CHAPTER 2

Perspectives of Indian Literature

(i) Indian Literature

(ii) Indian Writing in English

(i) Indian Literature:

The term ‘Indian Literature’ is of recent origin. Initially, by Indian literature, scholars like Albrecht Weber, Sten Konow, and M. Winternitz etc. meant only Sanskrit literature. However, the general and accepted view of literary historians is that Indian literature is a collection of different literatures of the subcontinent having diverse linguistic manifestations. Sanskrit literature and the literature written in different languages, recognized by Sahitya Akademi are part of Indian literature. In the essay “Many Languages but one Literature: A Retrospective on Indian Writing”, Mulk Raj Anand has said that at the time of the inauguration of Sahitya Akademi, Dr. Radhakrishnan uttered a truth, “There are many languages in India but one literature.”¹ There are at least twenty two different manifestations in the twenty two major languages in India as recognised by the Sahitya Akademi. Indian literature is the sum total of all regional literatures as well as the tradition that these languages focus. The interaction between these languages establishes the

unity in Indian literature. The oneness of the unity of outlook, according to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, can be traced in the writing of these major languages of India, as they derive their inspiration from a common source and share more or less the same kind of experience - emotional and intellectual. The Vedic, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, the Gita, the Jatakas, folk literatures are basically the source of inspiration for all the Indian languages, which exhibit fundamental unity among them. The whole corpus of Indian literature mirrors Indian mind and delineates Indian consciousness. Even though, Indian literature is written in different languages, there is a pan Indian sensibility, because the original voice of Indian mind has always been one. Inspite of having the regional differences, there has been a unity of thought and aspirations. 'Unity in diversity' is the essence of Indian culture and it is reflected in Indian literature.

One of the objectives of Indian literature is to arouse the spirit of nationalism. In the 19th century, the idea of national identity emerged in literature and mostly the Indian writings turned into a voice of enlightenment. At the time of the freedom struggle of India, the nationalism emerged in the minds of the Indian people, which made the people belonging to different regions, different of castes and tribes, united and succeeded in the abolition of the foreign rulers from the soil of India. The question of literature and Indian freedom struggle is primarily connected with the idea of national identity - the self-awareness of the nation. The first phase of freedom movement was marked by a feeling of devotion for the motherland. The idea of a freedom movement received spiritual elevation at Bankim Chandra
Chatterjee’s hands. He described the geographical entity of the country as mother and goddess and in his song, ‘Vandemataram’, he identified the motherland with Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. Nationalism, in the course of its development, has accepted revivalism as one of the major factors inducing love and regard and concern for the heritage and culture of the country. It one hand, has strengthened the idea of continuity and on the other, created an urge to introduce reforms in the society. The writers roused nationalistic fervour among the people through their writings which also focussed the past glory of the country. It induced people on one side, to remember the national heritage of India and create a national awakening among the people and on the other side, to cleanse the society.

Another feature of Indian literature is to focus the spiritualism which is inherent in the minds of the Indian people. The dominant note in the Indian mind has been spiritual, intuitive and psychic. Indian literature has at times been called spiritual. But it does not mean that it is theo-centric or religio-centric, rather it is about life, it is about, how to unite the ultimate with the temporal. The quest of knowing the ultimate through the temporal, features Indian literature. The concept of spirituality in case of Indian literature is mystic; it combines the concept of spirituality with worldly happiness. This mystic idea of spirituality has led Goethe to comment that the ‘Indian art without individual passion’. Matthew Arnold called the ‘Indian virtue of detachment’. The word ‘detachment’ perhaps means either detachment from body and quest for the spirit or may mean that the artist forgetting his own identity submerge in the identity of totality of humanity.
This basic Indianness that is focused in Indian literature, complexes for most of the western readers who hardly understand the roots of the Indian literature. It is true even today, that a majority of the western readers do not understand Indian literature on account of their depth spiritual outlook.

The Indian literature is full of the depiction of the myths and legends. The myths of Shiva-Parvati, Radha-Krishna, Ram-Sita as well as the tales from *Panchatantra, Jatakas*, folklores and philosophical treatises are part of the national psyche of Indian literature. In fact, myths are one of the segments which serve to determine the Indianness in Indian literature. The reference of Indian myth has been retained by the modern Indian artists in their creations in spite of all pervading disillusionment.

It is said that in Indian literature, there is always a search for aesthetic experience, that is to say, an experience of beauty and pleasure. Beauty, in the Indian context, lies in the experience of a particular kind of harmony. It is the harmony of the form and the content, giving the readers a kind of pleasure- aesthetic pleasure. Harmony is central to the concept of beauty which induces a unique feeling of pleasure termed as blissful.

There are three other archetypal concepts which stand for three basic characteristics of Indian literature and emphasize its Indianness. One of them is the Vedantic concept of oneness, the absolute reality which is explained through phenomenal reality. The dualism of soul and body, spirit and matter is interrelated and through their interrelation, the ultimate reality has been discovered. The quest to oneself is evident from the Vedic times to the modern
age and the artists specifically of Indian literature, often discern this tendency in their art forms.

Another archetypal concept prevalent in Indian literature, is that of idealism. Indian literature is basically idealistic in character. Indian literature discerns the idea that good will always win over the evil. The ideal man always fights against injustice for the preservation of human virtues and though he has to struggle a lot for the fulfillment of his purpose, ultimately he wins. This optimism prevails in Indian literature even in the darkness of the present age.

