EXPERIMENTING WITH MODES OF NARRATION: A STUDY OF THE NOVELS OF VIKRAM SETH

ABSTRACT

THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
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IN
ENGLISH

BY
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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
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Chapter I – Introduction: Developments in the Mode of Narration in English Novel.

Fiction has been permeated with different innovative techniques and forms, necessitated by themes of the time, from Richardson down to the present time. Romance held sway in the beginning, which was later replaced by realism. The realistic novels depicted panoramic view of society, hence highlighting socio-economic and political issues. It was followed by psychological novels, which probed deep into the mind of characters. With the passage of time, personal and individual issues became more important than collective and social issues engendering impressionism and stream of consciousness. Henry James is the established writer of impressionism, and the technique of stream of consciousness has been employed dexterously by Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. There was a paradigm shift in the trend of fiction to analyse the development of character depthwise rather than lengthwise. D.H. Lawrence and Thomas Hardy represented lower middle class, working class and underprivileged through their works. In the late 1930s under imminent threat of war, social cataclysm and fascism, a host of novelists abandoned old themes and took to social diagnoses or oral or political fables. After the Second World War, a group of novelists became anti-establishment in their approach and showed their heroes trying to rise above working background after receiving higher education. The heroes were not able to identify themselves with either group and hence they were dissatisfied and indignant. Since 1950 onwards, a host of novelists harked back to working class, marginalized and suppressed section of society, for they were not adequately represented.
Chapter – II  Introduction: Developments in the Mode of Narration in Indian Novel in English

The genesis and development of Indian writing in English can be studied in relation to new themes, forms and techniques. At the beginning, Indian writers in English used English language self-consciously, but later they became confident and started using it as one of the Indian languages. The experimentation with regard to technique and style started with the appearance of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan on literary scene. They were compelled to experiment, for there was a disharmony between Indian sensibility and the mode of expression they chose for their writings.

G.V. Desani’s *All About H. Hatterr* is the most important work with respect to innovative technique and style. The novel experiments heavily with the language, and it fuses western and eastern narrative forms.

In the pre-independence period, the most of the novels depicted the themes of national awakening, struggle of independence, for they were momentous issues of the time. After having achieved independence, people were very happy but this happiness did not last long, because it was followed by violence and carnage in the wake of partition. Khushwant Singh’s *A Train to Pakistan* unfolds tragic events of partition with picturesque vividness.
The Indian writers in English who stayed back in India, did not experiment much with the narrative technique, but those who went abroad and settled down there, experimented heavily with their narrative technique, for they had to deal with themes of alienation, cultural shock and maladjustment.

There has been sporadic experimentation with forms and technique but it gathers momentum with the publication of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. The novel has firmly established Indian writing in English on literary map internationally.

The novels of contemporary period, especially those of Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Chandra, Shashi Tharoor, Upmany Chatterjee are characterized by cosmopolitanism, magic realism, plotlessness, story within story and use of myths from epics and scriptures.
Chapter - III - The Beginning: *The Golden Gate*

Drama has been written in free verse, but *The Golden Gate* is the first novel of its kind to have been written with rigid iambic tetrametre.

Broadly speaking, there are five major themes like disintegration of family life in America, image of American woman, homosexuality, nuclear disarmament, alienation in modern American society. In America, women's higher education leading to employment, and hence getting increasingly independent economically has spoilt man-woman relationship. American woman is career-oriented, selfish and individualistic in nature. American society is pervaded with homosexuality which has led to sexual perversion. There is strong advocacy of anti-nuclear weapon which may disturb the peace and may create hostility among countries. Americans are so pre-occupied in the pursuit of their career that they do not interact with one another, and hence alienated.

*The Golden Gate* can be compared with Shakespearean sonnets, for both of them deal with themes like love, friendship and excessive praise to male friends, homosexuality, depiction of erotic and passionate scenes. Unlike Shakespeare, Seth undertakes contemporary issues.

The sonnet primarily concerns itself with single theme throughout. That is why various themes are discussed in different sonnets. Though Seth's sonnets, like T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, are fragmentary in nature,
yet they are held together through overriding theme of destruction at various levels.

Since the novel tells coherent, integrated story with a specific temporal and spatial setting, depicting contemporary issues, hence *The Golden Gate* is a novel and not a collection of sonnets like Shakespeare.
Chapter – IV : Back to the Roots : *A Suitable Boy*

*A suitable Boy* contains Indian substance, clothed in Austenian form. Like Austen’s *Emma*, the present novel revolves around a hunt for a suitable boy for Lata, the protagonist of the novel.

Just like Austen, Seth sets his novel in quiet period of time i.e. in the immediately following years of independence. There is remarkable similarity between Austen and Seth that Austen confines herself to three or four families to highlight socio-economic condition of the time, so does Vikram Seth through the four families – The Mehras, the Chatterjees, the Kapoors, the Nawabs. In the wake of industrial Revolution, England was undergoing transformation from being feudal and aristocratic society to modern and capitalist society, but middle class resented this change, thinking that it would alter social structure and would have a negative impact on power relations. As the feudal society was falling apart, Austen believed that adherence to conventional and traditional code of conduct might alter the course of history. So her heroines are in the quest of dominating husband they can look up to, and power is reposed in the elder member of the family. These themes highlighting socio-economic relations necessitated realistic mode of narration for her novel.

Seth finds similar situations in the years immediately following independence. There was a departure from feudal society to capitalist society in the wake of abolition of Zamindari system. Since this change effected the rural way of life, hence the setting of the novel, Purva Pradesh, and the mode of narration realism.
Chapter – V : In Search of Symphony: *An Equal Music*

In *An Equal Music*, music is not only instrumental music, but also music in life, hence harmonious relationships. Just as music is created out of fusion of euphonic sounds, so is the case with authentic life that can come into existence only with fusion of two perspectives, aims and perceptions. Hence, disharmonious relationship results in meaningless life.

Michael, the protagonist of the novel, feels alienated all along, for he evades his native place, Rochdale and disowns his roots. Music is a specialized existence, and musicians are isolated individuals. Michael is isolated in the group itself, so his isolation is more restrictive. Michael rejects being a part of society to become a part of a group. Michael fails to integrate himself with the group because of the strings that attach him to the world outside his group and society.

Since Michael is not sensitive to his roots, so he cannot be sensitive to the rarefied world of music. Creativity cannot be achieved in a vacuum, and Michael is living in a vacuum. He takes refuge in music to fill in the gap created by relinquishing his roots, but music provides him no solace. Thus, he is not able to come to terms with his beloved Julia as well. Michael does not find refuge anywhere as he is not sensitive enough.
Chapter VI - Conclusion: Not the End

It would be improper to expect a contemporary story-teller to portray modern and cosmopolitan life through a few cave-sketches. Hence, Vikram Seth is constrained to experiment with the narrative techniques available to him to record experiences of an alien society for the natives of that society. And he manages to find a balance between tradition and innovation so as not to alienate his readers with what they have been used to.

In *The Golden Gate*, Seth touches upon various issues in different sonnets, yet they are held together through broader theme of destructiveness. Hence, Seth opts for sonnet form with rigid iambic tetrameter to present chaotic and diversified American sensibility. Just like England in the post-Industrial Revolution period, feudal society in India was falling apart in the wake of abolition of zamindari system. And Seth was in search of stability in society with the help of conventional and traditional code of conduct. Hence, Seth adheres to Austenian form with Indian substance in *A Suitable Boy*. Seth’s *An Equal Music* forays into music and souls of musicians. His detailed description about musical instruments and performances account for realistic mode of narration.
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Dedicated

To

My Brother (Munna Bhai)
This is to certify that Mr. Md. Ibrar Alam Ansari has conducted his research on the topic “Experimenting with Modes of Narration: A Study of the Novels of Vikram Seth” under my supervision. This thesis is a result of his independent labour and application of mind. Mr. Ansari’s contribution in the field is fairly significant and original. I am of the opinion that his thesis on the topic “Experimenting with Modes of Narration: A Study of the Novels of Vikram Seth” may be submitted for consideration for the award of Ph.D. degree.

(Madihur Rehman Suhaib)
SUPERVISOR
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Preface

The topic of this thesis raises two significant questions: why focus on experiments with narrative technique, and why chose Vikram Seth for this study. In selecting this topic for research, I was motivated by the observation that though there has been experimentation with narrative technique since the very beginning of fiction, it gained momentum during the 20th c. I was intrigued by the question, what prompted 20th c fiction writers to carry out such extensive, at times outrageous, experiments with narrative technique that at times rendered their works incomprehensible to the common reader and defeated the very purpose of fiction writing, that is, telling a story.

I chose Vikram Seth as the anchor for this study because he stands out amongst his contemporaries in the sense that he began as a wild traveller and then settled down to a more beaten path, but with mischievous twists. His first novel, *The Golden Gate*, is written in verse form, that too one of the more demanding meters, while his second novel, *A Suitable Boy*, is more or less realistic in form and the third one, *An Equal Music*, though broadly realistic, is still hard to classify definitely because of its structural focus on music.

I know that I have not been able to do justice with the topic with such wide ramification, but it is only the beginning.

I will take this opportunity to perform the duty of thanking people, though it is hard for me to find appropriate words to all those who helped and encouraged me during the course of my research, but I cannot ignore my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Madihur Rahman Suhaib for his
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Chapter I

Introduction I: Developments in the Mode of Narration in English Novel
Chapter – I

The English novel, like the English language, is a rich and flexible instrument which has developed casually through the centuries, making its own laws, breaking them, borrowing from abroad, now here, now there, absorbing every fresh idea, rarely jettisoning an old one, and branching out afresh at the whim of every master hand which has gone to its shaping. In truth, the story of the novel has no end and no beginning. The generally accepted opinion that the father of English novel was Samuel Richardson is not without foundation. He was certainly the first to bind psychological interest, dramatic complexity and convincing characterization into a whole and to present them with naturalism. Yet centuries before Richardson men had experimented with story-telling; delight in adventures, interest in personality and the taste for realism were as strong in pre-Elizabethan times as they were in eighteenth century.¹

A novel follows few laws but it has invariably a story which involves silent reading. It demands a large reading public who may be aware of contemporary conventions. The supremacy of drama and poetry had restricting effect on the early development of the novel. Hence, the decline and fall of drama paved the way for prose fiction.
There is no denying the fact that the novel is now considered a distinguished literary form, and is the only literary medium through which a writer can discuss a host of problems, which are brewing in the contemporary society. It deals with social, economic, political and religious problems. It also acts as a link between society and its members. The writer at times makes the novel a tool for convincing his readers of his views and ideas about certain issues.

Unlike poetry and drama, the novel has variegated forms. It does not have any fixed rules to be adhered to. In his *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), E.M. Forster defines a novel as “a fiction in prose of a certain extent.”[^2] He further remarks, “the novel is a formidable mass, and it is so amorphous – no mountain in it to climb....”[^3] There are many formal restrictions where drama and poetry are concerned, but the novel largely remains free from all restraints, and hence novels are written on multifarious subjects and in varied forms.

There are two important ingredients which go into making a novel an art-form. Firstly, the writer displays life. And secondly, he entertains the reader.

It is a widely acknowledged fact that the novel emerged when both Greek and English literatures had established their greatness. In Greece, romance came on the literary scene only after the decline and fall of Alexandarine period, whereas novel started appearing in England after
Elizabethan period. If Marlowe or Shakespeare had written novels, "the English novel would have matured as Russian did." So, late emergence of novel on the literary firmament accounts for extensive and continuing experimentation with its form.

In her *The Progress of Romance* (1785), Clara Reeve draws the line of distinction between the romance and the novel. She says:

The novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened, nor is likely to happen. The novel gives familiar relation of such things as pass everyday before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend or to ourselves; and the perfection of it is to represent every scene in so easy and natural a manner and to make them appear so probable as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real, until we are affected by the joys or distresses of the persons in the story as if they were our own.⁵

Hence, novel concerns itself with life as it is actually lived, while Romance deals with life in a strange and in probable manner.

Fiction emerges out of distortion of facts. Although the novel proper got established in English in the 18th c, the genesis of the novel can be traced back to the beginning of story-telling. The minstrel and the ballad maker
could be considered as early writers of fiction as they wove stories out of the facts of history.

Chaucer’s fictional works in the form of historical romances contain some elements which ultimately became important ingredients of the novel. In his romances, we have a good story on the one hand and probable, though fictitious, characters on the other. Furthermore, there is “a compassionate realism in the observation of behavior comparable to what we find in the novels of Fielding.”^6

There was a proliferation of translation works in English on account of invention of the printing press. These literary masterpieces translated from other literatures have unmistakable features of fiction. For example, Malory’s *Morte’d’Arthur* (1470) has some momentous features of a good novel. It has a story, good characterization, autobiographical elements and authorial point of view. The characters are human with shades of the good and the bad. Moreover, the characters are taken from the real world, but the French medieval romances which were translated into English, were out of touch with reality, as lived by the readers, and thus the readers were dissatisfied with the utterly fictitious characters. They were in need of another type of fiction which would fill up the gap that existed between the fiction and their own lives. Hence, the way for the emergence of the novel was paved.
In Italy, the novel form was made popular by Boccaccio who wrote prose tales dealing with contemporary life. In Elizabethan age, Lyly experimented with this form in his *Euphues* (1580), modelled upon Baccaccio, to capture the day-to-day life of England. Furthermore, the elements of irony and sarcasm are quite strong.

Unlike drama, the novel, unrestrained by the shackles of convention, was so flexible that it could adapt itself to changing contemporary society. It became a mirror, reflecting social, economic, political issues of contemporary society.

Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) was written in a simple, direct and easy style to express thought and emotion clearly, which makes it comprehensible even to the lay reader. The character portrayal in the essays of Addison and Steele has a fore-taste of the novel.

During the seventeenth century, it was fashionable for public and literary men to keep diaries and journals of family occurrences and of interesting social and political events. These writings had rudiments of narrative form that would lend to fiction the appearance of fact.

Throughout the seventeenth century and early part of eighteenth century, the main work of the novelist was to bring the Romance down to earth. This resulted in verisimilitude, in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the first realistic novel, which finally drew fiction writers to realism. With the appearance of Defoe on literary scene, the portrayal of real life and
the keen observation of nature became the focus of attention. He had the ability to surround fictitious situations with all the circumstances of actuality. He chose as “a model for his narrative the form that best produces the illusion of truth — that of current memoirs with the accompaniment of a diary.” His technique of making the first person narrator also helps him in his realistic purpose. The realistic novel of Defoe was under the influence of Romance, for the motives and emotion portrayed in it were out of touch with reality. The world created by Robinson Crusoe was similar to that of early fiction.

Many factors helped in the evolution of the English novel. In the view of David Daiches;

Elizabethan prose tales, picaresque stories, and accounts of the urban underworld represented one; the character-writers of the seventeenth century developed a technique of psychological portraiture which was available to Addison and Steele...; the straightforward narrative style used by Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the somewhat similar factual style of Defoe's journalistic and pseudo-autobiographical writings also helped to make the fully realized novel possible.8

Richardson uses fiction for a new purpose which is closer to the lives of the readers. He is concerned with the emotions and feelings of the people because they are manifested in the daily routine of their lives. The material
of Richardson's novels is quite different from that of high romance. They have no gorgeous descriptions of palaces, no adventures on sea or land and no enchanted castles. Their most favorite theme is an abduction. Richardson thus did away with "the paraphernalia of romance." His plot serves as a framework for a minute study of the heart.

Richardson added four important ingredients to the repertoire of fiction: "the libertine of hard intellectual polish, the immaculate gentleman, the chaste woman, and the protestant martyr." He could show the great power, which was hitherto neglected, through his emotionalism.

Richardson wrote with a specific moral purpose and the tendency to praise or disparage characters on the grounds of morality and ethicality which became traits of the tradition of the English novel for a very long time to come, and "aesthetic considerations and psychological realism were subordinated to a concern for morality." His greatness lay in his manner of telling a story. Being well equipped with his knowledge of the female emotions and feelings and his professional expertise in terms of letter writing, Richardson preferred to write his novels in the form of letters. This tool, which sustained the element of curiosity in a story, provided characters and events with animate quality and fascinated the eighteenth century readers.

Like Richardson, Fielding also portrayed life in realistic manner and endowed Richardson's narrative technique with a larger perspective. He also
depicted human motive and behaviors as he found them in common life, but he did not agree with Richardson’s simplistic view that virtue is rewarded and sin is punished in this world. Fielding wrote a burlesque on *Pamela* (1740) to ridicule undue sentimentality of Richardson’s novel. It has been acknowledged that his novels possess the seeds of future fiction, “...of character, of situation, of plot ...the problem novel or the comic medley typified by *Joseph Andrews* and the sentimental novel by Amelia.”\(^{12}\) Moreover, Fielding gave the novel form an epic narrative with lively dramatic incidents and the linking-up of complicated parts in a chain of cause and effect.

Smollet’s novels celebrate new Romance which replaced the novel of sentiment and ridicule. In his novels, Smollet exposes “those parts of life where the humors and passions are undisguised by affectation, ceremony or education.”\(^{13}\) His novels also contain blood curdling and spine chilling episodes which contribute to the growth of Gothic romance.

But the prevalent concept of novel form of the age was rejected by Lawrence Sterne. He dispersed the well-constructed “plot into a thousand fragments.”\(^{14}\) In fact, he wrote *Tristam Shandy* (1760) without a plot, heroine and action without following any other law except abrupt and random association. In the age of reason, he gave prominence to imagination and supported an easy conversational manner.
Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* assumes tremendous significance in the context of the development of fiction as it showed the malleability of the genre and the liberties that could be taken with it by a writer. He tried to prove that ideas could be replaced by episodes and verbal jaunts were as amusing as action; that two gentlemen, with a passion for talking, could keep the audience spellbound quite effectively.

*Tristram Shandy* incorporated queer “inventions, paradoxes, sallies, irrelevances and reflections”¹⁵ and everything adds to the confusion in the book. The preface was put at the end of the third volume, blank pages were considered to be chapters and others were made to appear like marble or were blacked out. Sometimes, five sentences or only one makes up an entire chapter. It is, indeed, the fiction of picaresque of enfant terrible type.

The minor novelists of the age have also contributed to the growth of novel. Sarah Fielding’s novel is an example of modified picaresque type. Johnson’s *Rassela* (1759) is full of maxims of conduct, which comes close to Richardson’s *Pamela*, dealing with Christian conduct. Goldsmith draws his material from common repertoire and enlivens it with his own spirit. In his works he deals with penal code, liberty and patriotism.

Inspite of many imitative works, the later half of the eighteenth century was the germinating point of the nineteenth century novel. After incorporating politics and morality into it, the sentimental novel developed into the purely didactic novel whose job, as we know, was to propagate and
disseminate “theories of government, conduct and education.”\textsuperscript{16} The novel of manners, whose exponents were mostly women, was modified into a comprehensive and subtle novel of social satire. And Jane Austen’s \textit{Pride and Prejudice} (1796) bears testimony to it. Then there was a reaction against the novel of manners, which gave rise to a new kind of romance, which gained currency with Smollet and reached the zenith in the romantic tales of Scott.

The Romantic Revival in poetry towards the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} c induced the readers to reject realistic portrayal of everyday life and look towards the remote and the exotic. Under the influence of some of the medieval notions, the romance story reappeared. They paved the way for the Gothic novel which is characterized by “…Wonder, Fear and Suspense, Sensation and Terror.”\textsuperscript{17}

The seminal works of Gothic novel are Horace Walpole’s \textit{The Castle of Otranto} (1764) and Mrs. Radcliff’s \textit{The Mysteries of Udolpho} (1794). Walpole kept fiction away from the realistic portrayal of day-to-day affairs, but at the same time he tried to portray character and situation as realistically as was done by the 18\textsuperscript{th} c novelists. He failed in this regard due to his extensive use of the supernatural. Moreover, medieval settings do not fit in with realistic portrayal of character and situation. On the other hand, Mrs. Radcliff’s \textit{The Mysteries of Udolpho} typifies “in quest of the picturesque alternate with exciting melodrama, and the two are skilfully
harmonized by her sense of atmosphere."¹⁸ Whenever she introduced any abnormal situation, she tried to explain it by some natural cause. It is on this basis that Mrs. Radcliff was considered a role model by those who wrote romantic fiction later.

Fanny Burney brings in natural comedy amidst morose and pretentious sentimentalism. Though she tried to keep herself immune to the follies and foibles of her time, but she failed to do so. According to Ernest A. Baker, "She was anti sentimentalist to the same extent as Dr. Johnson, but not more consistently so than Goldsmith."¹⁹ Most of the writers of the time were swayed by didacticism, moralizing and sentimentality.

Maria Edgeworth took up Irish social scene seriously and dealt with social, moral and psychological dilemmas to unfold harsh realities of Ireland. Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* (1801) pictures lively description of the decadent gentry scene. “It was Miss Edgeworth’s rendering of the Irish scene that inspired Walter Scott to try to do the same for Scotland.”²⁰

As we are well-aware, there was an attempt to unite the novel of terror with the larger movement of Romantic Revival. But this proved unsuccessful as prose, unlike poetry, lacks high emotional power which the supernatural required. However, the novel got escape route to romance through history and thus it was in a position to present a world which was both credible and remote. These historical novels contained imaginative
experience and historical facts which culminated in the Waverly novels of Walter Scott. He generated interest in the romantic past through his fabulously imaginative mind, and thus developed a new genre called the historical novel.

Scott was not an innovator of history but he, like Shakespeare, changed the sequence of events sometimes to achieve dramatic effect though “characters and motives remained inviolate.” He preferred either to make chief historical personages play the role of peripheral character as we see in Waverley novels, or to emphasize on minor historical figures, as in Walter Scott’s *Kenilworth* (1821) by creating a story using imaginative freedom. He was in disfavour of both pedantic realism and purely romantic approach.

