

CHAPTER - I

CONTEMPORARY INDIAN NOVEL IN ENGLISH

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Indian English Novel after Independence has carved a new track, a new vision both in theme and spirit. It has now emerged as one of the major genres in the New Literatures in English, an outcome of commercial, cultural and literary history of an encounter between India and Britain. The spectrum history of Indian fiction from the first generation novelists to the recent novelists after 2000 has passed through ' Adopt Phase' of colonial literature, the 'Adapt Phase' and 'Adept Phase'. In the first Phase, the Indian novel in English is in search of medium and form from 1864 to 1930. This is a pre-Independence novel in search of tradition, known to use Meenakshi Mukherjee's term, a 'twice born fiction.' It is imitative in nature but expressed the Indian sensibility and is rooted in the Indian soil. The novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and others popularized the Indian English fiction in their own ways, depicting social reality in India.

The novelists of second generation Bhabhani Bhattacharya, B. Rajan, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandaya, R.P.Jhabhvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, and Shashi Deshpande lifted Indian English novel to a considerable height and created a space in the literature of the world. Since then the Indian English Literature appeared on Global screen. The novelists try to present the truthful reality. Makarand Paranjape (1991:25) says "The novel interprets or creates reality. But the novel cannot be realistic or cannot deny social reality. It has to bridge a balance between personal and social." A gradual rise in this direction is seen in the development of the novel. Slowly from Freedom - struggle and Partition, the novelists shifted their emphasis from the social to the personal world and their themes changed accordingly. As observed by Meenakshi Mukherjee (1971:198), "Recent fiction has turned introspective and the individual's quest for a personal meaning in life has become a theme of urgent interest for the Indo-Anglian writer." Many of the

novelists of the second generation with their interest and eagerness to find new themes, as said by C. Paul Verghese (1971:25), “renounced the larger world in favour of the inner man” and continued “a search for the essence of human living”. The novel has always been a modern. It is always concerned with the contemporary life. In other words, the novel mirrors the contemporary society. As the name suggests, a ‘novel’ is always in search of new things. Modernism is a comprehensive but a vague term for a movement which emerged to get significance in the closing years of the 19th century and which has had a wide influence internationally during the march of the 20th century. As far as fiction is concerned, modernism reveals a breaking away from established rules, tradition and conventions of the Victorian well-made novel. Modernism indicates the tradition of rebellion against tradition’s. It provides fresh ways of looking at life and reality, man’s position and function in the universe and many experiments in the form and style. It is particularly concerned with language and how to use it with the craft of writing itself. “Putting reality in question, and falling in fragments,” automatic sentences and ‘subjective’ voices, these are a few of the things that made the novel modern,” observes Jesse Matz (2004: 6). As to the nature and purpose of the modern novel, modern novelist started with the belief that modernization has changed the very nature of reality, and that fiction also has to change its very nature in order to survive. Modern novels treat things differently. They go against the established literary norms and conventions. Experimentation, innovation and improvisation are the hallmarks of a typical modern novel. New styles and structures are the result and these are often shocking, surprising and difficult. But the difficulty has its reasons; often it makes fiction more life-like or makes the modern reality more subjective to awareness, scrutiny and understanding. Or it aims at making fiction itself as strange as modern experience. These are some of the fundamental tendencies of the modern experience. Some of the fundamental tendencies of the modern novel are discerned in an avante-garde in its radical formal innovation. In short, modern fiction refers to a new approach

to fiction in terms of new technique, new theories, new philosophies and new styles.

Post-modern fiction refers to changes, developments, and tendencies which have taken place or are taking place in fiction since 1965. If modern fiction aimed at mimesis, earnest redress, reality, plotlessness, immediacy, it is marked by diegesis, unseriousness, fantasy, magic realism, metafiction, mediation and plotting. Post-modernism invigorated the styles and features of the modern novel such as defamiliarization, consciousness, fragmentation etc. It also solved many modern novels' key problems with its radical experimentations, with theme, narratology and style.

