

## CONCLUSION

It has been my endeavour in this dissertation to offer suggestions for writing the history of the Indian English novel from different perspectives. In this connection, I have explored in some detail the studies made by some major critics in this area and shown how these studies have been useful in laying the groundwork for attempting such a history. In the remaining chapters, I have argued why and how it is necessary to make a departure from conventional considerations for writing the history of the Indian English novel and reconsider the existing historiography of this area.

I have further demonstrated the shortcomings of western critical theories and historiographical principles for the purpose of writing such a history. One of the central issues I have raised is that the existing methods of writing a literary history, mainly fostered by the influence of western critical and historical principles, will not be adequate in the present context. The new historian of the Indian English novel is required to go beyond periodization and canonization, two of the chief methods employed in a conventional literary history. He is required to give serious consideration to deploying a different perspective for writing this history.

In my opinion, it is too early and somewhat presumptuous to view the history of the Indian English novel in terms of periods or canons. An existence of a hundred odd years does not allow scope for making distinctions of periods on the basis of extra-literary events. It is also unrealistic to speak of the evolution of style and technique. Each novelist has his own unique style of writing which is peculiarly his own and which remains more or less unaffected by the march of time and innovations in style and

technique made by writers who follow him.

It would, therefore, be desirable and more realistic to view the history of this area of literature in terms of schools and clusters of writers. I have distinguished five such clusters of Indian English novelists on the basis of themes and styles.

The first cluster identified is that of novels with social themes which is further divided into two sub-groups :

-- the novels which explore the theme of social and economic injustice and

-- the novels which examine the social realities of Indian life.

The novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya are included in the first category and those of R. K. Narayan, Amitav Ghosh, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Allan Sealy, Anita Desai (in her non-female-oriented novels) and the entire group of Parsi writers in the second group.

The second cluster consists of writers who have explored the theme of gender injustice, the marginalized status of women in Indian society in their novels. I have classified the novels of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee, Namita Gokhale, Gita Hariharan under this category.

The third cluster of novelists hinges around political themes. I have categorized some of the novels of Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, R. K. Narayan, Manohar Malgaonkar, Nayantara Sehgal, Salman Rushdie and Shashi Tharoor under this group.

The fourth cluster identified centres on the theme of the East-West encounter under which I have classified novelists such as Kamala Markandaya, Raja Rao, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and G. V. Desani.

The fifth and final cluster is identified on the basis of style under which I have differentiated two groups of writers, one group of writers which employs the realistic mode of narration and the other which employs a fantastic mode of narration. I have reclassified novelists such as Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Amitav Ghosh, Upmanu Chatterjee, Bapsi Sidhwa, Firdaus Kanga, Farrukh Dhondy under the former category. Writers such as Salman Rushdie, Raja Rao, G. V. Desani, Shashi Tharoor, Boman Desai, who have made a departure from the realistic mode of narration, I have placed in the latter category.

Finally, the historian of the Indian English novel will have to make a special provision to categorize novelists such as E.M. Forster and Kipling who, though not Indians have made serious, worth while contributions to the novel in India. These novelists cannot be left out of consideration merely because their nationality does not happen to be Indian. In other words, the boundaries regarding inclusion on the criterion of nationality will have to be redefined. The historian of the Indian English novel will also have to give serious thought to leaving those novelists out of the purview, who do not fulfill any requirements for being defined as Indian novelists except that of nationality alone. Neither such fiction nor the sensibility it embodies appear to reflect 'Indianness'.

Last but not the least, the historian of the Indian English novel will have to reconsider the problem of its cultural identity, whether or not this body of literature explores the cultural otherness of India. Do the themes of the Indian English novel identified thus accurately reflect the cultural, linguistic, ethnic and social complexities within India ? Does the category of the subaltern exist within the Indian English novel ? Quite obviously, considering the vast fabric of Indian society, the existence of the marginalised, dispossessed communities, their language, literature cannot be ignored while formulating the literary/cultural history of the nation. In this connection, as far as the Indian English novel is concerned, it is useful to widen the perspective and include translations of those Indian novels which do examine the subaltern, marginalized sections of Indian society alongside novels written in English. Such an inclusion would not in any way impoverish the diverse cultural dimensions of this area of literature. On the contrary, the resultant history would 'only reflect these dimensions in a fuller, more complete way. The case for the inclusion of translations has already been argued and convincingly defended by renowned critics in this country. No historian working in this field can afford to neglect the possibilities generated by such contemporary debates.