CHAPTER- I

THE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL: THEN AND NOW

In India, literatures in Sanskrit-Prakrit and in the regional languages have existed for more than a thousand years now. In the regional languages, there are remarkable literary achievements in prose, poetry, drama, folk literatures and so on. Sanskrit works like, Kadambari by Bhanabhatta in the seventh century, Brhatkatha by Gunadhya and Vasavadatta by Subandhu are also treated as prose poems by early critics. Along with the prose narratives, Hithopadesha, Jataka stories by anonymous writers, Kathasaritasagara by Somadeva existed before the British came to India. All these formed a rich corpus under the rubric of Indian literature. Above all, Indian literatures were greatly influenced by the epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Moreover, Indian literatures were predominantly oral in tradition namely verse (kavya) and while it was passing from generation to generation, many changes might have taken place. Most of the available stories are not in the written form but in the oral form. Therefore, “The Indian tradition of storytelling was essentially oral in tradition and almost always a verse tradition”. (K.S. Ramamurti 2). This in fact reveals that India has a rich tradition of storytelling and galaxy of storytellers. Some of the Indian legends and tales, which have come down to us in the form of epics, puranas, myths, legends, and folk tales, are not only the oldest but also well-known in the world. Thus, the Indian legends and Puranas, have no doubt greatly influenced Indian literatures.

The history of the Indian English novel approximately dates back to one and a half century. English language and novel came to India in the nineteenth century as a
consequence of the British colonizing India. Therefore, the Indian English novel can be viewed as an offshoot of British literature. However, its moorings can be traced to the time of pre-colonial India. The first Indian English novel, *Rajmohan’s Wife* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was published in 1864.

The present chapter, *Indian English Novel: Then and Now*, charts the genesis of the English novel in India, its pioneers and forerunners taking recourse to sketches and romances, realistic novels, social novels, Gandhian age, partition novels, novels of East-West encounter, and historical novels coming to a close with the present. It also documents the trajectory of the Indian English novels, and relates it to the creative process of the writers of the time. This chapter discusses only representative novels and novelists of the period. The novels translated from the regional languages into English have not been included in the study for lending more focus to the discussion.

In the early part of nineteenth century, Raja Ram Mohun Roy (1772-1833) and other progressive minded Englishmen strongly pleaded for the Company Government to establish English medium schools to impart European knowledge of Science, Natural Philosophy, Mathematics, Chemistry, Anatomy and so forth. Raja Ram Mohun Roy was of the opinion that “the Sanskrit system of education would be best calculated to keep this country in darkness” (qtd. in Mehrotra 5). Yet the Company was reluctant in introducing English education in India. However, the administrative imperatives and the ever-expanding Company found it necessary to employ English educated Indians for the clerical and translation jobs. Otherwise, the company had to bring employees from England along with other benefits. Most of the Englishmen were unwilling to come to
India due to climatic and racial problems. “To produce trained staff for the company’s commercial and administrative services” (K.S. Ramamurti 27) the Governor General Lord Harding (1844-48), virtually made English education the only passport to avail employment opportunities to the Indian youth in the company. He also introduced regulations for the recruitment of English educated Indians through open and competitive examinations held by the Council of Education.

In the beginning, the Orientalists strongly reacted against the introduction of English education in India. But opinions were divided between Orientalists and Occidentalists regarding its introduction as a subject in the curriculum. To avoid the controversy, the East India Company started Sanskrit college for Hindus and Arabic college for Muslims in Benaras and Agra respectively. Nevertheless, the students did not show any interest in Oriental Studies, as they craved for English education. However, the Company dealt with the situation diplomatically by stating, “The great end should have been not to teach Hindu learning or the Mohammedan learning but useful learning” (James Mill 22).

Sir Charles Wood, who was then the President of Board of Control in the East India Company, was responsible for the foundation of the modern educational system in British India. He gave emphasis to mass education, female education and the improvement of the vernaculars. He stated, “It was neither our aim nor desire to substitute the English language or Vernacular dialects of the country.” (qtd. in Alphonso K 11). Finally, he proposed the creation of Department of Public Instruction and establishment of Universities in the presidency towns on the model of the London University, with a view to co-ordinate Higher Education. The Charter Act of 1831 passed
by the British Parliament directed that the East India Company be responsible for the introduction of English education in India. Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India then, put Sir Charles Wood’s proposals into effect in 1835 as a New Educational Policy. The subsequent Education Act by Lord William Bentinck and Thomas Babington Macaulay’s monumental “Minute on Indian Education” prepared in 1835 provided a stage for the adoption of English as a medium of instruction in schools and colleges. Macaulay observed: “a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and intellect” (qtd. in A. K. Mehrotra 5).

Macaulay attacks the Orientalist education as ‘useless’ and ‘unmeaning’ and says that the languages in India “contain neither literary nor scientific information” (qtd. in Priamvada Gopal 16). Thus, Macaulay upholds the ‘intrinsic superiority’ of English language. The statement of Macaulay quoted above clearly shows that the British in India introduced the English language for their own benefit. Gauri Vishwanathan makes an important observation which is relevant in this context. She observes:

The English Parliament wished to see a Europeanized improvement in the morals and manners of natives, partly to suit its administrative needs, it was nervous about interfering in their religious beliefs through missionary activity. The teaching of English literature was seen as a way to disseminate English values without coming to direct conflict with native religious beliefs’ (89).

The nineteenth century was an important period in the history of Indian literature. Literary historians have called it, the age of Indian Literary Renaissance. It opened new
avenues of learning and thinking. Indians who received English education had imbibed the liberal ideas of Western thoughts and science. The elite/upper class Indians, who were the beneficiaries, reaped the first fruit of English education.

The introduction of English education in schools, colleges and in Universities opened the floodgates to the Western ideas, both liberal and nationalistic. English education created a stir in and around Calcutta. The students who learnt English evidently could better their prospects. Indians used English language for creative expression much before Macaulay’s Minutes on Indian Education (1835). Henry Derozio, one of the bright students of the Hindu College, published his volume of poems in English in 1823. He became the youngest teacher of the college, at the age of eighteen. He is indisputably the first Indian poet in English, followed by Michael Madhusudhan Dutt and Kashi Prasad Ghosh.

Needless to say Raja Ram Mohun Roy, an intellectual and spiritual leader, a polyglot, social reformer and a dedicated Indologist, played a crucial role in introducing English education in India. Sir William Jones, who was the Calcutta Supreme Court Judge and the founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, was an important Oriental Scholar. There were others scholars such as Jonathan Duncan, David Hare, Sir Edward Hyde, H.T. Colebrook, the author of Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Succession (1797-98), and James Prinsep, the discoverer of the Ashokan inscriptions who were all significant scholars on Indian literature and Indian aesthetics. They were not imperial in their attitude but they had a great admiration towards Indian Literatures, and played an important role in introducing English education in India. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar terms them ‘Brahminised Britons’. “After studying Sanskrit and some of the
modern Indian languages, these Brahminised Britons’, translated Indian classics into English, or adopted Indian source material for retelling the ancient tales, myths, and legends in English” (Alphonso K 4).

The Christian Missionaries, with the help of Indian scholars, translated the *Bible* into Indian languages and Indian classics into English language. The translated works of European, French and Russians writers were made available to the Indian readers. “The European interest in translation and revival of the study of the Indian classics made the Indians conscious of their own rich ancient culture” (Alphonso K 5-6).

The socio-economic reforms introduced by the British- the abolition of *Sati*, women’s education, Posts and Telegraph, Canals for Irrigation, construction of roads and Railways, abolition of five hundred and twenty six Princely States, and the feudal system appealed to the younger generation who were hungry for reforms. The clamour for English education was not just a fashionable trend but a genuinely felt need by the people who were in search of new knowledge. The English education came almost like ‘a divine gift of Saraswathi’ (C. Rajgopalachari) for Indians. Along with English education, the British began Missionary activities. “The Christian missionarites started converting the elite Indian class into Christianity, and converted the Indian mass eventually” (R.S.Singh 7). Most of the people who got converted into Christianity in the later stage, were from the poor and the lower strata of Indian society. They embraced the new faith also to escape from rigid Hindu practices like, untouchability, and discriminatory caste practices. The influence of Christianity brought about a transformation in the socio-cultural life of India in the nineteenth century. Colonization no doubt is a fine instance of power and language going hand in hand.
After consolidating power in India, English, the language of the rulers began to exercise its influence on the intellectuals of the time. Western education made a great impact not only on the Indian languages but also on social, political, religious and cultural spheres of the country. It caused the spread of western thought, scientific temperament, individualism and liberal ideas among Indians. The emergence of the individualistic social order, the rise of middle class, the growth and development of the print media- journals, news papers, magazines, the birth of the age of reason, reforms and the emancipation of women sought to usher in a new age of social reform. Such winds of change soon began to affect the long accepted value system of the Indian traditional society. People endorsed colonial power structures- the socio-economic reforms as inevitable and useful as well. It is due to the literary renaissance, scientific temperament and democratic spirit, that the educated class challenged the Indian traditional views.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, though the study of the regional languages and literature was encouraged, the pattern of education in India generally followed the English system with the result that the mental make-up of educated Indians was conditioned by the English language (Alphonso K 12).

This spirit soon led to the social, religious and cultural reforms. Raja Ram Mohan Roy established the Brahmo Samaj in 1828. Soon it was followed by Arya Samaj by Dayananda Saraswathi in 1875. The Theosophical Society started by A.O. Hume brought socio-political awareness among the Indians. The high-spirited social reforms of Ram Mohan Roy, the replacement of Persian language by Indian languages in the Courts, and the socio-economic reforms, led to rationalism among the Indians. The uniform system of
education and the medium of instruction helped in bringing a new spirit of oneness. The reforms provided a kind of moral support to the Hindu society, and helped to develop a critical attitude towards society, religion and a new spirit of inquiry as well. At the same time, it awakened its own cultural tradition. For the first time the Indian middle-class, intelligentsia began to emerge from a feudal society into nationalism as well as individualism. K.S. Ramamurti opines,

The impact of western culture on the Indian society was the replacement of blind faith and superstition by reason and science.... India was standing at the threshold of a new epoch undergoing a radical transformation in her social and religious ideas. She owed that transformation to the impact of western ideas and culture which came through English education (27-28).