Post-modern fiction contains the themes of globalisation, multiculturalism, Diaspora, terrorism, violence, sense of loss, alienation, dislocation, disintegration, and cultural displacement and so on. The movement of post-modernism incorporated new concepts, new vision in perceptions of the writers of Indian diaspora. Most of these writers who are abroad approached socio-cultural India through different perspectives. The developments or the phases that Indian English novel passed through i.e. historical, socio-political and self-identity metamorphosed itself emerging into a new phase, a new development that is, the phase of post-modern novel. The post-modern literature that first sprang up in 1960s in the States of America and Europe is hailed in India by Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), a ground breaking work that grabbed the most coveted Man Booker Prize and is termed as Booker of Bookers. This novel placed Rushdie among European post-modernist novelists like Gabriel Gracia Marquez, Milan Kundera and Gunter Grass. As T.N.Dhar (1999:159) observes, "Viney Kripal singles out *Midnight's Children* as a trail-blazer, and trend setter which infused new life into the novel and made a tremendous impact on a whole generation of writers new and established." Rushdie has combined the political agenda of post colonialism with the styles of postmodernism in his novel. The techniques of the post-modern

are of subversive intent. These are often combined with 'outrageous' subject matter. Magic realism is used as a narrative technique mostly in the post-modern fiction. It is metafictional, self reflexive, self referential and meta-narrative. Some of the characteristic features of this kind of fiction are mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic or bizarre and skilful time-shift. Convoluted and even labyrinthine narrative and plots, use of myths, dreams and fairy tales, expressionistic and even surrealistic descriptions are some other devices in the post-modern fiction. Rushdie consciously broke away from the realistic tradition of novel writing. His experimentation related to the historical and cultural questions of the country sets him apart from his contemporaries. We find this reflected in narrative techniques where he uses "fantasy, magic realism and highly suggestive language etc."

The first of the new novelists to arrive is Salman *Rushdie*. His first novel *Grimus* (1975) is an attempt to graft Eastern and Western influences in his writing. He tried to use various strategies but is not a success. *Grimus* is considered to be his apprenticeship novel. The protagonist is Flapping Eagle, an American Indian in search of his lost sister. He finally locates her on a Mediterranean island controlled by Grimus, a magician. The narrative is a hodge podge of several myths and motifs. *Grimus* is a trial error novel, but Rushdie elevated himself, his excellence is seen in *Midnight's Children*. The novel placed Rushdie at the top of Indian English novelists. As M.K. Naik (2007:39) writes, "*Midnight's Children* is a multifaceted narrative, which is at once an autobiographical *bildungsroman*. It is a picaresque fiction, a political allegory, a topical satire, a comic extravaganza, surrealist fantasy, and a daring experiment in form and style." All these important characteristic features of post modernism are seen in *Midnight's Children*. *Midnight's Children* is a political allegory concerned about India. It is also called "autobiographical". The Bangladesh liberation movement and Emergency in India have greatly influenced the theme of the novel.

'Midnight's Children' is a metafiction. According to Jesse Matz (2004:134), "Metafiction means stories about stories, fiction about fiction, novels within novels". In the same way Saleem, the narrator of the novel is trying to narrate the story of his life, which is also the story of India. Metafiction in *Midnight's Children* is all about the political fictions of post colonial people their powers, their tricks, their failures and India itself. It is in turn all about fiction- what it states as an Independent nation does to the way people imagine themselves, their worlds, and the connections between them. Rushdie's next novel *Shame* (1983) is also a political allegory catering for Pakistan. The title is suggestive, and it can be interpreted in different ways. One of the sense of *Shame* is an impressive feminist document. The writer here wants to convey the message that women are humiliated and not given equal treatment, but after some days they will acquire power and destroy the oppressor. *Satanic Verses* (1988) is thematically based on Islamic History. One of the major theme is religion and fanaticism. *Haroun and Sea of Stories* (1990) is a delightful novel that appear to be a children's tale written for them. It is considered as an allegory and compared with *Grimus*. But the writer has avoided the pitfalls he has in *Grimus*. *Haroun and Sea of Stories* is also perhaps the most focused of Rushdie's novels. In *The Ground beneath Her Feet* (1999) Rushdie takes diversion from the trodden way and deals altogether with a new theme. The theme is of love. *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) consists of all the Rushdiean features that are expected in Salman Rushdie's novels. Salman Rushdie has successfully used the technique of magic realism in the above novels. His latest novel *Fury* (2001) has depicted the internal struggle due to the chaos and confusion within, unleashes the fires of hell, when all attempts of adjustment and assimilation fail. The arrival of Salman Rushdie hailed a new path for the diasporic writers of India. His fiction has been acclaimed as the hallmark of the maturity of diasporic Indian writing.

