INTRODUCTION

All art is the expression of life in forms of reality and beauty, which remain unnoticed until brought to the reader's attention by some sensitive soul, just as the delicate curves of the shell reflects sounds and harmonies too faint to be otherwise noticed. To enter and enjoy this new world, to love good books for their own sake, is the chief thing. Behind every book is a man; behind the man is the race and behind the race are the natural and social surroundings whose influence is unconsciously reflected.

Literature is the record of the experience of a writer. It also forms the artist’s reaction to the events that take place in society. To elaborate a little further, literature is a social institution, whose medium is language, which is a social product. It represents life, which is a social reality. The writer is a member of the society, sharing specific social values. He cannot escape the impact of the milieu he lives in.

Literature is one of the fine arts like music and painting. It is fundamentally an expression of life through the channel of language. Literature is composed of books which are of great human interest due to their subject matter and mode of presentation. In literature, form and the pleasure that form gives are of great importance. The writer is provoked by an urge for self-expression. Literature reflects an interest in the world of reality as well as imagination and our love of form and order. Matthew Arnold defined literature as “criticism of life” (5). Literature is purely personal experience, it dealing with the common question of life, death, destiny and God. It deals with the social world order and its activities. It deals with Nature and man’s relationship with the external world and finally it deals with literature and arts themselves.
Literature in general and the novel in particular being a social and literary seismograph, records the throbbing pulse of time and transmutes it to the heart beat of eternity. The origin of the Novel lay in the medieval romance, a fantastic tale of love and adventure, itself derived from the ballads and fragments of epic poems hummed by the wandering minstrel. The term originally meant a “fresh story” but gradually came to signify a story in prose as distinguished from a story in verse, which continued to be called a romance. When prose became almost the universal medium the term “romance” implied a story or series of stories of the legendary past. It is often used today to describe a historical novel which is intentionally picturesque and exciting rather than scholarly, and still more frequently for a piece of light fiction of an emotional type, somewhat remote from the facts, and probabilities of everyday life.

F. Marion Crawford, a popular American novelist, once described the novel as a “pocket theatre” (B. Prasadh 43), containing as it does all the accessories of drama without requiring to be staged before an audience. It is more formally defined as “a long narrative in prose detailing the actions of fictitious people”. Meredith called it “a summary of actual life”, including both “the within and the without of us” (B. Prasadh 43), Fielding loosely characterized it as a comic epic in prose. It is the loosest form of the literary art, but it’s very freedom from all limitations allows it to give a fuller representation of real life and character than anything else can provide. It is nevertheless a very effective medium of the portrayal of human thought and action, combining in itself the creations of poetry with the details of history and the generalized experience of philosophy, in a manner un attempted by any previous effort of human genius.

The novel is the only developing genre and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly reality itself in the process of its
unfolding. Only that which is itself developing can comprehend development as process. The novel has become the leading hero in the literary development of this time precisely because it best of all reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the making; it is after all, the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it. The novel is not required even assuming the task is within the realm of possibility to describe the specific historical forms of a society; that the authors ideas are necessarily correct. But literature is always an attempt to reveal to an unknown side of human existence and thus although it has no privileged access to truth, it never stops searching for it. The novel has a large group of characters that are inter connected to each other either as friends or by family relationships. The novel puts to test some of the personal experiences, relations, memories and historical processes in which the realization of the futility of metaphor on the one hand and an awareness of the illusion of knowledge created by deceptive weight of remembered detail are evidence at many levels.

A novel, like a play has a plot and to a great extends its characters reveal themselves and their intentions in dialogue. The dramatist, however, must depend on what he can make the audience see and hear for themselves, whereas the novelist can describe what could never be presented on any stage. He can tell reader what could be never being presented on any stage. He can tell the readers what is happening, explain it and if he so wishes, give the readers his own comments on it. His story need not be symmetrical in exposition, crisis, and denouement. It may begin with a crisis, and the rest of the book may be devoted to depicting how that crisis arose; on the other hand it may work patiently up to a climax in its very last pages. The novel has, in fact, no rigid framework; English authors have taken full advantage of the freedom this affords them. Foreign critics have remarked that the English novel, with all its unrivalled richness and
variety, is apt to be lacking in one important element of the highest art—a sense of proportion. There is some truth in this, for the novelist is eager to represent life in its fullness, and his creative urge may overwhelm his sense of artistic unity and balance in narrative, description, characterization, and dialogue. This however, matters comparatively little if the author’s handling of his plot and characters and above all his own narrative style can keep the reader under his spell until the story is ended. The modern novel has the tendency has been to subordinate action to psychology, to find the central theme in the mental and spiritual development of the characters rather than in their physical adventures.