It is pertinent to note that, the translation of Russian, French and other European writers into English influenced the Indian writers of the time and inspired them to write in a new language with a new perspective. Interestingly, writers like, John Masters, M.M. Kaye, George Orwell, E.M. Forster, Rudyard Kipling and others seem to have influenced Indian writers immensely by their creative writings. As a result, the early novels written by Indian novelists were imitative at best. Yet, this exposure to European Literatures began to yield dividends as Indian writers adapted to new literary forms of the West. Consequently, a fresh kind of literature emerged in the beginning of the twentieth century in the major Indian languages. The Indian writers adopted new forms and techniques in their respective literatures such as novel, poetry, drama, short stories and so on. However, they are only amateur attempts, for the authors were just beginning to wield the language for creative purposes when they first set their pens to fiction. (Alphonso K 76).
Bearing our contemporary Indian English literary scenario in mind, one still needs to refer to the graph of the preceding years to trace the development of literary genres in order to discover the achievements or genesis of contemporary Indian literature that are in fact rooted in the past.

The chapter *Indian English Novel: Then and Now* is divided into four phases, to tracing the growth and development of Indian English novels, their major preoccupations, themes and techniques adopted by the writers of different periods.

The first phase or the formative period begins with Bankim Chandra Chatarjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife* in 1864 and ends in 1920s. The novels written during this period grapple with such issues like, Social, Religious, Literary, Political Awakening, the impact of Colonialization and so forth.

The second phase begins from 1927, with K.S. Venkataramani’s novel, *Murugan the Tiller*. This pre-independence era, is also referred to as The Gandhian Era or the Colonial Era, and serves as the benchmark for the Rise of the Indian Novel in English with the emergence of the triumvirates, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and R. Raja Rao during the British rule and ends with the Indian freedom in 1947.

The third phase or The Post-independence Era constitutes novels beginning from 1947, with Kamala Markandeya’s *So Many Hungers* (1947) and ends in 1980. This age is marked by the Age of Transition, from Romance to Realism characterized by Individualism and East-West Encounter.

in terms of both literary output and the variety of themes and techniques introduced. The literary scene is renewed, quickened by the opening up of new possibilities and innovative techniques to give expression to a changed social, political, cultural, economic and psychological landscape. Also, the novels written in this phase discuss issues such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, human rights etc. Thus, the 1980s occupies a significant place in the history of the growth of the Indian English novel.

The First Phase: (1864 -1920)

It is interesting to note that, the first ever-English prose was written by an author of Indian origin, Dean Mohamet. *The Travel of Dean Mohamet; A Native of Patna in Bengal, Through Several Parts of India, While in the Service of the Honourable The East India Company, Written by Himself* (1794), is a series of letters written to a friend, based on his own experiences in the colonial army. After this work, no Indian writer attempted to write any piece of literature in English until Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s novel, *Rajmohan’s Wife* appeared in 1864. The period between 1864 and 1920 is considered as the Formative Phase of the growth of Indian novel in English. In the first half of the nineteenth century, “Most of them wrote merely sketches; some narrated and legends and tales a few others produced direct or disguised biographical accounts” (Alphonso K 66). Since the early writers lacked the confidence to invent stories, they merely retold the myths, legends, and folk-tales in English that had survived on the lips of the common people. Thus, the first generation of Indian writers in English, made an attempt in writing on prevailing issues such as socio-political, economic, and cultural re-orientations. As a result, they wrote mostly propaganda novels, whose tone was didactic, dramatic and emotional. This lapse was due to a lack of role models.
Although, the number of writers was small, they have a significant place in the history of Indian English literature.

It is apt to note the fact that the pioneers of the Indian English novels were experimenting with the English language. Since the English language was new to the Indian writers as well as to the readers, they could not easily find the proper medium to express their thoughts and feelings in the ‘alien’ language. Lack of books and lack of command over the English language, made them lag behind their counterparts, the English writers. The characters they depicted in the novels ‘were types rather than individuals’. Because, the early writers lacked in creative imagination as they were writing in foreign language. Hence, they confined to the role of social-commentators or chroniclers rather than fiction writers. As a result, no significant English novel was produced in the early twentieth century but novels had already become popular and were a powerful genre especially in Bengali and other vernacular literatures. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was the first Indian English novelist who influenced the new generation of writers to write in English. Though some writers attempted writing novels in English, the works did not impress and remained merely a blind imitation of the West, which V.S. Naipaul terms ‘Mimicry of the West.’

The Indian literary renaissance first manifested in Calcutta. As Calcutta was the first Indian city to come under formal British rule and they made Calcutta their Capital city and business centre. Hence, Calcutta naturally attracted a vast population of settlers looking for new prospects in life. As the Christian missionaries had already established educational institutions, helped the Indians to access to English education as well as Western thoughts. This resulted in an unprecedented awakening among the Indians.
This also transformed the general outlook of the generation. The stage was set for a complete intellectual and cultural regeneration of Indian society. Priyamvada Gopal’s comments are apt here:

The city of Calcutta, which generated this English-educated intelligentsia, was the centre of the commerce as well as the seat of colonial government…in the city where they pursued commercial activities as well as literary and intellectual interests (17).

Thus, Bengal became the birthplace of renaissance and it gave birth to literary geniuses like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Henry Derozio, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Kylas Chunder Dutt, Lal Behari Dey, Suchee Chandar Dutt, Ravindranath Tagore, Aravind Ghosh, Toru Dutt and many others.

The first phase is quite remarkable for the introduction of various fictional genres-the social novels, realistic novels, historical novels, romances, dramas and poetry. Although, Indian writers in English did not produce any significant work in this period, its impact could be seen in the form of pamphlets, poems, prose writing and so forth. The fast changing socio-political, economic and cultural order favoured and provided the necessary impetus to the writers of this phase. Though Alaler Gharer Dulal (1854) by Pearay Chand Mitra, was the first ever Indian Novel written in Bengali, it was Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s Rajmohans’s Wife (1864) written a decade after which gave Bankim the sobriquet of being the father of Indian English novel. As per chronology, Rajmohans’s Wife was not the first novel to be published because it was serialized in the Culcutta Weekly: The Indian Field in 1864. It is considered the first full-length Indian
English novel because it fulfilled the required elements of the novel. It appeared in the form of a book only in 1935, four decades after the death of the author.

*Rajmohan’s wife* is a romantic tale of domestic life in a Bengal village. It is a melancholic tale of a Hindu wife, Matangini, a beautiful and passionate woman, married to a villainous rich man and her tragic plight in a convention bound society. Matangini’s unrequited love for her sister’s husband, Madhav, is depicted with sympathy by the novelist. When she discovers a plot against Madhav, in which her husband, Rajmohan is involved, Matangini risks her husband’s wrath and her own life. She reaches Madhav’s house in the middle of the night to inform him about the impending danger. After a series of mishaps, including Matangini’s confinement, the British administration intervenes to foil the plot resulting in Rajmohan committing suicide. Matangini returns to her father and dies an early death. *Rajmohan’s Wife* is read, as a melodrama of romance and a study of an unhappy marriage. After *Rajmohans’s Wife*, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee did not try his hand at writing in English. Being a staunch patriot, he switched over to his mother tongue-Bengali. Meenakshi Mukherjee comments, “Read today, after 130 years of its first appearance *Rajmohans’s Wife* remains a fascinating text for a number of reasons, as a first novel in English, for well over a century been a text more heard than read” (1971: 8). For the modern reader or critic the novel may appear to be a romantic tale because of its “elements of mystery and suspense, of nefarious plotting and nocturnal adventures, midnight dacoities, secret meetings, surprise discoveries, blackmail and kidnapping” (K.S. Ramamurti 41). As a pioneer work in the genre and also as the first attempt by an Indian writer, certainly the novel deserves appreciation.
Kylas Chunder Dutt’s *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the year 1945* (1835) and Suchee Chunder Dutt’s *The Republic of Orissa: A Page from the Annals of the Twentieth Century* (1845) are imaginary historical works that were published before Bankim’s novel *Rajmohan’s wife*. Both the works project into the future describing the battles of liberation against the British rule, but end with dissimilar resolutions. Suchee Chunder Dutt’s *The Republic of Orissa* deals with the rebellion not by an urban educated youth but by a tribal boy from Orissa— the courageous Bheekoo Barik, the chief of Kingaries. *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945* is a fictionalized account of the sporadic armed rebellion against the British, which was fought in the early nineteenth century. It is an allegorical depiction of the battle led by the Governor Lord Fell Butcher and his general Colonel John Blood Thirsty against a large Indian army of patriots. But these two works fail to fulfill the required norms of the novel.

Suchee Chunder Dutt’s *Reminiscences of a Kerani’s Life* (1873) is the first autobiographical Indian English novel. The episodes of the novel are drawn from the author’s personal experiences as a Kerani or a Clerk in the East India Company. It documents the discrimination, corruption, social injustice committed by the British officers of East India Company. Another novel *Shunkur: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (1877) is a story of an ordinary peasant, Shunkur, who turns into a mutineer with his brother to avenge the death of his wife, who was raped by two English soldiers who come seeking shelter. The novel deals with the history of Sepoy Mutiny in a balanced and unbiased way. Another important novel, by the same author is, *Young Zameendar* (1883) which again reveals the author’s obsession with patriotism, in which Suchee Chundur introduces the mystic for the first time in the Indian English novel. All the novels deal
with an imaginary armed uprising against the British rule in India. Another important novel of the period was, Lal Behari Dey’s *Govinda Samanta or The History of a Bengal Raiyat* which appeared in 1874.

One of the significant events in the history of Indian novels in English is the emergence of women writers on the literary scene in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The movement led by Ram Mohun Roy, the emancipation of women, the ban of *Sati* in 1829, the female education, equal rights for women, re-marriage of child-widow and other revolutionary social reforms provided impetus to novelists as these reforms made a great impact on the Indian novelists as well as on the society. Thereafter a good number of women writers wrote novels in quick succession. Raj Lakshmi Debi’s *The Hindu Wife: or The Enchanted Fruit* (1876) is considered the first novel by a woman novelist in English. Toru Dutt’s unfinished novel, *Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878) is a romantic love story set in England. Krupabai Sattianandan (1824-94) wrote two important quasi-autobiographical novels, *Kamala, A Love Story of Hindu Life* (1895) and *Suguna: A Story of Hindu Life* (1895). Her preoccupation with gender, caste, ethnicity and cultural identity are strikingly progressive for her times. Both the novels deal with similar themes and interesting because she provides the Christian as well as the Hindu points of view, the positives and negatives in both the religions. The novels can be viewed as a critical commentary on the contemporary society reflecting the spirit of the age. Another important woman novelist of the period is Sevanthibai M. Nikambe who wrote only one short novel, *Ratnabai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895) which tells the story of a young girl married at the age of nine, whose husband is away in London for his higher studies. Her father wants his daughter to pursue
her studies but her in-laws oppose to it. They are shocked and outraged by this idea of a married girl going to school. The girl had to face the relatives of her husband who laughed at her going to school. After five years when her husband returns, he is pleasantly surprised to meet in his wife a woman quite different from what he had expected, and leads a happy married life. It was a propaganda novel espousing the cause of women’s education. It is evident that the English educated women took reformist part in the social life of the country. In a way, they made a great contribution to the growth of the Indian novels in English.