Globalisation has made Indian Writing in English a prominent part of global map. Writers in India and abroad are found dealing with post modernist features and successfully using them in their fiction. Rushdie's impact is noticed in both the male and the female writers. "The question of uprootedness, transplantation and experiences of looking at homelands from a distance has been narrated in various ways by both "diasporic writers within India and diasporic writers living abroad." observes A.S.Dasan (2006:78). Dealing with new styles, experimentation, creativity, new techniques like magic realism, accepting new modes and satire and concentrating on the current issues, the upcoming writers have been enriching Indian English fiction by contributing to new themes and techniques. The writers included in the Rushdiean tradition are Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Mukul Kesavan, Vikram Chandra, Rohinton Mistry, Allan Sealy, Amit Chaudhari, Anurag Mathur and Kiran Nagarkar. The female writers are Jai Nimbkar, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Githa Hariharan, Namita Gokhale, Sagarika Ghosh, Bharati Mukharjee, Meena Alexander, Bharati Kirchner, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Anjana Appachana, Sunetra Gupta, Shobha De, Uma Vasudev, Dina Mehta, Gita Mehta, Suniti Namjoshi, Manju Kapoor, Jhumpa Lahiri, Radhika Jha, Sunny Singh, Anita Rau Badami and Kiran Desai etc.

Male Novelists :

Amitav Ghosh : He is the novelist of international repute. He has used the technique of magic realism in his first novel *The Circle of Reason*(1986). In this novel the mythical Nachiketa incarnates a Nachiketa base nickname 'Alu' which proves his vegetable existence. Alu and the protagonist of earlier part Balram, circled in the text is subjected to subversion towards the end with a post modern ambivalence . His *Shadow Lines* (1988) is entirely a different novel, which deals with the lines that divide people and nations and they are often insubstantial like shadows but many a times responsible for bringing bad luck and even death. The *Calcutta Chromosome* (1996) is

somewhat a science fiction. Amitav has adopted various strategies in his subsequent novels like *In An Antique Land*(1992), while his latest novel *The Glass Palace*(2000), annexes a new territory to Indian English fiction. Cross-cultural sweep is observed in Ghosh's fiction. He has tried to encompass the cultural heritage of the world. *The Shadow Lines* has won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for excellence in literature written in English for the year 1989. His recent novel *The Hungry Tide* (2005) is based on the havoc and the disaster created by Tsunami of 2004. The narratives of Amitav Ghosh are metafictional. They seem to withstand the test of time.

Shashi Tharoor: He is a renowned novelist. He has also used the technique of magic realism in his novel *The Great Indian Novel* (1989). It is one of the finest examples of the post-modernist fiction in recent Indian English Literature. His next novel *Show Business* (1992) reveals that interpretation of history cannot afford to have single univocal ownership. In his another novel *Riot* (2000), he dives into the subtleties of powerpolitics in contemporary India in the back-drop of the Hindu nationalist version of cultural revivalism, the rise of Hindu Militancy and demolition of the 16th century mosque in Ayodhya. In the fiction of Tharoor we see that language becomes an open window to reflect in the light of the writer's awareness of the challenges in the contemporary India.

