Introduction

Novel as a literary genre is a relatively recent phenomenon as compared to drama and poetry, yet its impact on the mindscape of the readers makes it the most popular branch of creative writing. The novel reflects the cultural moorings, ethnicity, aspirations, thoughts and beliefs of an individual or a group or sometimes a nation. As a creative process, fiction is an expression of the most powerful and intimate consciousness of life and society- the society in which it grows and develops, it has some purposes to fulfill, some thoughts to be contemplated and some plans to be acted upon for the welfare of humanity. When it broods upon such different things, it witnesses changes taking place in life and society, and therefore, these changes are reflected in the fictional world. Esther Lyons observes:

The beauty of fiction writing is that the characters take the shape and description according to the author. Like the painting has the colour and the drawing of the painter, the fiction has the characters and the theme according to what the author has in mind. The author would create his situation and the plot of the story according to the society, experience, and the environment he lives in at the time. Although the fiction is not a true story, yet there are always the elements of the reality and truth in the situation, and the characters (online).

With its ever growing readership owing to the dissemination of text through various electronic and digital means, the novel form has earned a wide acceptance over the globe. The developing nations like India has been much benefited by the recent developments of novels in the country as it gives the West an opportunity to
understand the country and its cultural moorings in more comprehensive terms. The Indian novels mirror the microcosmic India caught in the crucible of traditions, conventions and social changes. The genre has truly brought Indian cultural ethos and consciousness of the people to the forefront and devised a platform for India to ‘write back to the empire’. M.K. Naik in *Dimensions of Indian English Literature* rightly points out:

One of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling, the novel as we know today was an importation from the West. (235)

The origin of novel in the sphere of Indian writing in English can be traced back to the language politics of the British Raj. During the British regime, Indians had to learn the language for the purpose of education as well as to earn their livelihood by securing a government job. The Indian intelligentsia who had sufficient command over the language, thought differently. They tried their hand at poetry, prose and fiction. The Indian litterateurs described their environs and social milieu in a strange language that belonged to an alien land as part of the natives’ interactions with the British. K.S. Ramamurthi observes:

The rise of the novel as an art form in the Indian literary scene was itself not an isolated historical event caused by the imitative impulses of the writers who had been exposed to the influence of Western art forms but an evolution and a growth brought about by changing socio-economic conditions which called for the emergence of a new literary form. (12)

Individuals from the wealthy classes went abroad for their education, learned to speak and write English better than their mother tongues. Enchanted by elitism
they tried to imitate the popular literary forms in the line of the British masters. They started writing novels in a dozen Indian languages and also in English. Their imitations did not strike much of the originality but heralded a new dawn of Indian English fiction in India. The novel stood out as distinctive literary form superseding poetry and drama. In this connection, Iyenger has rightly observed:

… the reciprocal influence between novel in English; and the novel of regional languages has been rather more intimate and purposive than such influence in the field of poetry or drama. And this has, of course, been facilitated by the comparative ease with which a novel (as a distinct from poetry and drama) can be translated from one to another of the many languages current in the country. (314-315)

_Alaler Gharer Dulal_ (1858) is believed to be the first novel written in India though in Bengali as a result of the Indian literary Renaissance that evolved in Bengal in the second half of 19th century and soon manifested itself in the other parts of India. Bankim Chandra Chaterjee’s _Rajmohan’s Wife_ (1864) was the first published novel in English. Taking its origin in the colonial influence of the British masters, the fiction in India slowly but steadily graduated from the phase of meek imitation to the powerful depiction of national consciousness and social realism. P.P.Mehta and P.N. Bhatt rightly remark, “A work of art changes in course of time. Its structure is dynamic. This process has never been interrupted and the task of the historian is to describe this process.” (170)

A number of Indian writers attempted their might to give the form of novel writing a definite shape during the fag end of 19th century but the literary output remains only of archival importance now. With the turn of the century, there appeared novels translated from regional languages into English. Here we find two major establishments- Bengali and Madrasi. Romesh Chandra Dutta and his fellow
Sarat Kumar Ghosh translated their Bengali novels into English and similarly two Madras contemporary of these novelists, A. Madhaviah and T. Ramakrishna Pillai also contributed their best in English Translation. All these novelists tried their hands at various themes like social evils and love romances of day to day life. With the emergence of Rabindranath Tagore as Nobel Prize winner for his *Gitanjali* in 1913, the novels of Bengal presidency dominated the world of Indian novel in English thus securing worldwide recognition as an exponent of literature and the precursor of modern fiction in English. It further helped in the emergence of the big trio Bankim, Ravindra and Sarat.