The other novels that appeared between 1864 and 1920 are, Ramabai Saraswati’s *The High-Caste Hindu Women* (1886), Trilokya Nath Das’s *Hirimba’s Wedding* (1884), Mirza Moorad Baig’s *Lalun, the Beragun, or The Battle of Panipat* (1884), B.R. Rajam Iyer’s *True Greatness or Vasudeva Sastri* (1886), Khetrapal Chakravorthy’s, *Sarata or Hingina* (1895), S.M. Mitra’s *Hindupore: A Peep Behind the Indian Unrest* (1909), Sorabji Cornelia’s *Love of Kusuma* (1910), *Love and Life Behind the Purdah*, Sharath Kumar Ghosh’s *1001 Indian Nights* (1906), and T. Balakrishna’s *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* (1909). These novels are considered as the turning point in the development of Indian English novels. Most of the novels got published in London and not in India. This aspect of being published in England gave both a status as well as an international visibility to the authors as well as to the advancement of English education and culture in India, which went a long way in inspiring the following generation of writers to write in English. With the turn of the century, novelists with substantial output began to appear on the literary scene, but most of novels failed to reach the readers.
However, they should not be ignored because they provided variety to the Indian novel in English in spite of not being very creative.

The South Indian novelists too contributed considerably to the Indian novels in English. Two prominent novelists, A. Madhavaiah and T. Ramakrishna Pillai wrote some good novels. A. Madhavaiah’s *Sathyananda* (1909) and *Thillai Govindan* (1916) first published under a pseudonym as *A Posthumous Autobiography* (1908) was edited by Pamba. *Sathyananda* is a story of a Brahmin boy of South India, who under the impact of western education loses his faith in the Hindu religion and at the end discovers his lost faith in *Bhagavad Gita*, which brings him peace. Another important novel, *Clarida*, (1915), is a historical romance dealing with the life of a woman, a Christian convert of Tanjore. T. Ramakrishna Pillai wrote two historical romances on the model of the British writer Sir Walter Scott. *Padmini* (1930) is a love story of a village girl; *A Dive for Death* (1911) is a story of a poor young boy loved by Princess, dives from a cliff to save an enemy but survives to get united with the Princess. Another important novelist from the North, Jogender Singh wrote *Nur Jahan: The Romance of an Indian Queen* (1909) a historical Romance of the Mughal period, and *Nasrin: An Indian Medley* (1911) portrays a decadent aristocratic life in North India, and also two social novels namely *Kamala* (1925) and *Kamni* (1931). The early novels are in the form of tales. But the writers made a sincere effort to create fiction proper though unsuccessfully. They were sketchy, didactic and philosophic in tone, failing to evoke any interest among the readers. M.K. Naik comments,

During the period from 1857 to 1920, the Indian ethos gradually underwent a sea change from the shock of defeat and frustration and
trauma of inferiority feeling to a newfound self-awareness and self-confidence… Indian English literature really came of age after 1857, when India’s rediscovery of her identity became a vigorous, all-absorbing quest and when she had learnt enough from the West to progress from imitation and assimilation to creation (2009: 38).

From 1860s up to the 1920s, a few novels appeared but did not create any stir. Most of the novels were social chronicles and a few novels were based on historical incidents, on the Victorian model of Sir Walter Scott. Meenakshi Mukherjee’s comments are relevant here: “The novel, the genre of imaginative literature which gives artistic form to the relationship of man and society, was conspicuously absent until the nineteen twenties” (1971: 18). Whatever the early writers produced, they were a kind of documentary novels and stories, which deal with the Indian life and traditions, manners and customs. The folk tales, myths and legends inspired and influenced the Indian novelists. However, these experiments seemed to be unsuccessful and evoked only an unfavourable reaction.

**The Second Phase: (1920-1947).**

The dawn of Indian social renaissance coupled with the spirit of national consciousness gave rise to a passion for Indian English novels. The national movement stirred the imagination and the emotions of Indians everywhere. Meenakshi Mukherjee makes a valid observation: “The Indo-Anglian novel made a diffident appearance in the nineteen-twenties, then gradually gathered, and established itself in the next two decades” (1971: 19). The writers of the period between 1920 and 1947 wrote on the freedom
struggle placing Gandhi as an ideal figure in their novels. For the early writer, then novel was a weapon to fight the British and a mirror to reflect the contemporary issues of the society. National consciousness received vitality and strength with the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi till the first half of the twentieth century. Gandhi played a crucial role in the awakening and shaping the social and political consciousness of people during the freedom struggle. In the later part of 1930s, the English novel stuck deep roots in the Indian soil. With the new social, political and cultural awareness, the novelists began to explore and interpret the Indian sensibility by choosing contemporary themes. They began to understand the relationship between man and his surrounding with a new perspective. They shifted their focus from the historical romances to the underprivileged, the economically exploited, socially oppressed and politically subjugated classes.

The real beginning of the Indian English novel can be located in the second phase with the publication of Murugan, the Tiller (1927) by K.S.Venkataramani (1891-1951). The novel is historically an important work because it paved the way for Gandhian novels or ‘Mahatma Theme’ in Indian English novel, promoting the cause of Gandhian economics. The novel depicts the allegorical relationship of two friends Ramu and Kedari. Ramu an ardent follower of Gandhi, an idealist implements the vision of Gandhi’s village based economy, whose spirit of serving public brings him respect and rewards. On the other hand, Kedari, an ostentatious and materialist, meets a tragic end. Venkataramani’s second novel, Kandan, the Patriot: A Novel of New India in the Making (1932) is set against the background of Gandhi’s Civil Disobedience/Non-Cooperation Movement of 1930. The protagonist, Kandan, a young Oxford-educated idealist, is depicted as a young Gandhian, who discards his prestigious Indian Civil Service job to
devote himself to the greater cause of nationalism before succumbing to a bullet wound. The novelist fuses both the personal and domestic themes with the larger political issues. Gandhi’s presence can be felt though he does not appear physically. It is a technique that Raja Rao too employs later in his well-known novel *Kanthapura*.

A.S.P. Iyyer, (1899-1963) is a novelist, dramatist, and a bureaucrat in the Indian Civil Service who wrote historical novels as allegories. Instead of Gandhian movement, he wrote about ancient Indian history and its glorious past. He wanted Indians to develop patriotism and national feelings. Iyer’s *Baladitya* (1930) is set in the background of fifth century India. It depicts the story of Baladitya, the king of Magadha, who defeats the invading Huns. He employs homilies to reveal the evils of caste system, pseudo-religious practices, etc. His second novel, *Three Men of Destiny* (1936) was also written in a similar pattern. The three men are, Alexander the Great, Chandragupta Maurya, and his Brahmin Prime Minister, Chanakya, set in the background against Alexander’s invasion of India in the fourth century B.C.

Although, the Indian writers wrote seriously from 1820 to 1930, for almost a century, they failed to set a trend till the arrival of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao “The Big Three” (William Walsh 26) on the Indian literary scene in the mid-nineteen thirties. The novelists of pre-independence era witnessed the social, political, cultural and intellectual upheavals in the wake of political unrest that provided ready-made materials for the novelists. The main object of the writers of the period was to create awareness and imbibe in them the social and political consciousness. The themes and sentiments, the novelists used were Indian but the treatment and the techniques were
Western. The stories weaved around the central characters and the tone of the novels was typically didactic. Though the novels were deficient in literary merits, one should notice the historic significance of the works.

The 1930s and 40s are considered momentous because Indian nationalism and Indian novel in English developed simultaneously. Both the events provided the sources and inspiration to come out of the incipient novel form for the writers. The real literary renaissance took place during this phase. Meenakshi Mukherjee calls, “it was a takeoff decade for the Indian novels in English” (1971: 8). The novelists of this period tried their hands with varying degrees of success. Issues such as social, political, economical and cultural dominated the age. It gave birth to a new generation of Indian novelists with a new perspective and new outlook. A good number of writers have produced a significant body of fiction. Slowly the Indian English novel started taking its root on the Indian soil. Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao emerged as literary giants who brought international recognition to the Indian English novels in the 1930s. Their novels are regarded as milestones in the history of Indian writing in English. These writers were conscious about their roots and had a clear perspective about the Indian society and culture, tradition and Western liberal ideas. All the three began their creative writing in mid-nineteen thirties, when Indian writing in English was in the incubation stage and the Western writers did not view Indian writers seriously. These three filled the flesh and blood to the skeletal form of Indian writing in English and were responsible for the evolution of the Indian English novel giving an identity to it in the international arena. Anand as a committed writer, in one of his interviews confesses that, “The double burden
on my shoulders, the Alps of the European tradition and the Himalayas of my Indian past” (Leela Gandhi 168).

The novelists of 1930s and 1940s owe their inspiration and indebtedness to the social and political upheavals of the Ghandian movement. Gandhi’s philosophy and principles dominated their works. M.K. Naik points out:

A highly significant feature is, the sudden flowering of the novels during the thirties, when the Gandhian movement was perhaps at its strongest. …. it was during this age that Indian English fiction discovered some of its most compelling themes: the ordeal of the freedom struggle, East-West-relationship, the communal problem and the plight of the untouchables, the landless poor, the downtrodden, the economically exploited and the oppressed. (2009: 124).

The various historical movements, such as, the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, the Civil Disobedience Movement, Jallian Wallabagh Massacre, Dandi March, Non-Cooperation, Quit India Movement, and other movements have been a source of inspiration for the novelists of the period and the movements provided impetus to their writings directly or indirectly. The leaders of the national movement, Gandhi, Nehru and others exercised in writing English prose in general. Nehru’s long spells in prison resulted in his monumental works like *Glimpses of World History* (1934) and the *The Discovery of India* (1946) during this period. The spiritual and philosophical writings, speeches and discourses of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swamy Vivekananda and others inspired the writers of the time.
The Journals published by Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India* (1919-32) and *Harijan* (1933-1948) provided material as well as inspiration to writers like, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K Narayan and others. Mulk Raj Anand’s debut novel, *Untouchable* was influenced by Gandhiji’s article published in *Young India*. Uka, a sweeper boy in an article in *Young India*, whom Gandhiji had seen, inspired Anand to create Bakha’s character. Anand opines, “Gandhi’s portrayal of Uka was more truthful than my concocted novel” (Leela Gandhi 172). In the same way, Gandhi’s Autobiography, *The Story of my Experiment with Truth*, influenced Raja Rao to write *Kanthapura* which implicitly reflects the influence of Gandhi’s autobiography. Many of the contemporary writers acknowledge their indebtedness to this seminal book of Gandhi. Bhabani Bhattacharya calls Gandhi the “writer’s writer” (Leela Gandhi 172). He also says that the best writing in the Indian subcontinent ‘bears his counter-signature’ (qtd. in Leela Gandhi.172p). K.S.Venkataramani’s *Murugan the Tiller* (1927), *Kandan, the Patriot* (1932), Mulk Raj Anand’s, *Untouchable* (1935), Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938), Amir Ali’s *Conflict* (1947), K.A. Abbas’ *Inquilab* (1955), R.K. Narayan’s *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1956), Nayantara Shagal’s *A Time to be Happy* (1955), K. Nagarajan’s *Attavar House* (1957) and *Chronicles of Kedaram* (1961) are some of the notable novels for the testimony of Gandhian theme. Meenakshi Mukherjee observes:

The most potent force behind the whole movement, the Mahatma is a recurring presence in these novels, and he is used in different ways to suit the design of each writer. He has been treated variously as an idea, a myth, a symbol, a tangible reality, and a benevolent human being. In a few
novels, he appears in person, in most others his is an invisible presence (1971:14).