Scott was in favour of a language which accommodated common speech, but he elevated it with poetry and with adequate archaic words to recover the past. He made a sort of reconciliation between pedantry and contemporary idiom in the historical novels.

Jane Austen carried forward Fielding’s mode of presentation in the sense that she did present action through a series of short scenes in dialogue. She depended heavily on dialogue, but the comment was made covertly in the turn of the sentence, as was the case with Fielding. Like Fielding, her fiction incorporated linguistic and situational irony. As far as morals and satires are concerned, the novels of both the writers steeped in them, but they do differ
with regard to the idea of morals. In the novels of Austen, main emphasis is on manners, which she considers as “morals in microcosm.”

It has been acknowledged that novelists of the eighteenth century drew their material from actual experiences. That is why they are referred to as eighteenth century realists. They approach their themes in the context of morality. Wilbur L. Cross comments, “Richardson makes the novel a medium for Biblical teaching . . .; Fielding pins his faith on human nature ; Smollet cries for justice to the oppressed; Sterne spiritualizes sensation.” By the end of the eighteenth century, people were not much satisfied with the way the world was presented to them, and looked for the strange and the exotic. “ The novel ...became in the closing years of the eighteenth century the literature of crime , insanity and the nightmare .Romanticism had drunk immoderately of new emotions , and needed sharp castigation from good sense.”

Most of the novels of the eighteenth century portrayed the customs of society with a touch of satire. Jane Austen followed Fielding with respect to the novel of manners. Unlike others, she confined herself to “two inches of Ivory” to work on. Her characters are individualized, but still types. And the dominant characteristics of the character are so hyped that it gives rise to caricature. They reveal themselves in action and conversation and the growth of characters helps the plot to come to full circle.

Austen gauges her characters with features such as “self-command, just consideration of others, knowledge of the heart and a principle of right
obtained from education." In the world of Austen, the follies and foibles of
the young are invariably a product of faulty rearing. For example, the
elopement of Lady Bennett with Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* points to the
stupidity of her mother and irresponsibility of her father. She provides us a
highly formal world where we find a strict code of behavior.

Although Jane Austen restricted herself to a tiny world, she portrayed
her characters with exceptional power of observation. She concealed her
feelings and emotions and allowed characters to unfold themselves. Her chief
contribution to the novel lies in the fact that she created novels out of humdrum
material like life of the countryside. This set the trend and engendered the later
growth of unromantic fiction.

Though dealing with certain areas of contemporary English life that she
was pretty familiar with. Jane Austen "wrote of the human comedy with
profound art to produce novels unequaled in English literature for technical
brilliance, ironic poise and awareness of the differing claims of personality and
society."  

There are many factors for the development of the novel in the
nineteenth century. Firstly, the middle classes were in possession of power.
Secondly, there was a tangible increase in the reading public. Thirdly, people
could have easy access to the material due to the growth of publishing houses.
Fourthly, it was the best medium to project contemporary life vividly. Fifthly,
they wanted to read about themselves, for they were bored and fed up with
reading about aristocratic classes. Sixthly, they wanted to be entertained. Seventhly, they wanted to have quite a little suspension of disbelief. With the advent of Charles Dickens, “journalism and melodrama are gathered into the novel to give it new life and a new and important place in middle class entertainment.”

In the nineteenth century during the reign of Queen Victoria, the novel captured a sense of humanitarian zeal, and Charles Dickens could do it almost to perfection. In fact, he made the novel a mirror of contemporary life. His novels dealt with two specific purposes. Firstly, there was philanthropic approach to ameliorate the modus vivendi, and secondly, he made fun of the follies and foibles of the people whom he was familiar with. He could accomplish the first purpose in the manner of Richardson whereas the second purpose was carried out through caricature.

Dickens did not give much importance to plot, but paid elaborate attention to characterisation. In *Pickwick Papers* (1837), the only thread of unity is the presence of the same group of characters in a succession of different scenes. “Each of the characters soon develops his own moral, physical, and emotional qualities ... and ... these qualities reveal themselves in new and unexpected situations.” His popularity as novelist rests with the fact that he presents a crowd of people in a manner as we meet them here and there. He could present everyday life of London with tiny details owing
to his training as a journalist early in life. In his novels he tried to champion
the cause of the suppressed and poverty-stricken people.

Dickens, like Richardson, attached a lot of importance to didacticism
as he was a sentimental realist. But Thackeray reacted against this
sentimentalism and harked back to Fielding. Thackeray presented his plot
and characters truthfully.

Thackeray was very indifferent to the form of the novel. He rejected
intricate and sophisticated plot. He allowed his story to unfold itself
“through the actions and speech of his characters.” He does not probe deep
into the mind of characters, and hence there is no room for self-analysis.

As far as Thackeray’s strength is concerned, he does entertain his
readers through the action which emanates from character, and this adds
vitality and liveliness to the character. Like Tolstoy, he displays a sense of
life broader than the story itself encompasses.

In the Victorian age itself, a change was noticeable. These were
writers who introduced a feeling of poetic intensity and passionate
seriousness. The contribution of Bronte sisters to the art of the novel is
immense. They brought to the novel a queer concoction “of wild romance
and domestic realism, of cosmic poetry and local detail.”

The Bronte sisters were aware of the psychological fears of the world
of reverie, but this world also held the promise of fulfilling every wish. It
helped them to satisfy their longings for a more vigorous and lively
existence, which they did not get in the real world. They were entirely dependent on an imaginary universe to sustain their literary life. "They lived for an illusion and, perhaps, they died of it."^31

There is no denying the fact that day-dream was a potent weapon for the Bronte sisters, which exercised a tremendous influence on their works. They wrote in a simple language, completely free from embellishment and pomposity.

Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights (1847) is a psychological novel. The characters in it are the personified powers which were assimilated into her own being. The novel signifies the belief that good and evil emerge from the same source. The failure to attain self-knowledge and to lead life happily results in disharmony and chaos. Heathcliff is not evil, but represents a vital energy which was suppressed to make it “a creative outlet through love.”^32 Long before Freud’s study of the inner workings of the mind, Emily Bronte detected the conflicting impulses within the human soul. She was of the belief that the suppression of these impulses has adverse effect on the structure of personality.

An important difference between the novelists of the first generation and the second generation lies in the fact that the former were in agreement with the age whereas the latter were at odds with the age. The first half of the Victorian age has Dickens, Thackeray, Brontes and George Eliot. On the
other hand, Thomas Hardy and Butler belonged to the second half of the eighteenth century.

George Eliot paid heed to the world of theology and ethics. She put a lot of emphasis on morality and righteousness. She was of the opinion that human beings are determined to be good or bad by their actions. She changed the nature of English novel in the sense that she made characterisation more prominent than plot and thus plot becomes subservient to character.

George Eliot is the first English novelist who studied the inner workings of the mind of her characters. She probed deep to understand unfulfilled desires and reveal the operations of human will. She analyses characters through psychoanalysis and introspection.

George Eliot’s greatest contribution to the art of novel lies in the fact that she made use of psychological aspect in the portrayal of her characters. She was the first Victorian novelist who portrayed characters from inside and detected the element of destruction in all those who are not primarily evil. “Her sense of the tragedy in life is Aristotlean. Some hidden flaw ... undermines what is otherwise a good, perhaps potentially noble, character.”

The kind of realism which was completely devoid of romance and sentiment was introduced in the English novel by Hardy. The early Victorians, Dickens and Thackeray, abandoned romance for real life to
study social behaviour, but the Victorians, Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot, made the novel a medium of study of individual psychology. Hardy was not convinced with their character analysis as people who analysed were from upper strata of society and were completely detached from ground realities. Thus, the characters were able to mask their true identity. So he picked up characters who lived in primitive conditions such as Wessex. His study of simple and ordinary life of the people divorced from civilisation is amelioration of Wordsworthian attitude towards country folks. Thus, he ushered in a new era in fiction.

In his novels, Hardy always depicted man in conflict with nature. Unlike Wordsworth, Hardy considers nature to be cruel and destroyer of entire scheme of things. His characters are merely puppets in the hands of nature.

Hardy was trying to do something different from other novelists. The novelist generally shows human beings in the context of social life as we come across in George Eliot, Austen and Thackeray, but the characters of Hardy "stand in relation to other things, the weather, the seasons, a traditional craft." He is more concerned with deep, evolved passions like sexual love.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the literary scene was completely monopolized by the novel. It had incorporated in itself "characters, diaries, poetry, biography, fantasy, polemics...." Fiction
developed far beyond other genres of literature. Improvements were made in story-telling and felicitous vocabulary was in use now. During this time, a host of writers appeared on the literary scene and used the novel to explore its values and enjoyed the malleability of the medium that it provided both for characterization and artistic form.

In the Victorian age, Dickens uses the novel to solve social problems; Thackeray pictures life that he saw; George Eliot delivers sermons on morality. The impact of these writers is to be seen in the minor novelists of the age. "Thus, Dickens is reflected in Charles Reade, Thackeray in Anthony Trollope and the Bronte sisters, and George Eliot's psychology finds artistic expression in George Meredith."^36

The minor novelists of the Victorian age also played some role in the development of the novel. E C Gaskell takes up the social problems of the day which affect the lives of the people. Her description is tinged with humane feelings and psychological perceptions. Her Cranford (1851) captures English village life with a gentle mixture of humor and irony. Wilkie Collins is considered to be the father of the detective story, for he deals with novels of crime and discovery. He heeds to contemporary life with realistic detail. Charles Reade unfolds contemporary social scene with the intention to expose some evil or abuse. Charles Kingsley uses the novel for discussing problems that confront society. He exposes injustices done to the British working classes in the age of Chartism. Meredith, like George
Eliot, is a realist and a psychologist. G. Eliot takes help of tragedy to give a moral lesson, whereas Meredith uses comedy to do the same. Anthony Trollope considers novel a medium to encourage virtues and discourage vices.

The English novel remained, basically and essentially, rooted to middle classes throughout eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was based on contemporary social world. The concept of class division of society was well-supported by the novelists of the age; "it provided humor and atmosphere, and local color as well as motivation for self-advancement".^^

II

In pre-World War II era, British fiction was making departure from collective and social causes and was becoming intensely personal and individual. Technically speaking, there was a perceptible development vertically rather than horizontally, hence probing deep into the mind of characters. The novels of Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Henry James account for the same, for they employ technique of stream of consciousness to analyse their character. There was a good deal of representation of working class and lower middle class in the novels of D.H. Lawrence and H.G. Wells respectively. Even Thomas Hardy dealt with underprivileged and primitive class in his novels. The theme of the relation between knowledge and value was well-researched in the novels of Aldous Huxley. Just as the theme of the relation between gentility and morality was trend
throughout eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so was the theme of "the relation between loneliness and love" in the novels of twentieth century.

In *The Art of Fiction* (1884), Henry James talks about developments that had taken place in the narrative technique of fiction towards the beginning of 20th century.

Only a short time ago it might have been supposed that the English novel was not what the French call discutable. It had no air of having a theory, a conviction, a consciousness of itself behind it – of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison ... there was a comfortable, good humoured feeling abroad that a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding, and that this was the end of it. But within a year or two, for some reason or other, there have been signs of returning animation – the era of discussion would appear to have been to certain extent opened.

Realism was the major technique of narration throughout the Victorian era, but some novels were distinctly romantic. For example, R.L. Stevenson reverted back to the old romance of adventure and he was of the opinion that it was the significant form of prose art. But the most important emerging phenomenon that characterizes the nineteenth century fiction is impressionism, which contains the ingredients of both – the romance and realism. Henry James is the established writer of the same.
Towards the close of the nineteenth century, the novel was considered as serious form of art, as serious as music, painting, and architecture. Writers like Henry James, R.L. Stevenson, Conrad, et al. took the novel form very seriously and accorded it the status of poetry and drama. Even satirists and theorists seized the opportunity to use the novel as a medium to propagate and disseminate ideas and it became an instrument of social criticism of the contemporary period.

Through his works, Butler contributed immensely to the art of the novel in the sense that he, unlike others, focused upon the systems, institutions and principles which were hitherto left untouched. Before Butler, satirists in fiction had confined themselves to expose the follies of individuals, malaise of society and to evoke sympathy for its victims. In his three novels, Butler vehemently criticized the whole system of belief on which English life based – familial and religious.

Henry James introduced to the form of the novel conscious artistry, aesthetic refinement, sensuous subtlety, and an elaborate perceptiveness. In The Art of Fiction, Henry James states that the novel was the “best form of art to express the truth of life”

40, but to express the truth requires freedom. Henry James comments on freedom;

A novel is in its broadest definition a personal impression of life; that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression
of life. But there will be no intensity at all, and therefore no value, unless there is freedom to feel and say.... The execution belongs to the author alone; it is what is most personal to him, and we measure him by that. The advantage, the luxury, as well as the torment and responsibility of the novelist, is that there is no limit to what he may attempt as an executant — no limit to his possible experiments, efforts, discoveries and successes.41

In the same essay, he emphasizes on the need for experience;

Experience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web, of the finest silken threads, suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative — much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius — it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations.42

James gave a lot of emphasis to the moral purpose in the novel but he was of the opinion that it should be done covertly, and that fiction does not provide any room to preach and instruct as it has adverse effect on the entirety of a work of art. James says;
There is one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; that is, in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer.... No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind; that seems to me an axiom which, for the artist in fiction, will cover all needful moral ground. If the youthful aspirant takes it to heart, it will illumine for him many of the mysteries of "purpose".\textsuperscript{43}

\textit{The Art of Fiction} showed the seriousness of James with the art of story telling. He wanted to attain the completeness of art about any given situation. He had an eye on artistic perfection to be able to unfold the truth of an imagined situation. He worked laboriously for the felicitous words to convey his meaning, the right image or metaphor to transmit an emotion to the reader. He has the credit of being the first English novelist who gave equal importance to how a thing was said and what was said.

Joseph Conrad was the true follower of Henry James. He is referred to as the novelist of extreme situations, for most of his works deal with the theme of a "man against himself, the environment, whether sea or exotic place."\textsuperscript{44} Herein, this performs two functions. Firstly, it dissociates the character from the society and the larger world of men. Secondly, it serves as the agent of self-confrontation. Thus, nature itself symbolizes evil. Like
Henry James, Conrad’s form, content and language are inextricably linked with one other.

As far as Conrad’s language is concerned, it is elevated and exalted. It is, indeed, oratorical and rhetorical to a degree that subdues everything—“choice of words, rhythms, balance of clauses, length of sentences, culmination of paragraphs.” The total effect produced helps to elevate narration to a degree that at times, it appears that language is used not to reveal but to conceal meaning.

Conrad was influenced by Flaubert, the Russian novelists, Maupassant and Henry James. His works are amalgamation of adventure and French naturalism. His main purpose was to convey “impressions of reality, be it good, bad, indifferent, cruel, mean or magnificent.” He analysed psychology of ordinary characters bewildered by the cruelty of fate. Despite having the intention to do something good, human beings were relentlessly deceived by their self-centredness to change into cannibals. His objective was to depict misery and vulnerability of man.

In the eighteen-nineties, the English novel which had given a lot of prominence to form, was inching towards aesthetic movement. Although this movement did not last long, but it produced a few significant works.

Like the French, The English seldom group into well-defined entities and decadence is spread over an entire period. The only thread that we come across in the movement is of psychological order. John Ruskin introduced
the aesthetic movement to revolt against the ignorance of art and the beauty by the industrialized Victorian England. It catered to the demands of the moral and social ideals which characterize Victorian age.

Somerset Maugham concentrated on forces that gave rise to frustration and sadness in individuals whether they emerged from human passions or were caused by modus operandi of society. His *Of Human Bondage* (1915) manifests the working of fate that brings in misery.

H.G. Wells, the established writer of science fiction, uses his art to disseminate ideas. He preferred Biology and World History to the classics. He rejected the established convention and set new trends. In *Time Machine* (1895) times consciousness is brought in through the tool of time machine. He was of the belief that civilization could be bettered and improved through reason and ideas.

Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* (1922) analyses numerous things that go into the making of society. He was very sensitive to the misery and sufferings of the downtrodden and the suppressed. Thus he sympathized with them and tried to champion their cause.

E.M. Forster showed himself to be the champion of the liberal humanist tradition. He manifests faith in individual freedom, and the qualities of tolerance and brilliance which were products of the prosperous middle class of nineteenth century.
Being a liberal humanist, Forster adored civilization, for it was the fruit of liberalism. He was of the belief that liberalism was based on reason which was itself rejected by irrational impulses. Subsequently, he found it very difficult to reconcile or harmonize “civilized order with imaginative awareness and the world of feeling.” In a nutshell, the main theme of the novels of Forster is the problem of the intricacies of human character and relationships.

No period of English literature is completely self contained. In fact, we come across constant overlapping of styles and forms. If something is discarded at the higher level with regard to creativity, it becomes the very basis of the novel of another kind. For example, in the innovative and experimental era of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, many novels presented “straight-forward narrative, well-knit plot and recognizable characters.” On the other hand, Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh were assailing traditional morality, and popular novelists. Despite deviations at several levels, the novel exhibits a certain thread of unity and coherence in its growth between 1918-1930. There was a change in form and subject matter as the remarkable writers were experimental with regard to forms, themes and techniques.

The First World War had occasioned a great and drastic change in thought and feeling. As we know, the nineteenth century was completely revolutionized by the path-breaking ideas of Darwin, Marx and Freud, and
as a result, old assumptions were discarded to pave the way for scientific, political and psychological theories.

By the end of the nineteenth century, medievalism gave way to individualism. Thus, there arose a belief in progress and development, absolute rights of the individual and in the sanctity of human reason. Furthermore, ratiocination eliminated superstitions and introduced a creed of liberal humanism.

By the end of the nineteenth century there was this belief that the progress was steady with respect to advancement of science and a constantly proliferating economy. Thus, there was improvement in the modus vivendi across the globe in the first decade of the twentieth century. But this idea was shattered due to the introduction of new ideas given by Darwin, Marx and Freud. And this was further aggravated by the outbreak of the war.

The twentieth century novels manifest the change in the assumptions of the age. The writers paid heed to intellectual aspect. The literature of the time was characterized by two important features — one negative and the other positive. The first group assailed the well established assumptions and yet impressed by traditional mode of thinking. On the other hand, the second group broke away with the old ones and disseminated the new ones.

The First World War discarded old assumptions, brought in new ones which engendered pessimistic and distrustful attitude towards life. The works of the time show a contemporary attitude towards the middle class.
Everything which appeared to form a platform "for established order" was attacked—education, religion, the world of politics, business, sex-relationships, and puritan restraints. The middle class society is criticized as it involved mankind in war. Huxley and E. Waugh were welcomed, for they focused on the need of sexual freedom and made a mockery of traditional conventions.

In the nineteen thirties, with the increase of unemployed youth in England, the triumph of Fascism in Germany, a brewing civil war in Spain, the writer was no longer so significant. As the writer was losing his importance, two ways presented themselves for him. Either he had to side with the current political ideologies or he had to break away with them and stick to religion or philosophy. The younger generation adopted the current political ideologies, but the older generation broke away with it. Hence, the works of Huxley exhibited the growing distrust of materialism, and the desire to fall back upon religion to gain an individual freedom. In this way, there revived an interest in religion which became a prominent feature of the works of the nineteen thirties. The two main factors for this were the revolt against reason by D.H. Lawrence and the psychological absorption into the inner consciousness. Virginia Woolf and Richardson occasioned a change both in form and content.

D.H. Lawrence considered the relationship between man and woman disharmonious. He was of the opinion that the endeavor of "contemporary
struggle of women for mastery" brought in all human misery and unhappiness. He introduced the blood-consciousness which paved the way for creative life. He wanted to overcome intellect which suppressed basic instincts. His creed was to get back to primitive belief that the relationship between man and woman was basically organic.

In the world of scientific development and technological advancement, the modern man does not like metaphorical expression which characterizes poetry. The novel is preferred, for there is room for explanation and clarification. Furthermore, the progress of science has paved the way for probing deep into the minds of character, and only the novel offers this possibility.

The modern novelist is realistic in the sense that Lawrence, unlike Zola, incorporates broader view of life. Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* is testimony to the same. It could be made as flexible as life itself. Secondly the modern novelist has psychological insight. The psychological problem pertains to the nature of consciousness and its relation to time. Modern psychology rejects the idea that consciousness moves in a straight chronological line from one point to the next. The writer adopts the stream of consciousness technique to probe deep into character’s mind so as to capture the thoughts existing simultaneously at different levels.

According to Virginia Woolf, the individual’s reaction to any given situation is gauged by his “experience in the past through the links of
association." So, reality here is a matter of personal impression. On account of differences in terms of impressions about objects, the real communication between persons becomes impossible. And this leads to strangeness among the people. This idea gets support by the lack of common values in the society. D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf deal with the same.

Stream of consciousness technique introduces a change in the characterisation also. Before the advent of this technique, there were two ways to deal with characterisation. Either the character emerges out of a chronological account of a number of events and the character's reaction to them or we are told the details of the character. And thus we get to know what he is and what to expect from him in a given situation. In Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), we come across the first approach to characterization. The second method of characterisation is to be seen in Trollope's *Barchester Towers* (1857). But Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816) employs amalgamation of both the methods in the portrayal of Emma. But the stream of consciousness novelist breaks away with the traditional mode of characterisation. James Joyce is of the opinion that it is impossible to present a psychologically accurate account of what a man is at any given moment either through a description of character or through chronological account of a group of events. By implying the stream of consciousness method, the writer is able to capture the precise nature of the present
experience of his character and to give facts about the character’s life prior
to this moment. Thus he is able to give us in one day a complete picture of
the character both historically and psychologically.