Rishi Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894) appeared as the literary dictator of contemporary Bengal drawing the characters from lower-middle-class of society and history. His *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) was the first Indian English novel which established novel as a form of literary expression in India. This was followed by *Durgeshnandini KapalKundala, Vishavriksha, Anandmath, Devi Chaudharaniu* and other novels between 1866 and 1890. Bankim possessed exquisite skill in both, the romantic and the historic fiction. From one hand, his novels deal with the sad plight of widows in traditional Hindu society, and from the other, he has a sharp focus upon history. *Anandmath* has a full patriotic fervor and it established the patriotic feelings which were necessary for redemption from the British thralldom. It taught the famous *vandemataram*, a gospel of the fearless strength. The contribution of Bankim lies in fact that he brought the fiction at the real ground keeping away from the imaginary fairy tales and established it as a powerful medium of freedom-fighting. He paved the way for other novelists. Though *Rajmohini's Wife* cannot be considered a remarkable novel but it did inaugurate a long series of novels to come. Raj Lakshami Devi’s *The Hindu Wife* (1876) and Toru Dutta’s *Bianca* (1878) are some other examples.
Bankim Chandra also remained an inspiration for Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. Tagore's success of *Gitanjali* attracted the attention of publishers and readers across India and consequent upon, a number of translations and publications appeared frequently in literary field of Indian English novel. Of Tagore's full length novels, only three appeared as approved English versions in his life time. *Naukadubi* (1905) appeared as *The Wreck* and *Ghare Bahire* (1916) became *The Home and The World*. These were some pieces written under the influence of Bankim, but Rabindra's success lies in his *Chokar Bali* (1902) which deals with the plight of a young Hindu widow Binodini. It is not a blind repetition of Bankim's theme, but a subtler, more convincing and psychological study of character. Tagore affirms the right of widow to love and happiness instead of neglect and suppression. The story of *Gora* (1910) presents the clash of a traditional Hindu society with the modern, liberal thinking of Brahmos (followers of Brahma Samaj). Gora is grown up in an orthodox Hindu family in the care of his foster parents Krishnadayal and Anandmoyi but at a later stage, he came to know that his mother was an Irish who died just after he was born. The reader's opinion is divided between Gora and Suchitra and their love is shown in conflict with religious orthodoxy which makes the novel a play of ideas. *The Home and The World* has a background of revolutionary Bengal during 1905 and illustrates the battle Tagore had with himself, between the ideas of Western culture and *swadeshi*. These two ideas are reflected through his two main characters, Nikhil, who is rational and opposes violence, and Sandip, who will let nothing stand in his way from reaching his goals. These two opposing ideals are very important to understand the history of this region and its contemporary problems. Tagore was a large admirer of Gandhi’s anti-violence while his character Sandip would use violence in any respect to get
what he wanted. The book shows the clash between new and old, realism and idealism, the means and the end, good and evil within India and southern Asia.

Another Important writer in this trio, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay (1876-1938) also wrote like Bankim and Tagore. Sharat Chandra has good understanding of Bengali villages. He speaks of day to day life stories of the families, living far away from the cities in the tranquility of nature, growing old among the rivers, trees and farm lands. He voiced his protest against the social discrimination, injustices and superstitions that went on in the name of religion. He refuses to be judgmental. His critique on social norm was only a message and never an agenda. He lets his characters to speak for themselves; and lets the reader form his own opinion of purity conceptualized in the contemporary Hindu Society. In most of his writings, he wrote of the women very highly and talked about their situation in a patriarchal society frankly and honestly. His portrayal, particularly, of strong-willed women of rural Bengal defying the convention; and also of women rooted in their sense of values and who set a benchmark for other characters to be judged by the reader, stand out as authentic. In some of his master pieces Srikanta, Grihadaha, Patherdabi, Bipradas, and Sesprasna, he found himself with the 'have-not' classes of society which has deep influence upon the later writers of fiction.

The thematic concern of this Bengali trio can be summarized in the words of Anand Sankar Roy :

When Bankim wrote, the chief question was how to restore the national self -respect, In Rabindranath's time, it was how to bridge the East and the West. In this dynamic age, it is how to identify ourselves with the common people". (Iyengar, 317)

The real bloom in the novel writing was seen in the first half of 20th century and the growth of novel was definitely converged with the growth of the nationalist
consciousness and the awakening of national pride after the entrance of M.K. Gandhi (1869-1947) in the political cosmos. Gandhi has immensely affected the theme of Indian English fiction like Karl Marx in contemporary Russia. Now the novelists turned their attention from past and concentrated towards the dynamicity of contemporary issues and the social and political problems of the country. It was the age that Indian English fiction was going to occupy an important place in the tradition of commonwealth literature.

What began as a small plant seemed to attain a luxuriant growth and branched off in various directions. The novels of this period are marked by various themes such as Indian struggle for freedom, communal problem, east-west encounter, miserable conditions of the downtrodden, the untouchables, the landless poor and virtually the exploiters and the exploited.

The decade of nineteen thirties marked the arrival of “the big three” to the Indian literary scene. The trio includes Mulk Raj Anand, R. K.Narayan and Raja Rao. They were the founders of true Indian-English novel. They delineated social ethos, village life and the concomitant effect of freedom movement. This is the phase that gave the Indian readers excellent novels for the first time, as is evident from Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935), R.K. Narayan’s *Swami and Friends* (1935) and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938).

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) proved himself to be more conscious having a long interest in the Indian peasant, landless poor and the downtrodden strata of society. The heroes of his novels symbolize one or another class of such society. His works show the effect of various artists from various languages such as Tolstoy, Dickens, Tagore and Premchand and above all the father of the nations, Mahatma Gandhi. His fiction is shaped by what he calls "the double burden on his shoulders, the Alps of the Europe tradition and the Himalaya of his Indian past" (Bhattacharya). His novels reshape the idea of humanism and his humanitarian
compassion for the underdog is a persistent theme which established him as first Indian novelist in English to gain an international readership.

Anand's remarkable contribution in the field of fiction are *Untouchable, Coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud, The Village, Across The Black Waters, The Sword And The Sickle, The Big Heart, Private Life of An Indian Prince, The Old Woman and The Cow, The Road, Seven Summers* and *The Morning Face*. In these novels, he deals with the characters derived from various stages of society. In all his novels Anand concerned himself about the status of the pariah and the untouchables or the have-not classes of the Indian society. His novel *Untouchable* was inspired by his aunt's experience when she had a meal with a Muslim person and as a result, she was treated as an outcast by her family. The plot revolves around the argument for eradicating the cast system and depicts a single day in the life of Bakha, a young ‘sweeper’, who is ‘untouchable’ because he cleans the latrines and dirt of those who are so-called ‘touchables’ in this society. As symbolic figure, Bakha stands for all untouchables and their sufferings. This powerful critique of the Indian caste system suggested that British colonial domination of India has actually increased the suffering of outcastes like Bakha.