Humanism is another characteristic of Indian literature. The idea of humanism is based on ethical and aesthetic universals. In Indian literature, the effort has been to find out how a man can achieve divinity.

The interaction of western civilization with Indian ideology results in two tendencies in Indian literature; one, acceptance of the western thought and the other, as a reaction to western ideologies, tries to revive the ancient glory of India and the Indian consciousness. And as a result, nationalistic, reformistic and revivalistic thinking are found in Indian literature.

Like the English romanticism, Indian literature is also loaded with romantic feelings. The trend of romanticism of the twenties, ushered in by Tagore's quest for the beautiful in nature and man. Romantic trend in India followed the tradition of Indian poetry where romanticism indicates the Advaita oneness between nature and man. Apart from the influences from
abroad like those of Freud, Marx, Kierkegaard etc., the three great forces that have influenced the destiny of contemporary Indian literature are Sri Aurobindo’s search for the Divine in man, Tagore’s quest for the beautiful in nature and man and Gandhi’s experiments with truth and non-violence.

Now-a-days, one significant issue dominant in Indian literature is that there is a clash between tradition and innovation. The conflict between traditional Indianness and functional modernization is easily discernible in the writings of the contemporary Indian writers in all the major languages of India. There are some corresponding forces operating which have placed the Indian society in a dilemma and this dilemma has become the focal theme of modern Indian literature. Against the growth of nationalism, there is also a growth of regionalism, against the caste-abolition, there are forces of class-strengthening, against secularism, there are also religious fundamentalism, against women liberation, there are also forces of women suppression—these dilemmas form the basis of the various themes of Indian literature.

The Indian writers, like the writers belonging to other countries, have depicted the experiences connected with different kinds of people, the milieu and the environment in their art forms, which display the Indian tradition, values, beliefs as well as many social problems related to life. The stories depicted in their art forms unravel every aspect of the reality of life. They not only focus the positive aspects, but also the negative areas of society. It gives a glimpse of the actual India, the totality of the country.
In order to show the total picture of the country, the writers often use the help of symbols, images and other rhetorical devices to make the description suitable, effective and dignified.

Indian literature has always focused on India’s cultural tradition, human values, philosophical meaning of life, and spirit of freedom, imagination and idealism- on the establishment of universal humanism.

(ii) Indian Writing in English

Indian writing in English has turned a new vision to literature. It has commended unstinted admiration in both home and abroad. It holds a prominent place among English and other literatures of the world. The Indian writing in English is not a minor tributary of English literature; it is not a part of English literature, but legitimately a part of Indian literature. Meenakshi Mukherjee says,

"Indo-Anglian fiction in my view is a part of a truly Indian fiction and not a tenuous extension of English fiction."\(^2\)

Though it is not a part of English literature, it has given a new shape and colour to English literature. Indian writing in English is both an Indian literature and a variation of the English literature. It can be called the manifestation of the new creative urge in India, the literary renaissance in India. It is a new voice, it appeals to Indians as well as to the foreigners.

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It continues to inspire a host of poets, prose writers, novelists and dramatists in India and outside India. As the Australians and Americans have evolved their own literature in their respective countries, likewise, the Indian writers in English also have evolved their own literature writing in English and they have offered a new range and power to literature. Today, English is not the heritage of only England, but it is gaining ground all over the world. Indian English literature has been growing slowly and steadily in the twentieth century attracting the critical attention of diligent academicians all over the world.

The colonial encounter beginning in the early nineteenth century has been an important factor in the formation of Indian English literature. The seed which was first sowed by Lord Macaulay for introducing English in the educational system in India, has been blossomed abundantly in the later period of time. Macaulay’s Minute on Education is a landmark in the history of English education in India. Macaulay’s Minute decreed English as the language of higher education, exposing an entire class of urban Indian men to British narrative models. Macaulay’s recommendations were fully accepted by the Government and in March 1835, it was decided that the funds for education will be used for English education alone with the object of promoting western science and literature among the natives. However, it cannot be denied that Indians began to use English for creative expression much before Macaulay’s Minutes and the implementation of his policy on English education. At that time, English was used as the medium for serious discussions on social, political, religious, economic and
educational problems. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, perhaps, the first Indian to write in English, wrote very powerful English to advocate various social reforms in India.

It is true that inspite of having many regional languages in India, some of the Indians started writing in English. There may be various reasons behind it. Trying to discover the reasons of writing in English, Ramamurti in his book *Rise of the Indian Novel in English*, has said,

"...the emergence of the Indian novel in English itself was but part of one great creative surge which manifested itself in almost all the Indian languages around the same quarter century. The desire of some authors to write novels in English was, therefore, born of a genuine creative impulse characteristic of the times and not out of a desire to imitate the western models or to impress the western readers."³

He again says,

"The Indian writers in English referred to write in English because perhaps they felt more at home in that language and found it most natural to express themselves in English."⁴

Indian English writers, though, have shown their mastery in their art forms, the potentiality of Indian English literature was doubted by Englishmen as well as the Indians. The English people thought that Indian English

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⁴ Ibid, P.49.