In stream of consciousness novels, the character also develops. For
example, in Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) character is developed into a rounded
one in just one day, and so is the case with *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) of
Virginia Woolf. It is a method in which a character undercuts time and
space. There was a maiden attempt in the history of literature to achieve
realism by “allowing the ‘stream of consciousness’ to flow on
uninterruptedly, carrying with it all the debris of psychological
underworld.” Here it is asserted that it is unwise to wait for time to make
the potential qualities in the character take the form of activity.

Through the writings of James Joyce, we get to know his command
over language, and his power to create scenes that produce sensations on the
nerves. We find a change in prose style of English as he introduces a
different syntax and structure. Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (1939) extensively
experiments with language. There is an abundance of puns and allusions.
The normal structure of words is disrupted, roots from many languages are
put “into a new synthesis, a kind of philological palimpsest.” He uses the
device of the pun to reveal the covert meanings.

In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce employs a strange language which
performs two tasks. Firstly, it homogenizes the obvious diversity of western
languages. And secondly, it captures meaninglessness of life, for there is a lack of universally decipherable language and set of symbols. Thus, it creates de-communication. There is a synthesis of many senses through words. And words themselves are a store of myriads of experiences—past, present and future. He tries to convey a sense of simultaneity through linguistic experimentations and a host of associations.

Joyce's contribution is immense with respect to synthesization of experience and a change in English prose style. His works are pervaded with "poetic lyricism, metaphysical wit, impish humor, and keen philosophical perceptions." He showed a priceless gift of introspection and tremendous knowledge.

There appeared hardly any notable novels during the World War Second and the years that immediately followed it. Some of the successful novels, which were written in this period, were written by the writers who were well-established before the occurrence of the Second World War. It is because entire energy was consumed by the cataclysmic war. Moreover, people were involved in the struggle for existence. "Life was both disorganized and regimented." There were just two options for the writers—either to engage themselves directly into action or to take up the role of being propagandists. Nobody could remain immune to the war, not even children. At the end, people thought it wise—either to forget about
catastrophe of war at the earliest or to do something for the welfare of England.

It is to be noted that the significant works of the war years were produced in the form of penal literature, documentaries and biographies. The already established English novelists continued to write even in the war years, but they refrained completely from the theme of war. James Gindin observes:

The novel of conduct and class is certainly not new in the English tradition. Richardson and Fielding dealt extensively with class distinctions and struggle in eighteenth century society and, a century later, Dickens, Trollope, and then Hardy frequently used the theme of the young man from the lower or lower middle classes attempting to enter a more urbane and cosmopolitan society. Class lines, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were not prescribed with absolute, immutable rigidity, although the problems and stresses holding back the young man of energy were invariably greater than the opportunities before him. In the twentieth century, however, and particularly since the end of World War Second, the young man finds moving from one class to another superficially easier.56
The post-War British fiction portrays a society in which the hero is not very sure as to where he is destined to go. The main problem that confronts the novel of class and conduct is how the hero reconciles with himself and his world, though it was the same during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The difference is apparent here with regard to values, and alternatives in society in twentieth century. There is a rapid change in values of conduct and class. Novels tend to anchor in personal and metaphysical issues. Moreover, "the structure of permanent metaphysical and personal concerns" are clothed temporarily with the help of social issues. The novel of class and conduct paves the way for rapidly changing values of the twentieth century. After the end of World War Second, many writers have striven to hark back to nineteenth century theme of how a man works his way through society.

George Orwell, the novelist of the state affairs, was thoroughly annoyed with the emptiness and squalor of life among working class. So he wanted to make this world a better place to live in and he thought this could be achieved through socialism. But his experiences of civil war in Spain eliminated any belief that he might have had in communism. He thought it pretty intricate to change life through political formulas. His faith in slogans and propaganda was further aggravated by the Second World War. The break up of alliance between Russia and the west after the war occasioned his political allegory, *Animal Farm*. 
Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eight Four* (1949) appeared to be establishing a liberal world view on the basis of a deep skepticism of political extremes that engenders “a new lineage of liberal and socially attentive writing.”\(^{59}\) And the British Fiction in the 1950, and beyond is pervaded with this sort of writing.

Both the works of Orwell indirectly refer to the rejection of the corrupt mechanics of the communist state which agrees with the cold war mood and pervades western society through into the 1980s.

*The Beveridge Report* of Sir William Beveridge was prepared for a comprehensive welfare programme with the hope to raise employment, universal national insurance scheme and a national health service. Thus, it occasioned the emergence of welfare state after 1945\(^{60}\).

Aldous Huxley was thoroughly disgusted with the worldly affairs, and was unhappy about the undue scientific control of human life. The spiritual values were lost in the pursuit of material gain. Through his writings, Huxley suggests that human love has an ability to transform and regenerate human kind.

Wyndham Lewis, the satirist, hits out at youth cults, liberation, relativity, homosexuality and women. He is also very satirical about the intellectual and literary cults of the twenties. His aversions to scientific experiments and human degradation were further deepened by the horrors of
the Second World War. He dealt with those areas of human life which are contrary to the heroic and divine.

The optimistic view in post-War era was partially built on hope, and this hopeful projection is not reproduced in the novel. It is a matter of little surprise, for the function of serious fiction is to provide an alternative perspective in the areas which engenders a sense of concern about history and society. In 1950, serious writers held celebratory mood of a new beginning faulty and defective. In *The World My Wilderness* (1950), Rose Macaulay put emphasis on a breakdown of social order which gives rise to psychological problem.

In *The Humbler Creation* (1959), Hansford Johnson says that assessment of belief in goodness and progress is also a testing of the liberal philosophy. And the same goes with Angus Wilson’s novels of 1950s in which the adequacy and integrity of liberal humanism is continually questioned. Wilson thinks deeply over the nature of English society and culture and asks himself whether liberalism will be able to provide a moral centre for the new social formation or not.

Since the post war society is fraught with judgements, class differences and distinctions, the writers of the age have sympathized with the lower class, for it was not adequately represented.

Allen Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night And Sunday Morning* (1958) is a realistic, sympathetic account of an industrial worker whose emotional and
sexual complications are highlighted. In his opinion, the world is divided into the powerful and those who acknowledge the authority of the powerful.

In John Braine’s *Room at the Top* (1957), the hero tries to rise above his working class origin but ends up corrupting himself in the process. It spoils his personal relationships as well.

William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* (1954) captures meticulous realism which is quite symbolic. The kind of society which it depicts is based on cruelty, fear, violence and anarchy. His novels offer visionary intensity. He searches for a form that may adequately represent a kind of tortured moral vision.

Iris Murdoch’s plots are a series of episodes woven together. She devises unusual situations tinged with exotic intensity. Her first novel *Under the Net* (1954) records the power of fancy and imagination. Her metaphors and images are painted with poetry. Through her novels, she tries to make “sense of the chaos of daily feelings and happenings”.

Angus Wilson shows his inclination to Victorian narrative styles as opposed to “the errant experimentalism of the modernists.” His *Anglo-saxon Attitude* (1956) analyses the cultural, sexual and social tensions of a period struggling to come to terms with conflicting claims of tradition and novelty.
Kingsley Amis claims that his main aim is to write funny books. "The comic image, the specific and irrelevant reference, the frequent iconoclastic interruption and the verbal texture" characterize his novels. In *Lucky Jim* (1954), Jim Dixon, the hero, makes fun of accent of Professor Welch.

Dorris Lessing is intensely committed to reform society. His novels report with journalistic accuracy about what strike or industrial campaign is like. His political and sociological causes are worked through historical situations. In the portrayal of working class, Lessing often uses women to put across his argument. In *Martha Quest* (1952), Martha, the heroine, struggles to define herself personally and politically.

Graham Greene probes "the disparities between human decency and theological virtue, between moral intention and irreligious act." His shifts from the themes of horror, violence and cruelty to the themes of man and his conscience and hence his struggle with God, makes him distinct from others. Catholicism provides him space to build inner conflicts to explore the moral conscience on different issues. His *The Heart of Matter* (1948), is a story of sexual sin and damnation.

According to John Fowles, there is a need to identify the chief features of the novel in a secular and individualistic age. The novel is a vehicle that offers an imagined present in the life of one or more characters, but it tries to find some significant links with the past and future experiences in an imagined life through narrative exposition. As this temporal interplay
is condensed into a short narrative span, the structure of the novel can provide complete temporal consciousness which is, at times, apparently missing in contemporary life governed by immediate gain and transient cultural forms. This aspect of modern novel explains for its ability to strike a balance between imagination and reality. With the help of the power to fictionalize, the novel enlivens the real and creates a medium of temporal comprehension which is not available in other forms of writing. And this helps us to understand "the individual's ongoing role in social history."^68

Through historical variability and the significance of the context, the novel shows the tendency to attach itself with history. The novel may have a perceptible effect "on contemporary culture, on our memory of recent social history, and on our perceptions of self-identity"^69, but the novel cannot interfere with given social problems. The liberation in which it takes part is an intricate mixture of different forces and influences within the social superstructure.

As far as the post-War novel is concerned, the democratic conception of art is its liberating feature. The literate class tries to pave the way for egalitarian culture, and the mass-market paper-back provides the way for its transmission. Today, anyone who is educated, can afford to become a novelist. And anyone who is erudite and thoroughly well-read can make himself a better one. There are no stringent rules, as the novel develops continually. In the age of computer, to produce a novel has become simpler.
all the more. Now, it appears that publishing house could be right in the hands of authors, since the internet and e-book system are on the rise.

Another important point to take note of is that the social novel has acquired the status of discourse that can be accessed to various areas of social experience. The gap between the serious expression of the novels and reflective expressions of popular culture are well-bridged up. The post-modern novel has done away with "distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture." The novel has created for itself a new intellectual space that covers every part of social life. It has an ability to reflect on social and cultural questions. Consequently, there is a democratization of narrative fiction owing to the blurring of distinction between genres.

In the opinion of Arthur Marwick, the social historian’s view is that the novel in the immediate post-War period was on the wane due to parochial matters and inwardness of contemporary political thought. The literary critics have been very concerned about the prospect of the novel throughout the period. In his famous declaration of 1969, David Lodge states that the English novelist encountered alternatives of "fabulation and experimental metafiction." He was of the opinion that the novel should stick to realism and liberal ideology.

In 1960s there was emergence of ‘youth culture’ which brought a change in social scenario. The newly empowered section of society gave rise to youth related cultural forms, especially pop music, which became
important ingredients of economy. This radical change in the perceptiveness in age brought forth intellectuals and entertainers. This change had an impact on the views of the public about novelists. The belief that the novelists write their masterpieces after the age of forty is shattered, poor youth achieved the same in their prime age. Shena Mackay is the best young novelist in the early 1960s, when she says “all books by young persons were treated in the papers as dispatches from front-line Swinging London.”

The phenomenon of 1960s gave rise to hippy culture. It tried to reunite society with nature to create intellectual legacy, because it conceived reworking of the relationship between the humanity and the rest of the nature. There is a lot of disapprobation because of the fuelling of drugs to enlarge consciousness and expediency of the achievement of social harmony. At this point, historians and novelists are in unison. Esther-Fraud’s *Hideous Kinky* (1992) mentions hippy idealism, associated with drug experimentation and slight dabbling in Eastern mysticism. In this, the child narrator’s view is critical of “her feckless mother’s pursuit of adventure in Morocco.” Freud shows the narrator and her elder sister trying to recall the deliciousness of Mars bars and mashed potato while their mother sleeps in with her African lover, and this trapping of the west is very difficult to do away with.

It is to be noted that the Second World War assumes tremendous significance with regard to class relations. There was a lot of demand for a
lion's share of proletariat in the new prosperity that emerged in the 1950s. There was a lot of effort and endeavor to help proletariat to prosper, which subverts the economic basis of class affiliation. Despite this, British culture with respect to class is riven with contradictions especially where classes are jolted by social and economic change, but they are not yet given up.

In the middle of the nineteen fifties, there was a growth of writers who were representatives of a social realism that manifested the apparent characteristics of the post-War world. The novelists like John Wain, Kingsley Amis and John Braine incorporated in their novels the new lower middle class, with its first generation of scholars. The works of these writers manifested protest, often articulated through provincial characters with a working class background. These characters were generally anguished, disturbed and angry, satirizing society, its codes and institutions. This kind of work also contains class-conflict, intense marital tension.  

The 1960s witnessed the widening of women's perspectives and opportunities with respect to the social changes. There was an appearance of new ways of women's employment, particularly professional employment, for the 'New Morality' had questioned the established notions of gender, sexuality and marriage. Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970) provided impetus to the growth of a newly frank and provocative feminism in the period. Dorris Lessing's book *Children of Violence* (1952-69) dealt with the problems of race, class and gender. Greer and Lessing emphasized
upon the marginalized and parochial representations of women's roles in society and its literature, and tried to bring about awareness to woman community about the same. Jean Rhy's novels explore the nature of loneliness, exploitation and victimization.\(^{75}\)

According to Bernard Bergonzi, the decade 1970 is "generally held to embody the nadir of British Fiction"\(^{76}\), for the economic crisis had adverse effect on publishing and the production of texts. If we take into account the larger perspective of literacy history, it can hardly be treated as the suppressed and restrained period of creativity. On the contrary, this decade witnessed the spurt of publication of significant novels by Iris Murdoch, John Fowles, J.G. Farrel, and David Storey among others. It also saw the first books by Martin Amis and Ian McEwan.

During the period of 1950-1970, despite the consumer boom, Britain lost its influential status as a world power, and came to be considered as one of the insignificant states. This is because British economy failed to keep pace with its European competitors. Economic recession had an adverse effect on the industrial relations through the 1970s.

The post-war consensus came to an end soon after Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister of England in 1979. The policies of Thatcherism were characterized by privatization and free-market economy, and for the reform of Trade Union Law. The British society and culture experienced radical changes which gave rise to a spirit of either adventurous
entrepreneurship or lamentable greed. Novelists were on the latter side, for they were quite depressed to see the collapse of the welfare state in the offing. Thus, there came a new era of inequality and social division. Martin Amis' *Money* (1984) captures Reagan – Thatcher era with its mood of possessiveness and materiality.

We have Bergonzi’s assessment of 1970 that ‘English literature in the fifties and sixties has been both backward and inward looking’ indicating that on literary and political front, Britain is not very significant part of the world today. Bergonzi argued that English fiction remained pre-occupied with parochial matters and less innovative than American novel.

Taylor is of the belief that decline and fall of literary fiction had persisted well into 1980s. And that is why this period is considered ‘a sprawling landscape of underachievement’. He sides with Berganzi’s view of the inborn superiority of American fiction.

Hilary Mantel’s *Every Day is Mother’s Day* (1985) presents a "society in confusion and chaos", beyond the redemption of the welfare state. The novel, set in mid 1970s, manifests the loss of faith in welfare measures, and is representative of the public mood throughout the 1980s and beyond.

Carol Birch’s *Life in the Palace* (1988) is a good example of the modern political novel which shows the shift from the scene of public life to
urban dereliction. It depicts the inner-city decay that is seen through the 1980s.\textsuperscript{81}

There is another novel \textit{Nice Work} (1988) by David Lodge, which parodies English novel of the Victorian era. It also projects the division between industry and academia. Moreover, he parodies the mechanistic binary oppositions of structuralist literary criticism. This runs parallel to Lodge's method in the sense that there appears to be a gyrating gap between the complex nature of modern society and the impact of plain narrative realism, written in the third person\textsuperscript{82}.

There are many causes such as literary, technical, social and historical ones that have led to the elimination of collective representation associated with third person narrative realism. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this process begins with the advent of modernism. The emphasis here is on how that ongoing development associates itself with specific social anxieties in post war Britain. We have to arrive at conclusions about the contemporary social and political novel with caution, for the literary – historical term is broader one.

Irvine Welsh's \textit{Trainspotting} (1993) is a good example of a novel that is a definitive break with "a bourgeois tradition"\textsuperscript{83}. Welsh represents the voice of junkee culture. It is a new kind of fiction that manifests social fragmentation and alienation, and is deeply nihilistic in its implications. The novel contains horrible and desensitized episodes and is written in a broad
dialectal form and is made to alienate the liberal English literary mainstream. The narration of the novel is done through various perspectives. Welsh reveals a new kind of social division in Edinburgh, the city with the highest rate of HIV infection in the UK, through the description of Heroine addiction.

In the late 1940s the novel in Britain was considered to be in chaotic condition because the post-war society dispensed with the established principles of cohesion. The established values of national identity, race, gender and class were all questioned. In the second half of the twentieth century, this provided opportunities for the novelist to intervene in social change imaginatively in order to re-invigorate culture and society as the century progressed. The year 1950-2000 witnessed a great deal of creativity with regard to supplementing given forms of the novel of society in Britain.

III

The intellectual renaissance of New England coincided with its material prosperity. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Boston was the centre of intellectual and material production, but after the Civil War, the West and the South gained literary importance, and the Middle West around the Mississippi Valley became the source of inspiration for Mark Twain. The Mississippi, according to Bernard DeVoto, "...had dominion over Mark's imagination and here becomes a truly great symbol. Thus
realism, fantasy, satire, mythology and the tragic knowledge of man, all of them a good many layers deep, united in Mark Twain's masterpiece."  

Mark Twain's masterpiece *Huckleberry Finn* (1885) pleases the reader with its language. Its language was discovered and adapted and not created. In the opinion of Hemingway, "all modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*."  

Richard Chase comments on *Huckleberry Finn*:

In the works of these writers we are not asked to accustom ourselves to a version of traditional "literary" English, as we are in reading Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, or James, writers whose versions of English are sometimes highly idiosyncratic and imprisoned in their own special conventions. And yet, close as it is to the spoken English of rural South-West America, the language of *Huckleberry Finn* is itself a new literary style which, as the works of Hemingway show, is capable of extreme conventionalization. It is literary because it is sustained beyond the span of spoken language to meet the requirements of a long story and because it is consciously adapted to the purposes of a novel which even those critics who object to the concluding part of the book, where Tom Sawyer takes over, on the ground that this makes a disunity, admit to be in the main a masterpiece of literary form. But it
is also literary because, unlike ordinary spoken language, it is always conscious of the traditional English – notably of the Bible and Shakespeare – from which it is departing. The language of *Huckleberry Finn* is a kind of joyous exorcism of traditional literary English, but this ritual act allies it irrevocably with what it exorcises. And half the pleasure of reading the book comes from the alternation of tension and release as the language modulates or, as often happens, shifts with wonderful abruptness from traditional literary English to colloquial American.87

As far as imaginative power of Mark Twain is concerned, *Huckleberry Finn* includes “the imagination of idyl and of melodrama. That life on the raft is idyllic and that *Huckleberry Finn* is a pastoral fiction that looks back nostalgically to an earlier and simpler America... The book banks heavily on melodrama-and burlesque and farce, which are to comedy what melodrama is to tragedy.”88

Ernest Hemingway’s works reflect the image of his life and the most important part of his life is adventure. His experiences of First World War and Civil War are captured in his novels *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) respectively. His latter novel is known for its dexterous and mature style. Joseph Warren Beach comments;

Hemingway’s style is more a matter of separate statements, with no legato, no holding over of the effect with the
The blurring of the pedal. Most of his sentences are short and simple, a single statement, subject, predicate and object. And the most of the rest are strings of simple statements held together with *ands*. The rarest thing with him is the statement modified by subordinate clauses indicating reasons, causes, conditions, concessions – intrusive refinements of thought, which only serve to clutter things up and blur the simple behaviouristic sequence. Stimulus and response-gesture, speech, action….”

In *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), Hemingway unfolds a story of the ‘last generation’ in the wake of First World War. Jack, the hero, an American journalist, is rendered impotent through a war wound. Brett, the heroine, an aristocratic English woman is both an alcoholic and a nymphomaniac. The novel hinges upon the relationship between Jack and Brett. Here, Joseph Warren Beach observes;

Hemingway is of the school of those who identify themselves in tone with their characters. The narrative portions are assimilated as nearly as possible to the tone and idiom of the characters to whom they refer. And the vocabulary is chosen with the same eye to simplicity as the syntax… with Hemingway the exact word is the word most likely to occur to unsophisticated, or the consciously unbookish, character. It is the word which puts the least
strain upon the intellect, the most simple and so undiscriminated word.90

Henry James was interested in the analysis of character. He had "brought a new precision and complexity into the description of states of mind... The isolation of individual consciousness steadily became the most important psychological fact in a world... where every individual was seen to be the prisoner of his unique stream of consciousness."91

Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady* (1880) was the first novel by an American which made full use of novel form. James shows Isabel Archer, the protagonist of the novel, to be a charming lady who is moving away from the world of innocence to the world of experience in the quest of knowledge of life. Richard Chase remarks:

The conscious assimilation of romance into the novelistic substance of *The Portrait* took place in two different ways. It was assimilated into the language of the book and produced a general enrichment of metaphor. It was also brought in in the character of Isabel Archer, the heroine, who is to a considerable extent our point of view as we read. Isabel tends to see things as a romancer does, whereas the author sees things with the firmer, more comprehensive, and more disillusioned vision of the novelist. Thus James brings the element of romance into the novel in such a way that he can
both share in the romantic point of view of his heroine and separate himself from it by taking an objective view of it.\textsuperscript{92}

Henry James is the creator of his own world. His world is peopled by lonely human beings who lead life gracefully. He presents "a world which vibrates with the finest instincts and sentiments and trembles at vulgarity and ugliness; a world full of works of art and learning and intelligence, a world infinitely refined, a world perfectly civilized".\textsuperscript{93}

Faulkner is the most distinguished novelist of the South. He catapulted into fame for his novel \textit{The Sound and The Fury} (1929), which is about the degenerate members of an old Southern family. His famous novels \textit{Light in August} (1932) and \textit{Absalom! Absalom!} (1936) deal with the doctrine of a planter family through racial interbreeding. Generally speaking, his works deal with incest, murder, adultery, and racial hatred. Joseph Warren Beach comments;

Faulkner's personal style is a thing of prodigious force and splendor... if we judge by sheer brilliancy, by richness and expressiveness in characterization and description. His eye and mind are ever on the alert and driven by a sleepless passion for rendering the very heart of his subject... For with vanity there enters the concern not merely for adequate expression but for display of gifts and \textsuperscript{94}

Faulkner has predilection for the use of adjectives. He prefers to use adjectives in pairs which engender rhythm and amplitude. He is fond of
adjectives of Latin origin, which add up to pomp and glamour. For example, he talks of a couple who "had both become ineradicably intimate with cold for the first time in their lives, a cold which left an ineffaceable and unforgettable mark somewhere on the spirit and memory like first sex experience or the experience of taking human life."\textsuperscript{95}
References


3. Idem.


9. Wilbur L. Cross, op.cit., p. 34

10. Ibid., pp.41-42


15. Ibid., p-87.
16. Wilbur L. Cross, op. cit., p. 84.
18. Ibid., p.197.
19. Ibid., p.155.
23. Wilbur L. Cross, op.cit., p.76.
24. Ibid., p.114.
28. Ibid., p. 1051.
30. Ibid., p.190.
31. Ibid., p.193.
32. Ibid., p. 205.
34. Walter Allen, op.cit., p.234.