The novel can, of course, have its “setting” or background in any part of the world and any time, past, present or future. As regards the local or regional setting, certain authors have almost marked out a territory of their own. It might also be possible to classify them to a certain extent by social setting. Every serious novel is sure to reveal the author’s own view of life and its problems. In modern fiction the readers do not expect the author to interrupt his story from time to time and appear in his own person to point out the moral of the situation and justify or deplore the conduct of his characters.

Characterization is the art of presenting the characters alive and real to the imagination. The men and women in the novel must move through it like living beings and they should remain in the reader’s memory after the novel is laid aside. There are two types of characterization – the direct or the analytical and the indirect or the dramatic. In the analytical method the novelist portrays his characters from outside, dissects their passions, thoughts and feelings and even passes judgement upon them. In the dramatic method, the novelists allow the characters to reveal themselves through speech and action and through the comments of other characters. In modern novels the
second method is generally adopted. Characterization demands great skill and insight in the novelist.

Dialogue, well managed gives vividness and actually to the plot and the characters. Dialogue reveals the passions and emotions of the characters and advances the movement of the plot. Dialogue should constitute an organic element in the story; it should be natural, appropriate and dramatic. It should be in keeping with the personality of the speaker. Theatrical declamations and melodramatic rant should be avoided.

Time and place of action in a novel refer to the whole setting of the story, both social and material. There are novels of sea life, military life, industrial life artistic life and life of different classes of people. There are novels with regional background; there are novels written in the historical background. Whatever may be the setting; the novelist should master its details and then present a lively picture of it.

The novel is concerned with life and so the novelist’s view of life may be revealed in the novel. A novelist may make creative observations on human life. By the selection and organization of the material and by the presentation of character and development of the plot, the novelist can show the readers what he thinks of life. However, the novelist should not indulge in propaganda or preaching. His philosophy is a part of the structure of the novel and should reveal itself through the interpretation of life, thought, character and temper of the work as a whole.

Modern novels have tended to be brilliant virtuoso performances especially in their employment of news unusual and uncommon fictional strategies. The ideal balance that ought to exist between form and content in a novel is not seen in many modern works. Telling a tale in novel manner is fine but what is told must also be novel.
Speaking of the novelists who constitute the great tradition of the English novel. F.R. Leavis marks that, “They not only change the possibilities if the art for practitioners and readers, but that they are significant in terms of the human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life” (16).

A close study of the contemporary novel reveals writer’s preoccupation with their historic past and the unbeatable interest of the readers in the novels that depict that past or that treat some event of national important that has had wide repercussions. Modern deconstructionists would easily discuss them with an exercise in self-deception. Utopians make fine reading; their relevance to the immediate problem is more an escapist nature suggesting remedies neither available nor practical. The historical novel represents no surface wave of escapism, but a deep, unconscious movement toward national homogeneity. It is in the historical novel only that the actual day to day problems of life can be encountered, examined, exposed challenged and rectified. Entertainment and instruction are, by factual and informational values of history illuminate the subject and increasingly what the reader’s curiosity. In other words, for a true artist history is handmaiden which helps him to achieve several purposes.

A writer of historical fiction then is as much a historian as a writer. But history does impose limitations on him. He is not free to distort history; factual accuracy has to be strictly adhered to. History puts the author at a disadvantage since a great majority of characters who have an independent historical reality can hardly be made amenable to the author’s designs or the exigencies of the plot. The interaction for historical and fictional characters, and the interactions of the two kinds amongst themselves, is the most challenging part of writing a historical novel.
The most important historical event of this age, as is evident from the writing of Indo English novelists, was the partition of the Sub-continent. The English in 1947 left the country with bag and baggage, after dividing it into two parts. The religious and political differences between Hindu and Muslims, which climaxed with this event led to widespread disturbances, causing destruction of human life on a scale unprecedented in the recent history of the Sub-continent. There was let loose a communal fury which caused a great havoc and misery. There was large scale migration of people from one country to the other. In the process, thousand were massacred; women were vitiated, children flung on spears and property looted on a vast scale. A number of novels were written on the theme of partition, the destruction it brought and the plight of the refugees. They faithfully record the reign of violence that characterized the period and provide a sad, telling commentary on the break-down of human values.

