Chapter – VI

CONCLUSION
India could not remain unaware to what was happening during the long occupational period of colonization. Willingly or unwillingly writers were influenced by this mode of subjugation. It can be confirmed by a look and feel of the postcolonial literary and artistic products. They allowed a new breed of writers to be noticed from the early 1980s. They produced a lot of works that were full of new themes and techniques. Those works allowed critics and readers to explore new areas of awareness.

A new movement always begins with a hostile attitude towards traditionally accepted literary norms. The innovative attempts are made by the new writers against a postcolonial background, with the latter being associated with a historical condition that still persists. According to Kumkum Sangari, the individual styles of Marquery and Rushdie are reflections of their own
culture-specific space and reality. Her position was reaffirmed by Santosh Gupta who pointed out that,

Marquez’s “magic realism” is a reconstruction, a reflection of his own cultural complex postcolonial world where time, space and reality are conceived in typical, specific way; she [Kum Kum Sangari] relates Rushdie’s style to his links with the country of his origin and to the experiences of a multilingual, multiethnic history and tradition.¹

A critical look at the works with an exclusion of the factors of inspiration can recreate a new angle of interpretation. All of these new developments help in “identifying significant shifts, continuities and developments.”²

What is literature without tryouts. It shows that concerns change and with it new techniques and approaches take the frontal seat. In the last two decades writers in English were found churning out works that said that Indians no longer favour being led always by the memories of their colonial masters. There are frantic efforts to redeploy the traditional narratology without remaining blind to global developments. These attempts of the writers are helped by the presence of a mass of Indians who are not unfamiliar with English. Indira Nityanandan points out:

The Indian novelists attempt to break away from a slavish imitation of western and colonial writings. They are not a part of English literature – not a coloniser’s tool or force – but instead a part of literature in English, as much proof of native genius as writings in other languages are.³
Being unfettered, the Indian writers in English have made attempts to include a vast view in their new attempts. This is not solely confined to the subcontinent. A deep difference is now detected between Euro-American postmodern English novels and those produced in India. The postmodern Western writers remain engrossed with the postponement of textual meanings. As such their engagement has become academic to the point of tiring a reader with the reading of the first page. With the Indian writers of novels in English, the relationship between postmodernism and the writer is not cerebral. Certain deconstructive practices may be utilized in order to dismantle annoying social and authoritarian practices. The older practice of relating a story is not enough to deal with the variegated tensions of a postmodern life. Postmodern episodes move around to reflect the present human conditions. The remark of Dasgupta is very appropriate when he says that it is “the minutiae and emotional crisis of everyday life” that attract the attention of the present-day novelists. It includes the affirmation that at present the Indo-Anglian writer is not averse to freely absorbing the local flavours that belong to different social sections.

The postmodern sensibility is present in most of the works of Indian English writers that came after 1947. This creative departure gives a fair share to the Indian style of telling a story. The art of the Indian novelists is indigenous. The wish to make Indo-Anglian writing a regional literature is voiced by Indira Nityanandam:

In the post-modern age, decanonization is accepted as imperative. In the post-colonial Indian context, the extreme hold of Western literary theory needs to be considered. Time and again, Indian scholars have reiterated the absolute need to apply traditional Indian
theoretical concepts to literature specially modern Indian literature. Since Indian writing in English is very much a part of modern Indian literature, the same applies to this writing too.\(^6\)

There is a lack of critical discourse on the theory and practice of narration in India. This stems from a general unawareness of the multitude of the practices of narratology that had been with us from time immemorial. Present attempts are made to revive the methods that were adopted. Such a wake-up call seems to be somewhat late because by the time critics and writer begin to think of their actual revival, the Western methods of narration seem to have swamped the subcontinent already. However, this has not persuaded writers, mainly novelists, from using the regional techniques of narratology. Paniker Ayappa K. remarks:

India provides a wonderful opportunity for story-telling. When Alan Sealy, writing in English adopts a model for his narrative from Kalidasas's *Rtusamhāra*, it is a great occasion for celebration: the pattern of six seasons providing a model for the narration of a story in the novel from Raja Rao, in *Kanthapura*, had tried to use the oral folk model for the narration of contemporary life .... Shivaram Karanth and a few others began to use native strains of the narrative in their major narrative efforts.\(^7\)

Reality, as a concept, has been looked at with disbelief. It seems to lie in the region of fantasy. Our religious scriptures convince the Indian mind that
what we are seeing and associating with are nothing but a product of imagination. Reality lies only in fancy. Paniker Ayappa K. reiterates:

Fantasy is a way of adjusting and accommodating even the unpleasant reality of the outside world to the heart’s content of the authors or reader. The author fantasizes, so does the reader, so that fantasy becomes an interface that the reader’s imagination shares with that of the author. The reader is allowed to be as creative as the authors, although the former’s imagination is triggered off by that of the latter. Fantacization is thus a privileged enterprise in the Indian narrative...

Most of the present-day writers, without exception, seem to be following the postmodernist discourse pattern. According to V. Ayothi what John Ponw [sic] writes on literary postmodernism can be repeated for further explaining the postmodern Indian situation. He writes:

If one defines literary postmodernism as that mode of writing which features some or all of the following: a stylistic reflection of the chaos around; the unclear distinction between fantasy and reality; matter-of-factness rather than lyricism; the writer caught in the act of writing; fictionalization of history and especially reader participation...

Michael Ondaatje consciously employs language as a catalyst between fiction and real happenings. This allows him to present himself both as an insider and outsider. The possibility of exploring untouched areas of creativity is expanded more when the writer starts forgetting the red lines that divide different modes of writing. He can now highlight marginalized issues
and techniques that did not exist because they remained unexplored. It shows that nothing remains sacrosanct. Linda Hutcheon grasps the situation by saying that,

In the critical wake of poststructuralism’s emphasis on “textuality”, distinctions between genres have been radically destabilised: Poetry, fiction, biography, history, criticism, theory – all can be seen primarily as texts and therefore can be read as such, that is with suspicion .... The boundary between textualized not only by (inevitably fictionalizing) historians but by their readers. Ultimately, it is readers who define genre.¹¹

The traditional mode of telling a story no longer occupies a pivotal position in the literary arena. It was taken for granted that the traditional way of telling a story was powerful enough to convey a total picture of a given object or idea. That another dimension can be added never occurred in the mind of the writers. But postmodernism has allowed the addition of another dimension which, now, makes it a multi-dimensional one. The writer or novelist is now armed to the extent of destroying the make-belief world of readers. The world of meaning and language provided a comprehensible world. This does not happen any longer. Readers remain bewildered because the privacy of their relationship between meaning and enjoyment gets shattered. But they are comforted by the assurance that they will enjoy a more varied fare. This may be declared as to be true because a widened view of the two worlds – the inner and the outside – are at hand to be tasted. This is a boon that is tied with a curse. No one can any longer enjoy a linear story as its place has been taken over by an ever-changing form of expression. It can not be denied that
literature has become a process and a product. This confusing situation is dramatically expressed when Dr. M.K. Bhatnagar says:

The postmodern writers have decisively affected a sea-change in the reader-writer equation which had been hitherto based on the now clichéd ‘suspension of disbelief’ or ‘the illusion of reality’ going back to the very dawn of the genre. This obviously culminates in increasing manifold of the hiatus between the reader and the writer. What must not be lost sight of here is the purposive stance of the writer, viz., rather than feeling apologetic about it or inclined to diminish it, the writer not merely exults in it but shows himself exulting in it. At ideational level, this blitzkrieg on common sense is symptomatic of the vertical split it society in general about the values it ought to live by, the place and role of the individual in it, the worth of society as a unit as such in the ultimate analysis, the existence of God or some other supra-human agency and the credibility of the body of universal trusts as well as the very notion of the supposedly general human nature. The only thing certain in such a skeptic scenario seems the disintegration of the concord – howsoever tentative or unstable it might have been earlier – between the reader and the writer along these lines.\textsuperscript{12}