41. *Idem*.

42. *Idem*.


55. Ibid., p. 378.


57. Ibid., p. 4.


61. Ibid., p. 19.


63. Ibid., p. 1176.


66. Ibid, p. 86.


69. Ibid., p. 5.

70. Ibid., p. 6.

71. Idem.


75. Andrew Sanders, op.cit., p. 614.

76. Dominic Head, op.cit., p. 7.

77. Ibid., p. 30.

78. Quoted by Dominic Head, op.cit., p. 6.


80. Ibid., p. 38.

81. Ibid., p. 41.

82. Ibid., p. 43.

83. Ibid., p. 44.


86. Ibid., p. 139.

87. Ibid., p. 140.

88. Ibid., p. 148.


90. Ibid., p. 102.


Chapter II

Introduction II: Developments in the Mode of Narration in Indian Novel in English
Chapter – II

With the expansion of empire and hence civil administration during the 19th century, English language flourished as the official administrative language. Visionary educationists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Lord Bentinck and Lord Macauley gave impetus to English education in India. English language became the main medium of instruction. It was through this language that Indians could have access to western thoughts and innovative ideas, and hence could broaden their horizon of knowledge. Intellectuals like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore disseminated their philosophical ideas by the end of the 19th century. These writers tried to project Indian culture, religion, and philosophy to the west.

English became a link-language between India and the foreign countries. Furthermore, educated Indians wanted their countrymen to be familiar with the treasure of “English literature with its new techniques, new forms and new outlook on life”, hence enriching the literature of different regional languages of India. B.R. Agrawal and M.P. Sinha remark;

Indian writing in English was but one manifestation of the new creative urge in India. It is often referred to as the literary renaissance in India. The exhausted and almost sapless native soil received the rich fertilizer from the west, and out of this fruitful union, a new literature was born.
As far as the earlier writings of Indians in English are concerned, they were mainly in prose, and were confined to speeches and a pamphlet on social reform. In the opinion of B.R. Agrawal and M.P. Sinha;

The novel, the genre of imaginative literature which gives artistic form to the relationship of man and society, was conspicuously absent till the mid-nineteenth century. Early Indian-English fiction appeared when Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott had become classics and Dickens had written most of his novels in England, when in France, Balzac and Alexander Dumas were in their graves, and when in Russia, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy had published most of their important novels. The delay in the development of prose fiction in Indian literature has often been related to the late emergence of the historical sense among Indians.  

It is remarkable to note that a novel by an Indian writer seeks direct involvement in values and experiences which are pertinent to the Indian context. This was absent in the early generation of educated Indians. They either associated themselves to “creative writing in their own regional languages or to social reform or political organisations” to bring about awareness among public.

With the passage of time, the novels in regional languages paved the way for the genesis of Indian English fiction. First of all, Bengal experienced the literary renaissance, which spread to other parts of India.
slowly. It is said, “The vicissitudes of the Bengali Novel foreshadow more or less the vicissitudes of the Novel in India. The western breeze blows sometimes directly, and sometimes – and more significantly, indirectly – its velocity chastened in the ample spaces of Bengal.”

It is generally assumed that Indian English fiction made a diffident appearance in 1920s and picked momentum by 1930s. The novels written before 1947 unfold the themes of national movements, the struggle for independence, patriotic feelings and zeal of reformation among Indians. Some of the novelists preached the ideals of Gandhi and addressed the problems of social injustice and oppression. “The style of these novelists was largely moulded after Gandhi’s style” and the novels were characterized by simplicity, lucidity and effectiveness.

It is very essential to study the matter and manner of any work of art so as to make its critical assessment. Hence, it seems to be pretty difficult to study the major trends in Indian writing in English without ascertaining technical devices used by the novelists to be able to manifest their vision of life.

Novel as a literary genre came quite late to this soil, although Indian writers in English were familiar with the long tradition of European and British fiction. That is why the urge to bring about a change with regard to technique was felt at a later stage. The decade of 1930s was considered as quite productive, because the novelists began to experiment with the style of
narration by adapting innovations of modern European novelists to suit their own sensibilities. Experimentation gave rise to the jumbling of the past, present and future to add element of suspense to the plot, "characterization on the basis of purposeful inconsistency"7, and a circuitous way of narration.

Plot is defined as the "pattern of events in a ... work of fiction; and further, the organization of incident and character in such a way as to induce curiosity and suspense (q.v) in the spectator or reader."8 It has a beginning, a middle and an end and they are linked with one another logically. If anything is subtracted from it, it has adverse effect on the whole. A good plot enables the writer to put across his views coherently. There are different ways of narrating a story. Sometimes a story is narrated in the logical time-sequence, sometimes the time frame is refracted. Flashback is one way of achieving this effect.

Aristotle lays emphasis upon characterization, but secondary to the plot. The novels employing technique of stream of consciousness centralize the character whereas character is not that "important in allegorical, satirical or highly experimental novels"9 where narration of the story is concerned. It was supposed that a great novel allows to identify ourselves with the characters irrespective of whether we like or hate them. The character which maintained verisimilitude was considered the best. The novelist endeavoured to make characters types, spokesman, symbols and myths. As psychological novel gained ground, the emphasis was put on character all the more.
The Indian writers in English are of the view that English language is flexible so much so that each writer can change it in his own way as per the demand of the situation. At the beginning of the 20th century, some writers used English language very carefully and were always conscious of English being a foreign language. During the thirties, we find a perceptible development in Indian writing in English qualitatively and quantitatively. The rationale behind this is that they could use English language as one of the other Indian languages. The best exponents of such writer being Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, and R.K. Narayan.

There has been a tendency among the writers that they mould the language to suit their own purpose, and so is the case with Indian writers in English. Any creative writer has to remake or refashion language to suit his own sensibility. In the opinion of B.R. Agrawal and M.P. Sinha, the Indian English novelist basically deals with those people “who do not normally speak English or think in English.” So in order to project their sensibility, Indian writers in English are compelled to experiment with the style of writing.

After the end of First World War, the effect of the war began to be reflected in the writing that followed. The war had shaken the conscience of the world. India could not remain immune to this phenomenon. National awakening and a longing for independence resulted from it. This idea gained prominence as Gandhiji’s freedom movement spread over different parts of
the country. Most of the writers of the period dealt with the theme of struggle for freedom and national awakening.

There was a break with the old tradition, but that came about slowly. There was advent of new tendencies while old ones continued at the same time. Old technique, didacticism, and old themes did not disappear overnight from the novels. But the advent of the realistic novel heralded new inspiration, new technique, and new vision. This period of 1930s is characterized by a tangible advance in technique, form and style. As regards technique, Raja Rao, Anand, R.K. Narayan and others brought the Indo-Anglian novel closer to "the latest novels of the west." Raja Raos' novel is marked by poetization and artistic narration, whereas M.R. Anand has tried to probe deep into humble life and reveal dignity and self respect in the marginalized, displaced and repressed community of society. And Narayan has mirrored middle class society of South India with vividness.

Before the advent of M.R. Anand on the literary scene, the Indian writing in English was still in its embryonic stage. With regard to form and technique, the Anglo-Indian fiction was far behind the modern developments in English. Its canvas was limited and realism of Zola or Dostoevsky was absent. In this regard M.R. Anand himself says;

I found myself going beyond the work of these three writers, because the world I knew best was the microcosm of the outcasts and peasants and soldiers and working
people. Of course, I am of my time ...could have written only of the lives I knew most intimately.

In so far, however, as my work broke new ground and represented a departure from the tradition of previous Indian fiction, where the pariahs and the bottom dogs had not been allowed to enter the sacred precincts of the novel, in all their reality, it seemed to become significant and drew the attention of the critics, particularly in Europe which only knew Ommer Khayam, Li Po and Tagore but very little or nothing about the sordid or colourful lives of the millions of Asia.¹²

Anand was influenced by Tagore, Bankim, Sharat Chandra and Munshi Premchand in a big way. He carried their tradition forward and tried to bring the form of the novel in line with the modern development in England and Europe. Anand, indeed, achieved remarkable success in projecting "the real India of the villages to the west"¹³ in the manner which they could appreciably understand.

Anand's first novel Untouchable (1935) assumes a tremendous importance historically as it heralded the new trend of progressive literature. It was the first novel in Indian literature to have portrayed the most exploited section of Indian society. It depicts the caste system which has rusting effects on Indian society. The action of the novel spans just one day. The one-day experiences of Bakha, the protagonist of the novel, project not
only his whole life, but also that of his entire community. Here, he becomes the representative of his own community. In order to do away with untouchability, Anand has put across three remedial measures – “Christ, Gandhi, and main drainage.” He considers the last one as the most effective, for it enables them to shrug off their dirt and squalor and lead a respectable life.

Jack Lindsay commends Anand for his “capacity to define the general in the particular.” In this regard, Harish Riazada remarks:

This method is evident in his treatment of his hero’s character. Anand makes his portrayal of Bakha deeply touching by depicting not only the degrading or humiliating environments in which he lives and which he shares with other members of his community, but also his inner feelings and passions – his joys, sufferings, aspirations, mental agonies, frustrations and anger. Anand thus portrays his hero both as a type – a symbol of man’s inhumanity and the representative of untouchable class – and as an individual, a living human being of flesh and blood with his own peculiar nature and aspirations.

Mulk Raj Anand’s *Coolie* (1936) unfolds the pathetic and miserable life of Munoo, a coolie. He tries his hand at different odd occupations but fails miserably. He struggles hard for his survival. Here, he becomes the
spokesperson of all those who want to do a lot but fail due to the scarcity of resources. Through the character of Munoo, Anand projects the most neglected, oppressed and maltreated Indian community of labourers. The novel provides panoramic view of Indian society, for the hero moves from one place to another in order to earn his livelihood where he meets people of different walks of life.

In the opinion of P.P. Mehta, "The plot of the novel moves very slowly but the characters are very effectively portrayed... The psychology of the boy is realistically worked out. But the plot is episodic in character. It is a chain of incidents joined together, the central figure of which is Munoo. The descriptions of scenery and cities are vivid."^{17}

The style of Mulk Raj Anand is simple yet effective. The novel is peppered with Hindustani words, which add an element of the exotic. Humour and absurdities of human life are blended together effectively. He has shown the sordidness of the life of poverty-stricken class in a touching manner. Through the character of Mrs. Mainwaring, the trait of Anglo-Indians has been highlighted.

Walsh comments on *Coolie*, "The novel combines an acid indignation at the condition of the poor with a Dickensian vivacity in physical registration and a delicate sense of the psychology of Munoo, the waif hero, in particular of the rhythms of his growth from child to adolescent."^{18}
Through the forced meanderings Munoo, panoramic view of India is shown in her variegated colours.

Like most of the novels of 1930s, Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938) deals with the subject of struggle for independence. It depicts the effect of Gandhian movement on an Indian village. The national movement is shown to be passing through various stages till it picks up momentum. It also unfolds before us the various facets of the village life as well as growth in the consciousness of the people under the influence of socio-political struggle.

Kanthapurians respond to Gandhiji’s call of national struggle. Moorthy brings the message to them after rejecting his studies for freedom movement. Through Harikatha, he tries to instill and persuade the villagers to fight for the noble cause of freedom. He exhorts youngmen of the village to cast away foreign clothes and become Gandhi – men. The villagers are provided with books and spinning wheels. Hence, Moorthy’s influence overwhelms the villagers. They join him and become the followers of Gandhiji later.

In the foreword to this novel, Raja Rao explicitly puts forth the problems that an author faces while writing in a language alien to his culture. He says;

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own, the spirit that is one’s own. One has to
convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-
movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the
word ‘alien’, yet English is not really an alien language to us. It
is the language of our intellectual make-up — like Sanskrit or
Persian was before — but not of our emotional make-up. We are
all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own
language and in English. We cannot write like the English. we
should not. we cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to
look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression
therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as
distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time
alone will justify it.

After language the next problem is that of style. The tempo of
Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as
the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into the making of
theirs. We, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly and when we
move, we move quickly. There must be something in the sun of
India that makes us rush and tumble and run on. And our paths
are paths interminable... we have neither punctuation nor the
treacherous ‘ats’ and ‘ons’ to bother us — we tell one
interminable tale Episode follows episode, and when our
thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another
thought.¹⁹
Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) is maiden attempt to write a novel on the subject matter of Indian mysticism and vedantic philosophy. The serpent and the rope symbolize illusion and reality respectively. The world is either unreal or real – either serpent or rope. The space between the two is occupied by spirituality. And Ramaswamy, the protagonist, wanders in Benares looking for the Absolute and Eternal. Raja Rao opines, "There the dead do not die nor the living live. The dead come down to play on the banks of Ganges, and the living who move about, and even offer rice balls to the manes, live in the illusion of a vast night and a bright city." His marriage with Madeline breaks up due to mutual incompatibility. Consequently, Madeline finds solace in Buddhism whereas Ramaswamy seeks help of Guru so as to stabilize himself. In other words, they take refuge in religion to guard themselves against rootlessness.

According to William Walsh, “In essence, the novel is a philosophical meditation on the nature of existence in which the drama lies in the activity of meditation and not in the action, plot or progression we are used to in a European novel. For Raja Rao, experiences naturally fall into a series of antinomies — life and death, being and becoming, knowing and unknowing — and the inner debate about the nature of existence is seen as the tension between appearance and reality, figured as the serpent and the rope.”
As regards style of this novel, Raja Rao tries to capture in English the rhythms and beats of Sanskrit verses. He attempts to synthesize the intellectual essence of the west and the East symbolically.

R.K. Narayan’s *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) is another novel which deals with Mahatma Gandhi and freedom struggle. This is a story of Bharti-Sriram romance in the backdrop of momentous movements such as the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement of 1942. The novel comes to an end with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

This is the first novel of its kind which lays emphasis on Gandhi himself and not merely on his influence. But other novelists have exploited the impact of Gandhi’s name and presence as we see in *Kanthapura*. Iyenger says, “Gandhi is too big to be given a minor part: On the other hand, he is sure to turn the novel into a biography if he is given major (or the central) part. The best thing for the contemporary novelist would be to keep Gandhi in the background and make his influence felt indirectly.” Regarding Narrative technique of Narayan, William Walsh comments;

The exploitation of incident, a blend of event, action, context, motive, memory, feeling, cause and effect, is a perfect target for Narayan. The movement conveys that sense of flux in human life... draws the reader’s attention down to deeper levels, a middle level of motivation and individual psychology and a more profound level of poetic myth and instinctive communal awareness. The effect of this
method and of the lucidity of the idiom is to render the reader sensitive to the woven, ongoing unity of human action."^23

*Inquilab* (1955) by KA Abbas is a politico-historical novel, inspired by Upton Sinclair's *World's Ends* (1940). It describes the glorious struggle of independence which passes through various stages, starting from Khilafat Movement, and culminates in the independence of India. The story is narrated through the eyes of a Muslim youth, Anwar, who involves himself with others in the struggle against imperialism.

The language of *Inquilab* is simple yet effective. The writer on purpose uses Urdu words here and there so as to register local colour. The message is conveyed effectively with the help of "smooth and polished"^24 expression.

GV Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) is acknowledged as a path-breaking novel, for it is a highly experimental novel as far as Indian English literature is concerned. The novel is the story of a boy who endeavours to understand the meaning of life. It chronicles "aspects of White, Eurasian and Indian character."^25 Moreover, it is quite innovative as it fuses western and Indian narrative forms. In this regard, Prof. Iyengar observes;

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* (1948) 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 verbal legerdemain.\(^2\)

Prof. Iyenger further comments, “To the Joycean freedom of linguistic experimentation and the endless appetite for experience, there is added a Rabelaisian exuberance, and a quirkiness that is peculiarly Desani’s own.”\(^2\)


Bhabani Bhattacharya’s *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954) projects caste conflict. It is a story of the underprivileged and downtrodden lower castes: Kalu, the blacksmith, is famished, jailed and tortured when he tries to save his daughter from being sexually exploited. He revolts against society and “metamorphoses himself into Mangal Adhikari”\(^2\) a Brahmin, and is idolized
by upper caste Hindus. The novel makes fun of blind religious faith and superstition of the high caste people who do not feed the children dying of hunger but offer bucketful of milk for the bath of idols in the temple. In this society “where man died of hunger, wealth grew; and while kindness dried up, religion was more in demand.” Thus, the novel emphasizes upon the miserable life of the poor and their exploitation at the hands of the rich and powerful.

Another novel by Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers* (1947) depicts the story of a man-made famine, which does away with hundreds of crores of people in West Bengal. But profiteers and black-marketeers could reap rich harvest out of this tragedy. The government “had scorched the boats. They had scorched the food. They would scorch the people.”

As regards the style of Bhabani Bhattacharya, Prof. Iyenger remarks, “The satirical and humorous sketches entertain us in due measure, the backdrop of history makes us sad and serious by turns, but it is the human action that involves us in its intricacies and ramifications.”

Manohar Malgonkar’s *The Princess* (1963) satirises the condescending attitude of the upper caste people, particularly Brahmins who think themselves to be the representatives of gods. Through the character of Kamakchand, the diabolical system of caste-ridden society is highlighted. The novelist unfolds through him “the miserable lot of the lower caste people, not being allowed to draw water from the well because it would
pollute the water supply.” Malgonkar’s *A Bend in The Ganges* (1964) deals with “the shame and the agony of the partition, the glory and the defeat of the hour of freedom... destiny that was also the death-trap fashioned by the malignant Time Spirit: the horror and the humiliation, the terror and the pity of it all are the theme of Malgonkar’s novel.”

In the opinion of Prof. Iyenger, novels like *The Princess* and *A Bend in the Ganges* are “bolder experiments in artistically fusing the personal and historical perspectives in fictional terms.” These novels present panoramic view of Indian society with stark reality.

Khushwant Singh’s *A Train to Pakistan* (1956) projects the carnage which took place immediately after independence. It “impresses with author’s control, calm objectivity and self-effacement. The treatment, infact, approximates the documentary, a most unusual mode among Indian novels. The objectivity, detachment and impartiality of *A Train to Pakistan* make the horror it describes – a train standing in the station crammed with Sikh corpses from Pakistan, another packed with Muslims massacred in India – with all their madness and ferocity all the more convincing, all the more devastating.” It captures the horror and the terror of the post-Independence time with pitiless precision. His *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) records the chaotic pre-partition period and delves into inner tensions and
external fear of a sikh family in the Punjab. In the novel, "feeble corruption is exhibited throughout and the novel seems designed to show the writer's disgust with the worst faults of national character which are made to appear even more distasteful as independence is imminent."^^

Indian women novelists came to the forefront after the World War II and started making significant contribution to the Indian fiction. Novelists like R.P. Jhabvala, Kamla Markandaya and Nayantara Sahgal have undertaken Indian women's issues and have tried to emancipate them from being slave to patriarchal machinations in the form of custom, tradition and societal norms.

Mrs. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, while living in Delhi, observed the "milieu that changes Chameleon like from local to cosmopolitan, from traditional to conventional, from naïve to sophisticated..."^^, hence, Delhi represents highly heterogenous society. Her novels deal with middle class families of Delhi in the post-independence period. Her canvas of theme comprises familial, social and personal problems within the nuclear family system with its "clashes between generations and marital feuding."^^ Through her novels, we are presented a vivid picture of extended family system.

In Jhabvala's novel, *Esmond in India* (1958) we are faced with a matrimonial problem in an affluent anglicized family in Delhi. Madhuri, the wife of Hardayal, is a domineering personality who prevails upon
everybody. Here, Madhuri could be compared with D.H. Lawrence's, Anna Brangwen, the wife of Williams, in The Rainbow, because both of them have a strong sense of individualism. Shakuntala, the daughter of Hardayal and Madhuri, develops a powerful personality. Shakuntala repudiates the authority of Madhuri and sides with her father. Her behaviour here is similar to Elizabeth's in Pride and Prejudice. Though brought up in an anglicized atmosphere, Madhuri sticks to the general Hindu system of belief to choose a suitable and affluent husband for her daughter. She dominates all aspects of family affairs and her decision is final in every matter. She makes all the family members dance to her tunes. The writer observes;

...she knew how to arrange her life and lives of those around her. The house was seen entirely according to her plans:

there was not a detail that she had not personally arranged...

In this way she had managed to possess herself more or less of their lives.39

In another novel, The Nature of Passion (1956) Jhabvala concerns herself with a strong sense of individuality. Kanta, a young educated anglicized woman, refuses to succumb to the tradition of caste consideration, but favours the material aspect as an important factor for marriage. Kanta's attitude here is closely related with that of Charlott Bennet in Pride and Prejudice who marries Collins to ensure financial security. Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy presents a similar situation. Though
Lata, the protagonist of the novel, falls in love with Kabir but settles down with Haresh Khanna just because Haresh could provide her with better financial stability. In the novel, Jhabvala projects Indian joint family to which everything becomes subservient. The novel depicts a realistic situation observed in affluent joint families in India.