Along with the novelists and short story writers of his age in various Indian languages, Anand was involved in forming a *dalit* literature, used to refer to the untouchable, casteless sects of India. In his *Coolie*, the evil practice in the society has various dimensions such as greed, selfishness and in-humanity in so many forms. The fictional character facing these problems is Munno, a young orphan lad who is accursed to work as servant in different homes in different towns. His continuous wandering and sufferings make this novel an epic of exploitation. In *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) Anand continued his exploration of the Indian society. The story is told about a poor Punjabi peasant. He is brutally exploited in a tea plantation and killed by a British official, who tried to molest his daughter. The
socially conscious work shared much with the proletarian novels published in Britain and the United States during the 1930s.

Anand's famous trilogy, *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940), and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), was a strong protest against social injustices. These three novels depict the three parts of life, adventures, escapes and struggles of the same hero whose magnetic personality binds the three works together. The illuminating cynosure in these novels is a dynamic and amiable hero Lal Singh, a young man from the village of Nandpur on Punjab whose progressive views in an ultra-conservative and superstitious society make it impossible for him to survive and compels to escape. The hero as presented is existential figure condemned to the liberty of choosing his own destiny, in a single handed manner, in a society unwilling to grant individual freedom. Anand’s next novel *The Big Heart* (1945) is woven at the pattern of *Untouchable* but the issue is between the coppersmiths and the capitalists as their factory has thrown many workers out of employment. *The Private life of an Indian Prince* tells the story of an Indian prince Victor, who is representative of all those maharajas and nawabs who found themselves detached after independence. Here Anand attempts to merge the personal history with political history of the country. However, this novel depicts a smooth transition of the novelist from his disgust and anger with the current reality to the world of humanity and compassion.

Anand's ambitious project was to write an autobiographical novel which he calls "a long confession" coming from "the compulsion of a morbid obsession". He has planned to write in seven volumes under the title *Seven Ages of Man*. The title is an extract from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Anand appears in these novels under the name of Krishna Chander, a Punjabi lad with his liveliness and love to life. Its first volume titled *Seven Summers* appeared in 1951. It is Anand's recapitulation of his own childhood. The second volume, *Morning Face* (1968)
deals with six years in protagonist's life. The third volume entitled *Confession of a Lover* (1976) depicts the multifarious love of the writer; love for political and social freedom, love for mahatma, love for verse and above all, the love for Yasmin. The subsequent volumes appear as *The Bubble* (1984), *And So he Plays His Part* and *Nine Moods of Bharat: Novel of a Pilgrimage* (1998) showing the later life of Krishna Chander, the protagonist. *And So he Plays His Part* appears as an epic novel in seven parts where the first part is entitled as *Little Plays of Mahatma Gandhi*.

In all his works, Anand appears as a crusader against injustice of every type. He steadfastly opposes the exploitation of the poor by any class that includes the imperial masters, the village-money-lenders, the unscrupulous tenders, the native rulers, the priests and the tea-planters. Till the last day of his life, he protested against all kinds of oppression and exploitation. Iyengar remarks:

> He is one of the few writers in India who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing with a sense of dedication what may often seem to be the mirage of technical perfection. There is a norm of excellence below which Narayan cannot possibly lower himself (359).

Though R. K. Narayan (1906-2001) did not explicitly deal with any social issue in any of his novels, nor was he a committed writer like Mulk Raj Anand, yet he made his writing known for a deep sense of humour. He has delicately blended gentle irony with sympathy and realism with fantasy. His *Swami And Friends* (1935) deals with Swaminathan, a ten-year old boy full of innocence, wonder and mischief growing up in the town of Malgudi. In the second novel of this semi-autobiographical trilogy, *Bachelor of Arts* (1936), Swami is replaced by Krishna who falls in love with a girl but not allowed to marry her since their horoscopes do
not match and this compels Swami to renounce the world and become a sadhu. The last of the trilogy, *The English Teacher* (1945), depicts Krishna's married life with Sushila, her years of illness to death and Krishna's journey to the cremation ground; *The Dark Room* (1938) has a female protagonist, Savitri, a submissive housewife who goes to the dark room i.e. *kop-bhawan*, whenever her husband's harshnesses are unbearable to her. She attempts suicide but escapes and after so many sweet-and-sour experiences, comes back to live with the burden because she cannot live without her children. The *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955) stands as an exception because the action extends from Malgudi to Delhi describing Bharati-Sriram romance which attains a new scope due to their indulgence in politics and their common allegiance to the Mahatma. In the forthcoming novels, *Mr.Sampath* (1949), *The Financial Expert* (1952), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1961) and *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), his art achieves perfection and we enter an exotic world of half-headed or half-hearted dreamers, financiers, twisters, adventurers, cinema-stars, several of them are not Malgudi products at all but straying from various fields. In his awarded novel *The Guide* (1960) deals with Raju who comes from Malgudi. His life is predicated on a series of self-deceptions which eventually lead him down a road of confusion, loss of the self and then to spiritual transformation and awakening. *The Vendor of Sweets* revolves around the issues arising from the generation gap between the father and the son narrated through the life-story of Jagan and his son Mali. As characters, Jagan and Mali are contrasted in many ways: while Jagan keeps a strict, religiously founded diet, Mali has begun eating beef and drinking alcohol after his stay in America. The thematic concern of this novel provides model for later novelists. *The Painter of Signs* (1976) portrays the story of Raman, a conscientious sign-painter, who is trying to lead a rational life.
In the later part of his career, Narayan added four more novel to his corpus, namely, *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983) followed by *The Talkative Man* (1983), *The World of Nagraj* (1990) and *Grandmother's Tale* (1992). *A Tiger for Malgudi* depicts the first-person narrative of Raja, a tiger that recounts the story of his capture by a circus owner and his eventual escape. The narrative takes on an existential colouring and becomes enriched with wise musing on life on the earth, youth and age, relationships, death and rebirth. *The Talkative Man* is also set in Malgudi and provides the same level of enjoyment. The *World of Nagraj* is quiet and comfortable which deals with the simple life of Nagaraj and his ‘adventures’, mostly tribulations. The length of Narayan’s *Grandmother's Tale* into 97 pages indicates that it is a novella that exhibits his experimental tendency.