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literature was not as good as English literature. The foreign readers as well as critics like Gordon Bottomley is said to have described typical Indo-Anglian poetry as “Matthew Arnold in a sari.”\(^5\), it has also been charged as “Sakuntala in skirts.”\(^6\) Likewise, many of the Indians apt to think that Indian English literature is not good as English literature. They think that Indian writing in English is rather like one animal imitating the steps of another. Many of the Indians are inclined to think that Indian English literature is not a part of Indian literature. Indian English literature has an exotic growth. The major arguments in support of their views are that those literary works are written in an alien language and for the foreign readers who crave for a different reading taste. However, some of the Indians are free from such prejudical comments. The accepted fact is that English is a world language and it is not to be rejected as a foreign language. Raja Rao, one of the important figures of Indian English literature, makes a powerful plea for the adaptation of English language to Indian needs. In his ‘Foreword’ to the novel *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao says about the English language:

> "English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up... but not of our emotional make-up."\(^7\)

Though Raja Rao has used the English language to express his Indian sensibility, he raises his powerful voice against the use of Babu English

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or English as is used in Oxford and Cambridge. He says that English is not to be rejected, but to be adapted and Indianised.

Literature is the most specific and precise record of the human spirit. Good literature is always concerned with significant socio-economic and political problems. Novel, being the most distinctive and effective form of literary expression today, has undeniably obtained a vital and significant position to Indian English literature. In the words of Walter Allen,

"... novels are the mirror 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 system, coursing of its blood and the unconscious promptings and conflicts which sway it."  

The Indian English novelists seem to have found a true and legitimate vehicle for the manifestation of their natural genius and eloquent sensibility. They represent varied sections of the pluralistic Indian society, its ethos and glorious heritage. As a by-product of both Indian and Western traditions, the Indian English novels have, in fact drawn broad and widespread interest all over the world. As a distinct literary form, it has at present achieved maturity and a unique identity. Still, it would be worthwhile to say that Indian English novel as a literary form was relatively late in developing in India than Indian English poetry. One of the reasons for this was that, though, Indian English literature began as a colonial venture, much more was needed than merely great models. A novel needs direct involvement

in values and experience, relevant in the Indian context. Though literary historians have cited different dates for the first Indian novel, it would perhaps be accepted by everyone that the novel came into existence in India in the nineteenth century. This was the time when colonial power reached its zenith in India and also simultaneously there was the spread of English education. Bengal, one of the first regions to be exposed to the British education, was one of the earliest producers of the Indian English novel. Indian novel in English was born with Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864). Bankim Chandra was a true pioneer of the Indian novel in English. It was the impact of an English novel, namely Wilkie Collins' *The Women in White* that influenced Bankim, the first graduate of the Calcutta University and father of Bengali fiction, to write *Rajmohan's Wife* in English. Before this, there had been no novel but only the epics and the *Puranas* and the stories of *Hitopadesha, Panchatantra* etc. which could not be treated as novels. Bankim Chandra established the novel as a major literary form in India. It was he, who showed that religious and social views could be put across through novels without detriment to their artistic merit. He showed that it was possible to write about Indian life and to describe Indian scenes in a foreign language without becoming imitative. He adopted an alien form and medium to a theme and sensibility, which were essentially Indian.

The Indian national movement caused a flowering of the novel during the thirties. The struggle for independence became a unifying force, particularly in the decades, before the achievement of political freedom. The Gandhian movement and the struggle for freedom swept the entire nation;
the Satyagraha movement, the Jallianwala Bagh incident of 1919, the Dandi March, the Quit India movement – all these were the factors for the creative imagination on the part of the writers. They became more vocal and came out openly against social injustice, economic exploitation of the ruled and the hardships of the masses during the freedom struggle. The novel soon became a medium for political education, for arousing the people against the differences of caste or money and urged people to unite, to fight and drive away the British rulers. A great national experience of such width and magnitude strongly influenced the maturity of the novel form. This phenomenon is not unique to Indian English fiction, but also to other languages in India. The freedom struggle provided rich and ready material for the writers; particularly the Indian poets and novelists in the regional languages and Indian English writers were no exception to the rule. Many Indian English writers have made use of the country’s freedom struggle and the partition as the background of their novels and not surprisingly, Gandhi figures prominently in the art forms as well as his ideology and philosophy are also focused there since the freedom struggle of India cannot be imagined without Gandhi. The advent of Gandhi has been described by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in the following words: "And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths, like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people’s minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India."\[9\] Gandhian tone predominates many fictions not

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only in Indian English literatures, but also literatures from other Indian languages. Premchand’s *Premashram* (1921) and *Rangabhumi* (1925) in Hindi, Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai’s *Gram Lakshmi* (1940) in Gujarati, G.T. Madkholkar’s *Muktatma* (1933) in Marathi and Satinath Bhaduri’s *Jagari* (1946) in Bengali, offer some significant narrations of the Gandhian theme. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan, who published their works during the 1930s, were strongly influenced by Gandhi. Gandhi also touches the fiction of many modern Indian writers indirectly where the focus is on topical themes like the relationship between two communities—Hindus and Muslims, the horrors of the partition, men-women relationship, the corruption and disillusionment in free modern India. K. S. Venkataramani’s *Murugan, The Tiller* (1927), *Kandan the Patriot* (1932), Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938), Bhabani Bhattacharyya’s *So Many Hungers* (1947), K. A. Abbas’s *Inquilab* (1955), Kamala Markandaya’s *Some Inner Fury* (1957), R. K. Narayan’s *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1958), Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935), *The Sword and the Sickle* etc. are some of the novels which are directly or indirectly related to Gandhian ideologies.

