CHAPTER ONE

THE PRESENT STATE OF HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

I

The Indian English novel has come a long way since the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife*, which has been recognized as the first full-length novel in English. A glance at the development of the tradition of this fiction since then should be in order before placing it in a proper historiographic perspective.

Rajmohan's Wife (1864) represents a tentative exercise in writing fiction in English, the first of its kind attempted by an Indian writer. It is a crudely structured tale, describing the pathetic plight of an Indian wife, confined within the narrow trappings of the social set-up of the age. In fact, many of the novels written between the late 19th century and the early 20th century reveal a zeal for social reform, which is not surprising, considering the fact that Indian society had just begun to manifest signs of an awakening sensibility and an introspective awareness of its own weaknesses, under the impact of Western culture at that time. Novels such as Shevantibai Nikambe's *Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895), R. C. Dutt's *The Lake of Palms: A Story of Indian Domestic Life* (1902), Lal Behari Day's *Govinda Samanta* or *The History of a Bengal Raiyat* (1874) Sirdar Joginder Singh's *Nasrin : A Indian medley* (1911) are further examples of the predilection for social concerns exhibited by Indian novelists in English during the foetal phase of the

development of this fiction. These novels are not of much artistic value since they are, at best, conscious imitations of Western models and at worst, poorly compiled sketches rather than serious attempts at narration.

The Indian English novel really came into its own during the nineteen twenties and thirties. It is interesting to note that, historically speaking, this period was also a period of much political turbulence, with the freedom movement gaining strength under the aegis of Mahatma Gandhi. The country was rising up against imperial repression with the growing frustration exhibiting itself in diverse ways.

It was during this period that the three great figures of Indian English fiction, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao arrived on the scene. They drew upon the resources of a politically and socially volatile situation in their own separate ways in their writings. Mulk Raj Anand's early novels, *Untouchable* (1939), *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1935) contain a strong element of the zeal for social reform, exhibited by the earlier novelists, combined with a rigourous passion for social justice, a deeply felt compassion for the under-priviledged and a tremendous faith in political instruments for bringing about an improvement in the condition. The influence of the political movement can be markedly seen in Venkataramani's *Murugan, the Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan the patriot* (1935), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), K.A.Abbas's *Tomorrow is ours : A Novel of the India of today* (1943). N. S. Phadke's *Leaves in the August Wind* (1947).

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is the most exquisite expression of a sensitive novelist's reaction to the magic of Gandhi, his overwhelming influence on the Indian sensibility. The novel narrates

the tale of the transformation of a small village set in a remote corner of South India, from being an obscure non-entity to becoming the centre of the Gandhian tornado, which swept the country at the peak of the freedom movement, leaving in its wake, a band of hardy survivors, given over to the life of non-violence and truth. None of the other political novels written at this time, reveals the same quality of the writer's artistry and excellence.

Of the three great luminaries of Indian English fiction, R.K. Narayan emerged as a distinctive novelist in his own right, his massive talent combining a lucid use of English, an observant eye for detail and a semi-amused tolerance of human situations. His first novel, *Swami and Friends* (1935) made an unobtrusive yet palpable effect as a modestly narrated saga of childhood. *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The English Teacher* (1945) and *The Dark Room* (1938) represent a series of attempts of a writer striving towards maturity and growth. It was with the publication of *The Financial Expert* (1952), *The Guide* (1958) and *The Man-eater of Malgudi* (1961) that Narayan's art fulfilled the promise of maturity and depth. He was able to hone his instrument of ironic detachment down to a requisite fineness and wield it with considerable mastery and skill. All three of these novels appeared in the post-independence period.

The post-independence period thus saw a further strengthening of the already impressive talents of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan. Anand continued to exhibit his unflagging energy and proliferance as a novelist in works such as *Seven Summers* (1951); *Morning Face* (1970) and *Confessions of a Lover* (1976). Raja Rao's magnum opus *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960)

created waves when it appeared. It has won acclaim as being the most comprehensive and profound rendering of Indian thought into fiction. It explores the subtleties of the Indian sensibility in relation to the west with arduous sincerity. It relates the story of a man, desperate in search for the freedom of his soul and the tortuous paths he journeys, which finally bring him to a glimpse of his goal.

Other novelists of merit, who made their appearance in the post-independence period, include Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, G.V.Desani, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. One can see traces of socialist sympathies in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* (1947) and *He who_rides a Tiger* (1954). *Music for Mohini* (1952) offers an expose of the hide-bound, tradition-ridden society of rural India as it comes into conflict with modern values. Manohar Malgaonkar has made a conscious effort to draw upon history and merge it with fiction. *Distant Drum* and *A Bend in the Ganges* revolve round significant historical events. The theme of the partition offers the novelist an opportunity to universalize through art, one of the bloodiest and most shameful chapters in the history of this country and invest it, with the awful inevitability of a Greek Tragedy. G.V.Desani's *All about H. Hatterr* (1948) is a remarkable novel in that it makes a sharp breakaway from tradition in form and content. On the surface, it is a delightful narration of a madcap protagonist who is an absurd mixture of Don Quixote and Tom Jones and whose adventures lead him to several escapades. It affords the novelist a chance to weave an extravagant fantasy mixed with large doses of wit and humour. The novel moves at a breathless pace in the picaresque tradition. The novelist has

moulded, broken down, twisted the English language itself to create such an extraordinary heady effect.

Among the women novelists who came on the scene in the post-independence era, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala have been fairly successful in carving out a niche for themselves as novelists of considerable substance. Kamala Markandaya explores the theme of hunger in *Nectar in a Sieve* (1955) and *A Handful of Rice* (1966). *Some Inner Fury* (1962) takes another look at the implications of the Independence movement. Markandaya's later novels *Two Virgins* (1973), *Possession* (1963) and *A Silence of Desire* (1960) study the impact of urban culture upon rural life. Anita Desai made a distinct mark for herself as a sensitive novelist with her very first novel, *Cry, the Peacock* (1963). The novel examines in some detail the psychological layers of the mind of a young woman named Maya, trapped in an unhappy marriage, whose tragic life finally dissolves into the oblivion of insanity. *Voices in the City* (1965) has a similar theme, this time centering around a high-strung, sensitive woman called Monisha and her slow escalation towards self-destruction. Nayantara Sehgal's novels have a strong political colour. *This Time of the Morning* (1968) *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) abound in references to the famous political personalities of the time. Sehgal, however, does not make any serious attempt to enlarge upon and explore the depth of political issues and their connection with individual lives.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala also finds her rightful place among leading women Indian English writers, an inclusion which should not really raise any surprise for it is hard to see how else could this remarkably prolific writer who has chosen to write in

the Indian context, could be described. Having spent a large portion of her life in this country, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala has managed to acquire a keen insight into the Indian sensibility. Her novels such as *To Whom She will* (1955), *Esmond in India* (1958), *The Householder* (1960), *Get Ready for Battle* (1962), *A Backward Place* (1965), *Heat and Dust* (1975) and others present sharp cameos of Indian upper-class society, very much in the manner of Jane Austen.

II

Contemporary Indian writers in English have effected a considerable boldness in style and technique, and succeeded in confirming, once and for all, the legitimate status of Indian English fiction. Salman Rushdie has received well-deserved recognition for brilliance in rendition and versatility in composition in novels such as *Midnight's Children* (1981), *Shame*. (1983) and *The Satanic Verses* (1989), *Midnight's children* is a protean admixture of fact and fiction, fantasy and reality, time and space, intermingled, conglomerated, synthesized skilfully. It narrates the life of Saleem Sinai, the protagonist and connects it with the birth and history of a nation. The vicissitudes in Saleem's life are a microcosmic image of the changes faced by a newly born country. Rushdie has symbolized history in this novel, giving it an ageless aspect, lifting it out of a particular context and making it universal. *Shame* re-creates the same magical effect in miniature form. This time the novelist narrates the story of a nation born of shame, ridden with shame, and ending up a victim of shame. The symbolism in this novel is far more complex in comparison with *Midnight's Children*. The style is taut, compact, replete with finnesse. *The Satanic Verses* is a fine example of magic-realism, blending religious fantasy and

fiction.