A great writer, who is socially committed, cannot ignore what is happening around him. A great writer’s responsibility is to represent the society and its various influences in his art. In other words, literature and society are inextricably interwoven; each reflects and influences the other. As Matthew Arnold puts it, “Man” and “Moment” are interrelated. The second generation of novelists, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao by their high degree of self-consciousness and self-reflectivity excelled in their use of language and their representation of the relationship with fiction, society, politics, history and Indian culture.

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) a social chronicler, the eldest of the trio, began his writing career in 1935, with the publication of his Magnum Opus, *Untouchable* (1935). The Oxford educated Anand under the influence of Marxist ideology, wrote socially committed novels in his relentless zeal for social justice. His novels deal with the misery, wretchedness and the oppression of the poor and their struggle for better life. *Untouchable* covers the events of a single day in the life of a low caste but introspective young boy, Bakha. He lives in a sweeper’s colony in a small cantonment town, Bulandsahar. He undergoes a series of humiliations and tyranny by the upper caste Hindu community that makes him search for release from the degradation of his life. At the end of the novel, Anand proposes three solutions to eradicate untouchability. Thus, the novel ends abruptly without any possible/positive solution to the problem. Anand is ironic that, though Gandhi was the hero of the Indian political scene but people lack faith in the Gandhian methods of fighting untouchability.
Anand continued to write about the oppressed folk of the Hindu society in his subsequent novels- *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937). In these novels, his concern shifts from caste to class struggle. While his *Coolie* renders a cross-section of Indian society the protagonist, Munoo appears to be even more convinced that the root of the problem is poverty alone. *Two Leaves and a Bud* recounts the hopes of Gangu, a Punjabi peasant, who had to work in unhygienic condition in a tea estate in Assam. He succumbs to the bullet of the British officer, who tries to rape his daughter. Thus, the novelist intends a radical change in the Indian social fabric ushering the hope of a casteless and classless society in the future.


Mulk Raj Anand is passionately concerned with the villages, with ferocious poverty and the cruelties of caste, with orphans, untouchables, and urban laborers. He writes in an angry reformist way. Anand as a radical socialist is sympathetic towards the socially downtrodden is evident in his early novels (18).
Anand’s contribution is seminal in the development of Indian Writing in English. He firmly believed that, writing was a social act and was a criticism of society. He occupies a respectable position among the Indian writers, who modernized the Indian English novel. His Untouchable is a novel of protest and in fact, inaugurated the literature of the socially downtrodden and the oppressed. Thus, he looks into their problem with his humanistic approach.

Rashipuram Krishnaswamy Narayan (1906-2001) known as R.K. Narayan is another prolific Indian novelist in English. Contemporary to Anand and Raja Rao, Narayan was born in a South Indian Brahmin family. He is a writer who has penned fifteen novels and innumerable short stories over many decades and who continued to write until his death in 2001. Similar to Thomas Hardy’s Wessex novels, Narayan created the fictitious town of Malgudi where his novels set. Some criticize Narayan for his parochial, detached and closed world that he created in the face of the changing social conditions of Indian society. Narayan offers an interesting contrast to Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. There is a stark absence of contemporary socio-political issues but rather he explores the South-Indian middle class milieu in his fiction. He is the champion of the cause of the vulnerable and the marginalized, a detached observer who writes about a small group of men and women and their oddities; explores the inner thoughts and ambitions of their characters. Narayan’s Malgudi, an imaginary town, in South-India comes to life in his fiction. His debut novel Swamy and Friends (1935) gives a lively account of a school-going boy, Swamynathan, alias Swamy, recaptures all the freshness of his boyhood days. Graham Greene, in his Introduction to the novel compares Narayan to Anton Chekov of Rusia, the most popular short-story writer.
His next novel *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) is a story of Chandran, a sensitive youth caught in a conflict between the Western ideas of “love marriage” instilled in him by his education and the traditional social set up in which he lives. His frustration drives him to become an ascetic for some time, after which he comes back home to find that a traditional, arranged marriage is not, an imposition. *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955) is an ironic interpretation of the impact of Gandhism on the freedom struggle. It also focuses convincingly the latent savagery of those masquerading as Gandhians. Thus, Narayan depicts human predicament and disillusionment in a realistic manner.

Narayan’s other novels are *Financial Expert* (1952), *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1962), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) and *A Painter Signs* (1976) are considered as mature works. In his eighties, Narayan added four more novels to his corpus- *A Tiger of Malgudi* (1983), *Talkative Man* (1983), *The World of Nagaraj* (1990) and *Grand Mother’s Tale* (1992). *The Guide* perhaps the best and the finest specimen of Narayan’s artistic genius, won him the Central Sahitya Academy Award in 1962. It is about a triangle love story of Raju-Rosie and Marco polo. As a characteristic of Narayan’s novels, the protagonist, Raju, known as Railway Raju, an anti-hero, seduces a married woman, called Rosie, drifts away from his mother and friends, and makes her a famous dancer. Being Rosie’s manager, Raju forges her signature and goes to jail. After his release, comes to a village, called Mangal, where a village rustic, Velan, mistakes him for an ascetic. The gullible villagers trust him, when there was a drought they expect him to bring rain. Raju is moved by the innocence and simplicity of the villagers, decides to do something good for them for the first time in his life and prays for rain or not. Narayan weaves his human comedy against the backdrop of
a changing Indian society. His novels depict the conflict between conservatism and modernity. They also focus on the disintegration of joint family values and ties. They are a wry comment on human nature.

Raja Rao (1908-2006) is another significant novelist and a contemporary to Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan. Rao was born in Hassan in a Brahmin family, studied and settled in Paris. His first novel _Kanthapura_ (1938) is a representative novel of the pre-independence era, focuses on Gandhian philosophy of truth and non-violence. It is the first full-length novel advocating the Gandhian resistance against the British. M.K. Naik hails it as ‘the greatest of Indian English novels.’ The action is located in an imaginary village called Kanthapura, near the Western Ghats. Raja Rao’s protagonist, Murthy, is an embodiment of Gandhi. The villagers call him ‘our Gandhi’ who discards his education and foreign cloths for the cause of the nation. He is an idealist, enjoys the support of the mass-students, local leaders of his village, and carries out the Gandhian philosophies such as simplicity, _charaka_, eradication of untouchability, truth and non-violence. Though Gandhi does not appear physically but his influence and presence could be felt throughout the novel. _Kanthapura_ is written in the mode of ancient _Puranic_ style. Moorthy, the protagonist is the true representative of the spirit of Gandhi. The novel is devoted entirely to the movement of freedom-struggle led by Gandhi.

_The Serpent and the Rope_ (1963) is Raja Rao’s most significant, representative, and a semi-autobiographical novel. It was written after a long gap of twenty-three years, and brought him the Central Sahitya Academy Award in 1963 and placed him among the major Indian English novelists. The novel is densely philosophical structured on Shankaracharya’s vision of the _Advaitha_. The novel embraces all aspects of an
individual’s life from the mundane physical relationships to the ultimate quest for the visionary seer. He wrote only five novels and a collection of short stories, *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cat and the Shakespeare* (1965), *Comrade Kirillov* (1976) and *The Chessmaster and his Moves* (1988). William Walsh makes a valid comment on these three writers, “If Anand is the novelist as reformer, and Narayan the novelist as moral analyst, Raja Rao is the novelist as a metaphysical poet” (31).

Krishnaswamy Nagarajan (1893-1986) is another important novelist from South India wrote only two novels. His novels too are predominantly Gandhian. *The Athavar House* (1937) deals with Gandhian nationalism sensitively chronicling the fortunes of a Maharastrian Brahmin family. Though Gandhi does not appear physically throughout the novel but one can feel his presence. However, it is only in his second novel, *Chronicles of Kedaram* (1961) that Nagarajan introduces Gandhi as a character within the narrative, who is called upon to resolve an incident of religious tension in a small town on the Coromandel coast. The novelist does not deal the nationalist movement directly but with the effects of the movement through the consciousness of an old-fashioned young man. The dominant technique that Nagarajan uses in both the novels is realism and sharp irony. “The Indo-English novelists until thirties wrote for a readership largely Indian and unmistakably nationalist. They were so preoccupied with the politics of the day that they had little occasion to turn to man” (R.K. Dhawan 51).

The post independent Indian English novel has a distinct corpus, which reveals the spirit of the age in a matter of fact manner. Perhaps, the Indian society was in transition from old order to the new. The old and rigid practices and customs, the disintegration of old values with the emergence of new values generated interest in
modernism and socialism, the national awakening, adoration of Gandhian ideology, the rise of humanism and realism. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly points out that:

The most potent force behind the whole movement, the Mahatma is a recurring presence in these novels, and he is used in a different ways to suit the design of each writer. He has been treated variously as an idea, a myth, a symbol, a tangible reality and a benevolent human being (1971: 60).

This invariably led to innovative techniques in the novel and the development of various fictional genres during the post-independence period. Some of the writers like Anand and Raja Rao of this phase carried the burden of commitment which they did not lay down, while others like Narayan and B. Nagarajan merely wrote as observers and chroniclers.