Narayan has proved to be an eagle-eyed observer of life and human nature and he has illuminated the basic ironies, deep-seated ambiguities and existential dilemmas of human condition. He was a part of the process, which in his own word is an ‘Indianisation’ of English. His characters, the inhabitants of Malgudi do not only represent local or Indian sensibility but also a human sensibility. His fiction has a strong sense of place and although the scene changes from novel to novel but the sense remains. He is mainly concerned with the character-analysis of the individuals with a comic and ironic view of life. His Malgudi is complete omnivorous in it and filled with all type of people such as teachers, tourists, guides, merchants, municipal-members and taxi-drivers who are real to us and provide a local color to his fiction. Throughout his novels, there is a disturbance of order in the beginning followed by a return and then a restoration of normality at Malgudi. Narayan was a true observer of human nature and he projected light upon the existential dilemmas of human condition. He founded the tradition of regional fiction in Indian English novel just like Thomas Hardy in British fiction.
The last of the "Big Three" (to use William Walsh's apt phrase), Raja Rao (1908-2006) established Indian English novel as an important place of commonwealth literature. He lacks the social dimension of Anand and gentle irony of Narayan. He has neither the humanitarian zeal of Anand nor Narayan's grasp of the living milieu of the daily life of people, but, apart from these, he is a true painter of the East-West encounter, the symbolist, the stylist and a metaphysical and philosophical novelist. He was more of a child of the Gandhian age, and reveals in his work his sensitive awareness of the forces let loose by the Gandhian revolution as also of the thwarting or steadying pulls of the past tradition. His Kanthapura (1930) is a fine example. Here, Gandhi is represented as a savior and incarnation of God who has come to save his devotees from the demon 'redmen'. Rao's other notable contributions in the field of fiction are: The serpent and the Rope, the Cat and Shakespeare (1965), and The Comrade Kirillow (1976). The Serpent and the Rope is dominated by Indian philosophy and cultural legacy. The Moorthy of Kanthapura is replaced by Ramaswamy (Ram) who is deeply haunted by the religious teachings of Shankar regarding non-dualism in advaitavedanta. Where Kanthapura has mytho-political treatment, The Serpent and the Rope has philosophical one. The beauty of this Sahitya Academi Award winner novel lies in depicting the tortuous mind of a cultivated Indian who is caught between the ambiguous agonizing present and his ancient cultural legacy. The third novel, Cat and Shakespeare (1965), a metaphysical comedy, proves to be a sequel to The Serpent and the Rope in its philosophical speculation. This novel suggests Rao's conception of human life by enacting a kind of surrender to destiny and God through the characters Govindan Nair and Pai. His other novel Comrade Kirillow (1976) deals with an Indian intellectual with his opinions on communism, the British and Indian freedom struggle. Rao's last novel The Chessmaster and His Moves (1988) is a huge novel and first part of the trilogy, the second and the third
parts being *The Daughter of the Mountains* and *A Myrobalan on the Palm of your Hand*, both of these remain unpublished. The novel is extremely philosophical where the centre concerns are suggested by the title itself. We are moves of chess in the hands of the supreme chess master and he plays us for his own pleasure. Raja Rao's deep concern with Indian metaphysics makes his claim to be called a thoroughly Indian novelist. He never looks toward the Western civilization for thematic concern of his works but deals with all those abstract things that have long been discussed by the Indian Maharishis and seers of truth.

The appearance of this big trio is the most remarkable event in the history of Indian English Fiction. They examined minutely the Indian sensibility and exposed the foibles of Indian way of life. They brought the latest form of novel in technique according to the latest development in Western countries and introduced the genuine pre-independence Indian English novel. These novels thematically preoccupied themselves with the subject matters like Indian freedom movement, patriotism, evils of feudalism and the matters of national and social concerns. The long years of colonial oppression and persistent aspirations of country’s freedom supercharged with Gandhian philosophy are echoed in these novels. It was truly the phase of social realism. The novels depicted the social ills of the time like oppression of individual in the ruthless society. They portrayed the distress and marginalization of the individuals on the basis of caste and class and pleaded for social reforms.

Apart from these major novelists, some second-rate novelists also appeared in this age who deal with one or other aspect of human life and society. Notable among these are *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) and *Ocean of Night* (1964) by Indo-Pak writer Ahmad Ali (1910-1994) that show the changing pattern of relationship in Muslim community. Amir Ali's *Conflict* (1947) reflects the adjustment between rustic and rural life whereas his other two novels *Via Geneva* (1967) and
Assignment in Kashmir (1973) are products of his personal experiences as a diplomat. Other Muslim novelists who acquire attention are Humaun Kabir (1906-1969) and K.A. Abbas (1914-1987). Kabir’s praiseworthy work *Men and River* (1945) is a river-sutra in modern sense. Abbas deals with various problems extensive in the society in his major works like *Tomorrow is Ours: A Novel of the India Today* (1943), *Inquilab: A Novel of the Indian Revolution* (1955) and *The World is My Village* (1984).

Among the remaining novelists of the pre-independence era who deserve attention is Dhan Gopal Mukherjie (1890-1936). He has popularity as a novelist of rustic and jungle life. His contributions are chiefly: *Kari, the Elephant* (1922), *Hari, the Jungle Lad* (1924), *Neck, the story of a Pigeon* (1927), *The chief of the herd* (1929) and *Ghond the Hunter* (1929). The social and ideological ferment of this age have also been depicted by K.S. Venkatramani (1891-1951) in his *Murugan, the Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan, the Patriot* (1932) which was hailed as the novel of new India in making. These novels are Gandhian in theme than technique having patriotic heroes who die having an unfulfilled dream in their eyes. These novels sing of victories, small or great, achieved on the social front by the soldiers of the civil disobedience. As they were written in a great age, their characters were designed to symbolize the heroic qualities like enthusiasm and patriotic feelings with zest and zeal.