In Indian English literature, several novels have been written on historical movements or events such as the freedom struggle, the Gandhian movement and the partition of India. In the words of R. K. Dhawan,

“The freedom struggle caught the imagination of the entire nation, no less the Indo-English writers. No significant writer could escape the impact of the mighty movement sweeping the country.”

Manohar Malgonkar’s *The Devil’s Wind* and *the Steel Hawk* deal with the great Indian mutiny of 1857. Kamala Markandaya’s *The Golden Honeycomb* presents the history of India, covering a period of about hundred years from 1850 to 1947. Though the struggle for freedom is now over, the time of the struggle for India’s independence from foreign imperial rule still continues to predominate in the novels of Indian English literature. It is now viewed from a new perspective which is seen in Kamala Markandaya’s *Some Inner Fury* (1955), K.A. Abbas’s *Inquilab* (1955), Nayantara Sahgal’s *A Time to be Happy* (1958), Khushwant Singh’s *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) and Chaman Nahal’s *The Crown and the Loincloth* (1981). Though many novels were written on the theme of partition, notable among them are Khushwant Singh’s *A Train to Pakistan* (1956), Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975) and Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964). The theme of colonial conflict has inspired many Indo-English novelists to portray the patriotic zeal and the awareness of nationalism.

Though Indian English literature began as a colonial venture and Indian English writers delineated the scenario of freedom struggle of India they were also very much interested in historical aspects. However, it will be worthwhile to mention that in India, the historical factor is provided by the Indian struggle for independence from the British colonial rule. Meenakshi Mukherjee says,

“The concern of the Indian English novel today is the ultra historical
modern man whose individuality and personal life are shaped factors of history.”

Among the early novels published were a series of historical novels like S. K. Ghosh’s *The Prince of Destiny* (1909), S. K. Mitra’s *Hindupur* etc. But the histories represented in these novels were entirely romantic with no actual basis in fact. The real historical novels appeared around the 1930s like A. S. Panchapaka Ayyar’s *Baladitya* and *The Unveiled Court* (1933) by Umrao Bahadur. The historical novels of Bankim Chandra, Romesh Chunder Dutt, Jogender Singh and Kali Krishna Lahiri showed clear evidence of the influence of Sir Walter Scott in their writings, though their preoccupation with historical romance was basically inspired by the awakening of Indian nationalism. In the first phase, one can see two pre-dominant theories in the novel: historical and the other political and reform motivated. But at the same time, the novelists of this period were also interested in areas of human experience.

The next phase in the development of the Indian English novel was the interest in social issues. “The Indian novel in English began not as romance or historical romance, as is often suppsed, but as a novel of social realism.” The novels dealing with social realism were ushered in by famous novelists like Munshi Prem Chand in Hindi and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay in Bengali during the 1920s. Writers, from the earliest stages of Indian

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English writing like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Sri Aurobindo and others, treated the novel as a document for social change and as a weapon of the nationalistic struggle. The history of the English novel in the 18th century from Daniel Defoe onwards, shows that the novel as an art form is essentially a social document. The Indian novel in English is also no exception. The problems of social life of the common people became amalgamated with burning public issues of the day. A discussion about the social and political aspects of the Indian English novel would be incomplete without talking about the Indian freedom movement, which was a burning problem of that day. The freedom movement made a sporadic start from around the later part of the 19th century after the First War of Indian Independence (1857) and gained great impetus during the 1920s and 1930s until the achievement of independence in 1947. The Indian freedom movement contributed greatly to the mass social emancipation of the Indian people. Around the 1930s, the Indian English novel acquired a distinctive shape when it started voicing the aspirations of the people against colonial oppression and awakening them to the need of putting their society on the path of freedom, hope and aspiration. This can be said about Mulk Raj Anand whose novels embody a strong sense of consciousness about the evils of social injustice, particularly exploitation, caste-division, untouchability etc. In the novel Untouchable, Anand shows how Bakha, the untouchable downtrodden has to face tyranny and injustice, insult and abuse in society.

The Indian novel in English which seems to have followed the track of the early English novel, reflects the transformation, transition and
upheavals of entire people and traces the social, political and cultural history
of the Indian nation from the late 19th century and continues to reflect the
ever-changing scenario of Indian life in contemporary times. Born out of
the encounter between the east and the west, it is enriched with the cultural
heritage of an ancient civilization. The major themes treated by various
novelists are nationalism, patriotism, Gandhian ideology, the struggle for
independence, the east-west conflict, rural-urban conflict, family relationship,
various social and economic issues such as casteism, superstition,
untouchability, poverty, merciless persecution of women, ethnic disturbances,
industrial development. The whole scenario of Indian life was projected by
many Indian English writers. All these ideas were focussed to some extent
by the big three of Indian English fiction.-Narayan, Anand and Raja Rao and
later on, were followed by the other writers like Bhabani Bhattacharyya,
Manohar Malgonkar, Khuswant Singh, Kamala Markandaya. Nayantara Sahgal,
Anita Desai etc. The novel as a portrait of society, got a wide diversified
treatment in their hands.