Other novelists who have caught the attention of the reading public in recent times are Arun Joshi, Shashi Tharoor, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Amitav Ghosh and a host of others. They have been effective in consolidating the position of the Indian English novel in the arena of world literature. Criticism in this area, too, has learnt to shed its apologetic, hesitant tone and acquired considerable maturity and assurance. Distinguished critics such as K.R.Srinivas Iyengar, C.D.Narasihnmaiah, C.Paul Verghese, M.K.Naik, William Walsh and Meenakshi Mukherjee made a beginning in the seventies. During the last two decades, the volume of criticism related to this field of study has been substantial. A glance at the existing works of criticism on the Indian English novel reveals several features which have become a hallmark of this area of criticism.

III

The first critic to lend a note of credibility and respectability to Indian English literature in general, was K.R.Srinivas Iyengar. Apart from the stray reviews in journals and negligible mentions in histories, this province of literature had not really been taken much note of till K.R.Srinivas Iyengar came on the scene and set forth to tabulate the extant works of Indian writers in English in the form of a brief but informative history. His earlier works *Indo-Anglian Literature* (1943) and *Indian contribution to English Literature* (1945) sought to draw the attention of Western readers and critics to this new literature, which was seeking to emerge from its chrysalis. But it was actually with the publication of *Indian Writing in English* in 1963 that this area of criticism

acquired a legitimate identity. The intervening time span had given space enough to this literature to acquire more depth, more richness. And thereby, it gave the critics adequate gestation period to absorb the finer nuances and implications of this literature, and comment upon it with some authority.

Indian Writing in English attempts to outline a brief history of Indian English Literature since its inception. The earliest references are to Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Toru Dutt, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and a host of Bengali writers who brought about the Indian renaissance during the course of the last century. Coming down to the novel form, Srinivasa Iyengar reveals a certain pattern that has prevailed during the evolution of this branch of fiction. He has given more than a fair amount of justice to the writers in this field.

C. D. Narasihnmaiah makes a case for Indian writing in English in much the same way as most of the early critics, in his book *The Swan and the Eagle*. In his opinion, it is absurd on the part of parochial western critics and regional writers in India to question the legitimacy or worth of Indian writing in English. English has to be accepted as one of the several languages spoken in India and therefore literature produced in English should also be judged on par with other literatures in regional languages. The use of English by Indian writers has evolved from the initial, imitative, clumsy efforts to original, thought provoking writing in the latter period.

Addressing the condescending western critics, Narasihnmaiah firmly states that the use of English is not the sole prerogative of Englishmen since English has come to stay in India. Instead of looking down with sneering contempt upon Indian writing in

English, these critics would do well to recognize the fresh yet meaningful and effective plumbing of the English language by Indian writers in the manner in which they have grown to respect American, Irish, Canadian and Australian literature in English. To the regional writers who have heaped a considerable amount of linguistic abuse upon Indian writers in English in the name of nationalistic pride, Narasihnmaiah has given an adequate reply. He exposes the shallow nature of such objections. Regional writers ought to remember that English enjoys a national and international status, with which regional languages could never hope to compete. That, of course, is not the real reason why some Indian writers choose to write in English. They are entirely free to choose their medium of expression. If they happen to feel that they can function creatively better in a language which does not happen to be their mother tongue, there is no reason why their choice should be condemned. The only criterion to be adopted in judging these writers should be the question whether or not they have acquired inwardness with the English language. It is such inwardness, in Narasihnmaiah's opinion, that lends credibility to the writings of Indian writers in English. These writers are, or ideally, should be united by a common cultural identity in terms of tradition and values.

The Swan and the Eagle does not pretend to make an extensive study of Indian English fiction. Its main purpose is to set forth a plausible argument in favour of Indian English literature as a whole. And it is fairly successful in fulfilling this aim.

C. Paul Verghese's *Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English* embodies another step in the direction of a self-concious attempt to understand this body of writing. Verghese outlines some

of the major problems of a practical nature faced by the Indian creative writer in English. The problems faced by the Indian novelist in English, in this connection, are legion. The two main problems confronting the Indian English novelist, according to Verghese, are the problem regarding the use of English for creative expression and the problem regarding the creating of an 'Indian consciousness' in writing such fiction. Verghese explores these problems with specific reference to some of the major Indian English novelists.

Meenakshi Mukherjee was the first critic who attempted to place the development of Indian English fiction in its proper historical and cultural context in her book, *The Twice Born Fiction* and to view it as a product born of the conglomeration of a native sensibility and a foreign language, inherent cultural spirit and an outward, formal moulding.

Meenakshi Mukherjee uses the term 'Indo-Anglian fiction' with the stipulation that it is subject to change. By this term, she refers purely to novels written by Indian writers in English and excludes translations in English from her consideration. She looks upon the advent of the Indian English novel as a fairly late occurance in the history of Indian writing in English. The Indian novel in English came of age only during the nineteen twenties and thirties whereas fiction in the regional languages had gathered momentum much earlier. In comparison with poetry, Indian fiction fell far behind in making its appearance. Meenakshi Mukherjee explains this late arrival in terms of a sense of history. Fiction in Britain had made its appearance in the eighteenth century. In fact the development of fiction during the eighteenth century had coincided with the onset of the Industrial Revolution. The novel,

thus, came to be the product, the outward mainfest symbol of a society in transit, expressing its values and rapidly changing systems, its turmoil and anguish, its hopes and expectations. The novelist sought to reflect the life of his times in his themes, for he had the capacity to sense the importance of the rapid change of events and felt the need to capture the essence of history. According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, Indians developed this sense of history pretty late in the day, and hence the delay in the development of the genre of fiction.

> The novel as it developed in the Western world is particularly concerned with time and space and their effects on man. The novelist has been increasingly less concerned with the unchanging moral verities and their presentation in a timeless setting and more with the precise location of historical man in the flux and flow of society.[1]

The Twice-Born Fiction attempts to classify the various themes explored by the Indian English novelists over the years of its development. It is, thus, the first, serious effort, made by a critic, to come to terms with this field of writing and hence its worth cannot be under-estimated.

The first western critic to take note of Indian writing in English and set forth to analyse it with sincerity, was William Walsh. His essay on Indian English literature in his book *Commonwealth Literature* is fairly informative despite its brevity.

M. K. Naik's *History of Indian English Literature* makes a rather sketchy survey of this field. Nevertheless, it is a laudable effort in terms of its scale and scope. Naik classifies the history of Indian English literature according to periods. He distinguishes

the periods in relation to political events. The early period, from the beginnings to 1857, for instance, is classified under the heading of *The Pagoda Tree*, followed by *The Winds of Change* (1857 to 1920) The literature between 1920 and 1947 is seen as the product of *The Gandhian Whirlwind* and the literature after 1947 is explored under the title of *The Ashoka Pillar : Independence and after*.

Naik begins by defining the nature and scope of Indian English literature. He distinguishes Indian English literature from terms as 'Anglo-Indian Literature', 'Indo-Anglian Literature', 'Indo-English Literature' which have been variously used to describe Indian literature written in the English language. According to Naik, the term 'Indian English Literature' can be used to refer to "literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality. It is clear that neither 'Anglo-Indian Literature' nor literal translations by others (as distinguished from creative translations by the authors themselves) can legitimately form part of this literature."[2]

Having, thus, laid down clear lines of demarcation surrounding this area of writing, Naik proceeds to make its historical survey, starting with the early prose and poetry. He marks down fiction as the last arrival on the Indian literary scene. His treatment of fiction is in the manner of a routine historian. His comments are intended to be factual rather than illustrative.

