CHAPTER – 1
INTRODUCTION
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Indian English Literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is a literature which is a combination of Indian literature and Indian literature written in English. It contributed to the common pool of world writing in English. Indian writings in English are a product of the historical encounter between the two cultures – Indian and the western—for about one hundred and ninety years.

Indian English literature has a long history of development and of course that of Indian English Fiction. There are so many factors responsible in the contribution of the study of the fiction and spread of English language in India. With advancement of the British Empire and the expansion of English administration in India, Indians have been using the English language, reading, speaking and writing the English language since early 19th century. They have started learning English because they thought it was useful. However the English language was not enforced upon them as a part of British policy in India. The people from all walks of life started learning English.

Modern Indian novel in English spans over a century. The writers like Toru Dutt should not be condemned as suffering from superiority complex due to their writing on sundry subjects rather they deserve to be
better understood. To these writers, English served the purpose of an intellectual means of expression. The Indian English novelists have attained a venerable stature to the extent that various questions have been almost prevented regarding skepticism pertaining to the validity of this writing.

Those Indian writers who developed this foreign language for creativity had an uphill task ahead of them for projecting their country’s heritage in an alien language. Apart from the Big Three - Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao, a host of the other writers like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Ruth Prawer Jhabwalla, Nayantara Sahgal, Arun Joshi, Salman Rushdie, Namita Gokhale and Amitav Ghosh are among Indo-English Novelists who explored Indian themes persistently. Their significant contribution demands a serious consideration.

Therefore, the Indian novelist has a greater responsibility to meet with. The Indian novel in English has arrived at its obtaining state after meandering through various stages and phrases.

**Novel: An Introduction**

While discussing the augmentation of the Indian novel in English of its early stage, a few relevant facts are to be noted that the early Indo-English novel was imitative. One should remember that there is a subtle difference between borrowing a form of literature and containing to
intimate it. Indian novelists in English have tried their hands in appropriating the form in their own way in content and in its treatment. Apparently similar occurrence found during 18th century when English writers adopted the Italian *Novella* and developed into its present form draws attention.

Novel as a form of literature emerges out of peculiar social circumstances and deals with human predicament in its nature. Since 1792 when Charles Crraut put forward the idea of making English a channel to circulate Western ideas and the advent of the British, Indian thinkers and writers have been prompted to express themselves in English. The political scene of the time inspired many conscious writers, as G. P. Sharma puts it.

It was natural that the Indian writers who were imbued with the spirit of nationalism during the nineteenth century wanted to express their view points not only to the Indians but also to the British and other people of the world.

It is that they are pre-occupied with things that are Indian - Indian themes, Indian characters Indian life and manners, Indian totems and taboos. It is this which has made English fiction by Indian writers unmistakably national. [Sharma: 286]

Thus the rise of the novel in India in English, as in other regional language harmonized with the rise of the sense of national cohesion.
The then Indian society suffered adversely from evils such as thugs, looting in the name of ‘Kali’, child marriages, problems of child widowhood, ‘Sati Pratha’, etc. To the absolute disappointment of enlightened citizens of India, these social vices could not be easily uprooted from a setup ridden with self-seeking religions bigots. The arduous task of reforming was beset with dangers. Indian leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy among others deserve the credit of coining a new India. He believed that India's progress was impossible without higher education, which in turn required the medium of English. Simultaneously the British should not be denied the credit they deserve because they were the rulers. On the other hand there was another attitude prevailing staunchly supported classical education in Sanskrit and the vernaculars.

For the implementation of new policy, colleges to be founded in major metropolises as Mumbai, Calcutta and Lahore which flung windows open to Western ideas. Against this backdrop Indian reformists offered their best among whom, Raja Ram Mohan was the foremost. That is why Sophia Dobson inspired to call them Aeropagitica of Indian history. Thus, a discernible path was paved for novelists to write of quotidian concerns of rising middle class. This new experience is described favorably by K. R. Srinivas Iyengar:

To be Indian in thought and feeling and emotion and experience yet also to court the graces and submit to the discipline of English for expression
is a novel experiment in creative mutation.

[Iyengar: 28]

The writers courageously received the challenge of the new experiment of which Iyengar speaks and was certainly to encounter satirical criticism from pedantic. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Raj Mohan’s Wife* (1864) is the first Indo-English novel. It is characterized by excellent story telling. The story is of Mantagini, Raj Mohan’s wife who courageously opposes her husband's evil designs of murder. She refuses to idolize her husband, as women of her time in India were expected to do. Bankim succeeded in adopting an alien form to express Indian sensibility and tried to prove that universal truths do not fall victim to language and form. In these hands the recurring concerns of the middle-class attained the dignity of being written on.