**The Third Phase (1947 to 1980)**

Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao had occupied the Indian literary field even after the arrival of a new crop of novelists like G.V. Desani, K.A. Abbas, Babani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgoankar, Kamala Markandaya, Nayanatara Shagal, Chaman Nahal, Kushwant Singh, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Shashi Deshpande and others. The striking feature of the Indian English novels written after independence opened the floodgates of creative energy. Novel after novel appeared re-evaluating the recent history of India or evaluating the possibilities of the East and the West coming closer in the changed socio-political and cultural contexts. The noteworthy fact is, the novels of the period drifted away from the public sphere to the private domain. A few writers shifted
their themes from Gandhi to the private life of the individual. After Independence, the Indian English novel was under the process of revival. The early reformist zeal for social upliftment gave way in course of time to intensive probe of the “self”. Therefore, it was natural that, a new generation of novelists were self-conscious, inward looking and analytical. Such a shift gave rise to the arrival of realistic novelists, like G.V. Desani, who is considered the first modern Indian English novelist. In *All About H. Hatter* (1948) Desani breaks away from the traditional storytelling. Desani experiments with the incoherent and scattered plot in fusing West and the Indian narrative forms. The novel marks a transition from the stereotyped characterization to a new and rich variety of plot, delving deep into their psyche. P. Lal comments aptly: “Hatter is that rare thing: a ‘total’ novel. It was the first major step in the stylistic development of Indian writing in English…. It being the first novel to take the readers into the complex world of human mind” (qtd. in R.S. Singh. 11-22).

The waning of British Imperialism and the growing social, historical, political and cultural awareness among the people brought about radical changes in Indian society. Consequently, Indian novel in English acquired a new dimension after independence as the creative writers attempted to look at their past and their culture with a different perspective. With this new awareness, the novelists began to explore and interpret the Indian sensibility by choosing the contemporary social, political and cultural issues. They began to view and understand the relationship between man and his surroundings in new perspective. They shifted their focus from politics to socially downtrodden, economically exploited, and politically subjugated classes. Thus, the post-independence Indian English novel was free of rabidly nationalistic overtones, and concerned itself with the problems
of the inner self. The novelists of the period try to give expression to the Indian experience of the modern predicaments. The writings of this period are largely based on realistic ideology and sociological and Marxist theoretical perspectives. One can notice that from 1947 to 1970s, the writers do away with all the inhibitions and constraints that the earlier novelists suffered from. They assumed the role of reformists and critics through of their writings. Consequently, the Indian English novel became complex and thematically richer. However, it was only in the 1960s that the sensibility of the Indian writer in English crystallized into what could be called a ‘post-independence sensibility’, marked by an expression of a private and unique voice. The fiction of this period has turned introspective and the individual’s quest for a personal meaning in life has become a theme of urgent interest for the Indian English novelists.

The post-independence period also witnessed the arrival of Muslim writers like, Ahmed Ali, Amir Ali, and K.A. Abbas. Ahmed Ali, the first Muslim novelist in English, was also the ‘vanguard’ of Indian literary movement. He was an active member of All-India Progressive Writer’s Movement, was born in India and settled in Pakistan after the partition. His Twilight in Delhi (1940) gives a vivid picture of the disintegration of Muslim families and the Muslim culture due to the political transition of the time. Amir Ali’s Conflict (1947) portrays the political upheavals as well as the sentiments of the Muslim family caught in the agitation of Quit India movement in 1942. Shankar, the protagonist of the novel, a village boy goes to Bombay for his studies but is drawn to the freedom movement started by Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders. As he gets influenced by the ideals of the leaders, Shankar gives up his studies to join the freedom movement. Ocean of Night (1964) is another novel by Ahmed Ali. K.A. Abbas is one of the
prominent writers of the period and a multi-faceted personality- a novelist, filmmaker, journalist, short storywriter and a scriptwriter. His *Tomorrow is Ours: A Novel of the India of Today* (1943) and *Inquilab: A Novel of the Indian Revolution* (1955) are the representative novels in the history of Indian novel in English. The writers of this period tried to depict the Indian socio-political and cultural life in an unbiased way and attempted to bring the Hindu-Muslim unity through their writings. The novelists who wrote till the 1940s looked for their traditional Western models and were largely influenced by their British counterparts for their themes, plot, techniques, characters and stylistic devices.

The writers of the 1950s and the 1970s wrote novels that probed an individual’s identity from the psychological point of view. The novelists explored the inner anxieties of characters that were rooted in the family, religion and metaphysics. In this context, K.S. Ramamurti’s comment is worth considering:

The novel writing in English by Indians as one continuous spectrum from 1874 to the present day as the manifestation of creative impulse which has derived its sustenance from two distinct traditions of storytelling which have their roots in two distinct cultures. The Indian writer of fiction in English as an inheritor of these two traditions and values- one by birth and another by his exposure to the influence of the West through several channels- has always been at the cross roads, burdened with problems of reconciliation in respect of values and attitudes and of experimentation in respect of form and medium (20).
The post-independence Indian novelists produced epoch-making pieces in Indian English novels. The novels become less ideal and more realistic, were mainly concerned with the aspects of society, and were preoccupied with the inner landscape of the human psyche. The conflict between tradition and modernity, between East and West are some of the significant themes. Meenakshi Mukherjee makes an interesting observation in this connection.

The themes handled by the older generation of novelists in English had for a long time remained predictably pan-Indian: the national movement, partition of the country, the clash between tradition and modernity, faith and rationality or similar timeworn clichés of east-west confrontation, disintegration of joint family, exploitation of women, etc. (2000: 173).

Kamala Markandeya (1924-2004) is the first postcolonial woman novelist who occupies a prominent place in Indian English literature. Like Anand, she too is sympathetic towards the poor and the downtrodden and believed that poverty is the root cause of all social evils and exploitation. With ten novels to her credit, Kamala Markandeya draws the readers’ attention about her penchant for characterization, with a remarkable range of characters. Nectar in a Sieve (1954) her first novel portrays the tragic plight of a peasant woman. It also depicts how people faced poverty, hunger and communal disturbances. At the same time, the novel criticises the way Industrialization and urbanization for destroying the rural life. Her Some Inner Fury (1955) a successfully deals with the horrors of war. A Silence of Desire (1983) is about the spiritual realities of life. Possession (1963) grapples with East-West encounter and A Hand full of Rice (1966)
is about the urban poor. *The Golden Honeycomb* (1997) a less successful novel, deals with the life of a prince. The *Coffer Dam* (1969) and *Pleasure City* (1982) deals with neo-colonialism. Her strength lies in her delineation of human relationship. Her last novel, *Nowhere Man* (1972) talks of racial prejudice that Indian migrants confront in England. As a writer, she has a clear perception of rural as well as urban life and culture. Her contribution to the genre of Indian English novels is noteworthy.

Babhani Bhattacharya (1906-1988) a prolific writer won the Central Sahitya Academy Award for his novel, *Shadow from Ladakh* (1967). In all his novels, Bhattacharya presents a realistic picture of India and its teeming millions struggling for life and substance. He too like Anand, believed in social upliftment of the poor and downtrodden. His novels are, *So Many Hungers* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954), and *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960). His representative work, *So many Hungers* was written against the background of the great famine that devastated Bengal. Millions of people lost their lives due to famine. The hunger in the novel is not the hunger for food but the hunger for bloodshed, power, money, fame, sex, wealth that corresponds directly to the moral degradation of mankind. Bhattacharya’s chief concern is to focus on the major social, political and historical changes that were taking place during partition. Besides, his novels have been translated into twenty-six languages including fourteen European languages.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (1927-2013) is another representative women writer of free-India. Born of Polish parents in Germany then migrated to England, she took Master’s degree in English married to an Indian Architect and stayed in India for some
time. Her novels are *To Whom She Will* (1955), *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *Esmond in India* (1958), *The Householder* (1960), *A Backward Place* (1965) and *Heat and Dust* (1975). As a keen observer, Jhabvala’s significant themes of her novels are- East-West encounter, tradition and modernity, and clash of cultures. She portrays the complex human relationship against the backdrop of India’s political discontentment of the people which adds a new dimension to her literary excellence.

Attia Hosain (1913-1998) the first Muslim woman novelist has only one novel to her credit namely *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) which depicts the tragic story of a woman, and focuses on the effects of the partition on the Muslim community in India. Her position in Indian literature becomes significant because she portrays the trauma of partition and the problems that Muslim community faced in India.

Nayanatara Shagal (1927-2013) occupies a prominent place among Indian English novelists. Shagal educated in the West, and came back to India in 1947. Being the niece of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, and the daughter of Vijayalakshmi Pandit, she was a witness to the social, historical, political and cultural changes of the times. Her literary world was dominated by the upper crust of the society, which includes bureaucrats, politicians, businessmen, women of higher-class society etc. Her works concentrate on the socio-political situations of the times such as modern woman’s search for sexual freedom and self-realization, western educated elites and their pettiness, power politics, its hypocrisy, shallow values and so on. Her first novel, *A Time to be Happy* (1958) articulates the problems of identity faced by English-educated elite in India. Her next novel, *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) is about partition of Punjab on linguistic lines in 1965. *Rich Like Us* (1985) is set against the background of Emergency of 1975, and it
won her Sinclair and Central Sahitya Academy Award. The novel also discusses the *Sati* system as an entrapment for women in conventional marriages. *A situation in New Delhi* (1977) deals with the death of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Naxalite movement and student unrest. Her novels clearly document the decline of social and cultural values among Government servants and common people at large in post-independence India. Her other two novels, *Plans for Departure* (1986) and *Mistaken Identity* (1988) deal with the British Raj and Independence movement.

Anita Desai (1937- ) occupies a distinguished place among the Indian Women writers in English. The fictional world of Anita Desai is quite different from that of other women writers- Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Shagal and Kamala Markandeya. Desai is often compared to Virginia Woolf. Born to a German mother and Bengali father, her novels probe deep into the psychology of the characters. Most of the female characters of her novels are lonely, sensitive, intensely emotional, and feel misfits within their world. Trapped in a repressive culture or an insular family, the women characters struggle to assert their identity against subjugation, voicelessness and patriarchy. Many of her protagonists suffer from incompatibility, breakdown of relationships, and traumatic experiences of married life. The tone of her novels is highly pessimistic.

Anita Desai began her writing career with *Cry the Peacock* (1963). And her other well known novels are *In Custody* (1965), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go this Summer* (1975), *Clear Light of the Day* (1980) and *Zig Zag Way* (2003). *Cry the Peacock* is the story of Maya, the protagonist, obsessed with death and haunted by an astrological prediction that her marriage is going to end within four years, with the death of either wife or husband. Her second novel, *Voices in the City*
(1965) is again a tale of alienated individuals. *Bye -Bye Blackbird* (1971) is about East-West encounter and the Indian emigrants in Britain. *Where Shall We go this Summer* (1975) is the story of Sita, a neglected and desperate middle-aged woman who is pregnant for the fifth time. The novel depicts the cruelty and callousness of urban life which makes her run away from Bombay to a small rustic island of her father, Manori which has her childhood associations. On the other hand, *The Fire in the Mountain* (1977) deals with the confrontation of two alienated people, grandmother and granddaughter. While *Clear Light of the Day* (1980) is about nostalgia and childhood trauma. Anita Desai’s novels are largely psychological case histories of protagonists who are caught in a trap of certain societal values and their own limitations that prevent them from coming to terms with their lives.