As for more recent criticism on contemporary Indian English fiction, Nilufer Bharucha and Vilas Sarang have edited a series of essays on Indian English fiction produced during the eighties and nineties. These essays range from general commentaries on this area

of fiction to detailed analyses of specific works. Though this collection of essays cannot be looked upon as an extensive, elaborate and single unit of criticism, it is, nevertheless, useful for a clearer perception of the recent trends in Indian English Fiction. A host of well-known critics, including G. N. Devy, Viney Kripal, Nilufer Bharucha, Makarand Paranjpe and others, have made certain significant points in their assessment of recent Indian English fiction during the process of its growth.

Having made a quick review of the extant landmarks in the criticism of Indian English fiction, it would be now appropriate to take a closer look at these works and make a detailed study of their implications. A proper assessment of the critical studies of the Indian English novel made thus far is necessary before suggesting new directions in outlining its literary history.

IV

Srinivas Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English*, represents the first voicing of the significance of this new field of writing. The novel form receives a sufficient amount of justification considering its hitherto juvenile stature. The chapter entitled *The Novel : Themes, Backgrounds and Types* sets forth the distinguishing characteristics in lucid and succinct terms. Srinivas Iyengar begins by giving a short account of this novel form with conventional references to the Bengali pioneers and slowly inches his way to the triumvarate of Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao. During the course of his brief narrative, he raises some extremely relevant questions regarding the problems facing the Indian English novelist. The chief problems, according to Srinivas Iyengar, have to do with the subject matter, language, style and technique of narration. Over and above these problems, there is always the larger question, whether

or not this area of fiction has been able to generate a sufficient amount of impact, on a more universal scale.

> There are no summary answers to these questions. The novelist is a man and an artist: and hence what he writes can comprehend all that comprises man's life and can exploit all the graces and freedoms of art. But what he writes must neither merely outrage humanity nor totally deny the imperatives of art. The novel is a means of expression for the writer, and it is ultimately born of understanding and love. The novelist's understanding (of man, of nature, of God) has to be as total, and as integral, as possible, and his love (or compassion) has to be a total power too. Such understanding and power will forge their own appropriate means- language, form, technique - for communicating the totality of the vision and the whole power of the love to the readers. Whatever the subject - a patch of past history, a segment of contemporary life, a problem in ethics or politics, a revolutionary eruption in the body-politic - the novelist's understanding and love will make his writing transcend the merely local and controversial, and attain the vitality and dignity of creative literature.[3]

Further, he goes on to add, "The novel written in the spoken languages of the people is rather more enterprising, richer in content, wider in range than the novel in English which, especially in recent years, tends more and more to address itself to a Western audience."[4]

Srinivas Iyengar distinguishes the major Indian English novels in terms of backgrounds and themes. He makes a particular note

of the use of the background of the river in some of the better known novels in this field. (The Cauvery in Venkataramani's *Murugan, The Tiller*, the Sarayu in R. K. Narayan's novels, the Hemavathy in Raja Roa's *Kanthapura*, to quote a few) Another preferred background appears to be the tea-estate, with its colonial connotations.

The most commonly chosen themes, according to Srinivas Iyenger are history, social and political reality and psychological reality. Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Manohar Malgaonkar are some of the novelists he examines in detail. He also devotes an entire chapter to some major women novelists such as Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sehgal. In his updated version of *Indian Writing in English*, he makes note of the arrival of some more novelists such as Salman Rushdie, Chaman Nahal, Arun Joshi, to mention a few.

A close analysis of his review of these novelists reveals a certain methodological pattern which Srinivas Iyengar has chosen to employ throughout his work. He commences with a brief retrospective on the life and background of the author. Then he goes on to sum up the themes explored in their major works, with subjective remarks thrown in from time to time and ends with a short observation of the author's influence and his standing in the context of fictional writing in general. To take the instance of Mulk Raj Anand, Srinivas Iyengar begins with a short review of his life, followed by a summary of his major works including *Untouchable, Coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud*, the trilogy of *The Village, Across the Black Waters* and *The Sword and the Sickle.* The themes of these novels are evaluated to illustrate Anand's

chief predilections as a novelist. His preference for social problems such as the caste system, extreme poverty, the plight of the under-priviledged, is dwelt upon with due consideration.

> Of all his novels, *Untouchable* is the most compact and artistically satisfying, *Coolie* is the most extensive in space and time, evoking variegated action and multiplicity in character, while *Two Leaves and a Bud* is the most effective as a piece of implied indictment.[5]

In conclusion, Srinivas Iyengar sums up Anand's achievements as a novelist objectively. He places special emphasis on his vitality and his keen sense of actuality, his use of swearwords literally translated from the vernacular idiom, his carelessness of style.

R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao are dealt with in much the same way as Mulk Raj Anand. The write-up on Narayan is largely composed of a short overview of the plots of his major novels, interspersed with incisive comments on his art as a novelist.

> Narayan's is the art of resolved limitation and conscientious exploration : he is content, like Jane Austen, with his "little bit of irony", just so many inches wide: he would like to be a detached observer, to concentrate on a narrow scene, to sense the atmosphere of the place, to snap a small group of characters in their oddities and angularities: he would, if he could, explore the inner countries of the mind, heart and soul, catch the uniqueness in the ordinary, the tragic in the prosaic. 'Malgudi' is Narayan's 'Casterbridge', but the inhabitants of Malgudi - although they may have their recognizable local trappings - are essentially human, and hence, have their

kinship with all humanity. In this sense, 'Malgudi' is everywhere[6]

In Raja Rao's case, Srinivas Iyengar makes an in-depth study of his three major novels: *Kanthapura*, *The Serpent and the Rope* and *The Cat and Shakespeare*. He dwells on the theme, the style of narration and the language of *Kanthapura*, the philosophy of renunciation in *The Serpent and the Rope* and the blending of fantasy and reality in *The Cat and Shakespeare*.

Among other novelists who find their place in this short review of Indian English fiction, there are Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Khushwant Singh, G. V. Desani, B. Rajan and Ved Mehta. There is a full chapter devoted to women writers. Kamala Markandaya's novels have been given a fair amount of space. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala has also been granted a place amongst the illustrious elite. Anita Desai and Nayantara Sehgal have been hailed as promising novelists with a bright future before them.

G. V. Desani's *All about H. Hatterr* is classified as the first experimentation of its kind in the field of Indian English fiction, as far as technique of narration is concerned.

> A journey and a struggle, a movement from innocence to experience, a growth in consciousness, education in the large school of life: it is on this formula that many an epic, many a novel is spaciously structured, and G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* belongs to this class. On a first view, it is a Joycean exercise in seeming incoherence and total comprehension, and the narrator-hero, Mr. Hatterr, who is half European, half-Malayan, journeys through life cutting across

classes, professions and continents, accumulating a variety of impressions, instructions, and presumptions, out of which some sort of design or pointer for living may emerge. Unquestionably *All about H. Hatterr* is a tour de force, an astonishing feat of legerdemain.[7]

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and *I shall not hear the Nightingale* have received attention for their thematic content, the turbulent period of pre-partition followed by the partition itself and the unfolding of one of the most tragic chapters in human history that it brought in its wake.

Srinivas Iyengar's survey of Indian English fiction is fairly comprehensive, considering that it is a pioneering piece of work. A pioneering work in any field tends to be impressive on account of its boldness in exploring avenues hitherto untouched, its fresh perspectives on a field not yet fully realized, its hesitant tone giving promise of more to come. Srinivas Iyengar's *Indian writing in English* falls into this category of criticism. It would be unfair to compare it with later day attempts to formulate a stronger, more ambitious body of criticism within this area of writing.