L. B. Dey - *Govind Samant: Bengal Peasant Life* (1874) edges over *Raj Mohan’s Wife* as a significant novel marking a departure from romance to realism. The protagonist, Govind, a resident of a small village in one of the remote pockets of Bengal, expires due to snakebite. His widow suffers the atrocities of religious punctiliousness. Indomitable spirit of man fighting against odds is deftly depicted. Srinivas pays noteworthy tribute to the novel in the following words,

The style of writing is now and then quaintly ceremonial but the characters are drawn and the scenes recalled with a natural ease. The story teller is also a commentator and does not hesitate
to make a point for the ‘gentle’ reader's edification. [Iyengar: 170]

Iyengar’s opinion quoted above is adequate proof of sympathetic assessment of early attempts. In due course the novel developed into various-trends exhibiting pre-occupation of writers with pre-independence and post-independence problems of Indian society. The common enemy before freedom was British Raj which inspired all energy to be channelised in opposing it and infusing people with a sense of national solidarity, but disenchantment crept stealthily in the Indian psyche after 1947 as the golden dreams charted by the leaders proved to be mirages. This disillusion steered a marked change in the tone of the novel, resulting in varied trends.

**Indian English Writing: Beginning to Modern Time**

The contribution of Indian English writers is the most significant in the field of the novel. Indian English novel has grown considerably in bulk, variety and maturity since the publication of Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife* in 1864. What began as a small plant has now attained a luxuriant growth and branched off in various directions. The development of Indian novel follows certain definite patterns, and it is not difficult to trace its gradual progression from the imitative stage to the realistic to psychological to the experimental stage.
The Indian English novel exploded in the fiery talks of Henry Derozio, the spiritual prose of Tagore and the pacifist dictums preached by Gandhi. With the coming of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan, the Indian English novel had begun its journey. The early novels in India were not just patriotic depictions of Indianness but the cynics. Niradh C. Chaudhuri visioned India without the crown skeptically and also rejected the fiery patriotism and spiritualism that were ‘Brand India’ and mourned the absence of colonial rule. As India grew out of her obsession with freedom and viewed her own streak of imperialism during the Emergency, the Indian idiom began to change. Now with the Indian Diaspora being a reckoning force in the publishing world, Indian English speaks a global tongue, unconfined to any particular culture or heritage - the language of the displaced intellectual.

This confronted us to a problem with contemporary Indian English writing. When you ponder on the subject very few Indian English writers in India have made it with their English writing. They inevitably have the odd degree from Oxford and Cambridge and their foundations are laid abroad. It seems to be a prerequisite to have a global perspective if one is to be successful in writing in English. The real need in India is more publishing houses that are willing to give aspiring writers in India a chance. Writers in India need more avenues to make them heard and as readers the Indian audience should not get too mesmerized by foreign publications.

The screen on the fantastic mythical realities was raised by the Indian Diaspora which became part of domestic conversations in the
villages. Salman Rushdie captivated critics with his ‘chutnification’ of history and language as well. He opened the doors to a plethora of writers. Amitav Ghosh experiments in postcolonial realities and Vikram Seth fuses poetry and prose with an air of Victorian grandeur, while Rohinton Mistry tries to interpret the Parsi world.

Women writers explore old wives’ tales, condemn exploitation and try to make sense of the fast changing pace of the new world. Kamala Das explores women’s plight in India and the world and others like Shashi Deshpande paint characters who blame their own complacency for their sorry condition. Arundhathi Roy begins her story without a beginning and does not really end it while Jhumpa Lahiri’s well-crafted tales move at a perfect pace.

Indian English took the drastic change when Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature and by the time V. S. Naipal carried the same, the Indian English novel had reached in its highest pitch. Now Indian English novels are sparking off debates about huge advances, plagiarism and film rights. Hinglish masala and a dose of spiritual realism are only the tip of the iceberg. The Indian audience and the rest of the world have a lot to look forward to when they get an Indian English novel in their hands.

The “*Big Three*” arrived on the scene in the thirties, and they were the founders of true Indo-English novel. Almost all the time they inevitably portrayed the village life and the concomitant effect of freedom movement. They could not keep themselves away from the Gandhian philosophy, which consciously or unconsciously entered their creative writing. But it is
in this phase that we come across excellent novels for the first time, as is evident from Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935), R.K. Narayan’s *Swami and Friends* (1935) and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938).