Manohar Malgonkar (1913-2013) was educated in Bombay University, served as an officer in the Maratha Light Infantry and is a man of sophisticated tastes. He has five novels to his credit and also written non-fiction including a biography and history. Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) deals with India’s freedom struggle and Partition. *A Bend in the Ganges* is considered an epic of the Gandhian era and explores the various aspects of political, social and moral life of Indian people.

Malgonkar’s *Distant Drum* (1960) attempts to analyze the mind of the Indian army during the crucial period in its history- political independence and the partition of 1947. *Combat of Shadows* (1962) is about North-Eastern Assam tea plantation and presents how the two shadows, ‘desire’ and ‘aversion’ are always active to take possession of the soul of human beings. His much acclaimed novel, *The Princes* (1963)
attempts to trace the history and the plight of the Indian Princes during the colonial period and depicts how the princes fought a losing battle against the upsurge of the people. *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) narrates how countless homes have been uprooted and millions of people are driven from India to Pakistan, during partition. *The Devil's Wind: Nana Saheb's Story* (1972) deals with once again his favourite theme, history, based on incidents of 1857. Manohar Malgonkar tells the story of Dhondu Pant Nana Saheb, the heir of the last Peshwa of the Maratha Confederacy, who played a leading role in the Indian Mutiny of 1857. It provides a sympathetic portrait of a man whom the British portrayed as a great villain. The book is written as a biography in which Nana Saheb describes his life in his own words.


Kushwant Singh began his literary career with his seminal novel; *Train to Pakistan* published under two titles *Train to Pakistan* in India and *Mano Mazra* in US. It is a pathetic story written in the backdrop of India-Pakistan partition in 1947, one of the most moving events and the great catastrophe in contemporary Indian history. It tells the
story of a sleepy village, Mano Majra in Punjab and its enforced awakening to the partition of India and Pakistan.

Singh’s next novel, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) is another important novel that deals with the Punjabi joint family set against the freedom movement of 1942-43. It presents the colonial encounter between the Indians and British Government. His third novel, *Delhi: A Novel* (1989) is written with a broad historical background in an informal and aggressive style, depicts the varied history of India’s capital city from 1265 to the anti-Sikh riots of 1985. His last novel, *The Company of Women* (1996) explores the sexual misadventures of the protagonist, Mohan Kumar, a successful businessman who is separated from his nagging and ill-tempered rich wife. His broken married life leads him to fornication and ends up with AIDS. Khushwant Singh is India’s most widely read author, has produced in his works an uninhibited, erotic and endlessly entertaining celebration of love, sex and passion.

higher studies and falls in love with an American unhappy married woman. When he discovers that he has terminal cancer, he realizes that he can no longer survive, comes to India in anticipation of death. His musings on the deathbed constitute a commentary on two cultures, the East and the West.

Rama Mehta (1923-1978) was born in Nainital was the first woman to be appointed to India’s Foreign Service. She became a top sociologist; lecturer and novelist honoured with Central Sahitya Akademi Award in 1979 for her debut novel *Inside the Haveli* (1977). The novel deals with the clash between tradition and modernity; it can be read as an authentic sociological study. The protagonist, Geeta, an educated, vivacious Bombay girl, marries into a conservative family and abruptly finds herself living in *purdah* in her husband's ancestral *haveli* in Udaipur. The haveli stands for tradition, strength, security and it also means isolation and stagnation. The protagonist manages to carve out an identity for herself in the new and ostensibly stifling environment she has been thrown into.

Arun Joshi (1939-93) is one of the gifted Indian novelists in English, who contributed five significant novels to the corpus of novels in English. Born in India and educated in India and United States, Joshi was a management consultant by profession had a brilliant academic career and headed a Research Institute in New Delhi. His premature demise in 1993 cut short his promising literary career. Quest for identity, alienation, futility and hollowness are the major and recurring themes of Joshi’s novels. The fictional world of Arun Joshi seems to offer insights into the human predicament in the contemporary materialistic society. One can find the influence of Camus, Jean Paul

The protagonist of *The Foreigner*, Sindi Oberoi, alias Surrrinder Oberoi is a born foreigner, alienated from all humanity in the materialistic world in which he lives. He is the only son of an Indian father and an English mother, born in Kenya. He becomes an orphan at an early age, and grows without family ties and without a country. Realizing the futility of life, he develops a philosophy of detachment. He loves passionately an American girl, June Blyth. As he is afraid to marry her ends the relationship. Later he is deeply involves with Kathy, an English housewife, who hungers for adulterous love. She too leaves him to go back to her husband. Though he comes back to India, again he has to face alienation due to his inability to cope with the society, and remains a ‘foreigner.’

Joshi’s *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, has an exciting, wise, and beautifully constructed plot. It is the story of Bimal Biswas, known as Billy, is the son of a Supreme Court judge, educated in New York. On his return to India, owing to his strange nature he feels alienated, and forbids his comfortable life in Delhi with his wife and friends. He forsakes meaningless existence in ‘civilized world’ because he feels chocked by the artificiality of the life modern society and rejects the superficiality, hollowness of the sophistication of the people around him. *The Last Labyrinth* (1981) portrays the tragic story of Som Bhaskar a married man with two kids, meets a mysterious woman, Anuradha in Benaras with Aftab, her lover, an immoral businessman. Som wants to posses both, the woman and Aftab’s business, but partly succeeds in this misadventure
and meets his end. The novel is a paradigm of the diseased world where discontent, lack of humanity, lack of faith, lack of Grace dominates the human life caught in the labyrinth.

*The Apprentice* (1974) offers a searing account of Rathan Rathore, the protagonist a young government servant’s descent into careerism and corruption. The novel is a testimony of moral degeneration that took place in Indian socio-political life after Independence. Its relevance is felt even today as it holds the mirror to the present day socio-economic and political scenario. Rathan Rathore is both the hero as well as the anti-hero of the novel.

Gita Mehta (1943- ) is born in Delhi into a renowned Oriya family of freedom fighters. She is the daughter of Biju Patnaik, who actively participated in the freedom struggle and who later become the Chief Minister in post-independent Odisha. Gita Mehta, has only three novels to her credit. *Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East* (1979) which is a satire on Westerners’ invasion of mystic India in 1960s and 70s. Her second novel *Raj* (1989) deals with the historical, political and cultural complexities of India under the British Raj and in the Princely states. In her first two novels, Gita Mehta has focused on the interaction between India and the Western world. But, in *A River Sutra* (1993) she changes her focus and attempts to explore the diversities within Indian society.

Due to the upsurge of the nationalistic feelings, the content of the works of Indian writers in English underwent a drastic change. The writers started writing with different dimensions, probing the inner psyche of the characters. Gender discrimination, the constructed norms of patriarchy, male hegemony, familial problems, and the burdens of traditions imposed upon them so on and so forth are looked from different perspectives. Thus, the focus of the Indian novelist of the period shifted from the public sphere to the private domain. The writers grapple with the individual’s quest for the self and identity, and its varied and complex forms along with the personal problems. Incidentally, the women novelists of the period gave a fresh look to the Indian English Novels. With their feminine sensibility, they opened up new vistas of human nature, women’s psyche, their status in the phallocentric society, East-West encounter, and man-woman relationship.
In this particular phase of Indian English novels, it is quite clear that the post-independence Indian English novelists wrote significant novels that reveal the spirit of the time in a matter of fact manner. The Indian society was under the transition period, which was moving from the old order giving way to the new and created a cultural crisis due to the influence of the Western culture. Meenakshi Mukherjee puts it: “the impact of the West has created certain cultural problems and crises in values in all parts of India, though not at all levels of society, and as such is a theme of all-India significance” (1971:27). The traumatic experiences such as partition, the disintegration of the old social, cultural, moral and ethical values, the instability of the new ones, the growing interest in modernism, progressivism, national awakening, fascination for Gandhi and his ideologies, the rise of humanism, the change of fictional theme and technique, style and language and the evolution of various fictional genres are some of the characteristics of post-independence novels.

**The Fourth Phase: (1980 - 2009).**

The 1980s mark a vital period in the history of Indian English novels. The novels of this period employed new approaches, thematic variations, and varieties in taste, perceptions and styles. The literary scene is renewed, quickened by the opening up of new possibilities to give expression to a changing social, political, cultural, economic and psychological landscape. The novels of 1980s also discussed issues such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, human rights and other issues. Thus, the decade 1980 occupies a significant place in the history of the Indian English novel.
The fourth phase of Indian novels in English begins with Salman Rushdie (1947-) who shot into limelight by winning the prestigious Man Booker Prize for his second novel, *Midnight’s Children* (1981). The novel attained unprecedented international recognition and readership. This seminal novel swiftly achieved canonical status, which put the Indian novel firmly on the global map and paved the way for a generation of novelists to follow. He wrote extensively on Indian (also about Pakistan) historical, political, cultural and religious upheavals of his time. He consciously broke away from the realistic tradition of novel writing, which is still popular in India. Rushdie’s writings undoubtedly inspired talented young writers of India, who used English language in a playful, creative and polyphonic manner, mixing it up with other Indian languages. This in fact exposed Indian Writing in English to the Western readers and drew the attention of the Western publishing world. The voluminous *Midnight’s Children* covers six decades, and looks at India through the eyes of a young man born at the stroke of the hour of Indian Independence. The title *Midnight’s Children* refers to the children born at the midnight, India’s “tryst with destiny” on 15 August 1947, portrays the life and experiences of three generations of the Sinai Family, living in Srinagar, Amritsar, Agra, Bombay and Karachi.

Rushdie’s first novel *Grimus* (1979) was not well received by the critics and the readers. His next novel *Shame* (1983) is about Pakistan and focuses on the ruling elites, especially the politicians, their nepotism, corruption, greed, violence and especially the utter shamelessness of the politicians. Rushdie’s most controversial novel *Satanic Verses* (1989) created many problems for him. It is about his attitude towards Islam, matters of faith and doubt. In the novel, Rushdie questions the conflict between religious faith and

Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* not only ushered a new era in Indian writing in English. He inspired a new generation of young and talented writers like Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Rukun Advani, Mukul Keshavan, Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga, Githa Hariharan, Jaishree Misra, Navtez Sarna to name a few. He is also instrumental in bringing many publishing houses like Ravi Dayal, Rupa Paperbacks, Penguin India and others. These publishers provided marketing network by selling books to the middleclass readership at affordable price. No doubt, the 1980s mark a golden age in the history of Indian novel in English in terms of both literary output and the multiplicity of themes explored and new techniques introduced. The metafictional works of the post-Rushdian generation deconstructed or dismantled the well-established norms of history, family, tradition and patriarchy for their ideological underpinnings.