V

C. D. Narasihnmaiah's *The Swan and the Eagle*. is yet another, significant study of the Indian English novel. Narasihnmaiah has examined only three novelists at length. They are Mulk Raj Anand. R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Narasihnmaiah regrets the fact that no systematic and serious study of any of these writers has been carried out, that no real attempt has been made to understand the central vision of these writers. Western critics, he feels, have been contented with making stray observations about these writers. The

time has, threfore, arrived to take proper stock of these three writers and estimate their real worth. Narasihnmaiah lauds the higher aims and intentions of Mulk Raj Anand in glowing terms, while reserving his opinion regarding Anand's tendencies towards preaching and propaganda.

> We have in Mulk Raj Anand a novelist who is not so interested in portraying the beauty or ugliness of life and espousing Marx or the machine, as in sensitizing us to the horror of poverty and suffering, the heartlessness of the few which thwarts the promising life of the helpless young, and the flaming idealism of others which will burn itself out because it can't cope with the many cornered attack in its half-developed state.[8]

Narasihnmaiah rests his judgement of Anand as novelist upon a close evaluation of three of Anand's better known novels : *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *The Big Heart.* Among R. K. Narayan's chief traits as a novelist, Narashinmaiah lists a keen eye for an observation of detail, particularly in the context of a small town, a sympathetic, semi-amused tolerance of human follies and an ironic preception of human life. The novels he examines in support of his thesis are *Swami and Friends*, *The English Teacher*, *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The Guide.*

> Actually, the odd men or rather, the oddities in men, in the ordinary men, seemed to evoke his interest most but they are invariably common men with a marked potential for the uncommon, trying to win attention to themselves; how do such men struggle towards maturity, such maturity as they can achieve within the accepted religious and social

> frame- work ? That seems to have been Narayan's preoccupation enacted in a succession of novels with different degrees of success.[9]

Narasihnmaiah reserves the highest praise that he can bestow on Raja Rao, in connection with his complex novel, *The Serpent and the Rope*. His statements on Raja Rao could be more accurately described as eulogistic rather than critical. He waxes lyrical in his assessment of the novel's achievement.

> Here is a novel which has begun where E. M. Forster has left-left because he was not equipped to probe deeper. Mr. Raja Rao has demonstrated in very convincing terms, in terms of fiction, that human relationships, no less than man's union with the Absolute, are the result not of bridges on rivers or bridge parties but 'the temporary suspension' over 'gurgling space' and 'alone with silence.' Ironically, these temporary suspensions are the only permanent bridge that man can build - the enactment of its truth is the contribution of Raja Rao to fiction.[10]

Narasihnmaiah does not aim at giving a full account of the rise of the Indian English novel in *The Swan and the Eagle*. He aims at writing an apology for Indian English Literature in general, with brief portraits of illustrative writers. Therefore, any critic, who turns to *The Swan and the Eagle* in hope of finding an indepth exploration of the development of the Indian English novel with a close dissection of important authors, is bound be diappointed. *The Swan and the Eagle* is a seminal piece of criticism in that it takes an overview of the field of Indian writing in English and succeeds in raising the status of this area of writing to a fairly respectable level. The individual comments on different writers

familiarize even the most uninitiated reader with the achievements in this area. They represent the first, fresh,untroubled insight into the innumerable potentialities of Indian English Literature.

VI

In his book *Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English*, C. Paul Verghese attempts to indentify and clarify some extremely tricky problems facing the Indian English novelist. One of the main problems confronting the Indian English novelist, according to Verghese, is that of the medium itself. The use of English as a medium for writing fiction raises several questions both for the writers as well as the critics.

The first question that has been raised is regarding the justification for the use of the English language by Indian writers to depict Indian scenes, Indian life, Indian values and Indian sensibility in their works. There are some critics who look down with disdain upon the use of a foreign language for creative expression in the teeth of the ready availability of a host of regional languages for the same purposes. There are others who believe that English fails to capture the finer nuances of the Indian sensibility and render it adequately in fiction. They even go so far as to suspect the motives of the Indian writer in choosing the medium of English for creative expression, implying that some writers are guilty of distorting deliberately the image of India in their writings in order to gain access to western approval.

After having listed some of the major questions regarding the use of English faced by the Indian writer, Verghese proceeds to take a more detailed look at the use of English by some of the major Indian novelists in English. He reproves Mulk Raj Anand's

habit of importing Punjabi swear- words and phrases into English and his vulgarization of English words, in order to lend an Indian touch to his writings. Such artifice, does not, in Verghese's opinion, help to heighten the effect of the writing. Rather it makes it sound bizarre and self conscious.

Verghese is all praises for Raja Rao's unique style of writing with particular reference to *Kanthapura*. He holds up *Kanthapura* as a unique example of a writer's dexterity which is evident in the blending of the rhythm and tonal quality of the vernacular language, Kannada, with the English language which is utilized to narrate the tale.

R. K. Narayan is a citeable example of the Indian English novelist who has achieved full success in adapting English to portray a considerably realistic image of Indian life, set in a small town, in his novels.

> Narayan's style is direct and straightforward and is characterized by an economy of expression and vocabulary adequate to deal with the range of subject matter. He avoids unique or obscure phrasing, and a too constant use of compound sentences. Syntax comes closer to the pattern of the normal conversation of an educated Indian. It is these things, as also the lucidity., extreme purity, simplicity, colour, verve and exactitude of his novels. The intimate liasion of his language with the senses and its fidelity to the idiom of speech enable him to achieve casualness and realism as a story-teller.[11]

Verghese also commends the experimentation in style and technique practised by writers such as Sudhin Ghose and G. V.

Desani. The chief thrust of his argument is that English can and has been used sensibly and successfully by Indian writers to convey Indian thought and explore Indian themes without hurting the sensibility of either Indian or Western readers or without assuming a peculiar garb for purposes of communication.

The next difficulty facing the Indian English novelists, states Verghese, concerns the creating of 'an Indian conciousness' and is thus related to the content of writing. Verghese attempts to define his understanding of the term 'Indian consciousness' and see how far Indian novelists in English have succeded in thematizing it. By 'Indian consciousness', he means an awareness and a sympathetic understanding of the vast fabric of Indian culture and history, combined with the knowledge of contemporaneous changes that have come about in Indian society as a result of a variety of influences. The Indian novelist in English, who has a sincere desire to reach out to his readers (Indian or Western) and to convey his impressions of Indian life, seeks to picture a cross-section of the multi-layered Indian society in his novels. And because the Indian English novel has a sizeable number of western readers, the novelist in question has to, often, weave explanations for customs and rituals which are peculiar to Indian culture into the fabric of his narration without sounding condescending or patronizing.

Coming to the question of the image of India as it is presented in Indian English fiction, Verghese suggests a critical reviewing of some of the major themes explored by these novelists. The themes which have been touched upon with considerable frequency include the theme of social and economic ills (marriage, the plight of Hindu widows, stark poverty, hunger to name some),

political movements, particularly the freedom movement and the resultant partition, the portrayal of rural life, with special emphasis on the life of the Indian peasant, an exploration of the East-West relationship, the highlighting of the conflict between tradition and modernity. Verghese, then, embarks on a detailed study of some of the major Indian English novels with a view to substantiating his claims. For instance, he examines the theme of hunger as expostulated in novels as diverse as *Coolie*, *So Many Hungers* and *Nectar in a Sieve.* The struggle for Independence and the horrors of partition are studied in relation to Venkataramani's *Kandan the Patriot,* Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Mulk Raj Anand's *The Sword and the Sickle*, Khushwant Singh's *A Train to Pakistan* and *I shall not hear the Nightingale* and Manohar Malgaonkar's *Distant Drum* and *A Bend in the Ganges.* The theme of the East-West encounter is enlarged upon in connection with Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*, Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* and B. Rajan's novel, *The Dark Dancer.*

Verghese concludes with the injunction that all of these themes have been over-used and have, therefore, become stale. The younger novelists, he asserts, have become aware of this and have, therefore, chosen to explore newer themes in their works. Anita Desai, for instance, examines the inner workings of the human psyche in novels like *Cry, the Peacock* and *Voices in the City.* Arun Joshi deals with the problem of loneliness and rootlessness in *The Foreigner.* Verghese ends his review on a note of optimism, expressing great hopes for the future of this area of fiction, and stating his belief in its capacity to withstand and absorb the onslaught of modernity.