In the literary world of today it is rare to find a writer who feels inclined to produce an easily identifiable piece of work. The concept of process overrides other considerations. By blurring the boundaries between different acts of creation he goes on trying to give birth to something strange. Rushdie in \textit{Midnight's Children} repeatedly highlight his prerogative as the spinner of the tale and his unquestioned authority to twist it as it suits his fancy, taking
liberties even with verifiable, well-known historical facts. Dr. M.K. Bhatnagar again comments:

Post-modernism as a literary phenomenon owes its existence to the cumulative impact of a number of pursuits and disciplines: anthropology, psychology, linguistic philosophy, literary theory, besides other, all keyed up with an awareness of the ideological colouring even in areas of inquiry once thought to be 'neutral' or 'objective', so much so that the postmodernist litterateur is to be seen as a new kind of polymath, having emerged in the eventful post World War II years. The thrust of the Post-modernist literary endeavours has been to use the terminology of the Russian Formalists, to jolt the reader into a fresh awareness of things free from halos or pre-ordained canonization. While 'realist' literature creates a world that the reader recognizes through the use of language as a mediating agent, post modernist literature defamiliarizes the world facilitating its return to a form where it might be 'seen' rather than merely recognized and this is accomplished in language that draws attention to itself.\(^{13}\)

Postcolonial Indo-Anglian writers are not exceptions to the theoretical attacks of postmodernism. A bizarre atmosphere covers the writings of these writers. A book like *Midnight's Children* came among us as a bolt out of the blue. Nothing has remained the same ever since it was published. Writers mock us with absurd and impossible textual and literary works.

The human mind that craves for newer things happily welcomed a moment like Dadaism though it was welcomed, in the beginning, with a reaction of disbelief and annoyance. As an international movement it was in
vogue between 1915 and 1922. It hated the officially recognized kind of art and went for a form of art that was ‘anti-art’. Absurdity and irrationalism became the favourite tools in the hands of the artists. Such a movement now finds sympathy in most of the postmodern features. Here it is worth quoting K.B. Razdan who writes:

In tune with the contradictory, paradoxical and antithetical nature of postmodernist living and literary representation, what gets evoked is... typology of culture and imagination.... A precise focus upon literary representation, especially in fiction... presents a total reversal of modernism. Certain schematic differences between modernism and postmodernism in terms of literary texts, characters, plots themes, symbolism and imagery, could be categorized easily. For instance, if modernism presents Romanticism, in postmodernism it becomes Pataphysics [sic]/Dadaism. Form no longer remains conjunctive, closed but takes the form of antiform, disjunctive and open. Purpose becomes plays, design: chance; centering: dispersal, paranoia: schizophrenia; metaphysics: irony; determinacy: indeterminacy; symptom: desire, to name only a few. Ostensibly, it is the total reversal of what modernism stood for as a concept.\footnote{14}

The Postmodern society is one that is utterly without compact notions of good and evil and high and low. Even emotion is treated like a lifeless commodity. Amidst this chaos there are still pockets wherein traces of ordered life and beliefs are found. Change brings new life, but with postmodernism it seems to have brought incomprehensible preachings on ideology. K.B. Razdan again points out:
It would also be pertinent to point out here that for an ideally absurdist, ironic and surrealist literary hero of postmodern writing, be it American, English, or Indian English writers like Arun Joshi, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, even Shobha De; human opinion... seems to have come to an end and even strong beliefs seem to be anachronistic. Nostalgia for the rigours of belief fills even the mind of an agnostic, such is the crippling impact of a dehumanizing mass [of] society.15

The creative impulses of a writer can not function unless he becomes a part of the popular literary scene. He may bring in twists and turns on the theory and practice of the current literary norm. It is this condition that seems to have coloured every Indo-Anglian writer in postcolonial India. Thus it can be safely said that the confusing theories of postmodernism will, for some time, go on engrossing the attention of the present-day writers in India – particularly the fiction writers. At the present moment no one can point to a new ism in the literary arena. So, even neoconservatives are swept along the current of postmodernism. Sudhir Kumar says:

Ever since, Salman Rushdie published his “epoch-making” *Midnight's Children* (1980), which was lapped up by his western reviewers and admirers as a kind of metafictional historiography of the Indian subcontinent validating even its several moral/ideological effronteries to Indian people, things have never been the same for the Indian fabulator in English. Under the explicit guise of “nativising” the colonial idiom and narrative technique (i.e., Rushdie’s mode of narration was hailed as parallel to that of *Panchatantra* or *Mahabharata*!), Rushdie was/is subtly but surely representing the subcontinental realities through an angular and arcane narrativity which obviously derives from his western masters or their collaborators.16
Makarand Paranjape rejects the unquestioned acceptance of postmodernism in its totality. He is able to see both the positive and negative sides of postmodernism as a discourse. Besides exulting in the abundancy of the phenomenon, he wants to use postmodernism as a tool to bring about changes in social systems. He recognizes the fact that postmodernism “... is a quite sophisticated discourse that manifests itself in several areas of cultural production – literature, photography (advertisement), tourism, architecture, film, painting, video, music and elsewhere too. Its chief concern seems to “de-naturalize” some of the dominant features of our way of understanding the world and to point out those entities that we uncritically accept as ‘natural’ are, in fact, cultural....” The ability of Makarand Paranjape to analyze postmodernism to the point of seeing it as a modern-day commodity is very much established when he argues that postmodernism’s “arcane, esoteric, and cabbalistic discursivity is an outcome of the compulsions to novelty and product refinement....”

The postcolonial novel shows that it is deconstructing the tradition namely a fictional narrative. It wants the reader to feel that –

A novel is also a long narrative of a kind and so is history – a species of narrative construct, a discourse whose meaning is actively produced by the tropes and devices.... A postmodernist narrative is, therefore, an intensely self-reflexive act that only refers to its own fictionality or facticity. Self-reflexivity in this sense cancels the mimetic model of art. Hence, the postmodernist fiction is metafictional – it becomes a fiction about fiction. Since, under the postmodern moment, there is room only for the provisionality (or) deferral of meaning, the postmodern narrative fractures
or subverts the metanarratives through such devices as parody or pastiche or magical realism.

Now the question is whether to treat those Indo-Anglian novels that precede 1980s as ones not to have arrived. The Indian English novelists have long back established themselves by being able to absorb successfully any mimetic technique that might have come from outside. This move was continued when *Midnight's Children* took shape as a postmodern novel. Just as the novelist was very bold and creative in his adopting a new style of narrating a story, he continued to break down most of the facades put up by those in authority. Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Nayantara Sahagal and Rohiton Mistry did not baulk on the front of trying to prove the masters of metanarratives as to be wrong. Other writers like Amitav Ghosh and Vikram Seth too fall in line with the above-mentioned novelists because they share a common convention of literature. "They are metafictional in nature, their protagonists are self-conscious that they are writing fiction; some use lapsed memory as a device to destabilize meanings." What has been existing and continuing did supply the grist for the postmodern Indian novelists writing in English. Viney Kirpal was able to feel the pulse of the Indian background which would serve as a fertile field on which the seeds of postmodernism could be successfully planted. So, he expounds:

Indian society with its traditional, feudal, patriarchal structures (consolidated further during the period of colonization) seems to offer sample material and scope to a novelist desirous of subverting and dismantling power structures. Official versions of womanhood, class/caste versions of the subaltern are the discourse that are being contested and undermined by the post 1980s Indian English novelists. For example, history-
writing is seen as ideological, and official version is offered, it is simultaneously subverted by other available public versions. Such a Long Journey, Midnight's Children and Rich Like Us are novels which... undermine the official version.21

By using this literary technique Indian postmodernists have successfully brought about a noticeable change on the matter of tradition and its accompanying values.