Vikram Chandra: His debut novel, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995), is an artistic work that has woven together history, myth and fiction linking continents, centuries and contemporary India through the tales told by Sanjay, the Monkey Man. His novel *Love and Longing in Bombay* (1997) has been translated into Spanish by Dora Sales Ester Nebot. He makes considerable use of the supernatural and magical in his narrative. Some of this is certainly a matter of technique and can be understood as magic realism which symbolises the deeper aspects of reality. Reading of the novel reinforces the truth that transculturation nullifies nothing. It modifies

thought patterns and reshapes languages, celebrates multiculturalism and creates sensibilities which are coherent and holistic.

Upamanyu Chatterjee: Upamanyu Chatterjee, an IAS officer, entered the literary field with his debut novel *English August: An Indian Story* (1988). It is a marvelous, beautifully written intelligent and entertaining novel and especially fascinating for anyone about glorious modern India. Characters of this novel evolve as 'types' reflecting real life situations of Indians, Indian policy and its eccentric bureaucracy. His next novel, a saga of middle class ethos is *The Last Burden* (1993). His latest novel, *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* (2000) is a sequel to his first masterpiece. His recent novel, *Weight Loss* (2006) is a socio-comic picture portraying sexual degradation in India. Chatterjee's narrative power has crossed the boundaries and left an enduring powerful influence on the mind of the readers.

Rohinton Mistry: He has written about Indian social reality and human situations. His *Such a Long Journey* (1991) is set in Bombay against the back-drop of war in the Indian sub continent and the birth of Bangladesh, telling the story of the peculiar way in which the conflict impinges on the lives of Gustad Noble, an ordinary man and his family. He is awarded *Commonwealth Writers Prize* for this masterpiece. His other fictional works *A Fine Balance* (1996), *Family Matters* (2002), reveal his quest and search for human values. *A Fine Balance* is between hope and despair. It depicts the period of Emergency that is declared in mid-seventies suspending the fundamental rights. *A Fine Balance* has its similarities and differences when compared to the magic realism of Rushdie in *Midnight's Children*. In *Family Matters*, Mistry presents the brokenness of modern society. Brokenness is compounded with multiple memories and feelings. It is this kind of subtle humour planted with an elegant narrative within which truth is implied gracefully. It has won the writer international accolades.

Amit Chaudhari: Amit Chaudhari a Calcutta born writer, whose roots are deep in the soil of Indian culture, has tried to fill the gaps by making a bridge between East and the West with a unique style. He has the following novels to his credit: *A Strange and Sublime Addresses* (1991), *Afternoon Raag* (1993), *Freedom Song* (1998), and *A New World* (2000). M.K. Naik(2007:71)writes, "Delicate Lyrical" "Elegant" "Sensitive, Evocative",

" Charming", Enchanting" are the some adjectives which reviewers both Indian and Western have used in praise of Chaudhari." Chaudhari does not use the stream of consciousness technique, but his passion for the notion of life lived from moment to moment is akin to him. His omniscient narrations, ironic contrast are another essential tool in the hands of the novelist. *A Strange and Sublime Addresses* shows the skilful manner in which the novelist juxtaposes the simple joys of childhood bathing, eating, sleeping, going out on a drive, watching people from windows and balconies against the complicated world of the grown ups.

Mukul Kesavan : *Looking Through Glass* (1995) is a better organised novel, story of the narrator who accidentally falls off the railway bridge and becomes unconscious. When he recovers he finds himself back in the 1940s. The novel is highly imaginative. Kesavan has used the technique of magic realism that *Midnight's Children* has provided wide scope for the exercise of imagination. M.G. Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack* (1989) has been reviewed as Africa's answer to *Midnight's Children* for its presentation of history mixing the personal and the colonial in the back-drop of East African Life interconnected with four generations of Asian Immigration.

Raj Kamal Jha's *The Blue Bedspread* (1999), possesses some major features of the postmodern fiction, viz. use of dream and fantasy, fractured multiple endings, self- reflexiveness. The narrative is of fantasy and stream of consciousness method. It is a metanarrative about the intimate interpersonal relationship between the two siblings.