VII

In her critical evaluation of the growth of Indian English fiction, *The Twice Born Fiction*, Meenakshi Mukherjee begins by tracing the development of the regional novel and compares it with the development of the Indian English novel. She unravels three distinct strands: (1) The historical romances (2) The novels portrayings social or political realism and (3) The psychological novel. According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, the problem of language remains of paramount significance for the Indian novelist in English. The English language is not native to India and it is spoken by a negligible number of Indians. The interaction between the author and the readers suffers on this account and it is not sustained by cultural bonds alone. As far as the appeal for the Western audience is concerned, Indian Literature in English has to compete with an already existing literature in English.

Over and above these questions, the Indian English novelist has to face the problem of communication within his own country. India is a composite of many cultures and languages. It is a difficult task for an Indian writer to reach out to his audience across the chasms of such vast differences. The English language, feels Meenakshi Mukherjee, has been more successful in this regard in comparison with the regional languages. The Indian novelists in English have sought to overcome these problems by choosing themes which are recognizably Indian in nature. Meenakshi Mukherjee identifies the following themes : the struggle for Independence, the Partition, the East-West encounter and the socio-cultural life of India. Meenakshi Mukherjee, then, proceeds to comment upon the use of each of these at some length and finally concludes her analysis with trenchant observations on the technique and style used

in Indian English fiction.

The first theme that Meenakshi Mukherjee elucidates is that of the movement for Independence and the subsequent achievement of the same. The novels of the thirties and the forties were written against the background of one of the most significant and epoch-making political events that has occured in this country during the present century. No writer who had the opportunity to witness or experience this tremendous political turmoil could hope to be completely free of its influence. Meenakshi Mukherjee classifies the novels revealing a distinct impact of the political upheaval of the thirties and forties into several categories. According to her, these novels could be classified on the basis of the extent of the writer's own commitment, the scale of the treatment of the independence theme and the style or technique employed by the author in voicing his theme. There are writers such as Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao who have in their own individual ways, chosen to deal with this theme directly, making it the centre of their narrative while there are others like R. K. Narayan who merely echo the distant sounds of the movement in their work. A novel like Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* merely scratches the surface of this theme which is replete with so many possiblilities.

The technique of narration, says Mukherjee, differs from novel to novel. Raja Rao has employed a garrulous, rambling style in *Kanthapura*, which is in keeping with the character of the narrator, who happens to be an old woman. R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* embodies a simple, straight-forward serio-comic style which is so characteristic of Narayan and which is so eminently suitable for a novel in the third person. Meenakshi Mukherjee

considers both these novels in some detail to illustrate her thesis.

Apart from these two novels, she also studies the theme of Independence in *The Sword and the Sickle*, *The Chronicles of Kedaram*, *A Time to be Happy*, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, *Some Inner Fury*, *Zohra* and *A Bend in the Ganges*.

In conclusion she says:

> ...no major novel has as yet emerged on the theme of this great national upsurge. Nearness probably blurs the edge of events and inhibits the detachment necessary for rendering a massive experience into art. If Indo-Anglian literature continues in its vigorous growth it may yet produce a convincing treatment of this great theme which is potentially rich in human interest as well as powerfully imbued with the larger forces of Indian history, But at the moment what we have is a number of minor essays, some of which are more successful than others because they have greater technical competence.[12]

Next, Mukherjee considers the deployment of the favourite theme of the East-West encounter, by Indian English novelists. The East-West encounter has always held a tremendous fascination for Indian writers because of the colonial experience which served to bring two different cultures, two different ways of life, two different philosophies together. This theme has been employed in novels as varied as *Murugan, the Tiller*, *The Serpent and the Rope*, *Some Inner Fury* and *The Dark Dancer*. According to Mukherjee, one reason why many novelists prefer to employ this theme in their novels is that these writers themselves are exposed extensively to the conflict of the two cultures, and being sensitive men, they

respond to the questions raised by such a conflict. The search for an individual identity becomes of paramount importance to them, and it is this search which they attempt to embody in their treatment of the conflict in their work.

> ....the majority of Indo-Anglian writers have found a creative challenge in this tension between two civilizations. A few have confronted it with some measure of success, while some have reduced the intercultural dialectic into a narrow national commitment. The duality of culture as it exists in India today can either be a source of strength to the writer, providing him with a double-bladed instrument with which to conquer India's hydra-headed reality; or it may be a serious handicap, because writing about a society in which different sets of values are flowing into each other, each at a different level of internal change, cannot be an easy task. To make out of this flux, where no single standard exists for all, a coherent social context for a novel, calls for exceptional qualities, of organization and selection.[13]

The other theme, states Meenakshi Mukherjee, which has been so often utilized by Indian English novelists is the ideal of renunciation. Novelists have frequently woven their stories around a central chacracter who, after facing many pitfalls in life, slowly come to a realization of the need to renounce the world or a set of values or a way of life in exchange for peace, freedom from pain, moksha. This theme is found in different forms in *Kanthapura*, in *He who rides a Tiger*, in *The Guide*. According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, the figure of the ascetic has always held a mesmerizing quality for most Indians, and has therefore figured so prominently in Indian literature. The ascetic is seen as a

beneficiary in novels such as Bhabani Bhattacharya's *A Goddess name Gold*, Sudhindranath Ghose's *The Flame of the Forest* and Kamala Markandaya's *Possession*. He is often exposed as a fraud, a hypocrite and a charlatan as in G. V. Desani's *All about H-Hatterr*. *He who rides a Tiger* and *The Guide* also raise questions regarding the dubious position of self-styled sadhus. Meenakshi Mukherjee makes a lengthy evaluation of both these novels, exposing the human play of fraud and self deception crowned with the ultimate self-realization, leading to a reversal in the fortunes of the central characters in both the novels:

> The ideal of asceticism runs through Indo-Anglian fiction as a recurrent and compulsive motif. Even writers who are seemingly indifferent to the spiritual aspects of life have not been able to ignore it altogether because this is a pervasive cultural ideal in India.[14]

Having thus outlined some of the major themes present in Indian English fiction, Mukherjee proceeds to study the style and technique evolved by the prominent writers of this fiction. In her opinion, 'myth' is the most favoured technique utilized by these writers. She tries to define 'myth' and takes a look at the conscious and unconscious use of myth in all literature. She states that Indian novelists in English have made a conscious use of myth in their writing as part of technique. Writers are drawn to myth for obvious reasons. Myths have a universal appeal on account of their timeless story-content. Indian English novelists, says Meenakshi Mukherjee, have utilized myths in two ways: as a digressional technique or a structural parallel. She goes on to illustrate both the uses. *Kanthapura* is the most celebrated illustration of the use of the digressional technique of myth in Indian

English fiction. On the other hand a novel like *The Man eater of Malgudi* is recognized to have a structural resemblance to myth.

Leaving aside the deliberate use of myth by writers, one must also make note of certain archetypal situations, figures and rituals which have been conciously incorporated into fiction. Mukherjee quotes quite a few examples of these. The figure of Sita, for instance, has been drawn upon with considerable frequency in several novels such as *Some Inner Fury*, *The Dark Room* and *The Dark Dancer*, as a symbol of suffering womanhood. The ritual for inviting rain is yet another recurrent motif found in diverse ways in novels such as *The Cradle of the Clouds* and *The Guide*. Further, Mukherjee evaluates *Kanthapura* as a 'sthala-purana' and *The Man-eater of Malgudi* as having a structural composite of the ancient myths relating to the eternal conflict between gods and demons, which are so pervasive in Hindu mythology.