After the political independence in 1947, the socio-cultural atmosphere changed rapidly. There is change in social structure which provided all new themes to the novelists. The challenges before this newly-made India were the problems of the adjustment of refugees, the merging of princely states, end of Jamidari system and conflict between the traditional beliefs and the scientific development. The communal problem rose as a result of partition of the country. The novelists of this
period also prepared themselves to meet these new challenges and they manifested different themes and trends as compared with their predecessors. To quote:

As a total result of these developments, important gains were registered especially in fiction, poetry and criticism. Fiction, already well-established, grew in both variety and stature. (Naik 192)

The post-independence novels retain the momentum they have gained in the Gandhian age. The tradition of social realism established earlier by Mulk Raj Anand was succeeded by Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar and Khushwant Singh. Bhattacharya is a novelist deeply influenced by Tagore and Gandhi. Each of his novels like *So Many Hungers* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1952), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1968) *Shadow From Laddakh* (1966) and *A Dream in Hawai* (1978) advocate that the "novelist must have a social purpose and must put before the reader something from society’s point of view" (Joshi, 7). Bhattacharya has created a picture of India along with its sense of Indianans by incorporating a sense of situation, mastery of narrative tools, and local realism in his novels. His *So Many Hungers* (1947) portrays the ravages of hunger on an epic scale. The hunger turns in hunger for freedom in *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1952). The *Music for Mohini* (1952) is an attempt to understand modern life in connection with the old-age value system. *A Goddess Named Gold* (1968) and *Shadow From Laddakh* (1966) tell how a country should make most of its liberation and how its benefits can be passed on to the masses. *A Dream in Hawai* (1978) shows the conflicting values of the East and the West. It depicts how the Westerners love aestheticism and spiritualism yet they tend to mock at them.
Manohar Malgonkar's (1913-2010) purpose is to create a pure entertainment in his novels. His novels present before us a picture of male-dominated world where women come to life better than men, but remain a substance of man’s pleasure. His novels *Distant Drum* (1960) and *Combat of Shadows* (1962) both present his involvement into a fast moving picturesque with cinematic attitude rather than the ethical question of survival in the changing society. *The Princess* (1963) has been hailed as his masterpiece depicting the prince Abhayraj struggling to maintain the old order even after the independence. The *Bend in the Ganges* (1964) is set around the partition whereas *The Devil's Hand* (1972) peeps into the personal history of Nana Saheb. His other contribution after 1980 are *Bandicoot Run* (1982), *The Garland Keepers* (1987) and *Cactus Country* (1992) have spy stories in the centre. To quote:

Malgonkar's novels are neatly constructed and entreatingly told narratives which, however, present a rather limited view of life and human nature seen through the eyes of hard-boiled man of the world. (Naik, 217)

The basic question of survival is successfully raised in the social realist novels of Khushwant Singh (b.1915). His fictions completely show us his deep roots in the Indian villages. His first novel, *A Train to Pakistan* (1956) shows the picture of such village *Manoomazara* at the time of partition. This work deals with communal problems. Khushwant Singh can also be regarded as a regional novelist delineating his own birthplace Punjab and its citizens, chiefly the Sikhs. This community finds place in his second novel, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959). Singh's new novel, *Delhi* (1992) moves backwards and forwards in time through the history of Delhi whereas *The Company of Women* (1999) deals with the relationship between men and women and celebrates the universal and the
eternal story of man's relationship with woman - the relationship of love, sex, and passion. The book presents this relationship in a very unusual and original style which is not only uninhibited and erotic, but also enormously enchanting and engrossing.

Other novelists who carry the contemporary themes in their novels are: Bhal Chandra Rajan, who has mixed the realism with fantasy in his *The Dark Dancer* and *Too Long in the West* (1961) and Sudhindranath Ghose (1899-1965) who has initiated a new experiment in the expression of Indian ethos in fiction. His best piece *The Vermilion Boat* (1953) presents a story told by same narrator under different roles. Ghose is affected with the old Sanskrit device of framing of the story with inserted tales told by different narrators and often by different characters but he did not try to do a philosophical probe like Raja Rao’s fiction. Within his self-defined limits, he has produced fiction which has unmistaken authenticity, freshness and charm. This tradition was further continued by G.V. Desani in his *All About Hindustaniwala Hatterer* (1948). Both the novelist tried to blend the Western and the Indian models of story-telling with a modern setting.

The foregoing discussion regarding the growth of Indian English fiction has been largely limited to the assessment to the male novelists but it is to be submitted here that women novelists’ contribution to Indian English literature is by no means inferior. They are rather on the driving seat in the contemporary literary scene, not only challenging their compatriot male counterparts but carving a formidable niche in the global arena. It is noteworthy that the literary scene in India before independence was overtly dominated by the male novelists but the emergence of significant number of women novelists after the independence made a startling enrichment in both quality and quantity of fictions written in English language. As Iyengar in his anthology holds that women are the natural story teller even when they don’t write or publish, their contribution deserve acknowledgement in all
proportions and effort should be made to locate them in proper literary tradition. Toru Dutt’s *Bianca* or *The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878) is considered to be the first novel written by Indian woman in English. Taking a cue from Dutt a number of women novelists followed the suit before independence but could not strike much of critical attention as they lacked in the depth of characterization and depiction of seething world. Raj Lakshmi Debi’s *The Hindu Wife* (1876), Krupabai Satthianadhan’s *Kamla, A story of Hindu Life* (1894) and *Saguna* (1895) set the ball rolling for the Indian women whose main obsession was to portray the concerns of women faithfully.