At the same time, the galaxy of women novelists appeared on the Indian fictional arena. Owing to their entry, the obsession with the mystification and mythification of sex and the dogmas of the phallocentric society and other social constructs gradually disappeared. The sexual revolution and interpersonal relationships became the main focus of the Indian women novelists like, Shoba De, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Das, Manju Kapoor, Githa Metha, Jaishree Misra, Kiran Desai, Arundati Rao, Githa Hariharan and
other expressed boldly about sex, extra-marital relationships, incest, lesbianism, living together kind of relationships, divorce and so on as the major themes in their novels which mainly concerns women.

Shobha De (1947- ) is one of the most controversial women writers in Indian English writing today. De is a multifaceted writer, a columnist, activist, editor of magazines and she represents the modern urban cosmopolitan India. De began her career as a model, and then she switched over to the career in journalism in 1970. Simultaneously she was the editor for reputed magazines- *Stardust, Society,* and *Celebrity.* *Stardust* is an exclusive film magazine even today.


Manju Kapur (1948- ) lives in Delhi, teaches English literature at Miranda College, Delhi. Her novels depict the social and psychological upheavals in the lives of women protagonists, come from traditional business community of Punjab in particular and urban middle class in general. With four novels to her credit *Difficult Daughters*
Manju Kapoor’s women characters suffer under the phallocentric society. Apart from familial issues, she also penetrates into larger issues like partition, communal violence, Ayodhya issue etc. Her debut novel *Difficult Daughters* won her the prestigious Commonwealth Prize. It is written against the backdrop of partition of India, tells the tragic story of a young woman, Virmati, her love affair with a married professor, narrated by her only daughter, Ida, in the flashback. Her second novel *A Married Woman* depicts the story of an urban elites’ life in the background of communal violence and sexual intimacy. *Home* explores the conflicting polarities of tradition and modern, poverty and prosperity, men and women and presents the picture of a joint family system. Her recent novel, *The Immigrant* (2008) is her recent novel which probes the complex and multiple relationships that affect its protagonists, Nina and Ananda. As the title indicates, the individuals find themselves in the process of naturalizing their migrating experiences in a world of increasing global interconnectedness. Indeed, Nina and Ananda's experiences of the two Indian-born citizens permanently moving (albeit in different times) to another Western country are shaped by at least two major institutional and cultural apparatuses: India and Canada.

Commonwealth Writers' Prize for the best debut novel. The plot revolves around three women—Devi, the central character, Sita, her mother and Mayamma, the caretaker and the cook. The novel interrogates the power of myths, both normative and subversive which shapes the destinies of the three women. *The Ghost of Vasu Master* is a moving tale of a small-town retired schoolteacher known as Vasu Master. Away from the familiar restrained world of school, principal and classroom, he begins to re-live incidents from the past and discovers in his own halting and in an imaginative way of teaching. Gita Hariharan creates a fantastic world by using fantasy, fable and a host of beautifully imagined characters with a gentle, humane and philosophic voice of Vasu Master. *When Dreams Travel* (1999) Githa Hariharan returns to the issue of gender and the power of storytelling. *Fugitive Histories* deals with the burning issues of India—the communal violence that took place in 2002 at Godhra in Gujarat and contemporary Indian communal politics. *In Times of Siege* (2003) deals with Hindu fanaticism, this is gaining unprecedented foothold in academia. The protagonist, Shiv Murthy, is a Professor of History, teaches at Delhi Open University. His life gets complicated when religious extremists challenge one of his lessons on the ‘Poet-Saint’, Basava the twelfth century social reformer. The department responds by giving Shiv Murthy an opportunity to make apology publically. However, Meena, a student activist does not allow Shiv to apologize and influences him to take a stance against the religious fundamentalists.

Vikram Seth (1952- ) is an accomplished novelist and a poet. His outstanding achievement as a poet remains largely and unfairly neglected. His wealthy family background, his education at reputed institutions and his travels across the globe have moulded him to be a citizen of the world. Seth is the author of important novels like, *The
Golden Gate (1986), A Suitable Boy (1994) and Two Lives (2008). Seth’s A Suitable Boy centers round Mrs. Rupa Mehra's efforts to arrange the marriage of her younger daughter, Lata with a ‘suitable boy’. It is a love story, set against the background of newly independent India, in the fictional town of Brahmpur. Lata is a nineteen-year-old college girl, vulnerable, yet determined to have her own way and not to be influenced by her strong mother and opinionated brother, Arun. Her story revolves around the choice she is forced to make among her suitors, Kabir, Haresh and Amit. The story also covers the various issues faced by post-independent India, including Hindu-Muslim strife, abolition of the Zamindari System, Land Reforms, and empowerment of Muslim women and so on. Seth’s another significant double biographical novel Two Lives (2008) based on the life of Seth’s maternal uncle, Shanthi Behari Seth and his German wife, Henny, and Seth’s stay with them in his early days in Germany. Apart from their love story, the novel explores the pathetic and heart rending holocaust under the Nazi rule under Hitler.

Shashi Tharoor (1956– ) a multifaceted personality, was born in London and got educated in Bombay, Calcutta, and USA. He did his graduation in History at St, Stephen’s College, Delhi, got Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He was a UN diplomat in Geneva, political commentator, politician, former Union Cabinet Minister, novelist and a writer. His novel, The Great Indian Novel (1989) is a political satire, which interprets the Mahabharatha as modern India through a fictional recasting of events, episodes and characters. Like Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children, The Great Indian Novel fuses history, myth, fiction, fantasy, all in one to deal with almost the same period of history of India. Show Business (1992) is also a satire of the Bombay film industry that was subsequently adapted into the motion picture
“Bollywood”. His next novel Riot (2000) explores the subtleties of power politics in contemporary India in the backdrop of demolition of the sixteenth century mosque, Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992. It also takes up the issue of the growing Hindu militancy and the communal tension between the major ethnic groups, the Hindus and the Muslims in India. It deals with the East-West cultural clash, and as a multilayered narrative, that sheds light on many contemporary issues like history, politics, economy, religious fundamentalism and culture of India.

Kiran Nagarkar (1949- ) is quite notable among Indian bi-lingual writers. His first novel Saat Sakkam Trechalis (1974) (later published in English as Seven Sixes Are Forty Three) is considered one of the landmark novels in Marathi Literature. His significant novel, Ravan and Eddie (1995) is set against the Bombay chawl and depicts the two boys, Ravan and Eddie whose relationship symbolizes the tension and division of India. His third novel Cuckold (1997) is on mystic Bhoj Raj, Meerabai’s husband; which won him the Central Sahitya Academy Award. It has been translated into a number of European languages and has become one of the most popular Indian novels. His next novel, God's Little Soldier (2006) is a tale of a liberal Muslim boy's tryst with religious orthodoxy. The Extras, (2012) is a sequel to Ravan and Eddie that traces the adult lives of Ravan and Eddie as The Extras in Bollywood. Kiran Nagarkar was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, described as highest tribute Germany can pay to an individual.

Mukul Keshavan (1957- ) another prominent writer of Indian English literature, teaches History at Jamia Millia University in Delhi. His Looking through Glass (1995) is
an exceptional novel in the handling of history and historiography and was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize. It is based on history and an immensely entertaining novel set in the troubled 1940s - the era of India's independence and partition. Keshavan is an academic historian and a novelist and thus provides an example of historiography, which breaks the chronological method of recording and arranging events in a sequence, instead it uncovers the embeddedness of the past within the present. In a way, it provides his readers a multiple versions of the same events. In 1940s, when the freedom movement was at its peak, an unnamed protagonist, narrator cum photographer in contemporary India, en-route to Benaras to immerse his deceased grandmother's ashes into the Ganges. While taking the photo of picturesque shot he accidentally falls into the river. He finds himself back in Delhi in 1942, where he encounters the same grandmother as a social worker. He is taken by a Muslim family joins a doomed anti-British rebellion, is wounded and convalesces in a wrestling academy. There he meets Gyanendra, a lecherous filmmaker who is shooting a rendition of the Kama Sutra. Rescuing Parwana, an unwed pregnant actress, from Gyanendra's clutches, the narrator flees with her towards Delhi. His further adventures span the tumultuous years through India's independence in 1947, when Hindu-Muslim riots took millions of lives and after which, spurred by the haste of Hindu and Muslim leaders alike. Meanwhile, Parwana pursues a lesbian crush on a politician's daughter- just one unconventional element among many in this unusual first novel that blends vivid realism, fantasy, sexual comedy and political commentary.

Upamanyu Chatterjee (1959- ) is one of the talented Indian writers of the contemporary generation. After studying English literature at Delhi University, he joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1983. In 1990, he was appointed as the Director
Upamanyu Chatterjee’s debut novel *English, August: An Indian story* (1988) won him the Central Sahitya Academy Award. The novel portrays how Indian culture is much affected by American culture, and views the Indian bureaucracy in a witty and satirical way. It is an intelligent and entertaining novel, especially for anyone who is curious about modern India. The novel portrays Agastya Sen, a young westernized Indian civil servant whose imagination is dominated by women, literature and soft drugs. This vivid account of ‘real India’ by the young officer posted to the small provincial town of Madna is ‘a funny, wryly observed account of Agastya Sen's year in the sticks’. On the other hand, in *The Last Burden* (1993) Upamanyu Chatterjee covers three generations of Indian middle class household and the cultural clash at the end of the twentieth century. While *The Mammaries of Welfare State* (2000) is a sequel to *English, August*. His fourth novel, *Weight Loss* (2006) is a dark comedy that explores socio-economic and sexual degradation in India, obesity and dieting. His most recent work is *Way to Go* (2010) a sequel to *The Last Burden*.

encapsulates the colonial history of the East. Ghosh's latest work of fiction is *River of Smoke* (2011) is the second volume of *The Ibis* trilogy. He has recently published the last of his trilogy *Flood of Fire* (2015) as well.

Ghosh deliberately reconstructs history to explore the psychological dilemmas experienced by individuals whose quest for identity is the predominant theme in all his novels. His novels speak on subaltern themes and give voice to the silenced humanity in the past. Ghosh’s novels go beyond political and national boundaries and across generations in time. In introducing issues like imperialism and multiculturalism, which are central to the postcolonial debates with sharp insights, Ghosh probes deeply the historical events that were sidelined/overlooked in government/official records and upholds the related issues.