Mukherjee cites examples where writers have made use of myth to exemplify certain specific situations of characters. She gives the illustration of *The Dark Dancer* in which B. Rajan has drawn heavily upon the mythical figure of Karna, from *The Mahabharata* to outline certain qualities of his central charcter, Krishnan. The parallel, however, does not remain sustained through-out the novel. It breaks down after a while. She gives a very interesting explanation for such a break-down.

> The fact that most of the literary myth of the fiction is drawn from *The Ramayana* and the *Puranas*, and hardly any from *The Mahabharata*, may be a significant commentary on the idealistic nature of Indo-Anglian Fiction. This total neglect of *The Mahabharata* as a source material for myths reveals

> what is part of the characteristic inability of Indo-Anglian Fiction to face life in the harsh and unflinching light of reality, without softening it with idealism and sentiment. Perhaps this is inevitable, because literature reflects the culture of the people and the aspirations people live by; idealism has always been part of a literary tradition in India, whether the ideal is patriotism or sacrifice or Rama Rajya.[15]

In her concluding remarks on the use of myth by Indian English novelists, Mukherjee firmly states that this use need not be considered remarkable or unusual in any way. Myths have been used more often technically rather than thematically. Indian novelists in English have experimented in various ways with the technical use of myth and their works, thereby, afford an interesting study to scholars and critics.

The next problem that the Indian English novelists have to grapple with is the problem of style. Mukherjee outlines the essential features of the styles evolved by different writers at different times. The chief hurdle that an Indian writer faces when it comes to evolving his own style is that of rendering the tone, the colour, the touch of Indianness in his writing, without unduly violating the rules of the English language. He tries to convey this 'Indianness' by moulding the English language to suit his own purposes. The process of this adaptation has been a gradual one. Mukherjee cites examples of the early writings in English which are marked by a stiff, pretentious style. It was only during the thirties and the forties, with the arrival of novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao, that the use of English lost its forced formal quality and began to flow more spontaneously. These writers evolved their own peculiar style of writing and

turned out to be remarkably successful in eking out their own identities. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya experimented with the language to lend a special Indian flavour to their writings.

> It seems there will be a continuous experimenting in giving English a peculiarly Indian tone and colour by drawing on the resources of the Indian languages and infusing their essence into normal literary English. It is essentially a personal experiment where each writer has to forge the medium that will best answer his needs. It is an attempt to find an individual style, but incidentally, a successful experimenter also finds a style that could be called Indian in that it is different from British or American English.[16]

What makes the problem of style more difficult is the fact that an Indian writer in English is writing about people whose native language is not English, and who, therefore, do not think or speak in English. Moreover, the writer's own native language is not English either. In this respect the Indian writer in English is placed in a more difficult position compared to his counterpart in Australia, Canada or the West Indies. Writers in these countries at least have the advantage of sharing their language with the people they write about. The Indian writer tries to overcome this problem through making use of Indian expressions, Indian idioms and the Indian style of conversation. But then, as Mukherjee so aptly points out, the word 'Indian' is too general in meaning to cover the differences in the variety of Indian languages that exist. Moreover, the writer's own native language is itself limited to a small geographical area. He tries to incorporate the feel of this language into English. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan

have all given a regional flavour to their writings in their own ways.

The experiments that these and other writers in English have attempted are of three kinds: experiment relating to the use of idioms, involving translations of Indian idioms into English, experiment with syntax or diction, and finally, experiment with imagery. Mukherjee illustrates the three kinds of experiment with specific reference to individual writers. She draws attention to Mulk Raj Anand's penchant for translating Punjabi and Hindi colloquialisms literally into English, his frequent use of swear words, Hindi words and vulgarized forms of English words. She also quotes Raja Rao's example of using Kannada figures of speech in his writings. In fact she marks Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya among the first Indian writers who have attempted to take liberties with the syntax and rhythm of the English language. Both these writers, in her opinion, have sought to introduce the rhythm and syntax of their own native languages, namely Kannada and Bengali, in their novels. In G.V.Desani's *All about H.Hatterr*, the peculiar style of writing devised by the author is in keeping with the peculiarities of the central character. The style creates the man, as it were.

Imagery is another medium through which Indian writers in English have attempted to convey 'Indianness' in their writing. Mukherjee dwells upon Raja Rao's use of peculiarly Indian imagery in his novels. Anita Desai is another novelist who has been successful in drawing out her own imagery, and developing her own style of writing. About R. K. Narayan's style of narration, Mukherjee has some very astute observations to make.

R. K. Narayan is a writer whose style is most difficult to

analyse or discuss, and he has a tendency to elude categories and classifications. He constantly underwrites, never emphasizing, never caricaturing, and hardly ever passing moral or aesthetic judgments. His style is so unobtrusive and so devoid of purple patches that it is difficult to find quotable passages to illustrate his particular characteristics.[17]

Mukherjee lauds Narayan's lack of pretence and his sincerity of style. This, in her view, matters more than the individual 'Indianness' of a particular writer's style. The oneness of theme and style lends a note of genuineness to his writing. And this is what, says Mukherjee, an Indian writer should strive to achieve to make any worthwhile impact.

In her concluding chapter, Mukherjee reviews the prospects of Indian English fiction in a fairly objective and realistic way. She gives a quick onceover to the development of Indian English fiction thus far. She distinguishes certain marked differences between pre-independence and post-independence fiction, though she is quick to point out that it is too early to speak of trends in Indian English fiction. One significant difference she notes is in the choice, or rather the treatment of themes. In the pre-independence era, writers were concerned with larger issues, national or social problems whereas, in the post-independence period, writers have revealed a decided tendency to turn inward and deal with the problems of the individual.

There is a difference, for instance, in the way in which the theme of the freedom-struggle is handled by writers who wrote about it in the thick of the movement itself and by writers who wrote about it in the post-independence era. Mukherjee cites sthe

examples of *Kanthapura* and *The Sword and the Sickle* from the previous era and *A Bend in the Ganges* and *Waiting for the Mahatma* from the latter period.

Another popular theme during the pre-independence period was the portrayal of the social and economic problems of the time, problems such as untouchability, social injustice, extreme poverty.

The East-West encounter has continued to be a resourceful theme in the post-independence period, with the emphasis on the individual, caught in the midst of the conflict between the two cultures. The changes brought about by rapid industrialization provide yet another outline for the novelists. The rural life, however, retains its fascination for many writers. Meenakshi Mukherjee states her firm belief that,

> The future of Indo-Anglian fiction seem to lie in the direction of further authenticity through exploiting the particular, local, regional reality without, of course calculated 'documentation' or 'explanation' - rather than through that straining to find another of the very few available 'all-India' themes. In other words, a conscious awareness of audience - whether at home or abroad - definitely limits the scope of the Indo-Anglian novelist, confining him to a handful of unmistakably Indian themes. If the Indo-anglian novel is to develop vigorously along with the novel in Indian languages, it must outgrow its general concerns and grapple with the particular, the concrete and the immediate.[18]

VIII

William Walsh makes a very sketchy survey of Indian English fiction in his book *Commonwealth Literature*. The three novelists

that he considers at some length are Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan.

He evaluates Mulk Raj Anand with considerable crispness of judgment. He commends Anand for his zeal for reform, his smooth fluency while he reserves his opinion about the element of preaching, the tendency toward propaganda which mar Anand's art as a novelist.

> As a writer, Mulk Raj Anand lacks the concrete sagacity, the finesse, the 'appetite for the illustrational'... which marks everything that R. K. Narayan writes; nor does he have that sense of the metaphysical nature of man we find in the other distinguished novelist, Raja Rao. But he has a deep feeling for the deprived, a grasp of the social structure of his society and an extraordinary fluency of communication.[19]

Walsh stresses the metaphysical quality of Raja Rao's works, particularly *The Serpent and the Rope* when he gets down to listing Raja Rao's traits as a novelist.