In *Coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand, the social disparity in India is laid bare. In R. K. Narayan’s imaginary village *Malgudi*, the invisible men and women of our teeming population come to life and act out life with all its perversities and whimsicalities. In *Kanthapura* by Raja Rao, Gandhism awakes in a sleepy village down south. India no longer needed to be depicted by outsiders. The perspectives from within ensured more clarity and served a social documentative purpose as well.

It was R. K. Narayan who first portrayed a purely Indian sensibility. He is India’s most revered and prolific novelist. In the words of K. R. Srinivas Iyengar,

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

Though R.K. Narayan was not radical as Raja Rao in his appropriation of English, Narayan is part of the process, which in his own word is an ‘Indianisation’ of English.
Mulk Raj Anand showed to the West that there was more in the orient than could be inferred from Omar Khayyam, Tagore or Kipling. When he started writing fiction, he decided that he would prefer the familiar to the fancied. He had first seen his heroes as pieces of trembling humanity and loved them before he sought to put them into his books.

Raja Rao was a child of the Gandhian age, and reveals in his work his sensitive awareness of the forces let loose by the Gandhian revolution as also of the thwarting or steadying pulls of past tradition. But as a user of a foreign language he also confesses his limitation in a ‘Forward’ given by himself in his first novel Kanthapura. He writes,

> English is the language of our intellectual make up whereas our mother tongue is the language of our emotional make up. [Kanthapura: 8]

Such was the creative genius of these “Big Three” that they discovered a whole new world in Indo-English fiction. They examined minutely the Indian sensibility and exposed the foibles of the Indian way of life.

In the forties, G.V. Desani’s All About H. Hatter (1948) made a major breakthrough in formal experimentation and became a masterpiece of remarkable artistry. Hatter’s dazzling, puzzling, leaping prose is the first genius effort to go beyond the Englishness of the English language. It created indelible impression in the minds of the readers by its highly evocative narrative technique and the language unparalleled in the history of Indo-Anglian fiction.
After the 1950’s, however, Indian novelists interest moved from the public to private sphere. They began to delineate in their works the individual’s quest for the self in all varied complex forms along with his problems. Most of them in their eagerness to find new themes “renounced the larger world in favor of the inner man” and engaged themselves in “a search for the essence of human living”.

Novelists like Anita Desai, Arun Joshi and Nayantara Sahgal changed through their works the face of Indian English novel and their works contain seeds of future development. Anita Desai is one of India’s leading authors. Most of Desai’s novels reveal the breakdown of relationship. She deals with the psychological aspects of her characters. Anita Desai explored the inner climate, the climate of sensibility in her novels and added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian women writers in English fiction. A striking feature of Arun Joshi’s fiction is his experimentation with different narrative techniques. While the trios are still creatively alive, the novelist of second generation keeps on bringing out remarkable novels from time to time. The contribution of Kamala Markandanya, Manohar Malgaonkar and others has already been recognized in and outside India.

Beginning with Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, known for engaging comedies of North Indian Urban middle class life, the women novelists have displayed not only authenticity but also brought a freshness to their works whereas Kamala Markandaya takes us to the heart of a South Indian village where life has apparently not changed for centuries. She depicted
rustic and urban realism in her work. Another writer Nayantara Sahgal, with her work *Rich Like Us* (1985), has shown a very charming way of storytelling, and Kamala Das with her autobiographical and bold works treaded the paths hitherto unknown for Indo-Anglian novelists.

Among the contemporary writers, Amitav Ghosh has shown his genius in the Indian English fiction. His two novels – *The Circle of Reason* (1986) and *The Shadow Lines* (1988) established Ghosh as “the finest writer who were born out of the post Midnight’s Children revolution in Indo-Anglian fiction.

Vikram Seth attained a dizzy height of success with *The Golden Gate* (1986) and *A Suitable Boy* (1993). He stunned the literary world with his novel *A Suitable Boy*. In its forbidding size, the novel can be compared with Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* or Marcel Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*.

Upamanyu Chatterjee, with his novel *English August* (1988), got great success. His tone was ironic and he hit all the foibles of the Indian bureaucracy. Chatterjee brilliantly uses Indianised English in the novel. His contemporary Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) is one of the greatest achievements of Indian English fiction. In the 1990s, Rohinton Mistry has emerged as a significant novelist. His *Such a long Journey* (1991) is his maiden attempt in the genre in which he deals with the predicament of modern life.