The depiction of socio-cultural life has been a theme of fascination
for generation of Indian English novelists. The socio-cultural patterns of
contemporary India that are so cleverly and perceptively deduced from the
Civilization* (1978), presents the finest example of literary experience
providing an astute awareness of the socio-cultural history of people. R.
K. Narayan weaves the colourful strings of Indian social life into the rich
fabric of his narrative, so that the fictive world is a reflection of the real
one. His novels like *The English Teacher* (1945) and *The Bachelor of Arts* (1936) mirror the hold of horoscope and astrology on people as an unseparable part of the Indian social complex. The theme that Narayan has selected for his novels, is mostly sociological. While with writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Bhabani Bhattacharyya, the focus was on the socio-economic cultural world of the characters, with writers like Arun Joshi and Anita Desai, inspite of delineating the social picture, the internal world of the characters are presented.

The appearance of women novelists has added a new dimension to Indian English novel. Women have always been in the forefront of the novel tradition. In the English literature, specifically in the Victorian period, women writers had associated themselves in novel writing. In India too women have associated themselves in novel; specifically the post-independence era has witnessed the emergence of a large number of eminent women novelists. Indian English women novelists as Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Despande, Nayantara Sahgal, Geetha Hariharan, Attia Hussain, Bharati Mukherjee et al. have enriched and elevated Indian English writing by their contribution to that field. They, with their feminine sensibility have opened up a new vista of human nature and man-woman relationship.

The Indian English novels reflect the changing role of the Indian women from the traditional mythicised one, to the new one of emancipation and modernity and the resultant changes in the social set up. The early Indian English novelists such as Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao created
the archetyped female characters, for whom, their husbands were gods and it was their duty to serve the husbands very well. However, because of the wake of feminist movement in India, the male as well as the female writers of the post-colonial Indian English fiction, have taken the themes like woman’s search for identity, quest for selfhood, awareness to make a balance between tradition and modernity in their art forms. Modern era has brought an entire change in women’s existence. The female writers like Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Despande, Mahasweta Devi, Bharati Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy and Sobha De have portrayed myriad faces of the new women who gradually learnt to fight for her rights and lived not only as a wife, mother or daughter but also as an individual. They made a fight against the established order of society. Freedom, for Indian women meant freedom not only from the hands of British rulers and their cruelty, but the freedom from centuries of male-domination and the orthodoxy of social and cultural norms. The novelists, specifically the women novelists, through their writings, have tried to bring freedom to the female from their age long subjugation by men. They also have shown the long endurance, the spirit of sacrifice, greatest tolerance on the part of women in their art forms.

Kamala Markandaya, one of the outstanding women novelists presents a cross-section of the Indian society, wherein, her women characters go in quest for autonomy. Though her women, by and large, are conservative and traditional in outlook, most of her women are independent in thinking, inspite of performing their traditional roles. She skillfully portrays the double pulls that the Indian woman is subjected to between her desire to assert herself
as human and her duty as a daughter, wife and mother, that she inherits from
tradition. Nayantara Sahgal advocates women's struggle for freedom and self-
realization in her fictions. Most of her novels explore and highlight the
attitudes of women, that is, women's quest for identity, real-life conflicts,
strive to achieve individual fulfillment and satisfaction, freedom to express
themselves, courage to fight against injustice etc. In the novel The Day in
Shadow, Sahgal shows how an Indian woman attempts to liberate herself from
the moral and social pressures. Through the character of Simrit, the novelist
has explored the suffering and position of a woman in Indian society. Simrit
is able to project the image of the new women, who has maintained herself
economically independent as well as is initiated into a search to discover
her deeper identity. Another woman novelist, Shashi Despande always
concerns herself with a woman's search for her identity. She endeavours to
establish woman as an individual, who breaks from the traditional constraints
and refines her identity in tune with the changed social ambience of the
modern times. Indu, in Shashi Deshpande's novel, Roots and Shadows
represents a woman torn between age-old traditions and individual views. Her
search for freedom results in her emergence as a bold and challenging woman
of determination. Shashi Deshpande's novels want to say that the women
themselves have to break the shackles that have kept them in a state of
captivity for several centuries. The women characters in the recent Indian
English fiction are quite sure of themselves, of their rights, and their place
in society in comparison to the women characters of earlier fictions. The
journey of the Indian women, from the darkness of tradition bound ethos
to the wide world outside to find a place, can be likened to the journey of the Indian English novel from its tentative beginnings to establishing its identity in the arena of world literature.

Indian ethos and heritage have played an important role in Indian English literature. The Indian writers like Toru Dutt, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi, Nehru, Radhakrishnan, R. K. Narayan and Kamala Markandaya all have retained their Indian sensibility. The consciousness of Indianness has been a persistent quality of Indian English writers, from the older generation to the later generation. The form and content, even the medium, the language of Indian English literature have carried Indian tone and nature. The writers of Indian English literature are genuine portrayals of Indian life. Most of the Indian English writers are ‘aiming at an Indianness bereft of temporal and spatial values.’ The so-called tradition, what is associated with the Indian English novel, is the tradition of Indianness. The writers of the past Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao etc. had a strong sense of tradition. They delved deep into the tradition of Indian myths, legends and scriptures and exhibited the past glory of the nation. Likewise, the modern Indian English writers also have a strong sense of tradition and they have portrayed very beautifully the mutual relation between the past and the present, tradition and modernity. In other words, it can be said that they have showed Indianness in their art forms.