Pankaj Mishra: *The Romantics* (2000), a youth centered novel which focuses particularly on the dreams of the youth which are mostly romantic illusions and so remain unfulfilled due to the harsh reality of contemporary India. It is about the frustration of new-age global youth who are caught in inner turmoil and forced to adjust and accept the reality. The plot construction meanders around the curious and the incompatible meeting between the East and the West with excesses of characterization, events, and verbosity. ***The Buddha in the World***(2004), a book of body, mind and spirit presents relevance of Buddha and his teachings that will put an end to man's sufferings According to Mishra, Buddha's Enlightenment will help man to fight out and adjust himself in the world of violence, communalism, terrorism etc. His latest book is ***Temptations of the West: How to be Modern in India, Pakistan and Beyond*** (2006). A.S. Dasan in his ***Rains and Roots***(2006:94) writes, that a critic has christened him "a postmodern moralist."

Women Novelists

The contribution of women novelist is significant as they have enriched Indian novel in English. Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabhvala and Nayantara Sahgal are the major writers who write about socio-cultural, economic and political realities of the contemporary society. Anita Desai has added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian women writers in English fiction. Her contribution to the genre of psychological novel in English is great. Her preoccupation is with the inner world of action. These novelists are not only prolific but are novelists of quality.

A younger generation of women novelists are steadily writing. Writers like Bharati Mukharjee, Uma Vasudev, Shashi Deshpande, Jai Nimbkar, Dina Mehta and Githa Mehta have established themselves. Their thrust is on feminism; however, it is the youngest generation of women novelists who are very promising very committed and ideological-oriented.

Githa Hariharan, Sunetra Gupta, Meena Alexander Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Manorama Mathai, and Namita Gokhale are some of them. In the tradition of these writers Kiran Desai, a rising star is trying to create a space for herself in the Indian Novel in English.

Women writers too like male writers have written novels of magic realism, social realism and regional fiction. They have proved their mettle and have created niche in the genre. Their writings have unveiled values like freedom of thought and expression, liberation from oppression, marginalization, equality, and a quest for dignity are the prime movers of their imagination and creativity. In most of their writings they have tried their best to free the female mentality from the age-long control of male domination. In short, in their novels, the protagonists are mostly women characters, desolated and isolated by an entirely sapless, hypocritical and insensitive male domination. The recent women writers have heralded a new consciousness in the realm of traditional thinking creating political, social, cultural and individual awareness. The modern outlook modifies the traditional values giving place to new ones and this is reflected in the writings of recent women novelists.

Arundhati Roy: Her Booker winner debut novel *God of Small Things* (1997) made the world realise the efficiency of Indian women novelists writing in English. It made her ascend the sky of Indian English Novel. Her novel deals with themes of Keralite Society, their rites and customs, traditions and patriarchal domination, a caste ridden mentality of some certain section of society. She seems to be well acquainted with the suffering and injustice that she has handled in this novel with a confessional tone. *God of Small Things* is a truthful portrayal of the plight of the women in society and their struggle or quest for identity in male dominated society. She has employed impressive narrative techniques. Roy's second novel *The End of Imagination* is a short but revolutionary. It deals with the author's strong revolt against nuclearisation in India and abroad. Her

thought provoking nature reveals us that the author is against war and killing. Her recent work *The Greater Common Good* deals with the same oppression and persecution which we encounter in the *God of Small things*.

Manju Kapoor's Difficult Daughters (1998) is a story of three daughters belonging to three generations. It is again a family story, at the core of which is the deviation of Virmati the difficult daughter, from family code of conduct and traditional sexual norms. It presents a woman who rejects arranged-marriage and marries a Professor, a married man. The protagonist after marriage fails to make space for herself in her husband's house. So she remains marginalised figure and is always boasted by her husband. It also focuses on the intellectual and emotional dilemma faced by an educated daughter of a conservative joint family of India in the context of the socio-cultural situation that prevailed. It is traditional, linear narrative, representational in character having a sophisticated plot.