Jaishree Misra (1961- ) is born in Kerala, educated in Delhi, lived in England for many years she now lives in New Delhi. A Misra began her literary career with a semi-autobiographical novel, *Ancient Promises* (2000), which tells about Janaki, the protagonist, her unsuccessful arranged marriage and a divorce. As per the wishes of her parents, she marries Suresh, a businessman. A daughter, born with a severe learning disability, led her to England to study about such children. Janaki leaves for England again, but this time to do a post-graduate diploma at the Institute of Education in London. After divorce and the dream-remarriage to her first love Arjun, she moves back to England in order to begin a new life. It is a moving story of a woman's painful journey towards self-discovery, self-identity and against the institution of marriage.
Jaishree Misra’s subsequent novels *Accidents Like Love and Marriage*, *Afterwards* and *The Little Book of Romance* and others failed to draw the attention of the readers and critics as well, except her much acclaimed *Rani* (2007). It is a historical novel based on the life of Jhansirani Lakshmibai, portrays the personal as well as public life of Lakshmibai, an inspiring historical personality who fought bravely against the British in 1857 war. *Rani* was banned soon after its publication by the Uttar Pradesh government, alleging that Lakshmibai’s character was misrepresented.

Vikram Chandra’s (1961-) debut novel *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995) is startlingly innovative and vibrant, and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Vikram Chandra presents a daring medley of fiction, mythology, folklore, history and contemporaneity. Reincarnation and moral dilemmas are probed in Chandra’s novel. A killed monkey becomes the subject for the theme of transmigration in the novel. Several cultures and individuals are drawn together in a complex story of fate and intrigue in this plot, which is filled with twists, turns and transitions.

Amit Chaudhuri (1962-) the author of five highly acclaimed novels. He was born in Calcutta and grew up in Mumbai, graduated from London, and now lives in Culcutta. His novels are *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991), *Afternoon Raag* (1993), *Freedom Song* (1998) and *A New World* (2000). His latest novel is *The Immortals* (2010). Amit Chaudhuri is also a poet, an acclaimed musician, a highly regarded critic and has edited *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* for Penguin Books. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and Professor of Contemporary Literature at the University of
East Anglia. In 2012, he was awarded the Infosys Prize for outstanding contribution to the humanities in literary studies.

Amit Chaudhuri’s genius lies in his style of writing prose. His debut novel, *A Strange and Sublime Address* tells the story of Bombay-bred Sandeep who aspires to be an English writer, spends his school holidays with his poorer and less educated cousins in Calcutta. In that house, and in Chaudhuri’s nostalgic gaze, routine life is elevated to a ritual. On the other hand, *Afternoon Raag* is an intensely moving novel, acclaimed as a ‘felicitous prose poem’. A young Bengali man who is studying at Oxford University is caught in a complicated love triangle. His loneliness and melancholy sharpens his memories of home, which come back to haunt him in vivid detail. *A New World* which won him Central Sahitya Academy award is a story of Jayojit Chatterjee, a professor of Economics in the American Midwest. A year after his divorce, Jayojit returns to Calcutta with his young son, Bonny, to spend the summer holidays with his parents. Jayojit is no more accustomed to spend time alone with Bonny who lives with his mother in California. *A New World* provides a peep into India from an immigrant’s perspective.

Arundhati Roy (1962- ) is a trained Architect from Kerala, and political activist who won the Man Booker Prize for her debut novel *The God of Small Things* (1996) in 1998. She candidly explores the plight of subaltern women subjected to oppression and exploitation in the phallocentric South Indian society. Roy’s novel focuses on issues related to social justice and economic inequality. The plot of the novel is set in Kerala during the 1960s. The story is about the twins Estha and Rahel, and the dreadful consequences of the accidental death-by-drowning of a visiting English cousin. In a delightful and lyrical language, the novel portrays the vibrant life of a small South Indian
town. It exposes the hypocrisy of the adult lives from the perspective of children. It also looks at the Indian Caste system from a non-Hindu perspective. The book is lauded for its creative use of language and Salman Rushdie describes it as being ‘full of ambition and sparkle’. Roy as an activist and writer has articulated her concern on many issues like displacement of people due to construction of a dam proposed over Narmada River (Narmada Bachao Andolan) and the repercussions of going nuclear.

Pankaj Mishra (1969- ) began to contribute literary essays and reviews to *The Indian Review of Books, The India Magazine,* and the newspaper *The Pioneer.* His novel *The Romantics* (2000) is an ironic tale of people longing for fulfillment in cultures other than their own. It was published in eleven European languages and won the *Los Angeles Times Art Seidenbaum award* for his debut novel. His book *An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World* (2004) is a fusion of memoir, history, and philosophy while attempting to explore Buddha’s relevance to contemporary times. *Temptations of the West: How to be Modern in India, Pakistan and Beyond* (2006), describes Mishra's travels through Kashmir, Bollywood, Afghanistan, Tibet, Nepal, and other parts of South and Central Asia. Mishra’s recent work *From the Ruins of Empire* (2012) examines the question of how to find a place of dignity for oneself in this world created by the West, in which the West and its allies in the non-West had reserved the best positions for themselves.

Kiran Desai (1971- ) the daughter of the renowned writer, Anita Desai, is an acclaimed contemporary novelist. Her debut novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) deals with the human foibles and eccentricities. It is her second novel *The
*Inheritance of Loss* (2006) that won the Man Booker Prize in 2006 which shot her into instant fame. The novel is an astute commentary on modern man’s problems like, dilemmas, immigrants’ problem, insecurity, loneliness, sense of loss, passive hate, misunderstanding, discontents and lust for material life and other issues portrayed effectively.

Basharath Peer (1977- ) studied Political Science at Aligarh Muslim University and Journalism at Columbia University, worked as a reporter at *Rediff* and *Tehelka*, currently stays in New York. Peer a young journalist in his debut novel, *Curfewed Night* (2008) gives the firsthand account of India’s troubled region, Kashmir Valley. The novel is a blend of memoir and reportage and recounts his youth in the troubled Valley during 1980s and 90s. It explores the hopes, aspirations and frustrations of the Kashmiri Muslims especially, the youth. Initially an organization called, JKLF led a movement for an independent Kashmir, declaring that Kashmir is neither a part of India nor Pakistan. Majority of JKLF members were from middle class or peasant class who were misled by Pakistan ISI agents, and trained them to create trouble in India. Peer tells the readers deeply touching stories of the suffering mothers who lost their sons reported missing or killed on suspicion of being militants. It also depicts candidly the wily politicians repeating their lies about war and peace to the Medias, the innocent crowd, locked shops, angry soldiers, boys with stones, military bunkers, curfewed nights, etc.

Aravinda Adiga’s (1976) debut novel *The White Tiger* (2008) won him the Man Booker Prize for the same year and is a penetrating piece of social commentary attuned to the inequalities that prevailed in India despite its economic prosperity. The novel
provides darkly humorous perspectives of India’s class struggle in a globalized world as
told through a retrospective narration from by Balram Halwai, the protagonist. *The White
Tiger* is a rag-to-riches story of Balram Halwai, son of a rickshaw puller, who comes
from the ‘Darkness’ of rural India, Lakshmangarh, Dhanbad District, Bihar. The
message that Adiga intends to give through his protagonist is, ‘poverty creates monsters
and Balram himself is such a monster’.

Navtez Sarna (1948- ) is an IFS Officer from Punjab Cadre by profession. His
novel based on history, *The Exile* (2008) deals with the tragic history of Punjab’s last
king, Duleep Singh, son (one of his five wives) of Raja Ranajit Singh, the Lion of Punjab.
*The Exile* breaks the stereotyped image of Kings and gives the hard realities of the
conditions of the princes during the British rule of India. The novel also depicts how the
British annexe the kingdom of Punjab and erase the kings completely from the public
memory.

Chetan Bhagat (1974- ) is an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT),
India’s foremost university for Engineering Sciences and Research. He arrived on the
Indian literary scene with a bang through his debut novel, *Five Point Someone* (--). His
other works are *One Night @ Call Centre* (2006), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *The
Story of My Marriage* (2009) and others. His novels are very popular as they capture the
vociferously rebellious tone of the present day Indian youth. Many of his novels have
been adapted for movies. Bhagat was also chosen by the *Times* magazine as one of the
100 Most Influential People in the world.
Conclusion:

The present chapter which begins with a careful documentation of the genesis of the Indian English novel, deals with all the representative works of the forerunners and pioneers.

From the above discussion, it is quite apparent that the Indian English novels evidently have acquired a significant place in the world literatures. It is now an established genre with more than one hundred and fifty years of history. Indian writing in English is primarily an integral part of the literatures of India since English is no longer the language of the British; but has become one of the naturalized Indian languages. In fact, English readership now is larger than ever before. Indian English novelists are today concentrating more and more on the socio-political realities of the times and their works are increasingly based on everyday reality. The contemporary writers are not blind to the facts of what is happening around them. They are sensitive in articulating them in their writings. This has widened their vision, sharpened their intellect and broadened their space. In a way, Indian writing in English has wide readership both in India and in abroad and gaining worldwide recognition through winning prestigious international literary awards like Man Booker Prize, Nobel Prize and so on.

The urge for social reform was of course, a significant aspect of the Indian English novelists. It therefore naturally became an important theme in some early Indian English novels. From the 1930s to late 1940s, the Indian English novelist was more concerned with national, political and social problems. Post independence novelists have dealt with various social, political, historical, cultural, economic, religious and
psychological issues. Their themes range from the portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi, freedom struggle, partition, exploitation, violence, the status of women, love, marriage, caste, class conflicts, region, religion, East-West encounter, alienation, identity crisis, psychological conflicts, terrorism, naxalism, materialism, spiritualism, philosophy, corporate world and so forth. The Indian writers in English have now acquired a new status in the National and in International scene and are considered seriously by the western writers. But the novelists writing after 1950’s onwards have shifted their focus to the individual’s quest for personal meaning, existential problems and social relationships. After 1980s, the novelists inspired by Salman Rushdie took up the relationship between national issues and the individual in a different way.

The contemporary Indian novels in English concentrate on issues like social insecurity, political instability, moral depravity, communal violence, religious intolerance, subaltern issues, feminine consciousness, ecological, the market forces, and global influence. Idealism and spiritualism have been replaced by materialism and consumerism. The liberalization, privatization and globalization have become the focus of discussion in both written and verbal expressions. These have become the pivotal issues of concern for the creative writers. No doubt, Indian English novel has become complex and thematically richer. The works of Rushdie, Kushwant Singh, Nayantara Shagal, Anitha Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Shashi Deshpande and others not only help in formulating a modern Indian consciousness, but alert one about the constructive changes in the Indian novel as a literary genre. The Indian English novel after 1980s ventures into new themes and experiments with new techniques and approaches to handle those themes. The writers simply experimented with the times
without prejudices or set notions. This encouraged them to focus on a vast and a comprehensive canvas and to invest their themes with epic dimensions.

The novels in this chapter have been discussed chronologically, basing on the year of publication. As it would help one to respond and register the changing phases of the genre of Indian novels in English. This survey of Indian English novels from 1864 to 2010 it is hoped would enable one to discern how the novelists have responded to the changing Indian socio-economic, political and cultural fabric from time to time.
Works Cited.