One of the things differentiating the novel from drama is that the novel presents the character’s hidden life with an extensiveness, intimacy and analytic subtlety which drama forbids. And significantly, the novel is a story controlled by a narrative voice. At no time has the use of the narrator been more compelling that in the modern Indian novel in English. Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amitav Ghosh, and even new novelists like Nina Sibal, Vikram Seth, Alan Sealy and Upamanyu Chatterjee have all experimented with narrative techniques to present new sensibilities, meanings and themes. The more striking aspects of the modern narratology and which have received a lot of attention in recent times are the handling of time, the narrative voice, the mode and point of view of narration. All these innovations stem from an interest and story-telling these modern writers try to impart freshness to their “telling” and to ensure the fluency to their story telling.
The Novel in English

The novel proper in English literature began in the 18th century. But the rudiments of the novel could be seen even in Chaucer’s conception of the gallery of characters in the Canterbury Tales. Several Elizabethan writers wrote prose fiction which laid the foundations of the English novel. Among them the most important were John Lyly who wrote ‘Euphues’ and ‘Nash’, the author of ‘The Unfortunate Traveller’. The first work was a didactic prose fiction in the picaresque tradition and the second was a realistic story of action. In 1678 John Bunyan’s ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress’ was published. In many respects this ranks as a novel. Then came Defoe’s ‘Robison Crusoe’ and Swift’s ‘Gulliver’s Travels’. Several critics think that ‘Robinson Crusoe’ was the first great novel in English Literature though it was a pure fantasy. Swift’s ‘Gulliver’s Travels’ is considered to be the first great satiric fiction.

It was in the 18th century that the novel attained its modern form. Samuel Richardson, the author of ‘Pamela’ is regarded as the originator of this form. His great novel was told in the form of letters. Richardson was concerned with moral themes in all his novels. He was an adept in expressing human feelings and motives through character. Two other important pioneers in the field of the novel were Smollett who wrote ‘Roderick Random’, ‘Peregrine Pickle’ and three other novels and Sterne, the author of ‘Tristram Shandy’. Among the later novelists of the 18th century Goldsmith deserves mention as the author of ‘The Vicar of Wakefield’, the earliest domestic novel in English. The first great woman novelist was Fanny Burney who published her ‘Evelina’ in 1778.
The 19th century saw the development of the novel in various directions. The novel discarded the sensationalism of the 18th century Gothic writers like Horace Walpole and the picaresque tradition of Fielding and Smollet. It entered a new era of artistic refinement, thematic liberalism and stylistic innovations. Jane Austen’s domestic novels reached unprecedented artistic perfection. Her novels such as ‘Pride and Prejudice’ and ‘Emma’ dealt with respectable country society and presented a miniature world dominated by graceful social conventions and manners. Scott inaugurated the historical novel in which picturesque details were combined with romantic feeling for the past. Some of his famous novels are ‘Waverley’ and ‘Ivanhoe’, ‘The Talisman’ and ‘Kenilworth’. The two women novelists Charlotte Bronte and Emily Bronte were a striking contrast to Jane Austen. In their novels ‘Jane Eyre’ and ‘Wuthering Heights’ respectively they made use of the elements of horror and soul-suffering to heighten a human story of violent passion.

The most outstanding name in the Victorian novel is Charles Dickens. He developed more complex plots than his predecessors and introduced greater human interest, pathos and humour. Some of his novels contain autobiographical elements. He was supreme in depicting the life of London and he used the novel as a platform for social reform. He moralizes and his armament for social criticism and reform are irony and satire.

During the last fifty years the scope of the novel has widened to include almost every subject. It has become the most popular medium through which an author can reach the public. The English novel is no more a drawing room entertainment addressed to the ladies.
Types of Novel

The Historic Novel

The historic novel is a work of fiction that attempts to convey the spirit, conducts and social conditions of a past age with accurate details and nearly perfect fidelity to historical facts. The subject matter may compass both public and private events. The protagonist may be an actual historical figure or an invented figure. The historical novel combines the dramatic interest of plot and character with a more or less detailed picture of the varied features of life of a particular age. The most important feature of the historical novel is its vivid reproduction of the life of a bygone age.

Even before the coming of the historical novel, writers had used history in their novels. As result of the impulse towards novelty during the Renaissance and after, several writers made use of history. In England Horace Walpole used a particular period in history as background to his gothic novels. The passing away of the feudal system created nostalgia for the past. Combined with social and economic changes caused by the French Revolution and Industrial, this nostalgia for the past created the proper climate for the emergence of the historical novel. The first great historical novel in English was Sir Walter Scott’s ‘Waverley’ published in 1814.