Walsh is most expansive in his evaluation of R. K. Narayan. He praises Narayan's easy and lucid flow of English, his penchant for the particular, the local, his complete lack of pretence, his acute awareness of human discrepancy. Walsh examines *The Guide* as most illustrative of the genre of the serious comedy, to which most of Narayan's novels belong.

Walsh makes a summary review of some latter day novelists such as G. V. Desani, B. Rajan, B. Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya. In conclusion, he says that it is difficult for non-Indian readers of Indian English fiction to comprehend fully the

Indian references, on account of the extreme differences in conditions. And yet they have been able to discern the common rhythm of life in these novels.

IX

In his survey of Indian writing in English, *A History of Indian English Literature*, M. K. Naik traces the beginnings of Indian English fiction to tales published in literary journals during the mid-ninteenth century (Kylash Chunder Dutt's 'A Journey of 48 hours of the year 1945' published in *The Calcutta Literary Gazette* on 6 June, 1835) and the first full-fledged novel to appear in English, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864). He enlists a number of now-forgotten novels written by Indian writers in English between 1864 and the nineteen twenties. The twenties mark the beginning of the Gandhian influence. He mentions *Murugan, the Tiller*, *Athavar House* and *Chronicles of Kedaram* as some of the early novels belonging to the Gandhian period. But like his predecessors before him, Naik relates the first noteworthy contribution to Indian English ficion to the arrival of Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao. He describes Mulk Raj Anand as the most prolific Indian novelist in English. Naik's critical observations are made with a view to enriching a novice's reading of Indian English fiction. They cannot be read in isolation as serious, well-thought out analyses of the writers in question. The compass of such a survey is too small to measure the complexity and depth of each of these writers in detail. The comments, however, do serve to acquaint the reader with the style and technique of the major Indian novelists in English.

The strength of Anand's fiction lies in its vast range, its

wealth of living characters, its ruthless realism, its deeply felt indignation at social wrongs, and its strong humanitaran compassion. His style, at its best, is redolent of the Indian soil, as a result of his bold importation into English of words, phrases, expletives, turns of expression and proverbs drawn from his native Punjabi and Hindi. A tendency to slip into easy sentimentality and lose artistic control, a weakness for preaching and a frequent insensitiveness to the nuances of expression, which often makes him write in a footloose, frenzied and even slipshod manner, have made his work extremely uneven, though his total fictional achievement, with all its limitations, remains impressive enough.[20]

Coming to the post-independence era, Naik mentions Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar and Khushwant Singh as chief among those novelists who have continued the tradition of social realism. He classifies Sudhin Ghose, G. V. Desani, M. Anantanarayanan as practitioners of the experimental novel, and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai as the leading women novelists. The listing of lesser - known writers Anand Lall, Jotindra Ganguli, Romen Basu, Dilipkumar Roy, Nirmal Jacob and a host of other writers serves as a bibliography to the interested student of Indian English fiction.

All in all, M. K. Naik's mapping of the history of Indian English Fiction is brief yet informative. Naik's style as a historian is crisp and concise, and therefore, his survey makes easy reading.

X

The anthology of essays which seek to examine Indian English fiction of the eighties, *Indian English Fiction. 1980-90 : An As-*

sessment, analyses the theoretical and ideological issues raised by this area of fiction. The noted critic, G. N. Devy warns the reviewers of this realm of fiction against the dangers of over-estimating its literary merit in an uncritical, unhistorical manner.

> It is necessary to take into account the peculiar character of Indian English fiction as an essentially bilingual, bi-cultural, upper class, socially restricted, linguistically cut-off from the going concerns of Indian society, and pan- Indian literature of migration, which has acquired legitimacy due to its institutionalization, while reviewing its achievements during the decade.[21]

He argues that recent Indian English fiction should be placed in the perspective of certain background factors which have stimulated its rapid growth. Background factors such as a new sense of black freedom, the sudden nostalgia for the Raj during the eighties, the Canadian project for aiding multi-culturalism, the feminist literary movement, the rise of regionalism and sectarianism account for the sudden spurt in the growth of Indian English fiction in recent times. Devy concludes that a proper assessment of the fiction of the eighties can take place only if Indian works in English translation are also included among the works under consideration and all these works are reviewed in the light of the various strands in the development of Indian English fiction, as detected by Meenakshi Mukherjee.

Works of specific writers such as Bapsi Sidhwa, Firdaus Kanga, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor and recent works of the established writers such as R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal have been variously reviewed. Nilufer Bharucha

assesses the contribution of Parsi writers of Indian-English fiction and considers the works of noted Parsi writers such as Boman Desai, Bapsi Sidhwa, Farrukh Dhondy, Rohinton Mistry and Firdaus Kanga. Viney Kripal examines the historical element in recent Indian English fiction with special reference to Nayantara Sehgal's novel, *Rich Like us* which is set against the background of the Emergency and in which individual lives are shown to be closely inter-twined with public events and deeply touched by the vicissitudes of time.

Lachman Khubchandani, in his essay *Polygenesis of English Heritage*, emphasizes the need to re-vitalize the use of English by Indian writers through a realistic representation of Indian reality.

> For a successful transplantation of English as an effective mode of communication and comprehension in a plural society such as India, the English elite will have to set aside the concerns of Western hegemony, and create a trust among the masses about an active partnership between English and Indian languages in the process of nation-building. The English elite can lend a constructive hand in developing Indian languages and making them more viable in different spheres of life.[22]

XI

Makarand Paranjpe has raised some thought - provoking questions about the indentity of the Indian English novel in his compact treatise, *Towards a Poetics of the Indian English novel.* In his *Introduction*, he declares that his aim is to understand and define the commonness and uniqueness of the Indian English novel, to come to terms with both, its form and content.

He begins by emphasizing that the difference between the western novel and the Third world novel is not so much found in form as in content. Those critics who argue that the form of the Third world novel is essentially different from that of the western novel base this argument on an erroneous assumption And the assumption is that the Third world novel must have a different form because it is a product of social conditions which are vastly different from those which produced the western novel. Paranjpe's argument is that the novel is not merely a passive recipient of the influence of social conditions, it also acts upon these social forces. The Third world novel has practically all the formal characteristics of the Western novel. And therefore the difference between the two is more strategic than real. And the difference is found in the content: in context, culture, ideology and location.

Paranjpe asserts that the first assumption made by some of the best critics of this genre is that the novel is an imported genre, determined by outside influences. These critics naturally relate the origin of the Indian English novel to the colonial influence. These critics, according to Paranjpe, have ignored the vital fact that the novel form is not entirely 'foreign' to the Indian literary tradition, that it is very much part of the Indian literary culture.

Critics who assume that the novel in India is the result of the colonial experience obviously accept the Western novel as the norm and then measure how far and how closely the Indian counterpart resembles or differs from the original. Actually these critics should look for narratives and fictions within the Indian literary culture and then come to a proper understanding of the growth of this form in the country. He quotes Bhalchandra Nemade, the noted Marathi novelist and critic who has stated in his essay *Marathi Kadambari : Prerna Va Swarup* that the novel is not merely an English form, that it is not entirely English in origin. Though this form came to India through contact with the English, it is not wholly new in this country as a form of writing.

The chief thrust of Paranjpe's argument is the need to see the Indian novel against the backdrop of our rich, continuous and ancient narrative traditions, to place it in the larger context of the growth of Indian civilization. Such a broad perspective, he says provides us with an aesthetics and politics, a metaphysics and an axiology.

