal human quest for purity through sacrifice of egoism, selfishness, and stupidity. The "Yagna" of life burns only on sacrifice. When the fire is low, when the flame is dying, men must feed it with their own lives. This is, perhaps, the meaning of life in the meaningless world. This is certainly the meaning of the boatman's rebellion.

Joshi seems to suggest that the cure, surely of all sorts of problems is within oneself. Like The Last Labyrinth, this novel, too, emphasizes the significance of faith, prayer, understanding and truth. The novelist puts forward his hypothesis through the Astrologer: "Ours is a spiritual civilization. It is through prayer and through vows that a man perfects himself"(100) As God resides in each soul, Joshi reassures that "all
should be well”(29), and we find *The City and the River* certainly far more optimistic than his earlier novels.

In all his five novels that Arun Joshi has written, we find a forward movement from one novel to the other. We see that the novelist has progressed from Sindi’s search for true self in *The Foreigner* to Billy's search for true self in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, from Ratan's cry of conscience in *The Apprentice* to Som's cry of consciousness in *The Last Labyrinth*. In *The City and The River*, he emphasizes the value of suffering and a sacrifice. Like eminent novelists of the world such as Dostoevsky, Kafka and Tolstoy, he has learnt the value of suffering and sacrifice. In *The Last Labyrinth* through Aftab Joshi speaks:" There is an understanding that only suffering and humiliation bring"(217) .There is a progression from suffering in *The Last Labyrinth* to sacrifice in *The City and The River*. This understanding Joshi affirms in *The City and The River*, brings tranquility (9) and enables to learn only by ourselves."(14) A clear understanding unfolds truth which "destroys the falsehood at its very roots, and leaves all men free to choose as they will"(112).The last two novels are similar in the sense that both emphasize the significance of faith, prayer, understanding and truth. In his last novel, Joshi affirms "In any case we are only instruments of the great God to the highest heaven who is the Master of the Universe-His is the will. His is the force" (264).He suggests that one who prays, who believes in God, tends to be peaceful, contented and in the long run happy and hopeful. The great Yogeshwar tells the Nameless-one: "God resides in a grand master as in you and me. Is not therefore, always room for hope?"(263) Hence, this novel is regarded as the most optimistic novel by Joshi.

Arun Joshi, verily speaking, is a novelist who can be said to belong to the tradition of traditionalist writers like Camus, Satre, Kafke, Elison, Malmund,
Lonesco, Tennesse Williams, and Arthur Miller. In *The Courage to be*, Paul Tillich writes, "Man is drawn into the world of objects and has lost his subjectivity in. He is still man enough to experience his dehumanization and despair" (Paul 142). Joshi like other existentialists is deeply concerned with man's feeling of alienation and anxiety in life. But he differs from the Western existentialist writers in the sense that in him the existential dilemma, the anguish of alienation and the absurdity of situation never remains the final predicament. His central motif is quest and all his characters are quester sans seekers. They combine both Malamuds's Yokov Bok's search for God. Joshi admitted to his interviewer, Purbi Banerjee, that he might have been considerably influenced but the existentials: "I did read Camus and Satre. I liked *The Outsider* I might have been influenced by them" (Purbi Banerjee, *The Sunday Statesman*).

However, in *The Last Labyrinth*, when Anuradha Som's "Shakti", his gateway to self realization, disappears, he cries bitterly. This "a cry for grace, a belief in God" (Harimohan 117). This cry is what Camus means by "Metaphysical revolt". In his last novel *The City and The River* this cry for grace is established as firm faith that leads to a human being to perfection. Joshi puts forward his hypothesis through the Astrologer: “It is through prayer and vow that a man perfects himself"(100). He opines that "The belief in God restores peace to human soul"(76) the novel explores the relevance of God to man and affirms that "the world belongs to God"(70).

The final message of Joshi seems to be that the only solution to life's problems lies in complete surrender to the God's will. He further states that "God is the highest Truth as it is known to each one of us"(70), and that He is the noblest thing each one of us can imagine"(70). Joshi reassures repeatedly that all" should be well"(79) and that God reside in each soul. In his novels, *The City and The River* and *The Last
Labyrinth, he seems to be more drawn towards Kierkegaardian live of philosophic faith, "a metaphysic of hope" which is very much akin to Hindu thought that essentially optimistic and never finally tragic. It so appears that it is the Hindu vision of life that offers solace and consolation to Joshi's mind and art.