The Social Novel

The Social novel may be defined as a fictional narrative that focuses on the varieties of human behavior in society and the way in which the characters reflect or contradict the values of that society. Here the characters are seen in the background of their social milieu and culture. Though the inner life of the characters finds a place in such novels, greater importance is given to their conflicts and collisions with classes and
beliefs. The essence of a social novel is the conflict between the individual and the society that surrounds him based on different concepts of values. Social novels can be divided into two groups the novel of manners and the novel of civilization. The novel of manners is concerned with social behavior and its correctness in a given society. The concept of behavior achieves a grand moral effect.

The Picaresque Novel

The Picaresque novel originated in Spain. The term ‘Picaresque’ is derived from the Spanish ‘Picaro’ meaning an anti-hero or rogue. A picaresque novel is generally an autobiographical account of the hero’s fortunes, sufferings and wanderings. It is a combination of episodic tales arranged as journeys. They episodes generally depict low life in a rambling manner and come to an abrupt ending. The object of the picaresque novel is to take a central figure through a succession of scenes and adventures, introduce a great number of characters around him and thus build up a picture of society.

The Stream of Consciousness Novel

The term stream of consciousness was first coined by philosopher William James to indicate the flow of inner experience of the flux of thought in man. When applied to novel, it is technique which seeks to record the random and apparently illogical flow of impressions passing through a character’s mind. It records the mental activity of a person in all minute details. Through a kind of interior monologue it shows the mind of the character in such a manner as to reflect the unending activity of the mind with all its apparent irrelevancies and contradictions. The writer does not generally use any punctuation or conventional syntax symbolizing the chaotic nature of human consciousness.
The Regional Novel

The Regional novel is a representation of the influence of a region or locality on a group of characters. In such novels local peculiarities in dress, speech and belief are given prominence. These traits are described in a realistic manner.

The Sentimental Novel

The 18\textsuperscript{th} century gave birth to a kind of novel which evoked the sympathies of the reader by presenting characters who undergo sufferings too preserve their morality and integrity. In the sentimental novels virtue is finally rewarded. The sentimental novel and the melodrama share several common characteristics. In both the stress is on cheap emotions and exaggerated virtues. In both tear-shedding is a common feature.

The Psychological Novel

The Psychological Novel was born in the period between 1913 and 1915 in the writings of Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Dorothy Richardson. It aims at expressing the inwardness of experience. It documents the world of the senses and describes the fugitive thoughts, sensations and feelings of characters. The writer makes use of his knowledge of psychological sciences.

The Epistolary Novel

The Epistolary novel is a fictitious narrative in the form of letters. In such a novel the author poses as the editor of the letters that have somehow come to his possession. The epistolary novel in English appeared in 1678. It was a translation from Portuguese called ‘Portuguese letters’.
The Gothic Novel

During the latter half of the 18th century there was a revival of interest in the life and art of the medieval times. The Gothic novel arouse out of this new zeal for medieval life and fashions. There was a new interest in pseudo-gothic castles and ruins described in ancient ballads and legends. The gothic novels of the period sought to do satisfy the readers craving for mystery and violent emotion and for stories set in remote time and place, depicting ghosts, portents and demonic forces at work.

The Detective Novel

The detective novel is one in which the story and plot are woven around an initial crime or murder the secret of which is solved by an investigator or detective. He does it by a logical assembling and interpretation of evidence known as ‘clues’.

The Dramatic Novel

In the Dramatic novel the separation between plot and character disappears. The characters are part of the machinery of the plot. The qualities of characters determine the action and the action changes the characters. Jane Austen was the first to practice this kind of writing.

The Science Fiction

With rapid development of science and technology, science fiction has become popular in the modern times. The essence of fiction is the presentation of conflict in the human drama. Science fiction deals with the conflict that arises out of the impact of scientific discoveries on the future life of humanity.
Short Story

A Short Story may be defined as a story that can be read at a single sitting. Edgar Allen Poe considered the short story as a prose story ‘requiring from half an hour to one or two hours in its perusal’. Thus brevity is one of the essential characteristics of a short story. However, a short story is not merely a novel on a reduced scale. The short story has a distinct, well-marked organizational structure different from that of a novel.