In the opinion of B.R. Agrawal and M.P. Sinha, Jhabvala’s novels unfold “intricate human relationship — especially among the women in the Hindu joint family. She recreates admirably this drama of cattiness in which conversation is often a veiled battle of polite affronts; the favourite weapons being innuendoes and insinuations, left handed compliments and deadly insults masked as innocent generalities, while a chance-word is a bomb-dropping with devilish accuracy and devastating effect. In these battles old scores are settled and new wounds are afflicted, all over a pleasant cup of tea, or a glass of old Sherbat.”

Kamla Markandaya, has a dexterous ability to combine range and intimacy. Her novel, *A Silence of Desire* (1961), deals with “male prerogative in a degenerate form.” Dandekar reduces his wife to a slave — a household object. Saroj, wife of Dandekar, is very submissive by nature and often surrenders herself to the will of her husband. Besides this, the novel unravels the clash between the western oriented rationalism of Dandekar and Sarojni’s adherence to irrational and traditional beliefs. Modern society is characterized by conflict — “science with superstitions, religion with
materialism, and Eastern tradition versus western progress. It is a noticeable fact that Indian mindset prefers religious faith to modern western values.

Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) undertakes the theme of exploratory self in an age characterized by conflict of values — old and new, agnostic and religious. The novel projects annihilation of rural life with the advent of western method of technology. Rukmani faces her sufferings and pain with indomitable spirit and dauntless fortitude, hence Markandaya's novels give us a picture of the post-independence Indian woman with a well-developed personality, an unconquerable will and an unflinching confidence in herself. William Walsh comments on Markandaya;

Her particular strength lies in the delicate analysis of the relationships of persons, especially when these have a more developed consciousness of their problems and are attempting to grope towards some more independent existence. She has been... an impressive best, in dealing with the problems of the educated and middle class, and she has a gift for delineating the self imposed laceration of the dissatisfied.  

Another significant novelist, Nayantara Sahgal, longs for unbridled freedom for women. In an article Nayantara writes, "Greater personal freedom for women will come and wishing won't hold it back... once they are educated and competently holding jobs, can the process stop there."
Nayantara’s novel, *A Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) focuses upon the recurrent theme of man-woman relationship. The story revolves around Inder and Saroj whose marriage seems to be successful but actually is not. Rather, it is on the verge of ruin due to temperamental maladjustment and difference of opinion with respect to marriage. Inder believes in male dominance and behaves with his wife Saroj in a condescending manner. The novelist makes fun of the Indian tradition where women “belonged to their man by contract or blood. Their sphere was sexual and their job procreation. They were dependents and not individuals.”

In the novel, *This Time of Morning* (1965) Nayantara candidly talks of sex and extra-marital relationships. “If Nayantara’s women characters have any passion, it is the longing to be free, freedom from all restraints in word and deed, being their monomania.” Moreover, Nayantara’s young women are drunkards, hence anti-establishment and sign of moral decay. It is quite Queer and quaint to note that “what is taken for granted in a man is horrifying in woman.”

William Walsh observes, “Nayantara Sahgal writes with much — too much — fluency sometimes in a merely journalistic way; her characters are generic rather individual and are deficient in subtlety as her style is in poetry. But one has to admire that moral stance, the grasp of detail, the energy and the accuracy.”
Anita Desai’s contribution to the Indian writing in English is immense. Her subject matter is exploration of modern Indian sensibility. In Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), Maya is a kind of girlish Mrs. Dalloway. The story of her conjugal life is narrated through ‘remembrance of things past’ by Maya herself. The novel displays her unsuccessful attempt to explore meaning in her life. Though Gautam, Maya’s husband, and Maya herself living under the same roof, yet they have communication gap which results in isolation and alienation. Iyengar remarks;

Maya and Gautam, of course, make several attempts at serious conversation but a nameless barrier prevents communication. What is real to her is shadowy to him; what are facts and hard realities to him have no interest for her. What is truth? What, exactly, is “the truth of living?” Maya feels that, even if she should try to formulate a comprehensive answer, he wouldn’t (or possibly he simply could not) understand her. Why, then, try to explain? Why waste words in the futile attempt to define that very elusive thing, the quality or the flavour of existence.”

In her *Voices in the City* (1965), Desai captures the torturous life of Mohsina, and her suicide as she fails to cope with pressure while living with her husband. In yet another novel *The Fire on the Mountain* (1977), Desai unravels two alienated and isolated souls – Nanda and Raka. In the view of B.R. Agrawal and M.P. Sinha;
Anita Desai’s novels unravels the torturous sensibilities, the troubled spirits and changing aspects of nature of her women, their strained unharmonious relations with men and so they advance from the vision of ‘aloneness’ which is a psychological state of mind to that of alienation as a metaphysical enigma.\(^{50}\)

Anita Desai chooses a different style because she has to probe deep into the minds of her characters. Iyengar comments, “since her pre-occupation is with the inner world of sensibility... she has tried to forge a style supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fretfulness of the stream of consciousness of her principal characters. The intolerable grapple with thoughts, feelings and emotions is necessarily reflected in the language, syntax and imagery...”\(^{51}\) In this regard, she proves to be an experimentative and hence innovative writer.

In her novels, Shashi Deshpande unfolds traumatic feelings of Indian women through her characters. Her writings emerge from her “own intense and long suppressed feelings about what it is to be a woman in our society.”\(^{52}\) In her novel *That Long Silence* (1988), Desphande, through the protagonist of the novel, Jaya, tries to resolve the conflict between Jaya’s perception of the self after she is freed of the shackles of husband, child and work, and how society perceives her as woman. The silence that Jaya maintains in her life is self-imposed, and hence similar to the fate suffered
by majority of women across the globe. Jaya marries Mohan against the wishes of her mother just to exercise her freedom in matrimonial affairs, hence breaking off the chains of tradition-ridden society. Through the character of Jaya, the writer projects “dual aspects of the feminine consciousness – one accepting male definition and identity, and the other, the androgynous aspect that revolts against male-imposed traditional constraints.”

William Walsh significantly remarks, “That Long Silence is sharply contemporary in matter and manner, being a novel in which a woman is writing a novel about her own oppressed and unsatisfactory life as a form of release-inducing therapy. The book is sprung with tension from start to finish. Jaya is incessantly ravelled by inner conflict... constantly analyzing her oppressed lot in a male-oriented society.”

In Shashi Deshpande's novel, Roots and Shadows (1983), Indu, the protagonist, has to leave her family as she marries the man of her choice. She also revolts against Akka, the mother figure as she is too demanding and commands domineering personality. There is no freedom of individuality. One has to conform to the norms of society. But women characters of Sashi Deshpande tend to raise their voice against social code of conduct and try to liberate themselves. The novels long for a society in which women will have total freedom and will be treated as equals of their male counter-parts.
Arun Joshi’s novels deal with theme of alienation in its myriad colours. Despite their weaknesses, his characters endeavour to procure a sense of purpose in life and self-fulfillment. In his novel *The Foreigner* (1968), Joshi projects, Sindi Oberai, the protagonist of the novel, as an alienated person. Oberai is born of an Indian father and an English mother in Kenya. He loses both the parents at an early stage, and attains adulthood without any family ties and without any sense of belonging to any country. The protagonist himself says, “My foreignness lay within me.” He develops a sense of detachment and alienation and distances himself from being attached with others. He does not find the idea of marriage appealing as he neither wants to be the possessor of somebody nor does he want to be possessed.

In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971), the protagonist is shown to be alienated from society in which he is born and raised. The novel *The Apprentice* (1974) unfolds alienation from the self. The protagonist of the novel is very pious and noble who finds himself a complete misfit in the corruption-ridden society. He makes an endeavour to purify his soul from being corrupted through the act of shoe-polishing of devotees. Joshi’s novels unravel the problems of post-independence Indian society, the east-west encounter, and the existential dilemma.

After achieving independence in 1947, Indians were ecstatic but it did not last long because the joy of independence was followed by tragic events
of partition. That is why the novels of this period depict themes of violence, horror and hatred.

According to B.R. Agrawal and M.P. Sinha, "The age old caste system came under challenge. With the abolition of zamindari system, traditional relations between landowners and landless peasants were overhauled and re-interpreted."\(^5\)

Gandhian slogan for abolition of untouchability and equal rights for all citizens brought a paradigm change in society. There was a change in the attitude of the people towards women in the wake of feminist movement. The exodus of villagers toward cities in pursuit of jobs also resulted in alienation. Traditional values were at odds with modern values.

As regards these developments, the Indian English fiction of post-Independence period unfolds different trends as compared to the novelists of pre-independence times. Here B.R. Agrawal and M.P. Sinha comment;

The post-Independence Indian English novelist had to appeal to the heterogenous community, people of diverse ethnic religious and cultural backgrounds. For this purpose, he chose themes and situations that had more or less the same validity all over the country. These themes emerged to form recurrent patterns and major trends which were more easily discernible in post-independence Indian society than in that of pre-independence India. That is why the range of the
novel widened and the various features of Indian society, economic, political, religious and cultural were exhaustively covered by it. Hence the Indian English fiction — already well established and growing both in variety and stature — not only retained the momentum of Gandhian Age, but also flourished to its fullness with wider ramifications.  

With regard to technique and style, there has been a lot of experimentation in the Indian novels of post independence period. For example, the first person point of view is the most recurrent narrative technique. A large number of novels are “autobiographical in methods, if not in substance.” The novels of this period are characterized by excessive use of images, myths, symbols from scriptures and epics. Walter Allen observes, “contemporary novels are the mirrors of the age but a very special kind of mirror, a mirror that reflects not merely the external features of the age but also its inner face, its nervous system, coursing of its blood and the unconscious promptings and conflicts which sway it.”

In the post-Independence period, Indian writers in English who stayed in India did not experiment much with the narrative technique because they basically dealt with simple and ordinary themes, especially the themes that they were familiar with like caste-system, dowry, untouchability, communal riots, poverty, struggle for freedom, violence etc. Some of the representative writers of this category are — Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamlal Markandaya. Indian writers in
English who settled abroad, experimented a lot with narrative technique, for they encountered new and complex themes such as loneliness, alienation, cultural shock, misplacement and displacement. Some such expatriate Indian writers in English are Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Anita Desai, Vikram Chandra, Mukul Kesavan, Boman Desai, I.A. Sealey and Rohinton Mistry. There are two groups of Indian expatriate writers. One, which looks at India as an outsider, and another, which looks at India from the perspective of an insider.

Salman Rushdie is a very significant novelist whose contribution is immense in giving international recognition to Indian writing in English. His complex themes compel him to break away with old forms and experiment with contemporary techniques. His remarkable novel *The Midnight's Children* (1981) chronicles the infancy of independent India through the life of the protagonist Saleem Sinai, who was born at the midnight of 15 August, 1947. This novel is about the narrator's life between 1947 and 1977. The title of the novel refers to the 1,001 children, including the protagonist, born in the first hours of the day of Independence. These midnight children symbolize the hopes and aspirations of the nation.

Here, William Walsh records his observation about Rushdie’s *Midnight Children* and says that his “novel combines the rush and fluency of Mulk Raj Anand, the speculative and metaphysical habit of Raja Rao, the shrewd psychological acumen of R.K. Narayan with the linguistic wildness,
inventiveness and fantasy of G.V. Desani. Its astonishing staple is composed of elements of magic and fantasy, the grimmest realism... extravagant farce, multi-mirrored analogy and a potent symbolic structure.” These elements are woven together to personify India and realize Indian life effectively.

Rushdie’s *Shame* (1983) treats Pakistan in a similar manner. The novel refers to Rushdie’s childhood, some of which was spent in Pakistan, but he says, “The country in this story is not Pakistan or not quite. There are two countries real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space.”

We witness three significant points which characterize Rushdie’s work. “First he is telling a story in a straight-forward, rather old-fashioned way. Secondly, he is breaking into the narrative line with discussion on his problems and obligations as author in unfolding the narrative. Thirdly, he treats the novel as a species of autobiography, taking every opportunity to link it with phases of his own life.”

There is another distinguished novelist, Amitav Ghosh, who happens to share many aspects with Salman Rushdie. Ghosh’s novel, *The Circle of Reason* (1986) is about the picaresque adventure of the young protagonist, Alu who moves from the small village “Lalpukur to Calcutta, Kerala, the Middle East and Algeria.” It contains elements of the picaresque novel, the novel of ideas, the detective novel and the Hindu epic.
The novel debates the relationship between science, technology and nationalism in India. There are dialogues in the novel dealing with "tradition versus modernity." which engaged great minds of Indian nationalists – Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru and the colonial thinkers – William Jones and Macaulay.

In this novel, Ghosh presents his point of view on science very emphatically. Science does not belong to any one nation, but to the world. The whites promoted the power of science on purpose so as to exploit the Easterners under the guise of "civilizing mission." There is no denying the fact that science and technology helped the west to strengthen their hold on colonized countries. These tools of the empire in the form of advances in weaponry, medicine, transportation and communication were used to hegemonize the world.

At the level of narration, Ghosh interweaves realism, fable and digressive hearsay so as to tinge it with realistic outlook. All the narratives are nothing but simply stories which engenders "particular spatial and temporal perspective."

*Shadow Lines* (1988) concerns itself with the interaction of various cultures and how an individual strives to find a place in it. In his quest of identity, the unnamed narrator comes into contact with a lot of people who influence his personality and outlook.
The novel, set in Calcutta in the 1960s, moves between Calcutta, Dhaka and London. The characters – a young unnamed narrator, the protagonist Tridib, and narrator’s granny form the basic framework of the novel. The novel records the experiences from 1939 to 1979, and 1964 is the most important year in the life of the characters. Past and present blend through the memory of characters. It makes fun of patriotic favour and pride as a riot breaks out both in Dhaka and Calcutta simultaneously in the wake of the theft of Prophet Muhammad’s hair. Here, the recurrent image is “snapping of cultural bonds.” The international boundaries serve no purpose, for the riot undercuts geographical boundaries.

Jon Mee comments, “The Shadow Lines is very much a dialogic novel. The narrator’s voice is always being warped by others who act as the narrators within the different time frames and his own point of view is constantly being interrogated (even by himself). He even gives up the role of narrator for the accounts of Tridib’s death that provide the denouncement of the novel.”

Upmanyu Chatterjee’s English August: An Indian Story (1986) is about the quest of identity of contemporary youth. Agastaya Sen, the protagonist who is an IAS officer is brought up in metropolitan city but is sent to Midna, a rural place, to discharge his duty as an officer. He is not able to settle down there as he feels quite alienated and dislocated. At times,
he tries to escape from this claustrophobic world, but realizes that remedy of rootlessness lies in optimistic and constructive human action.

History, politics and the individual are the basic concerns of the novelists of contemporary period. They have interwoven these themes in their works. In this regard Pico Iyer comments, “They are sometimes different: For one thing they are the products not so much of a colonial division as of the international culture that has grown up, and they are addressing an audience as mixed up and eclectic and uprooted as themselves. They are the creators and creations of a new post imperial order...just about everywhere is a suburb of the same international culture.” Thematicallly speaking, this change in perception gives rise to two aspects: an entirely different notion of the commingling of history, politics and the individual, and a new way of looking at traditional and stereotyped issue of the quest for identity.

In the pre-independence period, we find majority of the novels written on the themes of national awakening and struggle for freedom movement as it was the most momentous issue of the time. The experimentation with regard to technique and style begins in 1930s with the arrival of Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, and R.K. Narayan.

It is significant here to note that since 1930s experimentation in Indian writing in English was sporadic, but it gains momentum in the post-independence period especially with the advent of Salman Rushdie. His
work especially *Midnight’s Children* heralded the coming of Age of Indian writing in English.

Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) exemplifies post-modern Indian fiction in English. Tharoor finds some similarity between the main characters and momentous “events in the three thousand year old epic and the leading political figures and developments in modern Indian history”. These correspondences are suitably modified, sometimes distorted, sometimes hinted at, sometimes made a mockery of. In the story, the honourable Bishma, the son of Ganga in the epic, becomes Gangadutta, a Mahatma Gandhi — like personality; Gandhi’s ‘Salt March’ turns into comic ‘Mango-march’. Duryodhana, the wicked son of Dhritarashtra in the epic changes into a woman; Duryodhani stands for Indira Gandhi who split the Congress party and suppressed the democratic spirit during emergency. In the opinion of M.K. Naik and Shyamala A. Narayan;

The narrative is rich in comic invention of various kinds. Comic verses are interpolated from time to time to remind us of the original epic, and word-play is continuous and usually of a high order. The witty titles of the books themselves set the proper tone for the diverting narrative: “The Rigged veda”, ‘The Bungle Book”, “Midnight’s Parents”, etc. The Great Indian novel which effectively demonstrates how the technique of running a continuous parallel between antiquity
and modernity can illuminate both, is easily one of the most outstanding novels of the period. 71

Vikram Chandra’s Red Earth and Pouring Rain (1995) is an ambitious novel. The action shifts from India to U.S.A. and back, and spans two centuries. The characters comprise historical personages like George Thomas and Begum Samru, both famous adventurers; Hindu gods – Yama, Ganesha and Hanuman and a Monkey who was a Brahmin boy in his previous birth. M.K. Naik and Shyamala S. Narayan comment;

The narrative moves jerkily, with flash backs and “dash forwards” and there are numerous surrealistic effects, as when the gods Ganesha and Hanuman, and the protagonist, Abhay together watch the popular Hindi film, Amar, Akbar, Anthony. We are carried along swiftly in the headlong current of this fantastic narrative, but by the time we reach the end, we find ourselves saying, ‘but there seems to be no ‘figure in the carpet’ after all.”72

In Looking Through Glass (1995) by Mukul Kesavan, the narrator, a young photographer, accidentally slips off a railway bridge and loses consciousness. After he regains his consciousness, he finds himself back in the nineteen-forties. He is taken care of by a Muslim foster family in Lucknow and experiences the political vicissitudes of the entire decade including the last phase of the freedom movement and the partition carnage. In the words of M.K. Naik and Shyamala S. Narayana;
Fantasy now seems to run riot: Muslim Congressmen, who oppose the Quit India “resolution” of August 1942 suddenly disappear, and the degree of their disappearance is in inverse proportion to their commitment to the Congress... the famous film star, Yusuf-bin-Ansoo (= “child of tears” – an obvious caricature of Dilip Kumar, Yusuf Khan in real life, a well-known Indian Muslim film-actor, called the “Tragedy King”) looks into the mirror... and then somehow, the actor vanishes but his mirror-image remains. All this is, no doubt, highly imaginative and extremely entertaining but its final impact remains limited, localized and sporadic."

In his novel, *Asylum, USA* (2000), Boman Desai attempts at comic extravaganza. Noshir Daruvala, the protagonist, is a young parsi student in Chicago. There are two options for him – either to get a green card or be deported to Bombay. He bribes Barbara a thousand dollars to marry so as to obtain American citizenship, but discovers her to be a lesbian with a live-in woman-lover. Then, he comes across Blythe but she too has a boy friend, so he trudges along from one woman to another. He himself says, “The women... were troubled ... we were linked by our troubles.” But this serious strand of the story is overshadowed by “flippant gestures like frequently gratuitous dove-tailing of words, a la Rushdie (“he was the first to ask her”), the non-use of quotation marks in dialogue throughout with an entire page full of these marks at the end, to rectify the
deficiency. Devices like these yield more facetiousness than genuine comedy."\(^{75}\)

I.A. Sealy’s *The Trotter-Nama : A Chronicle* (1988) is a family-chronicle which fuses together “history, legend, digressions and humane of various kinds.”\(^{76}\) The title obviously refers to the *Shahnama* and the *Babarnama*. The book records the story of seven generations of the Trotters, the descendants of a mercenary who inhabited a place near Lucknow in the eighteenth century, but most of the trotters migrate to England and Australia after Indian independence by the end of the book. M.K. Naik and Shyamala S. Narayan remark on Sealy;

> His is a post-modernist narrative, with an open form. Devices like the mock-heroic and parody are employed frequently, and the style shifts register accordingly, recalling *All About H. Hatterr*. The digressions comprise passages from archival material, dictionary entries and even recipes, including one on “Trotter-curry.”\(^{77}\)

Rohinton Mistry is one of the prominent writers of contemporary period. His *A Fine Balance* (1995) is set in the nineteen seventies, when Emergency was declared suspending the fundamental rights of people. According to M.K. Naik and Shyamala S. Narayan, “Mistry’s picture of the excesses of Emergency is graphic but in his understanding of the lives and
mores of the rustics he betrays an urban expatriate’s ignorance at its worst."

The novel of last two decades grapples with transnational and transcultural experiences. These complex experiences are too difficult to be expressed in the old form. In this regard, Irving H. Buchen remarks, “The essential pressure for experimentation comes from the novelist’s conviction that the demands of his vision are so new and urgent and the forms available so tired that new forms or hybrid must be created … all experiment entails the violation of known orders of sequence, sentence, punctuation and language. The novelist plumbs for new forms only when he is driven up against wall and nothing else works.”

It has also been observed that the novel of last two decades brings forth cosmopolitanism, which is a break from the earlier novels. The new cosmopolitanism in turn introduces into the traditional Indian novel “episodicity, plotlessness, and story within story” which characterize postmodern works. There is deliberate attempt to use myths of different religion so as to project multiplicity of culture. The devices of cinema, flash-back technique, magic realism and playfulness of the language are the hallmarks of the contemporary novels.
References


2. Ibid., p. 2.

3. Idem.


5. Idem.


7. Ibid., p. 229.


10. Ibid., p. 242.


17. Prof. P.P. Mehta, op.cit., p. 158.

18. William Walsh, op.cit., p. 64.


27. *Idem*.