Many dissenting voices have been raised on the genuineness of the presence of postmodern elements in the novels of the 1980s and 1990s. Their presence do not mean that the contemporary Indo-Anglian novels are without the characteristic features of postmodernism. The emergence of postmodernism in India has been made possible due to the vastness of India – often aptly described as the repository of a sea of humanity. The multiplied human situation encouraged postmodern writers to write with a bent towards experimentation. B.K. Joshi is of the opinion that "The purpose of these novelists... has been to relate private lives to public events and to explore the limits of individuality in a country vast and populous and variegated as India."22 It is this variety that has spawned postmodern elements in the writings of postcolonial Indo-Anglian novelists.

Social changes bring about other changes too in the way people react towards environments that include individual and mass relationships. Everybody becomes powerful individual who no longer cares for the sentiments of others. As a result, "Today, no institution is spared. .... In Upamanyu Chatterjee's English, August the person introduced to the narrator
turns out to be one Mohandas Gandhi.” The tone of reverence is missing. There is the fact that the marginalized are becoming more bold in claiming and announcing their presence.

Some writers may remain content by following a current style of writing. They write without pressure. There is the absence of a sense of a compulsion to create a new form to meet new requirements. Irving H. Buchen says that, “The essential pressure for experimentation comes from the novelist’s conviction that the demands of his vision are so new and urgent and the forms available so inadequate or tired that a new form or hybrid must be created.”

Salman Rushdie knew that the older craft of telling a mimetic line of story would not do justice to the situations of a new India. Sensing the Indian readers needed a really new line of telling a story, he went for postmodernism that had pervaded all walks of life. R.S. Pathak argues: “Midnight’s Children” provided the much needed model…. The novelist claims to have borrowed the non-linear, many-fibred and all-inclusive form of his novel from the architecture of Hindus temples.

Experimentation has characterized the present Indian English fiction. Writers coming from different parts of India represent varying situations and suitable techniques. The movement is not towards a disconcerting goal, but one full of future promises. Writers favour the presence of the postmodern elements for they believe that India does possess the proper climate that necessitates postmodernism. Amidst the din and bustle created by postmodernism there are
others who look at the contemporary scene with disbelief. There is another harsh note of doubt against postmodernism. Avadesh Kumar Singh writes:

If postmodernism has anything to do with modernism, with post-scientific positivism or post-individual society, then it is almost inconceivable to think of postmodernism in our country. Only our naivety would have persuaded us to believe and accept that we have had modernism and are in the post-modern era now. Postmodernism neither grows in our climes, nor does it even sit well on us, if we put it on us to appear fashionable.26

Despite such a negative note, the reality is that postcolonial Indo-Anglian writers are going to take centre stage until the arrival of another "ism". Interestingly positive voices are heard that declare that the elements of postmodernism are going to be with the contemporary writers for a while. Postmodern elements are sometimes mixed with Indian recipes and the adaptations are welcomed as another incarnation of a new Indian way of writing – as a more sharpened version of the former.

It was Salman Rushdie who ignited a long line of followers. Most of them are recipients of the postmodern features of irreverence and variety. Even language takes on a new colour because its origin is from a world of spoken language. These new writers did not care a lot for the origin of any element of creation if only it fulfils a specific purpose.

The ability to choose, select and reaffirm material out of the vast array of the literary wealth of this country has encouraged more writers to join the
tribe of writers who came up after Salman Rushdie’s epoch-making venture.

John Mee remarks:

A different perspective might construe this trend as the self-serving attempt by sections of the elite to represent their own modernity with Indian’s past, papering over the cracks in the national imaginary, as it were, to affirm their authenticity. Similarly the celebration of plurality and openness could be understood as doing the ideological work of economic liberalization, presenting Indian identity in terms of the shifting surfaces of late capitalism .... Yet any assumption that recent writing is simply doing the ideological work of the globalised middle classes has to concede the complex nature of the relationship between culture and class, especially in the contemporary Indian situation ... 27

The different writers coming after Salman Rushdie have chosen different themes. However, this does not place them apart because there is a common element that runs through their works. Elements of postmodernism that are present in their personal approaches bind them together. Readers can not avoid coming across certain postmodern features, such as the use of the past, myths and history. At the same time it is self-reflexive and writing as a process of creation is often pointed out. Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate*, Sahgal’s *A Mistaken Identity*, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Circle of Reason* represent as those works that remind us of postmodern fiction.