Firstly, the theme of a short story must be one that can effectively be developed within the prescribed limits. The short story should impress the reader as clear in outline and well proportioned. It should not give the impression of crowding. This does not mean that the story must necessarily be confined to a single incident. It only means that even when the story covers a wide field of time and large sequence of events; it should give a concentration of interest.

Secondly, short story should have unity which means unity of purpose, of motive, of action and of impression. A short story should contain only one informing idea and it should be worked out with singleness of purpose. No scattering of attention is allowed in a short story as it may be allowed in a novel. Writers and critics hold different opinions on the art of the short story.

A short story should present only a ‘slice of life’ suggestively. It should have neither a beginning nor an end. However, the modern short story writer and novelist Somerset Maugham thinks that ‘a short story should be a finished product of art with a beginning, middle and an end’. Another critic compares the short story with a horse race in which the start and the finish count most. Such contradictory definitions are more or less reconciled in that, a short story should be a story, a record of things happening, full
of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development reacting through suspense to a climax and a satisfying denouement.

A short story may deal with any motive and material. It is a dramatic incident or situation; a telling scene; a closely co-ordinate series of events; a phase of character; a bit of experience; an aspect of life; a moral problem – any of these, an innumerable other motives which might be added to the list, may be made the nucleus of a thoroughly satisfactory story. There are three types of short stories, the story of plot, the story of character, and the story of impression. However, to most story writers, the idea of a story comes something like an abstract thought or impression and later they work it up into the shape of a story inventing the required plot, character and incidents.

Though the short story is comparatively a recent development, the elements of the short story could be seen even in the “Canterbury Tales” of Chaucer. The stories told by Chaucer’s pilgrims were the first of their kind in English literature. However, a proper prose medium was lacking. In modern literature the short story has firmly established itself as a favourite form. It is distinct from the novel and it is a fallacy to treat it as a shortened novel. The growth of the magazines and newspapers and the rush of modern life helped the growth the short story. At one time it was feared that the short story may replace the novel. Today the influence of the short story is international. The development of the English short story owes much to the great masters of the short story in other languages.

Indian has been using English for literary expression in prose for about 200 years. The earliest prose writing in the language by an Indian is C.V.Boriah’s twenty-eight page tract “Account of the Jains” in 1809. The short story however came to be written much
later. But within a short period, it became a highly popular form of literature. Much before the publication of the novel as an art form in the literary realm, it has been the staple of literary taste of the readers and has been the chief source of their entertainment. Literary periodicals, women’s, magazines, journals and numerous dailies thrive on the publication of eagerly sought after stories. The reader’s imagination and curiosity are easily fed by these, especially if they are detective stories, or tales of fear and wonder or thrill and suspense.

Short story has evolved itself in a fine art in the modern times. As a board generalization, one may argue that story in the last few decades has moved from the individual to the social from relatively simple narrative point of view to a more complex, and more significantly from the obvious to the subtle. On the basis of this, one can make a few tentative formulations and highlight the notable contributors of some of the contemporary short story writers.

One of the most prolific Indian English short story writers is Manjeri Isvaran who wrote as many as nine short story collections, beginning with ‘Naked Shingles’ in 1941. For two decades, the 1940s and 1950s, he immensely enriched the corpus of Indian literature by writing stories on varied subjects. Isvaran’s own comments on the role of the short story writer and the nature of short story emphasize the preoccupations with the revelation of his mind and heart. All his writings, poems and stories are rich with philosophical insights. Apart from religion, most of his stories about seventy in number deal with domestic life and social relations.
In the recent decades, a number of writers including Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kushwant Singh, Ruskin Bond, Manoj Das and a host of other writers have used the short story as a vehicle of expression. It is however the women writers who score over their male counterparts in this regard. It is universally admitted that story-telling comes naturally to women. In almost all the languages, women novelists have taken a foremost position in the art of narrative. There is thus a spurt in the output of stories produced by women writers. Special stress is being laid on feminist literature. It is increasingly being believed that women are super storytellers as is evident from the stories written by Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal.

A major theme in the stories written by these writers and especially by Shashi Deshpande is man-women relationship. The family in India and elsewhere in the world has been under a process of social change. There is a conspicuous change in the spheres of roles and values. From the sociological point of view, the role of husband-wife is the principal component in a family context and that has undergone a vital change due to growing enlightenment and the movement and the movement for emancipation of women. In this regard, literature has played a sterling role in raising the reader’s consciousness. In her stories, Shashi Deshpande delineates the position of women, especially educated middle-class women, in Indian society.