In Indian concept, the family is an integral part of Indian life and

central to the Indian social ethos. It is almost indispensable part of Indian life. In the Indian context, the duty towards the family is placed on a higher esteem vis-à-vis duty to oneself. As such, the role of family is very important in the context of Indian literature since it gives an opportunity for the study of group behaviour, the complexities of human nature, the liability and responsibility of the persons towards each other. As a critic says, “Tradition in India is wrapped up in the crannies of nature, in the rituals and religion, in the collective, simple living of the villagers, in the emotional integration of large families.”14 The place of faith in socio-cultural life has been a theme of fascination for generation of Indian English novelists. Sexual love, personal happiness, extreme individualism- these do not have central importance in Indian context. In India, the western concept of individual experience has always been considered alien. However, with the advent of changing scenario, the individualism also finds places in modern Indian English novels. Individual and individual concerns occupy a central position in most recent Indian English novels. Arun Joshi’s novels focus on the individual’s quest for identity and his sense of alienation in the modern world. His heroes are intensely self-centred persons prone to self-pity and escapism. As a delineation of social ethos, it can be said that rituals, adherence to faith, the importance of a Guru, the superior wisdom of a Guru shape the conduct of many people in different parts of India in different ways and different degrees.

Indian English novels are the storehouses of myths and legends and

folklores. A study of the fascinating world of myth or mythology provides readers with an exploration of the patterns of ancient life against a background of the specific characters of their own society. At the same time, it gives the knowledge of the roots of the society, in other words, the earlier primitive world. The importance of the study of myth, legends and folklore and their relevance in literature and life is significant since it makes aware people of their religion, social customs, ritual and way of life. The importance of mythology and folk legends find increasing in today’s life. Elements of folk-lore include legends, superstitions, songs, tales, proverbs, riddles etc. The uses of myths, folk-lores are recognized literary devices and part of modern trends in literature. In case of the Indian English novelists, myths and folk-lore appear in their novels both consciously and unconsciously. The traditional Indian value system is influenced by myths, legends and folk traditions. The myths of India have displayed the collective wisdom of an ageless, anonymous and many sided civilization. Myths and folk-lore so much a part of Indian tradition impinge upon the consciousness of the Indian writers, giving their work certain richness. Among the early Indian English novelists, Raja Rao has made abundant use of myths and legends and folklores in his novel *Kanthapura*.

Indian English writing is a product of two worlds- the Indian and the Western. The east-west confrontation is one important theme, used by Indian English novelists. The encounter between East and West, especially, India on one hand and Britain and America, on the other, is a recurring theme of most of the Indian writers in English. Writers from the older generation
to the newer generation, have used this issue in their art forms and consequently, have shown different values existing in different countries. In his novels, Raja Rao has fully absorbed and assimilated two cultures—East and West. Though western culture is a major influence in his writings, his eastern culture predominates over the western. The East—West problem that are posed in *The Serpent and the Rope*, has been generally portrayed by the marriage between Rama and Madeleine. In view of the inherent conflict of the two cultures, the marriage between them becomes unsuccessful and finally ends in divorce. The East-West confrontation is available in his other novels also. Likewise, Bhabani Bhattacharyya’s novel, *A Dream in Hawaii* also moves around the theme of East-West encounter in its various socio-economic, political, religious and cultural dimensions. The novelist has tried his level best to resolve the gulf between the East and the West. Through the character of Devjani he presents the synthesis of the modern materialism of the West and the traditional spiritualism of the East. In the novel, *Music for Mohini* also Jaydev, the hero of the novel is shown to stand for synthesis of the Eastern and the Western culture as the only way for the progress of the country. Another novelist, Kamala Markandaya in her novel *Possession*, deals with the socio-cultural economic conflict of the East and the West. In *Some Inner Fury*, Kamala Markandaya has dramatized the East-West conflict in a tragic manner laying stress on the themes of love and death. In her novel *Pleasure City*, Markandaya presents a positive outcome of the East-West encounter.

Since Indian English writing is a product of two worlds— the Indian
and the Western, so it is but natural that a concern with identity is one of the commonest themes of this literature. Many of the leading novelists have written about the quest for identity. The theme of the quest for identity has been of perennial interest for Indian English writers. This quest for identity forms the core of most of the Indian novelists from the older generation of writers like Raja Rao and Sudhin N.Ghose to the writers of present generation like Salman Rushdie and Allan Sealy. One early novel dealing with the writer’s quest for identity is *My Brother’s Face* (1925) by Dhan Gopal Mukherjee. The novel, loaded with autobiographical element, echoes the writer-narrator’s quest for identity. In these kinds of early novels, the hero’s quest never leads him further into his own family; the tendency is to look inward rather than outward. Likewise, in Amitav Ghosh’s novel *The Shadow Lines*, the introspective hero turns to the experience of his grandmother and his cousin Tridib to help him come to terms with his life in India. Identity crisis or search of identity has received an impetus in the post colonial literature. Indian English fiction deals at length with the problems, rising due to multi-culturalism and intercultural interactions. Many Indian women novelists have shown the identity crisis in their novels. For example, the protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee’s novels face the identity crisis and sometime overcome and sometime succumb to the traumatic experience. In the novel *Wife* (1975), she deals with the identity crisis and depicts the mental trauma through which the protagonist Dimple Basu passes. Mukherjee’s protagonists generally face the identity crisis. In the female characters of Shashi Despande also have their inner conflict and quest for identity. The
theme of Markandaya’s first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) is the identity crisis resulting from a clash between western value systems and Indian value systems.