64. Ibid., p. 37.
65. Ibid., p. 41.
66. Ibid., p. 53.


71. Ibid., p. 48.
72. Ibid., p. 51.
73. Idem.

75. Ibid., p. 49.
76. Ibid., p. 57.
77. Ibid., p. 58.
78. Ibid., p. 57.
80. P.S. Ravi, op.cit., p. 139.
Chapter III

The Beginning: The Golden Gate
Chapter – III

The present chapter focuses on The Golden Gate (1986), which is a novel written in verse form with rigid sonnet parameters. This is a very daring work, considering the fact that poetry is usually written in free verse today and drama has been written in blank verse, but the said novel has been written in iambic tetrameter.

At the beginning of chapter five of the novel, we are given a hint as to what inspired Vikram Seth to assay the novel in verse form. It so happened that Vikram Seth was awfully busy with his economic demographic research on China at Stanford University, hence mentally fatigued with the work of drudgery. So, for the sake of change, one day he went to the Stanford bookshop and came across Pushkin’s novel in verse Eugene Onegin, translated into English by Charles Johnston. Seth says that he “was struck by something so unique and beautiful, at once profound and light”.1 Thus he was stimulated and inspired to write poetic novel, to be set in San Francisco. This is how The Golden Gate came into being.

The Golden Gate is creative writing in the sense that it, like Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children unrestrained Indian English writing. It paved the way for Indians to write about other spaces, rather than about India and Indians. Seth has captured Californian life-style in this novel in a unique and fresh perspective, and not in the manner of nineteenth century European style. It is, indeed, a novel experiment with formal verse, for it goes against the grain
of contemporary Indian poetry in English. Furthermore, “it is an experiment that framed verse forms in a very contemporary context (descriptive, emotive and linguistic)”\(^2\), hence taking it away from established romantic or spiritual tradition which it had fostered. In this way, Vikram Seth has rejuvenated the genre of poetry by making it more contemporary.

Seth’s *The Golden Gate* depicts San Francisco in its myriad hues and colours as Pushkin does for Russia with *Eugene Onegin*. The range of life is shown from ordinary to intensely focused. It also depicts subversion of established moral standards. Some of the subjects touched upon in this novel are – love, friendship, loneliness, work, sexuality, single-parent child rearing, American woman, career woman, the nuclear age, disintegration of family life and homosexuality.\(^3\)

*The Golden Gate* is set in a metropolis, California of United States of America, a symbolic location of 20\(^{th}\) century American culture. This city has its own mores, values and lifestyles. In the so-called modern life, an individual has shrugged off his familial and regional associations in order to attain success. Hence, California can also symbolize urban Indian society. In this regard, Mala Pandurang comments, “Policies of economic liberalization, and a growing multinational culture, both in literal corporate terms as well as the availability of certain goods, jobs and lifestyles in India’s urban centres have led to changed lifestyle and growing material consumerism among the Indian urban middle classes. At this point of our history, certain
Broadly speaking, the themes of *The Golden Gate* could be divided into five parts – alienation in modern American society, nuclear disarmament, homosexuality, the image of American woman, and disintegration of family life in America. The protagonist of the novel, John Brown is a “young, employed, healthy, ambitious, sound, solvent, self made, self possessed”\(^5\), but depressed person. Though having almost everything, John suffers from extreme loneliness. He longs for a family that will help him to overcome with solitude, but he involves in constant change of partners, which does not allow him to settle down. Through the matrimonial advertisement, he comes in contact with Liz, a young urban professional, working in Cobb and Kearny law firm, who finally deserts him and marries Philip. This exacerbates his feeling of loneliness to the core, and makes his life loveless and pain aversive. Finally John reverts back to Janet, his former love who is unhappy with his behaviour. His hope shatters when Janet meets a fatal accident, hence the demise of Janet completes the process of John’s isolation.\(^6\)

In this novel, there is a strident advocacy of nuclear disarmament. Philip, a friend of John, works in the Lungless Lab – a place which is involved in the production of nuclear bombs, but he leaves the job there as his conscience does not allow him to continue with the job. He is of the view
that the mad race of nuclear proliferation and its misuse may result in ecological imbalances and destruction of flora and fauna. The demonstrators for nuclear disarmament carry placards which read, “I am my brother’s keeper”, “Nice folks don’t use nukes”, “Work for life, Not death”, and a huge “strive with strife” (152). Father O’Hare, the priest, and Liz deliver speeches on the futility of war and nuclear disarmament. The father also warns people of imminent danger of fratricide, which can have dreadful effect on all cultures and civilization.7

The theme of homosexuality is rather ambiguous. The character of Ed, Liz’s brother, personifies the condemnation of homosexuality and the character of Phil glorifies it. There are two groups of people – one group is represented by John, who fails even in the pursuit of female love; and another group represented by Phil who is successful in both male-love as well as female love. After having been deserted by Claire, Phil falls in love with effeminate Ed. John is a strident advocate of anti-homosexuality and argues that “gay life is irreconciliable to family life.”8 Furthermore, his contention is that men and women are designed to mate with the opposite sex so as to procreate. But Phil does not concede to John’s opinion and says that homosexuality and family life are not irreconciliable. His attempts are not only to justify but also to glorify homosexuality. He is averse to established assumptions and takes refuge in the realm of science and ratiocination to escape sexual repression and religious taboos. Seth vividly
describes their physical encounters. These passionate scenes make fun of heterosexual love. With consummate irony, Seth projects the Phil-Ed affair as romantically as John-Liz affair.

"...Trembling
He moves his hand across the space
What terrifying miles-assembling.
His courage, touches Philip's face
... I've never bothered with convention.
... And puts his arm around Ed's waist. (p. 88)
Now, just as things were getting tenser,
And Ed and Phil were making love," (p. 89)

Homosexuality is one of the significant themes of modern literature and has given rise to gay literature. Seth's *The Golden Gate* may also be considered gay literature as a large part of it is concerned with Phil-Ed affair. Ironically speaking, Phil, homosexual, couples with Liz and fathers a baby by her whereas John, hetero-sexual and a believer in established conventions, remains unsuccessful with women. He appears on the scene in a state of loneliness and remains so till the end of the novel. He remains an inconsolable and alienated creature all along.  

It is significant to note here the fact that the American woman is getting economically independent. There are characters like Liz, a young and smart lady, who works as an attorney in Kobb and Kearny law firm. She is an ardent supporter of anti-nuclear demonstrations. She is representative of those American women who are liberated, independent and free from
domestic slavery. She delivers thought provoking speech on nuclear weapons and their unprecedented cataclysm. Like Liz, Rowena Craven is also a pacifist who wants to promote peace and harmony.

The American woman enjoys a good deal of success in artistic fields. Janet is a drummer in a band called Liquid Sheep. Furthermore, she is skilled sculptress who has created many works like "Three Eggs", "An Adolescent Lion", "Clothed Nude", "Study of Young Man Caught in Eagle's Claws". But these works

"... have not yet brought
The sober critical attention
She craves". (p. 9)

During her life time, Janet was assailed by scurrilous critics as they were unappreciative and rather biased and prejudiced towards her creative works. But she was suitably rewarded posthumously and was compared with eminent artists like Moore and others. Another character, Sue Dorati, is an adept musician,

"Rich, bright, encapturing, enthralling
... of joy today envelops sue
In her Mozartian debut. (p. 68)

There is another trait which is the hallmark of the American woman's personality, that is, fondness for cats and iguana. Elizabeth Dorati, popularly known as Liz, has a cat called Charlemagne which is not liked by Philip, but Liz lavishes a great deal of attention and love on the cat. Janet, too, has
lovely cats named Cuff and Link. She feeds them fish and cream and provides them with silken beds to rest on. It is an irony that animals receive more affection, care and respect than human beings. This could be compared with Madam Eglantine of Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* who keeps three dogs and showers her love on them.

“Each day for breakfast cuff and link
Have fish to eat and cream to drink (p.10)
“...Jan gives them love, food, and indulgence
The cats take this for granted, show
Scant difference to their human betters,
Their baskets woven with gold letters,
In splendor Jan can ill afford,
In silken bed, on sumptuous board
They fatten.” (p. 11.)

The novel shows the disintegrating family values in America. We do not find any woman in the novel who is affectionate, warm, unselfish, self-sacrificing wife, a caring mother and the eternal virgin. The American woman, as an individual and, a professional, is quite successful, but the same cannot be said about familial life. Moreover, the increasing emancipation of women has led to incompatibility in marital life and ill-adjustment in husband-wife relationship. Claire, after having lived with Phil for six years, leaves him as she finds him of domineering nature. It is almost a year since her departure and she has not written any letter, or phoned Paul, her six year old son, to enquire about his health. Phil then marries in haste
and later repents as he is not satisfied. The following lines undermine the family system as Paul, a small boy, is left in the lurch by the circumstances:

“No Paul, She’s gone away “
“Forever?”
“I Just cannot tell you, son - but never think you’re alone.
“you ‘ve got me”
“when will you leave me?” Phil shocked, stares.” (p.62)

In *The Golden Gate*, most of the characters are outsiders and migrants who have come to settle down for the sake of financial stability. John Brown, a young software engineer, an Englishman, is basking in the glory of affluence and has almost everything at his disposal except for a companion. This is what has led him to loneliness, hence an unhappy life. In order to get success in his professional career, he works hard day in and day out. He becomes a successful engineer, but at the cost of human relationships. He is no longer in touch with them. Now he craves for his friends to have a moment for him, but none is available. John himself says

“I’m young, employed, healthy, ambitious
Sound, solvent, self-made, self-possessed
But all my symptoms are pernicious.
... you need a lover, John…” (p.14)

Phil Weiss, a jew, a computer wizard, has opted out of Lungless Lab, a nuclear power plant, as nuclear weapons are a menace to mankind, and hence civilization. Later, he works for the promotion of peace and harmony. Though Phil is bisexual, yet he is able to establish a family. After having
been deserted by Claire, his ex-wife, Phil marries Elizabeth Dorati who
gives birth to baby by him. He proves to be a caring father and lavishes all
his attention on Paul, his son by the ex-wife.

Janet Hawakaya is a sculptor as well as a drummer. She is also a third
generation Japanese immigrant. Janet and John had a good rapport while
they were in college. They renew their friendship as the novel opens. Janet
is a very skilled and accomplished artist who has produced many artistic
works, but they are not appreciated by scurrilous critics. She has a very
balanced personality and is a woman of great understanding. She is the kind
of person to be relied upon. She always stands by her friends through thick
and thin, but John does not respond to her in similar fashion.

Elizabeth Dorati, attorney in Kobb and Kearny law firm, is the
daughter of an Italian immigrant family. She is a vociferous advocate of
nuclear disarmament and delivers stimulating lecture to stir the minds of the
people. Earlier, she had developed a relationship with John, but she ties the
nuptial knot with Philip. He marries hastily and repents later on. This
emphasizes the fact that there is no harmony in husband-wife relationship of
Phil and Liz.

It is through Edward Dorati that Vikram Seth tries to project the
prevalence of homosexuality in America in general and in California in
particular. He is representative of the loneliness of an individual who fails to
strike a fine balance between his personal beliefs and practical functionality
in society. He considers himself an outsider in every relationship that he is involved in. He is very shy and reluctant to mix with people. Edward is eager to be introduced to Phil at the house-warming ceremony of Phil and Liz. He himself later fights shy of talking to Phil. He is given to swings of mood. Liz and Sue are not able to understand when Edward does not turn up to attend the musical concert of Sue, his sister. We find him being torn apart between his homosexual tendencies and religious beliefs. It is his inability to compromise with the situation that isolates him from everybody, and he is left in the lurch.

Vikram Seth directs his ire at John who represents capitalist and consumerist way of life. This kind of life engenders intellectual rigidity and the inability to come to terms with the other person’s point of view. We witness the limit of loneliness in the character of John Brown when he telephones two people but none of them is available to have a cup of tea or share a meal with him. This underscores the sordidness of life of singlehood and absurdity of friendlessness.¹²

In The Golden Gate, it is observed that the new family is based on more traditional values than the old one. This has led to familial stability. According to Mrs. Dorati, it is love that sustains any relationship, but Liz and Phil are of the view that the relationship which is based on passion-emotional or sexual, lacks stability. The relationship which is well-rooted in
familial values — friendliness, fraternity, parental care and love — is more stable, and hence these values foster steady and balanced life.

In urban India familial relationships appear to be well-rooted in traditional values. Angelie Multani remarks that in the popular movie, “Dil Chahta Hai”, directed by Farhan Khan, traditional values are represented to be successful, but the “non-conformist relationship between a young man and an older divorcee is represented” to be an unsuccessful one. Even in the age of modernity, people are actually reverting back to traditional values in order to stabilize the relationship. Here we find a sort of parallelism between Californian society of 1980s as depicted in the novel and the Indian society of the 21st century as depicted in the said movie.

*The Golden Gate* can be compared with Shakespearean sonnets. There is a point of commonality between them with regard to themes such as love, friendship, sonnets being addressed to male as well as female friends, homosexuality, excessive praise of physical beauty of male friend, depiction of erotic and passionate scenes, etc.

As regards to the theme of friendship and love, Shakespeare unfolds his feelings in some of his sonnets. He appears to be dedicated and committed in his relationship. He shows unbridled love for his friend. His immense humility lies in the fact that he takes blame on himself, though his friend is in the wrong. He is a true friend who provides support through thick and thin.
“No, let me be obsequious in thy heart,  
And take thou, my oblation, poor but free,  
which is not mix’d with seconds, knows no art,  
But mutual render, only me for” 14
“... Love is not love  
which alters when it alteration finds,  
or bend with the remover to remove  
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark” (p. 100).

So is the case with The Golden Gate, which captures the cheerful and jovial atmosphere where friends meet and part their ways.

“... It’s been convivial  
Part with a smile! They smile and part  
In friendship, with a lightened heart” (p. 23).

In both the works, sonnets are addressed to male as well as female friends. According to the norms of Petrarchan and Dantesque sonnets, real female friends were to be addressed but Shakespeare deviated from this and introduced imaginary characters; and male and female friends. Here, Vikram Seth seems to have been inspired by Shakespeare, because he seems to be unravelling his affectionate feeling for his male friend as well as female friends through his sonnet-cum-novel.

There is excessive praise of physical beauty of male friend in the Shakespearean sonnets as well as Seth’s novel. Male friend’s beauty is eulogized after the manner of woman’s beauty which is quite unusual, hence it seems to be an expression of homosexual tendencies.
"When in the chronicle of wasted time,
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful ...
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have express’d” (p. 92).

Similar description of male beauty could be seen in *The Golden Gate*.

"The night is generous and warm.
Phil looks at his good-looking lover’s
Face as he prays”. (p. 95)

Homosexuality is one of the major themes of Shakespearean sonnets and *The Golden Gate* also. In one of his sonnets, Shakespeare prefers his friend, Earl of Southampton, to Adonis, a beautiful youngman, and Helen, the most beautiful young woman in Greek mythology. He goes on to say that even Adonis and Helen have only a reflection of the beauty of his male friend.

"Since everyone, hath everyone, one shade,
And you but one, can every shadow lend.
Describe Adonis and the counterfeit,
Is poorly imitated after you
On Helen’s cheek all art of beauty yet” (p. 48).

Here amorous and homosexual inclinations are revealed in *The Golden Gate*.

"Phil’s always been attracted
By vulnerable people; Ed,
Eager, confused, intent, abstracted,
Is passionate in both speech and bed” (p. 96)
As far as phraseology is concerned, Shakespearean sonnets have made use of felicitous, highly formal, and bombastic words to express his thoughts whereas The Golden Gate is characterized by informal, modern and colloquial words. Most of the lines in his work are in prose style, though written in sonnet parameter with iambic tetrameter.

Shakespearean sonnets confine themselves to the themes associated with his friend only, and do not contain contemporary issues, but Seth's work addresses many contemporary issues such as nuclear proliferation, and its adverse impact, disintegration of family system in The American society, etc.

“I am my brother's keeper”,
“Nice folks don’t use nukes”, “work for life, Not death”, and a huge "strive with strife”
Against the smithy of “hardware” (p. 152).

This concern with contemporary social, economic and political issues and questions is necessitated by the fact that the novel tells coherent, integrated story with a specific spatial and temporal setting. Hence, The Golden Gate is a novel and not a collection of sonnets unlike Shakespearean sonnets. Shakespeare did not write a novel in sonnet form despite the fact that his sonnets share thematic threads.

Seth was inspired to write the novel in sonnet form by the theme that he chose to write on. Sonnet basically deals with one theme. The novel's main subject matter is actually destructiveness, an umbrella term, which
incorporates self-destruction, destruction at social, political and economic levels, and hence destruction at macro level. This movement from micro to macro perspective is expressed through depiction of the effects of disintegration of family at one level to effects of nuclear weapons upon society. Homosexuality, higher education and employment in women leading to their independence, careerism and focus upon upward mobility have all destroyed man-woman relationship and family, and have resulted in alienation and isolation where individuals are concerned. Similarly, socio-political and economic aggressiveness culminating in nuclear weapons has destroyed the relationship amongst various nations. The novel *The Golden Gate* could be compared with Eliot’s *The Waste Land* in the way that although the poem is fragmentary in nature, but it undertakes one broader theme of spiritual barrenness, so is Seth’s present novel which depicts the theme of destruction at various levels.

It is the fragmentary nature of the theme of the novel which justifies sonnet form because the novel appears episodic in nature. In the case of episodic narrative, one episode is replaced by another episode without any probability and logical justification, but the over-riding theme of destruction binds other themes together as an integrated whole. Though different themes are dealt with in a number of sonnets in the novel separately, yet they are held together through the string of this theme.
References


8. Ibid., p. 23.

9. Ibid., p. 25.

10. Ibid., pp. 28-29.


Chapter IV

Back to the Roots: A Suitable Boy
Chapter – IV

The fourth chapter deals with comparative study of Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy* (1993) and Austenian novels. As we know, Seth’s *A Suitable Boy* is Austenian in form with Indian substance. Though the novels of contemporary period, especially those of Salman Rushdie are pervaded with post-modernistic features, but Vikram Seth deliberately chooses to narrate his story in *A Suitable Boy* in the style of nineteenth century in a typical realistic mode which characterizes Austenian novels in particular.

Seth has modelled his novel on Austenian novel as is shown in the novel with regard to form and content to some extent. He has made this point clear in several of his discussions and interviews that he prefers “clear window” narrative, easy and transparent style which he has drawn from Jane Austen. To quote him, “I prefer a clear and easy style. It should be a window that helps you to see the scenery clearly instead of drawing attention from the scenery to the window”.\(^1\) The novel is sprinkled with Austenian moments and allusions. The portrait of Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* inspires in Elizabeth a “gentle sensation towards the original”\(^2\) the framed photograph of Lata evokes in Haresh “tender thoughts of the original”.\(^3\) We have similar moment both in Austen and Seth when love is in the air.

It is a well known fact that Austen writes mainly about the English landed gentry of the early nineteenth century. According to her, “the world of social pretension and ambition, of balls and visits and speculations about
marrying and giving in marriage, of the hopes and fears of genteel people of moderate means ... turned into a microcosm of life in its social aspect in her novels. She works on three or four families to create her own literary world. This is what we find in almost all her novels. Seth’s A Suitable Boy is also woven around four families, namely, the Mehras, the Kapoors, the Chatterjees, and the Khans. He writes about Indian middle class which held sway during the post independence and post partition decade of the 1950s.

As far as plot of the novel, A Suitable Boy, is concerned, the novel revolves around four families. Each family has a plot and there are sub-plots which actually support the four plots, leading towards the main plot – the quest for a suitable boy. The sub plots such as the academic skullduggery, the political parallelism between Nehru and Tandon on the one hand, and the political rivalry between L.N. Agarwal and Mahesh Kapoor on the other, Saeeda Bai-Maan episode, Lata-Kabir affair, Rasheed-Tasneem affair, all contribute to the development of the main plot in the novel.

The Mehra family consists of Lata, Savita, Arun and Varun, led by Mrs. Rupa Mehra. Lata, Savita, Varun and Pran (son of Mahesh Kapoor, and son-in-law of Mrs. Rupa Mehra) are on the side of Mrs. Mehra and hence represent tradition. Arun and his wife, Meenakshi (daughter of Justice Chatterjee) represent modern and contemporary perspective.

The Chatterjees are captained by Justice Chatterjee, the judge of Calcutta High Court. His five children – Amit, Tapan, Kakoli, Meenakshi,
with the exception of Dipankar, and his wife, Mrs. Chatterjee – are all snobs and are symbolic of the past glory of British rule and culture. Though being a Chatterjee, Dipankar is an Aurobindoite and Mrs. Chatterjee, a worshipper of Rabindranath Tagore.

The Kapoor clan is led by Mr. Mahesh Kapoor, a Nehruite, who is the Revenue Minister of Purva Pradesh. His wife, Mrs. Kapoor, is a devout, conservative and superstitious woman. His daughter Veena is married with Kedarnath Tandon. His elder son Pran Kapoor, lecturer in English at Brahmpur University, is married into the Mehra family, with Savita Kapoor. With the exception of Mahesh Kapoor and Maan Kapoor, the entire family is traditionalist.

The Khan family is headed by the old Nawab of Baitar, an old aristocrat and a big landlord. His sons – Imtiaz Khan, a doctor by profession, Firoz Khan, a lawyer by profession and his daughter Zainab, already married, are all on the side of tradition, but Begum Abida Khan is a quite modern and audacious woman.

All these four plots are well-supported by the sub-plots which run parallel to the four plots. The sub-plot of the academic skullduggery is expressed by Prof. Mishra, Head of the Department of English, Brahmpur University, with the help of his colleagues except Pran Kapoor.