Indian English

English education was introduced to India in the nineteenth century, serving as an ideological force behind social reform and control. There was an imperial mission of educating colonial subjects in the literature and thought of England, a mission that in the
any long run served to strengthen western cultural hegemony. Thomas Babington Macaulay’s Education Minute of 1835 is regarded as a crucial document in this history. His influences were based on a supposition of the inborn superiority of English culture.

The founding of English colleges in India led to the formation of English-educated and mainly Hindu, elite who ultimately became critical of both their own religious conventions, such as the caste system and child brides and of British rule. The British-style education also had the result of connecting Indian writers to literary civilizations of the West, allowing Indian writers writing in English to reach an audience in Europe as well as in India.

In the nineteenth century, both liberal and conventional improvers supported female education in India, believing that social evils could be eradicated through education. However, the concept of education was limited to manufacturing good homemakers and continuing orthodox philosophy, as women were believed to support the outmoded values of Indian society. Christian preachers and British rulers, especially in Bengali where the British has made their first inroads in the mid-nineteenth century, started girls schools and in the 1880s, Indian women started to graduate from Universities. The vast majority of girls, however, did not attend school, as education for women was mainly narrowed to the larger towns and cities.

**The English Language in India**

Many cities see the use of the English language in India as one in the middle of many postcolonial mimic activities, resulting from the irritation of the English language as a part of British colonialist interference in Indian education, language and literature.
In India, some cities see the domination of English language and literature as a form of ongoing cultural imperialism.

Others argue that the widespread use, prestige and expansion of English in India in recent periods are attributable to the post-war authority of the United States rather than to the British Empire, that is, its growing global exchange as a medium of communication.

English language has been and is being used by the Indians for the last two hundred years or so, not only for day-to-day communication but also for what can be called the ‘creative use of language’ that is in literature. The Indian writers started writing in English; after Independence, the unprecedented growth of Indian writing has consolidated the identity of the nation. The constant pre-occupation with the Indian ethos has ensured and strengthened the Indian identity. The socio political, cultural and economic development in the country contributing to the nation-building process has substantially influenced the character of Indian literature.

Indian nationalism gets an added meaning and interpretation after Independence. More than the mere patriotic zeal in pre-Independence period, it came to mean India’s assertion of its own self. The earlier search for identity in historical, mythical and legendary past leads to the assertion of Indian identity. The era of hope, aspiration gives way to the era of national consolidation. The same spirit gets reflected in creative expression in the form of cultural regeneration and criticism of the prevalent socio-political situation for the sake of the strong and healthy nation building.
The Indian English novelists have proved to be accomplished and confident storytellers. They weave many fine threads into their textual tapestry and seem to forget not a single one. The Novel as a literary phenomenon is new to India. Epics, lyrics, drama, short stories and fables have their respectable descents, going back by several centuries, but it is only during a period of little more than a century that the novel— the long constant piece of prose fiction— has occurred and taken root in India.

Novels have been and are being published in a dozen Indians languages, and also in English; and the reciprocal influence between the novel in English and the novel in the regional languages have 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 can be translated from one to another of the many languages current in the country. While a truly comprehensive and reliable literary history of modern India is yet to be undertaken, the main sign-posts seem to be clear enough. It was in Bengal that the ‘literary renaissance’ first manifested itself; but almost immediately afterwards, the signs of ‘new life’ were to be seen in Madras, Bombay and other parts of India as well.

Perhaps the first novel written in Bengali was ‘Alaler Gharer Dulal’ which came out in 1858. The wastrel elder brother, the redeeming younger brother and the deceitful uncle keep up the interest of the story and the novel itself seems to have been a sort of Jack Wilton in the history of the novel in India, a pioneering work if nothing else. However, the real beginnings were with the work of the great Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838 - 94). His first published effort ‘Rajmohan’s Wife’ in 1864 was in English. It was followed next year by ‘Durgeshanandini’ in Bengali, which appeared in an English translation in 1890. ‘Kapalkundala’, ‘Vishavriksha’, ‘Krishnakantar Uyi’,
‘Anandamath’, ‘Devi Chaudhurani’ and other novels appeared between 1866 and 1886 and several of them came out sooner or later in English versions also. In the meantime, Raj Lakshmi Devi’s ‘The Hindu Wife’ was published in 1876, Toru Dutt’s ‘Bianca’ in 1878. Kali Krishna Lahiri’s Roshinaravarti’s ‘Sarata and Hingana’ in 1895, these novels were written in English.