It was only after the Second World War (1945) when women novelists started asserting their creative prowess in Indian literary firmament. Indian English women writers of the first phase of post independence era wrote during the 1950’s and 1960’s in the backdrop of the new consciousness of national building and subsequent decolonization of the country. The fictional concerns in fifties and sixties centered on issues larger than the personal, but nevertheless the philosophy of life embedded in individual’s story remains pivotal. A unique mixture of realistic and idealistic jettisoned together. Authentic portrayals of women began to appear in English fiction. Of these writers, Kamala Markandya (1924-2004) stands out as one of the most gifted novelists. Her eight novels written between 1954 and 1973 are remarkable for their range of experience. She concerns with the cultural clash between Indian urban and rural societies.

Kamla’s first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) portrays rural India’s serenity, despair and tyranny; *Some Inner Fury* (1956) which includes a highly educated young woman and her English lover who are torn apart by the Quit India Movement of the time, deals with the conflict between Eastern and Western influences focused through a marriage; *A Silence of Desire* (1960) reflects the tensions, strength and inadequacies and aspirations of middle class Indian life. The
novel depicts the unconscious desire of a housewife, Sarojini to fight the decay of her ‘self’ within the marital relationship. She protests unconsciously, but in a manner approved by the society, against her husband and by extension against the whole society. Gentle in love and sharp in perception, the novel beautifully conveys the mixture of moods, the fiction of faith and reason, the clash of ideas between the old and the young; *A Handful of Rice* (1966) shows a hard struggle of life in a modern urban city and its demoralization through the marriage of a peasant-boy Ravi and the so-called cultured and sophisticated Nalini. *Possession* (1963) reiterates the theme of Eastern spirituality with Western materialism; and *The Coffer Dams* (1969) examines the love-hate relationships between the guest Whites and native Blacks creating piquant situation till a calamity overtakes both.

The women characters in her novels are taken from different strata of society - peasants, middle class educated women as well as from affluent royal families. She traces how changes in economic and social conditions adversely affect women. Instead of being docile and subservient to the patriarchal dominance her female protagonists emerge out of the darkness, overturning their age old legacy of humiliation, dependence and seclusion seeking equality with their male counterparts. Her later novels – *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) and *Pleasure City* (1982) echo woman’s quest for autonomy. She terms her novels as “the literature of concern” which may pull out something positive in the gloomy scenario of Indian life and can create a meaningful existence for mankind. Markandaya’s novels are of great contemporary relevance as she attempts to portray her women characters not rooted to the idealized conception of any romantic notion but in relation with the current historical, cultural, political and sociological of evolving India.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (b.1927) born in Germany, married to an Indian architect, spent the major part of her life in India. Her unique position as an
outsider gives her a penetrating vision to objectively analyse and delineate the issues concerning Indian sensibilities. She herself claims, “If I had not married an Indian, I didn’t think I would even have come here for I am not attracted – or used not to be attracted – to the things that usually bring people to India (Caroline: 16). In her novels like To Whom She Will (1955), The Nature of Passion (1956), The Householder (1960), Get Ready for battle (1962), A new Dominion (1973), Heat and Dust (1975), In Search of Love and Beauty (1983), The Continents (1987), Poet and Dancer (1993) and Shards of Memory (1995), Jhabvala focused on the domestic and social problems of predominantly middle class urban Indian and the oft-repeated East-West encounter. However, she willfully avoided the harsher problems such as political unrest and communal violence of post-independence India. She voiced her protest and annoyance for many orthodox aspects of Indian life such as the Indian attitude towards fate and woman’s total submission to her male counterpart and his family. She is highly critical of the cult of Sati and the atrocity of female infanticide. In her later novels the focus is shifted to the man and woman relationship trapped in the bonds of marriage.

Santha Rama Rau (1923-2009) another novelist of repute, started writing novels in the 50’s. Her passion for travel gives her an extra edge to minutely observe the cultural, social and national crosscurrents. Her keen sense of perception finds an apt reflection in a number of travel books penned by her: Home to India, East of Home, My Russian Journey and Gifts of Passage. She has also made a dramatic version of E. M. Forster’s A Passage to India (1960). Her first novel, Remember the House (1956) is a story of Bombay upper class society with its colourful ladies, drinking parties and princes. The story describes how Indira marries Hari, an eligible young man, after having refused once to marry him. When her father dies, she has to get settled one way or the other. As such after meeting Nicky and Alix and dallying with romance with them, she decides to
prefer Hari to the princes of romantic mirage. She can now well feel that the West cannot easily mix with the East, and she finds hidden innate strength in the traditional culture to absorb shocks from outside, and her progress “from adhesion to romantic tinsel to the calm appreciation of the need for security and commonsense” is presented as something natural as well as commendable.

Nayantara Sahgal is a writer of sharpened sensibilities. She has brought fiction to a dimension which symbolizes a rich heritage co-mingled with strong Western influence. Her novels deal with India’s elite responding to the crises engendered by political change and how people do adjust these changes. She claims her novels to deal with "more or less the political era we are passing through" (Jain, 143) In her four novels: A Time to be Happy (1958), This Time of Morning (1965), Storm in Chandigarh (1960), and The Day in Shadow (1971), she writes about those areas of life which she has known intimately and of which she has direct and first-hand experience. It is the upper strata, including the upper middle class, landlords, bureaucrats, business executives, industrialists, administrators, politicians, university professors, diplomats and wealthy well-to-do persons in general. A Time to be Happy (1958) discusses the problem arising from the slowly evolving socio-political situation in the country in the turbulent forties: the theme of adjustment to a shifting political panorama in a country struggling to be free. In This Time of Morning (1968), the author stands for the new humanism and a new morality, according to which a woman is not to be taken a mere toy, an object of lust and momentary pleasure, but man’s equal and honoured partner. Storm in Chandigarh (1969) and The Day in Shadow (1971) repeat the theme of lack of sympathy and understanding between man-woman relationships.