Recent years have witnessed a good number of Indian English fiction writers who have stunned the literary world with their works. Their
works have enriched the world literature, and they have been awarded with accolades and prizes in the field of literature. But a careful study of their development makes it clear that there are two kinds of writers who contributed to the genre of novel: The first group of writers focused on the various social problems of India like poverty, class discrimination, social dogmas, rigid religious norms etc. which has an appeal to the West.

The second group of writers includes those who are global Indians, who are Indian by birth but they have lived abroad, so they see Indian realities objectively. They are at ease with the English language and have enriched English language with their creativity.

Even though handling Indian sensibility these writers are no longer the slavish imitators of English. They have used English so creatively that the freshness becomes a prominent feature in their language. They have experimented with the language and fused Indian spirit in the foreign language. They have coined new words and idiomatic expressions in English and added a new flavor in English language. Some of these terms are now accepted as English words. The West relished it with zest and they have their permanent place in the world literature.

There was a time when the West used to recognize the ‘Third World’ writers with a sense obligation rather than genuine acceptance. It is often argued that if one wants to be noticed in the west, one should present the East in unfavorable light. Often the Indian writers who present India, its culture in the unfavorable light are considered for the awards. The west has a typical notion about the third world, where their eyes only see poverty,
wretchedness, terrorism, lack of system, failure of democracy and so forth. And the writers, voicing one of these are sure to be recognized by the West. But in the last few years, the scenario has changed. The Indian writers are major contributors to the English fiction and they are no longer a ‘sympathy seekers’. They have their English and their genuine experience to share.

It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that unexpected and overwhelming changes in Western attitudes toward India and Indian Literature came when Salman Rushdie’s novel *Midnight’s Children* was published in 1981. In the novel, Rushdie conjures up a generation of Indians born at midnight 15 August 1947. He writes,

> What made the event noteworthy… was the nature of these children, every one of the whom was, through some freak of biology or perhaps owing to some preternatural power of the moment, or just conceivably by sheer coincidence… endowed with features, talents or faculties which can only be described as miraculous. It was as though … history, arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise, had chosen to sow, in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world has seen up to that time.

[Rushdie: 195]
Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the fiction at the turn of the present century, from the Indian point of view, is the emergence of new talent. A number of novelists have produced significant novels, making a mark in the literary world. The most sensational literary event in the recent past was probably, the publication of Salman Rushdie’s magnum opus *Midnight’s Children* which became an international success instantly on its release. It created generation of young Indian novelists who eagerly followed his footsteps.

Arundhati Roy is one such talented writer of the post- Midnight’s Children Era who shows real psychological depth while conveying the realities of culture and history. Her novel *The God of Small Things* has earned much critical attention all over the world and fetched her Booker Prize. Undoubtedly, Roy has managed to free her from the shackles of conventional writing. She successfully experimented with the language, and has been duly rewarded for that.

As with Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai’s work also manages to explore the post-colonial chaos and despair. Her first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* satirizes society at large. Her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) spans continents, generations, cultures, religions, and races. She handles all these with ease like a master craftsman. Her narrative style, creative use of language and handling of plot put her among the leading Indian English fiction writers. And this is acknowledged by the Booker Prize she got for the novel.
Indian fiction in English has come a long way from the triumvirates of the thirties to the modern recent English fiction writers. The language which was once treated as a language of the foreigner or the language of the elite class is viewed differently. As the number of readers Indian English fiction has increased. So the quality of writing has also improved. The writers are now no longer active users of English but they have English as their first language (Lingua franca). They express themselves with native proficiency. They are the writers who think and write in one language, which is English. They have travelled in various continents and they have something substantial to tell their readers. Indian English fiction is now a world literature. It has struggled, endured indifferences of the west and now finally emerged as a clear winner among the recent fiction writers.

Amongst the new young writers the most talented, is perhaps Chetan Bhaghat. With his novels, *Five Point Someone: What not to do at IIT* (2004), *One Night @ the Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States – the Story of My Marriage* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), *What Young India Wants* (2012) and *Half Girlfriend* (2014), Chetan Bhagat has single handedly reshaped the Indian English novels. The influence of Bhagat’s writings has been so impactful, that even Hindi films are adapting his novels on the big screens. Another current writer who has gained immense popularity in the recent time is Amish Tripathi. *The Immortals of Meluha*, based on the origin of Lord Shiva, Amish has captured the imagination of the country.
Apart from this, yet another reason for which Indian writers are also recognized is their innovative experiments in the genre. These writers, who have created a new form, have been handsomely rewarded. It can be a narrative innovation or linguistic experimentation. Such writers have native-like proficiency of the English language; they know how to handle English creatively. So for them form and style are equally important in their story. Often we find autobiographical elements in their works. These writers have reached the height from where they can tell their own tale in the language suitable for their native set. Such writers are often awarded for their linguistic experimentation and genuine tale.