The sub-plot of the rift between L.N. Agarwal and Mahesh Kapoor unravels the political enmity of the warring groups in India during 1951-52,
representative of Nehru and Tandons. Mr. L.N. Agrawal is a traditionalist on the lines of Tandon whereas Mr. Maheṣh Kapoor, a progressive secularist, is Nehruite.

Like *Pride and Prejudice*, the novel opens in a dramatic manner, riddled with dialogues and actions. Mrs. Mehra matches closely with Mrs. Bennet. Lata is another Elizabeth Bennet and the preparation of her elder sister's marriage with Pran is on. There is a mismatch of class between them as Pran is the son of a Revenue Minister and Savita is daughter of an ordinary representative of the middle class – Mrs. Rupa Mehra.

It is to be noted here that the plots of *A Suitable Boy* are designed for the pursuit of different things by different characters which contribute to the coherence of the novel. Mrs. Rupa Mehra's hunt for a suitable boy for Lata; Mr. Mahesh Kapoor's search for a political base; Nawab's endeavours to strengthen the feudal stability and Dipankar's quest for a spiritual anchorage, all these quests are carried out during the period of 1951-52, when India, the nascent nation, was struggling to consolidate herself from within and from outside. This historical quest is closely reflected in the domestic searches that form the plots of the novel, and hence the novel gains socio-political and historical significance.

Legouis and Cazamian comment on the art of Jane Austen, "The secret complexities of self love, the many vanities, the imperceptible quiverings of selfishness... is here indicated or suggested so calmly and
with so sober a touch that the author’s personal reaction is reduced to a minimum".\textsuperscript{5} We come across similar sort of things in \textit{A Suitable Boy} of Vikram Seth. Mr. Rupa Mehra’s serious pursuit for a suitable and ideal husband for Lata is a case in point. Her mother is very particular about the fact that the boy must be in a good job and he should be able to earn a decent livelihood. Mrs. Rupa Mehra outrightly rejects Amit as the prospective husband for Lata: “She looked at Amit and thought: Poet wastrel! He has never earned an honest rupee in his life” (p. 486).

It is quite remarkable here to point out that Industrial Revolution had an impact on England as much as Nehruvian socialism and Industrial Revolution had an effect on India in the immediate post-independence era. As a result of industrialization in England as well as in India, there arose an unquenchable thirst for money, which led to the rise of the lower middle class. Mrs. Benett and Mrs. Rupa Mehra belong to this middle class and they face a lot of difficulties in the quest for suitable boys for their daughters. At present, this social problem has taken an ugly shape, where a lot of daughters are killed for improporsionate dowry. This speaks volumes about pains and agonies of mothers who have little resources to have them married off and find themselves in the morass of caste, religion and tradition. Kalpana helps Mrs. Rupa Mehra to look for a prospective husband for Lata in the form of Haresh Khanna and informs her that Khanna is better than
others with respect to "a dowry... he is not the kind of man to ask for it and there is no one to ask for it on his behalf" (p. 562).

Like Austenian novels, one of the prominent themes of this novel is Mrs. Rupa Mehra’s preoccupation with the quest for a suitable boy for Lata, but Lata is least interested in her mother’s concern. We come across this sort of situation in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, when Mrs. Benett’s only concern is to have her five daughters married off to five suitable boys. For this, she keeps on the look out for prospective husbands for them and look around for eligible bachelors. She reminds Mrs. Benett several times to do the same. In *A Suitable Boy*, though Mr. Raghbir Mehra is no more, Mrs. Rupa Mehra invokes ‘Him’ whenever the situation demands. Furthermore, she remembers Mr. Mehra on the occasion of the wedding day of her daughter Savita: “If He had been here, I could have worn the tissue Patola Sari I wore for my own wedding, sighed Mrs. Rupa Mehra” (p. 3).

Through humour, Austen and Seth analyse the society of their times. They try to create humour with the help of characters. Here are some examples of the same. “My dear you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty”. We come across similar moment in *A Suitable Boy*, “Why are you trying to annoy when I am so happy? And Pran and Savita will be happy, you will see. They will be happy, she continued emphatically” (p.4).
The characters of Mrs. Benett and Mrs. Rupa Mehra are not meant to be taken as vehicles of message of life. The comicality of the character of Mrs. Mehra lies in the fact that whenever any tragedy befalls or a critical situation arises, she invokes "late Raghubir Mehra" with "He", "His" or "Him". Even after his demise, Mr. Raghubir Mehra continues to be a part of Mrs. Mehra's existence as a comic character in the novel.

There is no denying the fact that it is a sort of revolutionary or path-breaking attempt on the part of the novelist to write a realistic novel about people and places. It inches closer towards the 'tradition of compassionate realism' of the first generation of novelists of Indian writing in English, but flinches back from the contemporary fashionable trend of 'pin-wheeling' experiment favoured by Rushdie. To achieve this end, Seth models his novel on Austen. Furthermore, he says emphatically that he prefers orderly nineteenth century realists to the disorderly, chaotic and anarchic modern novelists. There is another reason why he prefers realist mode. It enables him to blend 'internal impulse' and 'external compulsion' into a seamless unity so that the theme of the rise of middle class could be dealt with appropriately through the genre of epic narrative. Like Austen, he too considers drawing room and the parlour as the platforms for social affairs and confabulations. Marriage is a major theme in Seth’s novel, as in Austen’s. There is a paradigm shift from the question of who will prove to be the suitable boy for Lata to the question of who will be the boy who can
uphold the values and aspirations of the rising middle class, and hence be able to guide the destiny of the nation.\textsuperscript{7}

It is noticeable here that marriage is linked with sociological and ideological connotations in both Austen as well as in Seth. In her book entitled \textit{Desire and Domestic Fiction}, Nancy Armstrong argues that the emphasis on marriage helps promote the feminisation of bourgeoisie culture. She further says how domestic fiction revolves around the woman, who values marriage and family "actively sought to disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics and, in so doing, to introduce a new form of political power".\textsuperscript{8} This has consequently led to the consolidation of patriarchal power-relations.

As we see in Austenian novel, the heroine frees herself from the entanglement of feudal aristocratic relations only to get trapped into the bourgeoisie patriarchal relations. For instance, in \textit{Pride and Prejudice} Elizabeth's argument to vindicate her choice of Darcy hints at sexual division of labour and gender roles imposed by patriarchy. In \textit{A Suitable Boy}, Lata's discourse to vindicate her choice of Haresh corresponds to Elizabeth's. Here, Lata says, "Haresh is practical, he is forceful, he is not cynical. He gets things done and he helps people without making fuss about it" (p. 1297). Seth's association with the realist mode has its own weaknesses. The characteristic of realism is to slip back into a form of male objectivism, just as reality is perceived as such in the pattern of bourgeoisie patriarchy.
Thematically speaking, Mrs. Rupa Mehra’s search for the suitable boy for Lata assumes tremendous importance in the development of the novel. Lata hunts for an ideal partner on her own – as she falls in love with Kabir Durrani, a Muslim boy, flirts with Amit Chatterjee, a Bengali boy from Chatterjee family, and finally ends up with Haresh Khanna, who is ultimately chosen as the prospective partner both by Lata as well as her mother, Mrs. Rupa Mehra. To accept motherly choice is not only a matter of authoritative imposition, but also hints at Lata’s intellectual development and rationality. *A Suitable Boy* is not only a simple story of marriage in the fashion of Jane Austen, highlights preference of rational love over romantic love. The novel is full of married couples and domestic intercourse, but it is not only about marriage. It, in fact, encompasses momentous issues concerning the nascent nation – independence, partition, Jawahar Lal Nehru as the first prime minister, the first General Election, the campaign of the Congress party to win elections for the second time on the strength of abolition of Zamindari system, etc.

*A Suitable Boy* presents another significant similarity with Austenian novel. As we have witnessed, the novel is set neither in the years of struggle for independence nor the partition of India, but after three years of independence when nothing momentous took place. This is what we see in the novels of Austen. Though her novels were written during momentous
periods of history, that is Napoleonic wars, but they have no trace of it. Rather they deal with domestic issues – familial and matrimonial.

One of the important characteristics of Indian fiction is the treatment of ‘great god family’. Family is invariably central to the novel in both regional as well as English novel. Moreover, it undercuts the divide between tradition and modernity in Indian English fiction. In the opinion of Vinay Kirpal, “The family which has been central to Indian English novels... is aggressively foregrounded in the Indian English post modern novel. Work after work, it appears almost like a character... Midnight's Children, The Great Indian Novel, The Shadow Lines, Rich Like Us, A Suitable Boy, Such a Long Journey, The Binding Vine, and a host of other novels. By contrast, the characters in Euro-American post-modern novels such as Catch-22, Possession, Under the Net, appear to be so alone. No mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, wives, husbands, sons, daughters, cousins, aunts or uncles; only lovers who keep coming in and going out of their lives. They inhabit a lonely society and the malaise of alienation spills into the novels”. Barring a few cases, the kind of families portrayed in Indian English fiction are middle class families of India.

With respect to India, the familial relationships are of paramount importance. In A Suitable Boy, the family tree is given in the prefatory part itself which speaks volumes about its values. Amit Chatterjee, appears to be a mouthpiece of the alter-ego of the writer in the novel. He says that family
tree “sprouts and grows, and spreads, and drops down branches that become trunks or intertwine with other branches” (p. 483). This novel contains Indian sensibility with Austenian form. It has already been said that Seth’s reason for the preference of Austenian model is to adopt clear-window approach to behold the scenery quite clearly.

Besides technical concerns and lucidity of style, the novels of Jane Austen register a protest against the prevalent epistemology and ideology. In the view of McKeon, the novel grew in the early modern period in England to deal with two kinds of problem – epistemological and social. In other words, the novel addressed the problem of how to signify ‘truth’ and ‘virtue’ at a time of great social and cultural transition in the attitude of the people. As a result, we have a situation where romance is replaced by novel, through a historical process, and hence ‘aristocratic honour’ makes the way for ‘capitalist credit’.

Here is Austen’s fiction on McKeon model. For Austen, the realistic novel is an ideological weapon, which is used to resolve the issue of epistemological doubt. For example, Henry Tilney, the protagonist of Northanger Abbey, thinks that the truth in question is nailed down by the authenticating devices of a supposedly referentialist discourse. These devices, consisting of names, places, dates and events are constituents of a diary or a journal. The language of a diary or a journal is his model: “How are the civilities and compliments of everyday to be related as they ought to
be unless noted down every evening in a journal! Perhaps you are not sitting in this room and I am not sitting by you. These are points in which doubt is possible! Not keep a journal!'' The novel of Austen is an example of the same. Her critics consider her an accurate observer and recorder of empirical phenomena.

There is a parallelism between Austen and Seth with regard to gothism and marvellous realism respectively. Just as Austen was placed against Mrs. Radcliffie and her followers, so is Vikram Seth against Rushdie and his followers. There are two kinds of realism – one emergent, as we have in Austen, and the other ideologically ambiguous. The latter kind of realism is associated with Bourgeoise power. In this regard, Stephen Greenblatt comments: “Power that relies upon a massive police apparatus, a strong, middle class nuclear family, an elaborate school system, power that dreams of a panopticon in which the most intimate secrets are open to the view of an invisible authority, such power will have as its appropriate aesthetic form the realist novel.” The irony is that realism today has hegemonizing effect, which was once considered to be retrogressive and subversive. For example, in *Northanger Abbey*, Henry Tilney, the protagonist of the novel, defends English realism: “Remember the country and the age in which we live... Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known in a country like this, where social and literacy intercourse is
on such a footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open?"\textsuperscript{13} Though realism is associated with bourgeoise power, the power of realism is nebulous celebration.

The mapping function which was assigned to ‘roads and newspapers’ and was considered as positive by Tilney, is now seen as negative in the opinion of Stephen Greenblatt. His contention is that the realist discourse “dreams of a Panopticon in which the most intimate secrets are open to the view of an invisible authority”.\textsuperscript{14} In the Indian context, the realistic novel is a necessity, not only because of its panoramic quality and heterogeneity, but also because of shaping power of history. That is what makes Seth to revert back to nineteenth century realism, which performs nation building task as we witness in Seth’s \textit{A Suitable Boy}.

\textit{Austen’s \textit{Persuasion}} offers some parallel here. Both \textit{A Suitable Boy} and \textit{Persuasion} depict ‘the vanity of person and of situation’\textsuperscript{15} in an ironic manner. Mrs. Rupa Mehra’s praise of her late husband resembles Sir Walter Elliot’s obsession with his baronetcy. Just as Mrs. Mehra is preoccupied with eulogy and pride in her husband’s achievement in the Railway department, so is Sir Walter Elliot with his baronetage. The most remarkable aspect is that both Lata and Anne Elliot move against patriarchal order through their marriage choices. For example, Anne marries Captain Wentworth, a sailor, below her class on the one hand and Lata marries
Haresh, a middle class, self-made person who is devoid of social graces and refinement that are the hallmark of the convented, anglophilic elites of New India. Lata's brother, Arun, disapproves Haresh as the suitable boy on three grounds. Firstly, his English is not up to the mark. Secondly, his companion are silly and inferior. Thirdly, he does not have a white collar job. Arun remarks, "His family are small people from old Delhi, and, are, to put it bluntly, entirely undistinguished. Certainly, it does him credit that he has brought himself to where he is; but, being a self-made man, he has a tendency to be rather pleased with himself - indeed, a little bumptious" (p. 1293).

This is associated with the hatred of the middle class by the aristocratic class. In Austen's *Persuasion*, it is a case of decadent aristocracy, and in Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, it is a case of a snobbish English educated, convented class. The gestures of Anne and Lata move along the same line. Lata's decision of marrying Haresh is confirmed after she receives Arun's bullying letter. "She wrote to Haresh same evening, accepting with gratitude - and, indeed, warmth - his often repeated offer of marriage" (p. 1295).

In *A Suitable Boy*, there is defeat of romantic love at the hands of rational love. Not only the main love affair of Lata, but also of Maan and Rasheed, receives a heavy blow. The tragic fallout of the careers of Charlotte Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice*, of Marianne in *Sense and
Sensibility, and of Harriet in Emma, is too well known to require proof. In the case of Harriet, we witness that Austen's narrative rejects the matter of heart if it hinders the existing arrangements of property and status. It is only Emma, the rich heiress, who can marry Mr. Knightley, the owner of the Donwell Abbey. Neighbours in Austen do not live in the same geographical space, yet share the same economic space. Philosophically, property may be insignificant but real world is well-rooted in wealthy individualism. People themselves become the shadows of property.

The novel is about the world of men and women and about events such as party, marriage and demise. Hence, "Austen's novels are political too, for they necessarily imply 'questions of power, of justice, questions of wealth and poverty and so on". This kind of peaceful atmosphere is purely Austenian.

There is another striking resemblance between A Suitable Boy and Austenian novel: the domestic as a site for political and economic issues. In the opening scene of A Suitable Boy, Mrs. Mehra's search for the suitable boy gets the narrative started. In the opening scene of Pride and Prejudice, Austen says, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife". Mrs. Mehra is on the hunt for a decent, convented, Khatri boy for Lata. "Mrs. Rupa Mehra had indeed liked Haresh. She had liked the fact that he was energetic, that he was independent of his family (though affectionate towards them), and that
he clearly took great care with his appearance. Nowadays, many boys looked so scruffy. And one crucial point in Haresh’s favour was his name. Being a Khanna he was bound to be a khatri” (p. 556). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs. Benett likes Mr. Bingley, the owner of Netherfield Park, for the same reason. Lata’s infatuation with Kabir, a Muslim boy from the university, could be compared to Marriannes’ attraction towards Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* and how it disturbs the quiet atmosphere of Dashwood family.

The novel depicts basically a shift in Lata’s character from being romantic to rational being. As we see, Lata reads *Emma* on the train on the way to Kanpur from Calcutta to meet Haresh. *Emma* is about moderating one’s impulses and emotions, and hence instructive for Lata.

It is here remarkable to note that Kabir at the beginning disrupts Lata’s reason, and Lata’s choice for Haresh has moderating effect on her passion by the end of the novel. In this way, Lata moves along the lines of Austenian heroines.

Through the novel, Vikram Seth projects Indian society during a specific period of time when she was in the state of transition. After three years of independence, there was a social, political, and behavioural change, brought about by healthy economy and hence prosperity. Like England of nineteenth century, India in twentieth century experienced paradigm shift from feudal society to capitalist society. As Jane Austen chooses domestic
and familial issues to work on through realistic mode of narration, so does Vikram Seth. Furthermore, she confines herself to just three to four families to touch upon the said themes to create her literary microcosm. Similarly, Vikram Seth focuses on four families in the novel to record Indian society of the following years of independence. Literary history is testimony to the fact that forms are always necessitated by themes. Consequently, Vikram Seth adheres to Austenian mode of narration to unravel emergent India of 1950s, because he also undertakes similar themes to delve into. He deals with ordinary social themes through realistic mode of narration in Austenian manner.

Towards the end of eighteenth century and the beginning of nineteenth century, England was experiencing a paradigm shift from feudalism to capitalism in the wake of the Industrial Revolution.

Jane Austen belonged to the feudal class, which resented this change, for it would alter social structure and have a negative impact upon power relations. As the feudal society was disintegrating and collapsing, Austen believed that adherence to conventional and traditional codes of conduct might alter the course of history. So her heroines with 'sensibility' search for dominating husbands whom they can look up to, and power is reposed in the elder member of the family. These themes advocating adherence to time-tested socio-economic relations necessitated realistic mode of narration for her novels.
Vikram Seth finds similar situations in the years immediately following Independence. Zamindari system was being abolished, and feudal society was giving way to capitalist society. Since this process of change primarily effected the rural way of life, the social setting of *A Suitable Boy* is Purva Pradesh, a village, and the mode of narration realism.
References


8. *Idem*.


11. Ibid., p. 33.

12. Ibid., p. 34.

13. Ibid., p. 35.


16. Ibid., p. 40.

17. Ibid., p. 36.

Chapter V

In Search of Symphony: An Equal Music
Chapter – V

*An Equal Music* delves into music, as the title of the novels itself proclaims. Music begins where words end. It is pretty difficult and very frustrating to convey intangible yet visceral feelings of music. But it is one of the fascinating areas of creativity. That is why the writers strive to unravel the mysteries of this art form and some of them have succeeded remarkably.

Music is the highest form of art. It is created out of amalgamation of euphonic sounds, which gives rise to melody. Just as discordant musical sounds have no significance, and hence are meaningless, so is the case with disharmonious relationships in life. Life attains its full meaning if it is lived in total harmony.

Vikram Seth boldly experiments with narrative technique. We have already witnessed the extent of his imaginative courage in his first novel, *The Golden Gate*, which is a novel experiment in itself. It must be quite arduous to express complex ideas while maintaining the train of thought within a rigid rhyme-scheme. This hints at the fact that he longs for and prefers orderly and systematic society to chaotic and anarchic world of the contemporary period. In literature, poetry is the highest form of creativity. It requires the greatest degree of restraint in expressing ideas. Seth's endeavours become doubly tough, for he tries to put chaotic Americanized sensibility into the ordered form. It seems that he tries to explore his own
potential and potentiality of the genre itself to record contemporaneous sensibility.

In his second novel, *A Suitable Boy*, Seth attempts to capture social, political, economic and cultural aspects of Indian life through realistic mode of narration. Here he prefers simple realistic narration to Rushdie's vapourousness and stream of consciousness technique employed by the past writers. For Seth, it is, indeed, a rigorous task to squeeze variegated Indian experiences of contemporary times into the Austenian mode of narration.

Seth's third novel, *An Equal Music*, discusses music at length. If there is lack of euphony in the sounds, no music could be created. Only harmonious sounds lead to musicality. The novelist here uses the word music not only in the sense of equipment, instrument and orchestra, but also with regard to harmonious relationships. As music is the attainment of the highest form of art, so is harmonious relationship in man’s life. Human life hinges on relationships, and they flourish and blossom only in association with harmony, cordiality, co-operation and mutuality.

*An Equal Music* is not only about man-woman relationship, but it also delves into the world of music and souls of musicians. Michael, the protagonist of the novel, is part of the Maggiore Quartet in the capacity of second violinist. He, being a London based musician, supplements his income through private tuition and chamber ensembles. In the beginning, he is a student of music at the Musikhochschule in Vienna where he comes in
contact with Julia, and later falls in love with her. As he is egotistical by nature, he is not able to cope with his overbearing mentor Carl Kall, and decides to leave Vienna, his mentor and, most importantly, Julia, the pianist, whom he loves most.

After having returned to London, Michael tries to keep himself awfully busy with music. Though he has developed friendship with a French girl, Virginia, but he is constantly drawn towards his first and only love, Julia. He happens to catch sight of Julia on a London bus, separated by two panes of window glass and an unbridgeable gulf of about five feet. He tries to follow her, but cannot as Julia drifts away in the flow of London traffic.

It is quite remarkable here to note that it is the string trio that brings Michael and Julia together, and the same trio becomes the source of confrontation with Carl Kall. It also leads to the development of differences with Julia, and Michael subsequently says good bye to Vienna. As he fails in love, Michael endeavours to compensate it with music. There is no denying the fact that music, which is a profession that requires tremendous amount of devotion, pervades the novel. Seth himself expresses his passion for music in “Authors’ Notes” at the end of the novel, and says, “Music to me is dearer even than speech. When I realized that I would be writing about it I was gripped with anxiety. Only slowly did I reconcile myself to the thought of it.”
Though Seth had a passion to write about the world of music, yet he was quite reluctant to take up the topic as he was deficient and not well-versed in the said realm. He gathered courage and sought help from various quarters, as he expresses in “Author’s Note” itself;

Friends and strangers have helped me in this work: String players, often those in quartets themselves or who, because of their involvement with early music, have had to deal with the problems of variant tuning, pianists; other musicians, both players and composers; makers, repairers and sellers of instruments; those who aid or attempt to aid the creation or dissemination of music — teachers, critics, musicians' agents and managers, executives of record companies, managers of halls, and festivals; those who know the places I have written about better than myself — Londoners, Rochdaliens, Venetians and Viennese; those who understand the world of the deaf — medically, like the many doctors who have advised me or educationally, in particular my lip-reading teacher and her class, or from personal experience of deafness.