Sahgal’s A Situation in New Delhi (1977) is the repetition of her familiar theme which again continues in her later novels. Her Rich Like Us (1985) depicts the India during emergency in a unique narrative technique. Some other aspects of
narrative can be observed in the theme of political corruption, colonialism, women as objects and the power of love through its main characters Som, Sonali, Ram and Dev. The novel has become a leading example of India’s emergent writers, blending the Hindu with the Christian outlook, possessed equally of a cool analytical brain and broadly human sympathies; *Plans for Departure* (1985) is a familiar ground in terms of the Indo- British relationship; *Mistaken Identity* (1988) continues the theme and weaves the story of Bhushan Singh, who is the only son of the king of Vijaygarh. In her most recent novels, *A Situation in New Delhi* (1989) and *Lesser Breeds* (2003) Sahgal concerns for values. *A Situation in New Delhi* juxtaposes the conflict of personal relationships with the larger canvas of corruption in politics. *Lesser Breeds* tells the story of Akbarabad smoothly, with swift punches of un-expected violence where the story of a 23 year old teacher Nurulla is running parallel.

Other notable woman novelist who deserves attention is Shashi Deshpande (b.1938) with her works like *The Dark Holds no Terror* (1980), a domestic novel; *If I Die Today* (1982) and *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), both as detective fictions; *Roots of Shadows* (1983), *A Matter of Time* (1996), *Small Remedies* (2000), *Moving On* (2004) and *In The Country of Deceit* (2008). Her novels deal with the daily problems in a middle class Indian society. She is known to be a writer of domestic fiction since all her novels deal with crisis in its heroine's life. She cannot be claimed a feminist writer although her work is female-oriented. There is nothing doctrinaire about her fiction; she simply portrays, although in depth, the meaning of being women in modern India. Most of her protagonists are women who are well educated and exposed to western ideas. They are rooted in the contemporary society and stand on the threshold of social change in a decisive position. They are intensely aware of the injustice afflicted on them unlike the
protagonists a generation ago. However, Shashi Deshpande rejects the tag of inferiority that is associated with women and renders them passive and submissive.

After 1960s, under western influence, we may see a gradual shift of the focus from social realism to an individual’s search for identity in the novels. The exploration of mindscape of an individual became the chief concern for numerous post independence novelists; socio-political concerns also kept their significance but the treatment of these themes concentrated more on the working of an individual psyche than the society as a whole. Although the twilight of the masters of thirties was still shining but new practices were begun and the variety of novels published surpassing the total output of the old period. The shifting pattern of relationships under the tragic effect of two subsequent world wars gave rise to absurd situations and psychological disorder, consequently loss of moral values. The world literature, pertaining to this ethos, started to deal with two major themes in fiction; the rapidly changing society and the individual trapped therein. Alienation, loneliness, withdrawal, detachment are some other by-product themes of such situation.

Indian fiction in English has come a long way from the triumvirates of the thirties to the modern recent English fiction writers. During the past three decades or so, it has acquired a new dimension. Indian writers, however, could not remain aloof from these influences and henceforth variety of novelists appeared in the horizon of Indian English fiction with various themes and technique. These new novelists were born and brought up in post colonial period; many of these were a part of the Indian diaspora and had no reason to feel self-conscious in handling of English language. Consequently, various novelists appeared with various themes and technique in which magic realism of Sulman Rushdie, Amitav Ghose and Shashi Tharoor, social realism of Vikram Seth and Rohinton Mistry, political issues of Chaman Nahal and Aamir Ali are noteworthy. The tradition of regional
fiction has also been continued by several second-rate writers from different regions of the country. Some other themes are East-West encounter and domestic and child fiction by various novelists.

The most effective theme of the post-independence Indian English fiction is the existential condition of individual which is similar to the Western writings of the age. In modern European and American fiction, the depiction of protagonist's psyche or inner development can be noticed in the works of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Graham Greene, Kafka, Sartre, etc. They have portrayed the inner flow of the sentiments of their characters artistically. This theme is focused in Indian English fiction by two prominent writers, Anita Desai and Arun Joshi.

Anita Desai (b.1937) portrays the tragedy of human soul in the adverse conditions of life. She has inaugurated a new chapter of psychological/existential realism since she does not believe in metaphysical or socio-political reality. She accepts:

My novels are no reflection of Indian society, politics or character. They are a part of my private effort to seize upon the raw material of life – its shapelessness, its meaninglessness. (Desai, 348)

Rather than depiction of social problems, she is interested in the excavation of the psychic condition of her characters. In almost all her novels, she deals with the issues of private life. Social issues intrude only when it affects the life of the individuals. Anita Desai's novels are called ‘forte of poetic sensibility’ because she employs the ‘language of the interior’ to delineate the inner tensions and crises in the lives of her characters. Her exploration of sensibility and distinctive technique made her novels celebrities. Desai's two novels Cry, The Peacock (1963) and Voices in the City (1965) depict the inner climate, the climate of sensibility that rumbles like thunder and suddenly blazes forth like lightning. Since her
preoccupation is with the inner world of sensibility rather than the outer world of action, she has tried to forge the style, supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fretfulness of the stream of consciousness of her principal characters. Her *Bye-Bye Black Bird* (1971) is the only novel with a social theme but here also the social and political realities precede over status of mind. *The Peacock Garden* (1974) is followed by the Sahitya Academi Award winner novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975) which is a story of the oppressed mind and illustrates the tension between family members and the loneliness, isolation and alienation of the middle-class women Sita, the female protagonist of the story. The unusual situation of life is crafted skillfully in the novel. The story ends leaving the feeling of an intense pain of a young middle class wife who desires to bid goodbye to the hypocrisy and boredom of her daily existence.