Citing Bharata from the *Natayashastra*, Paranjpe goes on to show how closely intertwined literature in India is with dharma, in the broadest sense. He tries to show how literary traditions basically subscribe to a dharmic way of life. Then he focusses on the dialectic, which is so peculiar to Indian culture, the tension between the *marga* and the *desi*, which is evident throughout Indian art and culture. To this conflict has been added a third element, that of *the videshi*. It seems to him that these three cardinal points may be used to define the nature and development of any contemporary cultural product. He further distinguishes the *desi*, the *marga*[5] and the *videshi* in terms of the sub-altern, the

sub-imperial and the imperial. This framework is particularly useful in identifying the cultural politics of the Indian English novel. Here Paranjpe once again emphasizes the presence of the bilingual and bicultural influence behind the Indian English novel. Paranjpe sees it as a product of English imperialism and how it is still supported by the imperialism of the English language.

> It is not quite marga because it is not entirely indigenous, nor is it quite pan Indian. Yet within the country, it does occupy a marga-like position, with the difference that this elitism that it enjoys is because of an international, imperialistic cultural system. Therefore the best way of describing its cultural politics is by calling it sub-imperial.[23]

Further, Paranjpe argues that the Indian English novel can never become *desi* nor can it be truly international or global. One would wish to describe the dharma of the Indian English novelist as the ability to resist the modern values of Western culture and emphasize the essential values of Indian culture, But most often, it does just the opposite.

In conclusion, Paranjpe says that the Indian English novel represents a minority literature. It is essentially elitist and has a very restricted and limited scope and audience.

XII

Indian English fiction has been part of Commonwealth literature ever since its inception. It is not surprising, therefore, that it shares quite a few traits in common with Commonwealth fiction. The three phases of the development of Third world literature culture as delineated by Fanon can also be traced within the

development of Indian English fiction : (1) Literature responding to colonialism : inciting the fight against oppression while using the literary tools of the oppressor (colonial phase) (2) Encomiastic literature a short phase celebrating nationalism and independence. It emphasizes autonomous cultural values (3) The third phase which sees independence for what it is and assesses the development of neo-colonialism.

The new literatures, as Bruce King refers to them, by which he means the literatures produced in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the West Indies, South Africa etc. are closely bound up with nationalism and national movements.

> The Australian Bulletin-writers of the 1890s, the start of the modern Indian novel in the 1930s, the rapid development of Caribbean writing in the 1950s, and the emergence of African writing in the 1960s, can be directly traced to the cultural assertion, social changes and political debate that accompany nationalist movements. In each case representative subject-matter, local language usage, local history, racial or national pride, political independence and demands for social justice are among the characteristics as are concern with national mythology, with documenting local ways, usually in a realistic literary style, and the rejection of middle-class values. Nationalism is both political and a state of mind. It begins in the pre-independence period as means of organizing the masses behind native political groups that want to eject the colonizer or those felt to be alien. To organize others and to distinguish the national from the foreign, a typical, representative native culture and past must be discovered and asserted. The creation of a usable past or a cultural tradition

accompanies the social and political demand for equality and independence, since people with a history, a language, customs and myths of their own deserve to govern themselves.[24]

Such generalizing is a common feature of early post-colonial theory. The short comings of the homogenizing tendencies of post-colonial theory have been pointed by critics such as Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Arun Mukherjee. Homi Bhabha makes a reference to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. He shows how post-colonial perspectives intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic normality "to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged histories of nations, races, communities, peoples. They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority and political discrimination in order to reveal antagonastic and ambivalent moments within the rationalizations of modernity."[25]

Aijaz Ahmad warns against the dangers of homogenization which submerges "the enormous cultural heterogeneity of social formations in the so-called third word.[26]

As Arun Mukherjee puts it

Instead of making us aware of significant differences both across and within national formations, which are ultimately the product of history, the (homogenizing) theory locks us into the binary oppositions of colonizer/colonized, domination/resistance. The monolith created by the unitary discourse of the post-colonial theory stands in place of the plurality, heterogeneity and specificity of literatures subsumed under the unitary

name assigned to them. [27]

These injunctions put one on guard aqainst a blind drawing upon the strategies followed by the historians of Commonwealth fiction while charting the history of Indian English fiction. Moreover Indian English fiction stands in close proximity with fiction in other Indian languages and is influenced by them. It, therefore, has many traits which it does not share in common with Commonwealth fiction.

XIII

The attempts to chart the growth and evolution of the Indian English novel range from the bio-bibliographical surveys to thematic and stylistic analyses. Most of the critics discussed here have endorsed canonization or periodization for charting the history of the Indian English novel, either explicitly or implicitly.

K. R. Srinivas - Iyengar focusses on a few, selected novelists in his chapter on the Indian English novel in *Indian Writing in English*. These novelists are Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Khushwant Singh. G. V. Desani and B. Rajan. The women novelists include Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sehgal. *Indian Writing in English* is the first attempt of its kind at a historical survey of Indian English literature. It has, therefore, not been possible for Srinivas - Iyengar to examine more than a few, established novelists. It would be unfair to say that he is supportive of canon - making. As a matter of fact, his method ought to put the future historian of this area of literature on guard against the dangers of canonization. Even when canonization is justified in some cases, in the present context, it is inappropriate

to canonize some Indian English novelists to the detriment of others. The Indian English novel has not existed long enough for such an attempt.

Similarly *The Swan and the Eagle* examines only three novelists, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan. Though it is not Narasihnmaiah's aim to give a detailed account of the rise of the Indian English novel, the method of selecting the chosen few and ignoring lesser-known novelists who have contributed to the growth of this area should be discouraged while writing the history of the Indian English novel.

M. K. Naik has attempted to classify Indian English writers in terms of periods. For instance, the literature between 1920 and 1947 is described as the outcome of *The Gandhian Whirlwind* and the literature after 1947 is examined under the heading of *The Ashoka Pillar : Independence and After*. Such political labels are rather vague and do not, in any way, reflect the literary value of the works examined. This body of literature is, at the moment, too young and too slim to be dissected in terms of periods.

Meenakshi Mukherjee's separation of the three strands of the novel and her analyses of the themes and styles of some Indian English novelists have helped to establish the identity of this area of literature. They do not constitute a historical study as such.

Makarand Paranjpe's examination of the Indian English novel stimulates some serious queries about its identity and its cultural value. It does not make any sense to make de-contextualized studies of authors and their works and draw a thin line of continuity through them based on chronology. The history of the Indian English novel should convey a sense of collective growth,

manifesting itself in diverse individual works. In order that it may do so, the historian would have to probe into the collective and individual causes behind the phenomenon of Indian English fiction.

The collective causes would include broad causes such as the general conditions of culture and society, the political atmosphere, specific social conditions, the state of education of the general population which has a direct bearing on the demand and production of different types of fiction, the circumstances governing publication which would be either conducive or detrimental to the survival of fiction. From these broad-based collective causes, the history could then proceed to look into specific, individual causes behind the use of specific forms, material and techniques by different authors. Such an inquiry would look at previous usages of these in earlier fiction and the innovations in forms, subject-matter and techniques made in order to meet the growing demand.

This approach would enable the historian to place the field of the Indian English novel in a larger context and only then the individual context of each work would seem clearer and comprehensible. The significance of a novelist such as, say, Salman Rushdie, could be better understood, if he is seen in the context of the cultural climate, the level of education amongst general readers, the impact of education in the English medium which has led to a definite increase in the demand for fiction in English. The finer intricacies of the form, subject-matter and techniques employed in *Midnight's Children, Shame, The Satanic Verses* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* can, then, be related to previous influences, the writer's own creativity and so forth. The larger context would explain the sudden spurt in the production and

popularity of the Indian English novel amongst English-speaking people both within and outside the country and yield a panaromic picture of the whole field. These are some of the broad outlines along which a new history of the Indian English novel could be written.

There has been a growth in critical and philosophical literature related to literary historiography in recent years in the west. In order to see, if any of the insights or methodological principles provided by these critics are useful, it is necessary to survey this body of criticism. As such I intend to offer a brief critical survey of some major critical texts in the area of literary historiography in the following chapter.

N O T E S

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