Many people talked to me about the world of these characters; a few about the characters themselves...

At the cost of redundancy I would like most particularly to thank three musicians — a pianist, a percussionist and a string player — who helped me, in quite different ways, to go where
imagination alone could not have taken me: to get some sense of what it might be like to live, to have lived, and to expect to continue to live in the zones that lie at the intersection of the world of soundlessness with those of heard, of misheard, of half-heard and of imagined sound (p. 383).

Seth appears to have thorough command of his subject. He presents his material in such a way that it becomes an integral part of the novel. According to Seth, music is truth in itself. As we have witnessed in the novel, Michael's only true family is Maggiore Quartet. He finds solace in the bosom of this family, whenever he is in an anxiety – ridden situation:

Every rehearsal of the Maggiore Quartet begins with a very plain, very slow three-octave scale on all four instruments in unison: sometimes major, as in our name, sometimes minor, depending on the key of the first piece we are to play. No matter how fraught our lives have been over the last couple of days, no matter how abrasive our disputes about people or politics or how visceral our differences about what we are to play and how we are to play it, it reminds us that we are, when it comes to it, one. We try not to look at each other when we play this scale; no one appears to lead. Even the first upbeat is merely breathed by Piers, not indicated by any movement of his head. When I play this I release myself into the spirit of the quartet. I become the music of the scale. I mute my will, I free myself (p. 10).
According to Meenakshi Bharat, Seth could be compared with John Keats with respect to identification of the dancer with the dance. The element of Keatsian negative capability is seen here. Seth identifies himself with whatever he sees and contemplates upon. To quote him “I am the trout, the angler, the brook, the observer.”

After Michael is deserted in love affair, he receives a second shock when Mrs. Fromby asks him to give her violin to her nephew who can establish an educational trust for his three daughters. Later, he receives news of Mrs. Fromby’s death, and hence he has to part with his beloved violin very shortly. This compels Michael to abandon Maggiore Quartet and he takes part in advertisement companies and composes background music for movies. Michael is quite upbeat when he “receives a letter from Fromby’s solicitor” that she has bequeathed Tanoni to him. This rejuvenates Michael and puts life back into him.

Julia decides not to play music any more after her row with Michael during the Vienna and Venice tour but she decides to perform for public at Wigmore Hall of London where Michael enjoys to see her play music. He listens to her music and says, “It is a beauty beyond imagining – clear, lovely, inexorable, phrase across phrase, phrase echoing phrase, the incomplete, the unending “Art of Fugue”. It is an equal music” (p. 380). He is, indeed, very ecstatic about listening to the excellence of Julia’s music. Michael concludes, “Music, such music, is a sufficient gift. Why ask for
happiness; why hope not to grieve? It is enough, it is to be blessed enough, to live from day to day and to hear such music – not too much or the soul could not sustain it – from time to time” (p. 381).

Like his first novel, Seth deals with the theme of alienation in his third novel, *An Equal Music*. Michael’s desire to evade Rochdale, his native place, pushes him into a state of alienation. He comes from a very humble background. His parents had saved money so that they could send him to university for education. His mother thinks that he should escape Rochdale after being educated. His interest in music was aroused as he was once taken to musical concert by Mrs. Fromby. It is this influence that makes Michael decide that “more than anything else I want to be part of such a noise.” Moreover, it becomes irresistible for him to ask Mrs. Fromby to help him learn how to play the violin. She gifts her Tanoni to Michael. He gets awfully busy with the world of classical music. He stops visiting his upset and lonely father and is quite indifferent to hear the death of his affectionate cat, zsa-zsa. Not only this, he does not attend funeral ceremony of Mrs. Fromby. In the view of Mala Pandurang, Michael is “determined to cut off links with”4 Rochdale. Anybody who disowns his roots cannot live happily and always has a feeling of being alienated. Michael’s case here is a case in point.

According to Pandurang, Michael appears to be very sensitive of class consciousness. He involves himself with music just to evade “his
bourgeoisie background." The Maggiore Quartet provides him an immense pleasure but he is acutely conscious of his class and a sort of music that he engages himself with. He is envious of Julia, for she comes of the background “where art and literature and music are absorbed without effort or explanation – from speech and travel, from books and records, from the very walls and shelves” (p. 81). Michael tells Julia that she need not earn her livelihood with her fingers. He is of the opinion that the training into the best kind of music hugely depends upon the educational background of the student and tells us how educational background deprives grammar school students of the classical music. He says “If I had been born in Rochdale five years later, I do not see how I - coming from the background I did, and there were so many who were much poorer – could have kept my love of the violin alive” (p. 71). He does not recommend the music of the common folk – the music that is usually played by cab-drivers.

Nature occupies a significant position in An Equal Music. For the Romantics, nature stands in opposition to city/town life but here it is shown to be in harmony with city life. The novel begins with a description of nature: “The branches are bare, the sky tonight a milky violet. It is not quiet here, but it is peaceful. The wind ruffles the blackwater towards me.

There is no one about. The birds are still. The traffic slashes through Hyde Park. It comes to my ear as white noise” (p. 3).
The entire novel is sprinkled with vivid descriptions of beautiful objects of nature on the lines of the Romantics. A special relationship exists between character and nature. Michael too has special connection with nature. He gets his flat in central London on purpose, as he wishes to behold natural beauty from his window: “I can look across the brown branched park to spires and towers and chimneys beyond” (p. 4). He is very happy to walk through Hyde Park and swim across the Serpentine: “They chlorinate it in the summer, but in winter there’s nobody but us-Water Serpents, and we had to fight the park authorities and the Department of Health and the council and God knows who else to retain our right to swim here. You have to be a member of the club and sign away your health rights, because of all the rat-piss and goose-turds, and then you can swim between six and nine in the morning any day of the year” (p. 21). He further says “I was tempted by the quirky luxury of swimming in the open air in the heart of London” (p. 21).

Julia, the pianist and Michael’s love, always appears in association with nature in one way or the other. It is to be noted that Julia has her rendezvous with Michael in the Orangery in the season of rain and wind. “The rain has stopped. The garden outside is in clear view, with its huge green sand-turrets of topiary. The sky is clear…” (p. 109) He further maintains, “I often come here not to the Orangery so much as the sunken garden there. Sometime in the spring I just come and listen to the blackbirds. And you – are you still in love with your nightingales?” (p. 109).
In the opinion of Meenakshi Bharat, as the novel is located in the realm of music, the musical piece, “The Trout of Schubert” which holds Michael and Julia together, is also named after an aquatic creature, a fish, which belongs to the natural world. Michael says, “I feel that I’m on a tightrope over a chasm listening to a bird rising from below and singing high above me, higher and higher: an odd image for a piece named after a fish” (p. 193).

Like the literature of the Romantic period, the novel supports the belief that delinking with nature results in emotional crisis and annulment. It leads to boredom and frustration. Michael comments, “London unsettles me - even from such a height there is no clear countryside to view” (p. 4). But close communion with nature provides Michael with total peace, calm and tranquility. Nature has for both Michael and Julia restorative and refreshing effect. To live in close harmony with nature soothes our mind. It reminds us of Wordsworthian poetry, which infuses nature with similar medicinal value.

Unlike Julia, Virginia, a French girl, comes in the life of Michael to fill in the gap vacated by Julia. Virginia is not appreciative of natural beauty. She disapproves of Serpentine’s black water which is full of “rat piss and goose-turds”. She further adds about Michael, who is so thrilled to swim across and bathe in Water Serpents “In that filthy freezing water. You English are mad” (p. 20).
Virginia is actually a fashionable girl and likes to live life in stylish manner. She has a predilection for fashionable cars and swanky apartment. Seth describes her flat in hilarious detail: “I walk across the park to her flat. It is over-heated and there is a great deal of pink... Pink bath, pink basin, pink toilet... pink tiles, pink wallpaper, pink rug. Brushes, soap, tooth brush, silk flowers, toilet paper, all pink. Even the little foot operated waste-bin is pale-pink” (p. 6).

There is one momentous factor that runs across Seth’s novels. Like his first two novels, *An Equal Music* also deals with rational love. In *The Golden Gate*, rationality is preferred to emotion and sentiment. *A Suitable Boy* shows Lata’s love affair with Kabir Durrani, her flirtatious relation with Amit Chatterje, and she ultimately chooses Haresh Khanna to be her ideal husband. Hence, rational love is given an edge over romantic love. This is what happens in the case of *An Equal Music* also, Julia, though going steady with Michael, marries James who could be a more reliable life partner than Michael himself. Hence, Julia rejects passion and takes care of familial sanctity and social order.

There is another significant point that is common among novels of Vikram Seth. The novels highlight preference of family over individualism. In *The Golden Gate*, young individuals are shown to be quite successful in their career but they lead solitary and anxiety ridden life. Thus, they are able to achieve physical comforts at the expense of mental peace. In his second
novel, *A Suitable Boy*, Lata, though passionate about Kabir, marries Haresh Khanna as he is chosen to be an ideal husband by her family, hence family sanctity is upheld. In the third novel, *An Equal Music*, Julia, prefers James, a dependable and successful person, to Michael, who is of a moody and volatile temperament.

Like realistic novels of the nineteenth century, *An Equal Music* narrates the story of Michael's growth and maturation as a musician. According to Anjana Sharma, like Pip of Dickens' novel *Great Expectation*, Michael too comes from a small town and a humble background. As Pip receives the generosity of a benefactress, Miss Havisham, so does Michael from Mrs. Fromby. It is Mrs. Fromby who arouses his interest in music and nurtures him. She gifts him a violin to sustain his interest in the same. His parents are also happy with the fact that he will be able to escape Rochdale by means of education.9

The novel could be studied from post-colonial perspective as well. Vikram Seth presents Europe through the agency of music, rather classical music. He has already shown his love and passion for music in his previous works. In *The Golden Gate*, Seth discusses western music and comments, "The program?", "Mozart, Schonberg, Brahms". Ah-well, that certainly has charms."10 There is a discussion on music and musicians in *A Suitable Boy* as well. Seth describes a scene in which, "The musicians – a tabla player, a sarangi player, and a man who strummed the tanpura – sat down and started
tuning their instruments...” According to Mala Pandurang, “Seth studied the Khayal under Pandit Amarnath at Shri Ram Bharati Kala Kendra, while on short visits to India. This familiarity with Hindustani music comes across in those sections of *A Suitable Boy* that take the reader through the intricacies of Ragas. His love for Indian music perhaps got him interested in western classical music. Seth tries to search otherness in Europe through the agency of western classical music. In the words of Kundera, “No civilization has ever created such a miracle out of musical sound as has European music, with its thousand year old history and its wealth of forms and styles...” Seth attempts to fictionalize this idea through *An Equal Music*.

Exile is another significant point with respect to *An Equal Music*. Michael, the hero, gets sandwiched between his rural background and sophisticated musical aspirations. Hence, he feels alienated in the town. According to Silvia Albertazzi, Michael feels “an urgent need to reconstitute his broken life... by choosing to see himself as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people”. Vikram Seth appears to have put himself into the character of Michael. Seth also experiences the feelings of an exile in London. His association with western classical music might be an attempt to be a part of ‘a triumphant ideology’.

The title of the novel, *An Equal Music* is derived from John Donne’s “Valediction”, which deals with life after death. The ultimate equality could
be achieved only in the world hereafter. Though Michael tries to attain this equality through the agency of western classical music, but fails miserably in his attempt. Hence it could be attained only in death. The lines from Donne are at the beginning of the novel;

And into that gate they shall ever enter, and in that house they shall dwell, where there shall be no cloud nor sun, no darkness, nor dazzling but one equal light, no noise, nor silence, but one equal music, no fear nor hopes, but one equal possession, no foes nor friends, but one equal communion and identity, no end nor beginnings but one equal eternity (prefatory part of the novel, An Equal Music).

Throughout the novel Michael tries his level best to bridge up the gap between his background and his interest in the western classical music. But he is not able to do so as his choice for music is at odds with his background. Seth comments on Michael’s incompatibility with music: “No one in the family had ever dreamt of going to the university ...you want to be a violin player’ asked daddy slowly. ‘A violinist, Stanley’, interposed my mother. He hit the roof. ‘It’s the bloody fiddle, that’s what it is, the bloody fiddle” (p. 22).

Michael is haunted with a sense of loss because of his separation with Julia throughout the novel. It becomes doubly tragic for him to get to know that Julia, the gifted pianist, no longer performs in public places as she has gone deaf. This runs as a tragic element through the novel. Her departure
from the world of sound to the world of soundlessness could have been
presented in an intensely tragic manner, but it has been avoided and
Michael’s lonely and tension-ridden existence is highlighted. Seth here
conveys the message that if a person has an iron will and nerves of steel,
nothing could come in his or her way. This is what exactly happens in the
case of Julia. Despite being handicapped with deafness, she moves on with
her life quite confidently. But Michael is pre-occupied with his rural
background and lives only in his past.

“Again and again I hear her name and the word ‘deaf’, ‘deaf’, again
and again... She plays without the music, her eyes sometimes on her hands,
sometimes closed. What she hears what she imagines I do not know.

There is no forced gravitas in her playing” (pp. 379-80).

Michael’s passion for music at the beginning and the end is marked
by the musical piece, “The Art of Fugue”. Later, Julia takes a vow that she
will no longer perform for anyone but Michael. But she rescinds her vow
and plays for public. Michael asks, “Why are you playing the “Art of
Fugue”? What are you trying to do?” She replies “Why? Why not, for
heaven’s sake I love it too” (p. 352). This reflects that music has infused her
soul more than Michael’s.

There is a furtherance of patriarchal ideology through An Equal
Music. In the patriarchal society, woman is not allowed a separate identity
and is always placed under the guardianship of one male or the other. This is
what we see in this novel also. Julia, at the beginning, is under the care of Michael and later on she leads her life under the stewardship of James, an American banker and her husband. Julia's character is portrayed with some prominence as she is the object of Michael's desire. There is Helen who is part of Maggiore Quartet. She is the sister of Piers and lives under his guardianship. In fact, *An Equal Music* shows not only love for music and woman, but also promotes patriarchal ideology that is implicitly present in the linguistic system. They try to suppress the patriarchy but end up promoting the same for linguistic system is networked to supplement the patriarchal project.\footnote{15}

*An Equal Music* deals with the relationship of musicians with their music, and with their fellow musicians. It records the pains and pleasures of the Maggiore Quartet as they rehearse and play the performances of "Beethoven", "Schubert", "The Art of Fugue" which interpret the music and entertain the audience.

According to Wallace and Huckman, team-work is an "activity to realize a common purpose is shared among all members in such a way as to maximize their individual contribution to its achievement."\footnote{16} There are three aspects of team work – philosophical, practical and creative. Philosophically speaking, it is presumed that collaborative leadership leads to more effective result than individual entrepreneurship. It bases itself on sharing, helping and executing control. The second aspect is related with alternative options
that it puts forth to perform the work with regard to leading and managing any group or organization. The third aspect is creative one, which results due to synergy in the team. This is what we witness in Seth’s *An Equal Music* while reading about the rehearsal and performance of Maggiore Quartet:

Finally, after an hour and a half we arrive at the second movement. It is dark outside, and we are exhausted, as much with one another’s temperaments as with the music. But ours is an odd quadripartite marriage with six relationships, any of which, at any given time, could be cordial or neutral or strained. The audiences who listen to us cannot imagine how earnest, how petulant, how accommodating, how wilful is our quest for something beyond ourselves that we imagine with our separate spirits but are compelled to embody together. Where is the harmony of spirit in all this, let alone sublimity? How are such mechanics, such stops and starts, such facile irreverence transmuted, in spite of our bickering selves, into musical gold? And yet often enough it is from such trivial beginnings that we arrive at an understanding of a work that seems to us both true and original, and an expression of it which displaces from our minds — and perhaps, at least for a while, from the minds of those who hear us — any versions, however true, however original, played by other hands (p. 14).
The novel is distinguished by universal humanism. Seth deliberately avoids dealing with problems of ethnicity, dilemmas of immigration, the unbridgeable gap between cultures of origin and cultures of adoption in the novels, *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music*. He prefers universalism to nationalism in *An Equal Music*.

*Like The Golden Gate, An Equal Music* also undertakes the theme of alienation and loneliness. Michael's solitariness arises out of rootlessness, as he has evaded his native place, Rochdale. Music is a specialized existence, and musicians are isolated individuals. Michael is isolated in the group itself, so his isolation is even more restrictive. At the beginning of the novel, Michael rejects being a part of society to become a part of a group. Michael fails to integrate himself with the group because of the strings that attach him to the world outside his group and society.

His rejection of society leads him to feelings of guilt, and he fails to come to terms with this guilt. His isolation from society alienates him within the group too, so he cannot achieve creativity. As he is not sensitive to his roots, so he cannot be sensitive to the rarefied world of music. Creativity cannot be achieved in a vacuum, and Michael is living in a vacuum.

After relinquishing his roots, Michael takes refuge in music, which fails to provide him any solace. Thus, he is not able to come to terms with his beloved Julia as well. Michael fails to succeed in finding refuge as he is not sensitive enough.
References


4 Mala Pandurang, *op.cit.*, p. 179.

5 *Idem*.


8 Mala Pandurang, *op.cit.*, p. 178.


13. *Idem*.

14. *Idem*.


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Chapter - VI

Conclusion : Not the End
CONCLUSION

Story telling, hence narration, has a long history of evolution which coincides with the evolution of mankind. From cave-sketching to magic realism, narration of story of experiences of life, has come a long way. The narrators were forced to experiment with narrative techniques as society and human relationships developed and acquired complexities by stages, for theme decides narrative style, not vice versa. It would be a bit too much to expect a contemporary story-teller to depict life in a metropolis through a few cave-sketches.

Vikram Seth is no exception to this general rule. An Indian writer trying to depict his observations and experiences of an alien society for the natives of that society, must perforce experiment with the narrative techniques available to him. Not too wild experiments, for the novels had to find a readership, and hence could not deviate too acutely from what the readers were used to. Hence, Seth tries to find a balance between innovation and tradition in all his novels.

Vikram Seth’s Two Lives (2005) is non-fiction autobiographical biography. It fuses together memoir, biography, autobiography and history, which captures the social tapestry of India, the Second World War, the Holocaust, Israel and Palestine, Post-War Germany and the Britain of 1970s but, above all, he has written it as a personal and family record.

The work spans the period from early 20th century to later part of 20th century. These two historical periods are mirrored through the characters of
Shanti-Henny and Seth respectively. The East-West encounter runs parallel to this, highlighting issues of cultural shock, misplacement, displacement and alienation experienced by Shanty and Seth himself. Furthermore, it involves a paradigm shift from rural, agrarian and feudal world to urban, metropolitan and capitalist world, and hence a shifting perspective in the perception of life.

Seth's *Two Lives* chronicles anti-semitic movement with its naked realism. It retrieves history of twentieth century seen through the eyes of Shanti and Henny through simple realistic mode of narration.

Alexander S. Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (1828) deals with Russia of early nineteenth century whereas *The Golden Gate* (1986) depicts America of late twentieth century. And we have witnessed departure from rural, agrarian and feudal society to modern, metropolis and high-tech society. Though certain changes could be noticed, yet basic rudiments of life remain the same even after a gap of one and a half centuries. The use of free verse in drama was common. It is unusual here that Seth writes verse novel with sonnet parameter. Since sonnet is fragmentary in nature and primarily deals with one theme throughout the sonnet, so, in *The Golden Gate* Seth deals with varied themes in different sonnets, yet they are held together through the string of the theme of destructiveness, at various levels, which runs across the novel. Since Seth tries to record rigid, chaotic and variegated Americanized sensibility, hence sonnet form with rigid iambic tetrameter suits this purpose. Seth realized that Pushkin's form was relevant for modern society with a bit of innovation. The
commercial success of the novel suggests that Seth was trying to use a kind of narrative, which readers were used to, to capture complex modern themes.

Seth makes a paradigm shift from verse novel to realistic novel in *A Suitable Boy* and he goes back to the nineteenth century realistic mode of narration to project the life of twentieth century. It suggests that life, including perceptions, human relationships, emotion and sentiments is primarily the same, though change can be observed with regard to the fact that society was moving away from feudal and rural world to post-imperial and metropolis world. It is to be noted that Seth keeps shuttling between India, America and England but he finds same rudiments of life everywhere, hence he adopts a traditional narrative technique innovatively. Seth deliberately chooses Austenian mode of narration, for he, like Jane Austen, undertakes similar events and situations to deal with. There was a good deal of similarity between England of 19th c and India of 20th c especially in the years immediately following independence. Like England in post-Industrial Revolution period, the feudal society in India was disintegrating and collapsing in the wake of abolition of zamindari system. Thus, Seth was in the quest for stability in society through the tools of matrimonial alliances and friendships. He also confines himself to four or five families to capture socio-political conditions of India panoramically. He records minute details of zamindari system, communal riots, Nehruvian politics, shoe-manufacturing factory and Legal matters meticulously and presents them with picturesque vividness. The success of the novel is that his readers are able to identify themselves with Seth’s perceptions.
*An Equal Music* deals with western classical music, an ultimate of western culture. The novel unfolds mysteries of music and has a deep look into the souls of musicians. The performances and technicalities of music are discussed in great detail. His minute and keen observation of musical instruments and elaborative study into aural problems of Julia, account for realistic mode of narration.

Though against the literary trend of contemporary period, Seth is able to seize the attention of his readers across the globe appealingly. He is the first established Indian English writer who could go beyond Indianness with a roaring success.
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Bibliography

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