Other notable works of Desai include, *Cat on a Houseboat* (1976), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) and *Games at Twilight* (1978). The *Clear Light of Day* (1980) is perhaps her best novel which deals with two sisters Bimla and Tara facing the absurd conditions of their life. This book describes the tension in a post-partition Indian family during and after childhood, starting with the characters as adults and moving back into their lives through the course of the book. While the primary theme is the importance of family, other predominant themes include the importance of forgiveness and the power of childhood. *The Village by the Sea: An Indian Family Story* (1982) is based on the poverty, hardships and sorrow faced by a small rural community in India whereas *In Custosy* (1984) is a shift of focus from women-oriented narrative to that of male-oriented. Her ninth novel *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988) is a study of lonesome individual left at the mercy of impersonal forces too large to comprehend. *Journey to Ithaka* (1995) looks the melodramatic horrors of India from an outsider's eyes whereas *Fasting Feasting* (1999) crafts the oft repeated theme of post-colonial fiction, the East-West encounter. Desai’s recent
novels *The Zigzag Way* (2004) and *The Artist of Disappearance* (2011) have other existential questions tormenting the individuals.

An attempt has been made in the first part of this chapter to discuss briefly the shifting thematic concern of Indian English fiction with the changing pattern of society. Since the present study endeavours to read the novels of Arun Joshi in the light of his philosophy inherent therein, it becomes an intrinsic necessity to discuss his biographical details and other formative influences that helped to shape his vision.

Arun Joshi (1939-1993) follows the pattern of Anita Desai in the thematic concern of his fiction. He deals with the trauma and agonies of the modern man with its various manifestations in the form of meaninglessness, formlessness and cultural estrangement. His novels have an outer world which is characterized by mechanization, urbanization, self-misgivings, delusions, rootlessness, discontent and other maladjustments but this world is only the form of a background to his love for depicting the inner world which is existential and psychological. In an interview, he has confessed that he was prompted into writing to explore “the serious mysterious underworld which is the human soul”(Mathai, 8). In his reply to M.R. Dua, Arun Joshi open heartedly asserts that he "essentially attempts towards the better understanding of the world and of himself” (Dhawan, 8). He deepens into dark recesses of mind, which is the inscrutable region of uncertainty and inscrutability. R.K. Dhwan says:

Reading Joshi's novels is not only 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 seeks process of apprehension of reality, which may lead him to the world of the truth. He realizes man's uniqueness and loneliness in a different and inscrutable universe.” (8)
Arun Joshi was born on 07 July, 1939 at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh as the youngest child of Late Professor (Dr) A.C. Joshi, Vice-chancellor of the Punjab University, adviser in the planning commission and again Vice-Chancellor of the Banaras Hindu University where the child lived and educated until he was seven. He got his formal education up to intermediate at Varanasi, Lahore and Jalandhar. Thereafter, he got a scholarship from the USA to pursue higher studies. He obtained an engineering degree from the University of Kansas in 1959 which was followed by his master's degree in Industrial Management from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA in 1960. During his sojourn in the United States, he had also worked at a mental hospital where his uncle was a psychiatrist dealing with chronic schizophrenics. After returning back to his soil in 1962, he joined the Delhi Court & General Mills Co., Delhi as chief of the Recruitment and Training department. During the fag end of his career, he held the positions of the head of DCM Corporate Performance Assessment Cell, the Secretary of DCM Board of Management, and the Director of Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources. He married in 1964 to Rukmini who runs a well-known boutique by that name. Joshi held three children, two girls and a boy. He resigned from D.C.M in 1965 but remained associated with Shri Ram Centre for Art and Culture at Hindu college, Delhi as a member of their Governing Bodies. After 1965, he set up his own industries for the production of Diesel engines, machine-tools, foundry products and automotive parts. Unfortunately, he died of a cardiac attack in April 1993 at the age of fifty-four in New Delhi.

T.S. Eliot has rightly said:

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. (online)

Arun Joshi is no exception to it and numbers of literary and non-literary influences have their profound impact upon him. He is deeply influenced with the contemporary existential philosophy and the Indian philosophy expressed through ancient Hindu scriptures in the form of *Upanishads* and *Bhagvadgita*. Joshi finds that his ethos is essentially Hindu. In an interview with Pier Paolo Picueco, Arun Joshi has confessed this influence upon his mind:

I certainly have some affinities with this country (India). I have found it lately. One is the affinity of the spiritual kind, then there is affinity of the sensual kind and there are others too. Each country in India is very unique and all India still remains unique........ There is no other country like this for the religious size, for the spiritual, the Bhakti movement... India then has dealings with God which are peculiar. (89)

Arun Joshi’s dealing with *Anasakti Yoga* in his *The Foreigner* shows the effect of *Bhagvadgita* upon him. To quote:

I believe that the soul of man is immortal but there is this Indian belief that the soul is born again and again basically for the evolution of the soul, always under certain conditions. (90)

In the same interview, he elaborates loneliness and defends individual freedom which is another example of the oriental effect upon his collective unconscious:
inner liberation without detachment is not possible and selfishness is always stopping you from getting liberated. Loneliness is the state where you become aware that you are not liberated and you also do not know how to get liberated. That is the loneliness stage in man's life. (91)

All these statements show Joshi's belief in the concept of ignorance or *maya* and attachment or *asakti* which are dealt in the *Bhagvadgita*, *Vedant* and *Upnishads*.

Arun Joshi’s concern about the absurd condition of individual in modern age shows the effect of Western existential thinking. In his interview with Purabi Banerjee, he confessed:

I did read Camus and Sartre, I liked *The Plague* and read *The Outsider*. I might have been influenced by them. Sartre, I did not understand clearly or like. As for existential philosophers like Kierkgaard, I have never understood anything except odd statements. (4)

Like the thinkers of the modern age, Joshi’s work express the absurdity of man's existence in the modern world but the remedy of this condition is always derived from the native milieu. He seems to Indianize what was distinctly Western in sense. The Western sensibility and the Indian ethos has been fruitfully resulted in a pragmatic existentialism in the fiction of Arun Joshi.

In order to understand this amalgamated form of existential philosophy in the fiction of Arun Joshi, it would be quite pertinent at this stage to deal with the basics of the Indian and the Western existential thinking at some length in the next chapter.
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