**Popular Fiction vs. Literary Fiction**

Fiction, of course, is a work that is imagined from the mind, a different world than reality. An argument can be made that there are two types of fiction when it comes to novels: Genre Fiction and Literary Fiction. Popular fiction, also known as genre fiction, refers to the various fiction genres and types that have proved to be popular with wide audiences. This is opposite from literary fiction, which tends to be more academic, invites analyses and has a more narrow market among the scholarly. Also known as mass market fiction, pop fiction is typically divided into genres such as mystery, romance, horror, adventure, science fiction and fantasy.
The focus of most popular fiction is the plot. Readers want to see a well-defined and interesting plot, with plenty of complications and conflicts to keep them entertained. The conflicts might be physical between characters or might involve problems that characters must solve. Characters in these types of works might be embroiled in verbal fights with one another or might have a murder mystery that they must solve.

Unlike some literary fiction, conflict in pop fiction must either be resolved totally or at least wind down toward a resolution by the end. It tends to have more of a clearly defined resolution of conflict by the end of the story. Literary fiction might end without any resolution whatsoever to the conflicts presented.

Since the purpose of popular fiction is to appeal to the general public, it has to be written in a way that sells. It is marketed toward the interests of the public. Pop fiction authors who are serious about being published might have to make sure that their writing conforms to the guidelines of publishers who develop their guidelines based on what the general public will buy.

The opposite of this type of fiction is literary fiction. Literary fiction can be said to come more from the writer than popular fiction, which comes directly from the desires of the general public to increase its sales. Also, literary fiction is concerned with ideas and deep thought, and it is a manifestation of self-expression for the author as opposed to being driven by popularity in the market. Literary fiction tends to focus more on the characters, giving them considerable psychological depth, and on the
universal issues of life and existence, whereas popular fiction is more concerned with keeping audiences interested through the plot and might sometimes have characters that lack depth.

While changing opinions on reading tastes is not easily controllable, the war between Literary Fiction and Genre Fiction is one that will probably continue for years to come. The main reason for a person to read Genre Fiction is for entertainment, for a riveting story, an escape from reality. Literary Fiction separates itself from Genre because it is not about escaping from reality; instead, it provides a means to better understand the world and delivers real emotional responses.

The same way Chetan Bhagat wrote keeping in mind the reader and especially to entertain them. His novels cover all the current issues like education, politics, culture and religion. His novels revolve around youth and the problems of youth. He writes for them and about them. He writes to get attention of youth and that is the reason why his work are sold in bulk.

**Chetan Bhagat: A Brief Introduction**

Trying hands on contemporary writing and then reigning over hearts of millions is not that easy as has been proved by one of the prominent writers of the day – Chetan Bhagat. Very few authors have managed to reach out to such a wide audience as Chetan Bhagat. There is originality of content in his writings and when he writes people feel as if it is their story. He is a phenomenon that has affected everybody, touched everybody’s life.
Chetan Bhagat projects his readers’ viewpoint in his writings. According to him, “A writer’s first job is to strike a chord, and not to please elitist circles”. He does it by caring for his readers and listening to them, “It can’t be just the language, as it is simply the common language of the people. It is more about what is being said and communicated that strikes a chord.” Chetan strongly believes that the language should be colloquial, a popular fiction has to be a dialogue with the people on the streets. The secret to Chetan Bhagat’s success is he writes in ordinary English - and it is reassuring for young people to know someone knows what they are going through. In other words, Bhagat’s writing style tends to be simple with linear narratives and vivid storytelling. In the present thesis, the researcher tends to study the novels of Chetan Bhagat critically keeping in mind all the perspective.

Indian English novel has gone through a lot of transformation from its initial days to the present time and has attained a whole new intensity in terms of concept, marketing, presentation, business and impact on the Indian Culture. If we go back to the list of Indian Booker Prize Winners, we see that the writers of the Indian origin like Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and the recent winner Arvind Adiga have one thing common in their writings – they are not traditional Indian English writers. All the three are at ease with the English language, rather English is their first language. So medium is not at all a problem for them. They can use English as naturally as they breathe. And what is more important is that these writers have lived abroad for major part of their life, so they have
imbibed and assimilated the Western trends and it lends them the distance to have an objective view on India and Indians. These writers have come across many Englishes of the world and showed the world their English.
Works Cited