Alienation has significantly affected in the field of novels of Indian writers in English. It has served as a recurrent motif in quite a few works produced by Indian novelists in English. The identity of individual and that of his nation are inextricably entwined. The theme of alienation has moulded its way to the sociological, cultural, religious, economic, feminist and political dimensions in Indian English fiction. In the essay ‘Recent Indian English Novel and Changing Tradition’, Dr. B. R. Agrawal has said, “The feeling of alienation from their roots and thereafter a constant search for attaining these roots has brought ‘Diaspora’ as a very important issue taken up in recent Indian English novels.” Bharati Mukherjee has taken into her fictional works themes which are largely relevant to the contemporary social diaspora. Mukherjee’s *Wife* deals with the immigrant experience of the Indians and their disillusionment. Jhumpa Lahiri, the Pulitzer Prize winning novelist has received huge critical acclaim for her warm and complex portrayal of family life and Indian immigrants trying to straddle the two cultures- their Indian heritage and American dream. She has unraveled modern man’s crisis, conflict between two selves- the native and the acquired one as well as despair in the labyrinths of life, existence and reality. Her short story collection *Interpreter of*  

Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond (1999), shows the traumas and sufferings of the Indians, settled abroad, who fail to find their identity in a world where they cannot have a sense of belongingness. She portrays faithfully the trauma of cultural dislocation, disorientation and displacement suffered by the immigrants as well as their unsuccessful trial to balance themselves between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’. Her novel The Namesake deals with the theme of identity crisis and the problem of assimilation and adaptation in another country. One cannot reject the demands of tradition and cannot afford to accommodate to the temptations offered by a new culture. The Namesake revolves around the life of an Indian immigrant couple Ashima & Ashoke Ganguli, who have come to create a new life for opportunities for themselves in the University of Suburbs in Boston. In this novel Jhumpa Lahiri shows the theme of cultural alienation and loss of identity that the immigrant faces in making a new home in foreign country. Here Gopal’s quest for identity is a never ending search. The sudden death of his father makes him turn his back towards his family. As an elder son he would have maintained some rituals if he had lived in India. His problem is that he cannot reject the Indian culture and cannot even fully accept the American values. This feeling of loss of identity is not only prevalent in the Indian Diaspora but can also be felt in the hearts of those Indians who, inspite of living in India, find them disconnected from their motherland.

Change has become an integral part of life. Society and literature are interrelated. Social change is the transformation in society. Any society evolves and changes through the span of time. Melver & Page have observed,
“Social change is a process responsive to many types of change, to changes in the attitudes and beliefs of men, and to changes that go back beyond human control to the biological and the physical nature of things.”

Man is a dynamic being. Hence, society is also dynamic: growing, decaying, renewing, and reorienting itself to the new conditions and undergoing vast changes along the time-flux. With the pace and march of modernity, change has become an inevitable part of Indian life today. The disintegration of the old hierarchical and agrarian society and the break-up of the joint family is one of the major factors of social change. The break-up of family ties and subsequent disintegration of the older values of life are all Indian appeal irrespective of race, community, religion and class. With the changing scenario of society, literature also has turned to change. Fiction, like the other forms of literature delineates the contours of change. Indian English writers are also no exception of that. They find themselves swept by the current of new ideas and cannot help responding to their sensibility. Even some of the writers are faced with a crisis of values. Ancient Indian values are in sharp contrast with the emerging new ways of living. Mulk Raj Anand, an incredibly prolific writer strongly pleads for social change and relocation of the values of life in his fiction. He has shown the confrontation between tradition and modernity in his novels. He exposes the limitations of the decayed Indian tradition and has championed the cause of modernism as a cure for the ills of Indian society. In preface to *Untouchable*, E.M.Forster acknowledges the ushering of an age of social change in respect to the position of the

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untouchables in Indian social order. Anand’s *The Park Room* (1978) and *The Painter of Signs* (1978) have highlighted the changing images of woman in Indian society. Though Anand is an advocate of progress and modernism, he opposes any blind imitation of the West. A more comprehensive and intrinsic picture of the permanent and transitional values clashing and coalescing together is fictionalized through the comic and ironic mode in R.K.Narayan’s novels. His fiction mirrors modern India rooted in ancient traditions and caught up in the crucible of change. His ‘Malgudi’ is both the matrix of tradition and crucible of change. The changing and growing Malgudi essentially reflects the changes occurring in the Indian social fabric. Bhabani Bhattacharyya is a novelist who presents in his novels, the changing scenario of tradition from orthodoxy to modernity. Bhattacharyya’s *So Many Hungers* (1947) depicts the social and political situation of India in the 40s and unfolds the pattern of social change in the contemporary India. In the novel *The Goddess Named Gold*, the clash between superstition and modernity is focused very well. Likewise, *Music for Mohini* brings in sharp focus the clash between the reactionary ways of life on one hand, and those of progress and change on the other. In this novel, Jaydev, the quiet scholar and Mohini, the young city-bred wife worked as forces of progress which were resisted initially by the mother who is fully reconciled with the changing times. This novel illustrates that the society is changing rapidly. The major social reforms referred to in the novel are widow-remarriage, prevention of child marriage, minimum age for marriage, elimination of untouchability and casteism etc. Bhattacharyya’s another novel *He Who Rides a Tiger*