Despite the presence of many of these postmodern elements, the postmodern position of the Indian writers coming after 1980 is very distinctive. As the social background against which they write is quite different from the one present in the west, theirs is very individual and highly Indianized. If these
writers are subversive it is because their sense of righteousness is challenged constantly by the downward movement of Indian society. Various practices, ideals and beliefs still continue to the detriment of individuals. Ideals of womanhood can be felt and examined only by women themselves. This does not happen; male versions still determine the fate of the question of female existence. Such structures provide the desire to challenge them through the irreverent criticism of them in the form of highly unusual fictional challenges. "Such a Long Journey; Midnight’s Children and Rich Like Us are novels which use newspaper reports, popular gossip, folk-songs, diaries, private conversation, letters and jokes to undermine the official version."

Destabilization becomes a powerful tool in the hands of postcolonial Indo-Anglian writers. It enters the works and readers themselves. Looked at from the mimetic tradition of presenting a novel, the reader remains with the full conviction that a more ordered version of life will be handed over to him by the novelist. He is disappointed when he discovers that the fictional discourse of the writer has given him an incurable headache in the form of a disordered version of life and technique.

Writers belonging to the colonial period also dealt with various themes. They were not unaware of political, social, economic and identity problems. The earlier literary conventions were thought of to be sufficient enough to tackle the above-mentioned issues. It was the appearance of postmodernism, in its various roles, that brought about drastic changes. The Indian situation was ripe enough to welcome it. Political destability and a sense of the meaninglessness of existence found an echo in the deconstructing nature of postmodernism. There are differences in the need of writers, particularly,
between Indian and Western writers. For the Indian writers the urge to entertain readers is very strong. It remains mixed up with social, political and economic compulsions.

Postmodern elements are abundantly present in the postcolonial writings of Indo-Anglian novelists. But the world created by them existed harmoniously with the textual jugglery of the narrations. Readers can feel that the tradition of the Indian novel is continuing. It stems from the ability of the readers to find a world that is not devoid of the narrative content. Postmodernism seems to have added more variety, and as such the fictional works can still attract readers. In the western world the postmodern works tickle the reader on the cerebral level, but nothing in the form of enjoyment related with the depiction and awareness of a mentally visible world. The Indian English writers care a lot about marginalized people and problems. They do not, however, include matter in question that will throw society into disorientation. Indians still love variety and it is not to be at the cost of losing the logical depiction of life. It was the outcome of the ability of the Indo-Anglian writers to assimilate and produce a more vibrant kind of postmodern work. Viney Kirpal concludes thus:

Salman Rushdie in his numerous interviews, have taken considerable pains to explain the operational principles behind their art. Both have made it very clear that although they have been influenced by Western writers, they will not write imitatively. Their choice also to over determine the oral narratological processes in the making of the Indian English novel has been a studied one, inspired by a deep understanding of the Indian mind and society.... As perceived security that characterizes the postmodern Western world view, it is a vision of comparative certainty that colours the
objectives, the content and the technique of the recent Indian English novel.  

The conclusions arrived at in this thesis are analytical observations; however, they may be supplemented by other studies as the current of fictional literature does not remain stagnant. Indian society, at present, is undergoing through massive social, political and economic changes. They will engender more interesting approaches towards postmodern literature.
Notes


2 Ibid., P. 20.


4 Ibid., P. 14.

5 Loc. Cit.


8 Ibid., P. 8.


10 Ibid., P. 94.


13 Ibid., P. 3.


15 Ibid., P. 23.

17 Ibid., P. 209.

18 Ibid., P. 210.

19 Ibid., P. 212.


21 Ibid., P. 27.


29 Ibid., P. 33.