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(1954) attempts to show how the winds of social change and new socio-political and socio-economic awakening are sweeping the modern India. This novel is brilliant rendition of the emergence of a new social order in modern India. Bhattacharyya’s fictional corpus faithfully delineates the Indian social life passing through a process of change. Another novelist Nayantara Sahgal demonstrates through her novels the clash between the old traditional morality and the new permissive trends. Other Indian English novelists also have shown the changing scenario of Indian society in their art forms. Kamala Markandaya, one of the prominent Indian English novelists also reflects in her fiction, the process of change and modernization in Indian society. In *A Silence of Desire* (1960), she highlights the clash between tradition and modernity. Her fictional corpus amply reflects the various phases of social change. Indian society has been passing through in the momentous times of the twentieth century. The processes of social change that have taken place in the twentieth century England, have played havoc with the personal accommodation of selves into society. With the wave of social change as well as because of the impact of cybernation, technical development and globalization, new attitudes towards morality, marriage, female sexuality and divorce have emerged. Modern society has created a new system of values in which the pursuits of wealth and technological efficiency have replaced the basic human values. The change in the social outlook has affected in the writings of Indian English novelists. With the changing scenario, in modern India and the Indian English novels, the place of rituals, the importance of the Guru which were once very important themes of Indian
English literature, have shown a declining tendency. Classical role models, ideals and mythical figures have all but disappearance from the modern Indian novel though one finds traces of these in Indian social life.

It will perhaps be admitted by everyone that there is self-consciousness in Indian English fiction which motivates writers in choosing a theme that is Indian. In Indian English novels, it is often seen that writers in their effort to find a theme of all India interest, often has to spurn situations and characters around them, which are more vivid and alive. A conscious awareness of audience whether at home or abroad, limits the scope of the Indian English writer confining him/her to a handful of 'Indian' themes. C.L.Khatri says,

“Indian novels in English are by and large repetitive in subject and do not offer many varieties of fiction. Areas like phantasy, science fiction, gothic novel, picturesque novel, detective novel, tribal theme, naxal movement, terrorism, religious bigotry, globalization, family bond, spiritualism, philosophy, flora and fauna of India and many such areas are yet to be explored by Indian novelists. They offer very little in these fertile areas.”

However, Indian English writers, today, have emerged from the limited sphere. With the advent of modernism in the Indian English novel, its scope has widened considerably and has attained a certain universal status. The Indian English novel today, has reached a certain level of maturity,

17. C. L. Khatri, Narrative Noodles : Essays on Indian Novels in English (Jaipur India : Book Enclave,2008), P. 5.
attained a degree of confidence and has overcome the clichés associated with it. Indian English fictions of recent origin, have mirrored the realities of the multidimensional and multilingual India and at the same time, have become international bestsellers. According to the report of *India Today* Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass House* is rooted as one of the best-seller novels of its time (2003). Writers like Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy and Salman Rushdie have astonished the whole world by their extraordinary writing skills. Their works are being bought like hot cakes in every corner of the world. Vikram Seth got Rs. 25 crore as advance royalty for *A Suitable Boy* (1993). This is a book compared War and Peace which yet captures the diverse nuances of Indian life, the varied traditions and regional variations in language, customs, religions, cultures of India from all directions, emphasizing truly the varied ambience of the genre itself. About this book, Meenakshi Mukherjee says,

"The distinctive quality of *A Suitable Boy* is its polyphonic mosaic." 18

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* was the first Indian novel to be awarded the coveted Booker Prize in 1981 as well as the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. This was the first well-known international award for an Indian English work, since the historic Nobel Prize for Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* in 1936. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) not only bagged the biggest award of Commonwealth countries *The Man Booker* for 1997, but also became the most talked about novel of the world of its time. It is one of the most memorable and haunting books, written


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in an innovative style. Kiran Desai bagged the Man Booker Award for her second novel *The Loss of Inheritance*. India’s prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award was offered to several novels, namely, R.K.Narayan’s *The Guide*, Mulk Raj Anand’s *Morning Face*, Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*, Arun Joshi’s *The Lost Labyrinth*, Nayantara Sahgal’s *Rich Like Us*, Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate*, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* and Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence*. Bharati Mukherjee’s *The Middleman and other Stories*, Amitav Ghosh’s *Fires of Bengal* and Amit Chaudhari’s novel *A Strange and Sublime Address* have got The National Book Critics Circle Award for 1988, the Mecidis Prize of France and the Betty Track Award in 1990 respectively. Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* (1988) is a book “personal and political evocative of specific places and periods, blending memory with imagination…”19 It is a notable book as it attempts totalizing concepts of India, not defining but interrogating. Jhumpa Lahiri’s Pulitzer Award and Shauna Singh Baldwin’s Commonwealth Award were new feathers in the cap. All these things have established beyond doubt that Indian English writers have arrived in a big way and have earned critical acclaim abroad. These masterpieces open new horizons for the Indian English novel. Recent Indian English novelists, through their art forms, have shown multilingual and multicultural aspects of Indian society. These writers have used the language as a dynamic medium to explore the complex Indian reality. The Indian English novelists, specifically of the post-independence era, have used English as a tool and employed it in diverse ways to express different cultural experiences. They have focussed a new sensibility and added a vibrant richness.