Githa Hariharan's debut novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) won the **Commonwealth Writers Prize** for Best First Novel in the Eurasian region. It is about three women belonging to different generations who are unable to relieve the drabness of their lives. The novel is interspersed with the legends and folk tales that the protagonist has heard in her childhood. It has different narratives – the protagonist Devi is first person and the other characters, Mayamma and the author is third person. Her second novel *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994) is centred on a protagonist, a retired schoolmaster named Vasu. Hariharan's third novel *When Dreams Travel* (1999) is a self reflexive metafictional novel. It is a kind of feminist retelling of the Arabian Nights.

Nina Sibal's first novel *Yatra* (1987), deals with Sikh history especially the political situation occurred in Punjab during the 1920s. It is reminiscent of Rushdie's work in its use of magic realism. Like Rushdie's hero, the heroine

of *Yatra* is endowed with a magical skin that changes colour in response to India. Nina Sibal's second novel *The Dogs of Justice* (1998) is a regional novel dealing with the *Kashmir Crisis*.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: She has successfully employed Magic Realism in her novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997). It is a story of a ship wreck girl who is left on an island inhabited by women. There she is imparted instructions about the power of spice by an ancient women. Thus she can practise magical powers of healing by keeping a cool distance from ordinary mortals. Her second novel *Sister of My Heart* (1999) describes realistically the complicated relationships of a family in Bengal.

Namita Gokhale is a well grown and developed novelist, her first novel *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1984) portrays the upper crust of contemporary Indian society in metropolitan town where the characters change their sex partners more quickly than their clothes. Her second novel *God's Graves and Grandmothers* (1994) is a social and satirical sketch of the ways religious leaders proliferate in India. *The Himalayan Love Story* (1996) is a love story of star crossed lovers and her fourth novel *The Book of Shadows* (1999) deals with the changes that almost happen dramatically in the life of the protagonist Rachita, who has to seek refuge in her ancestral home in the Himalayas.

Anita Nair, a woman novelist of the nineties, is a post-Arundhati phenomenon. Her debut novel *The Better Man* (1999) deals with a tale set in Kerala village. It is a realistic description of the violence and conflict lying underneath the deceptively calm surface of village life. Indian regional languages are used in this novel.

Sagarika Ghosh's well-known novel, *The Gin Drinkers* (2000) is a fine sociological study rooted in Indian reality. The context of the novel is set up in the city of Delhi. It is a comedy of manners. The language is rich and fashionable. This novel is a vivid picture of life in contemporary Delhi.

Ambivalence textured within the blending of words and words seem to be deliberate as it is geared to reflect also the mood of the nation at the turn of the twenty first century.

All those women writers breaking the stereotyped themes of the experiences in a middle class family, started experimenting in new fields, with the novelty of Indian culture and Indian identity in the context of immigration and multiculturalization going across the world.

Bharati Mukherjee depicted cross cultural immigrant experiences that she herself has experienced or witnessed with racism in Canada and America. Her novel *Jasmine* (1989) deals with the life of an illegal immigrant. Jasmine, a Punjabi girl turns to be unfortunate. Her fate forsakes her. Her husband dies on the eve of going to America. But Jasmine modernises herself as Jyoti and enters America illegally. She has to face terrible things, she is raped, she becomes a victim of male lust but at last succeeds in killing the man who raped her. In this way her life shuttles without any settlement. Somehow her life goes on as predicted by a fortune teller in widowhood and forced isolation or exile. Her next novel *The Holder of the World* (1993) is a story of the protagonist who haunts the museums in search of a diamond called 'Emperor's Tea' and sacrifices her up bringing to become a mistress. Here the writer attempts to integrate contemporary travelogue and ancient history. Mukherjee's novel *Leave It to Me* (1997) is completely American. The prologue retells the mythological story of Mahishasuramardini the Devi (Goddess), who killed the Buffalo Demon. Here the writer attempts to integrate contemporary travelogue with the ancient history. The book soaked in blood and reeking of violence is written in American English. Mukherjee uses the technique of symbolism to treat the theme of identity crisis, terrorism, immigration, violence, and destabilisation of age old communities.

Another immigrant experience is narrated by **Bharati Kirchner** in her novel *Darjeeling* (2002). The novel is about the legitimate wife, who is betrayed by her own sister by having a love-affair with her husband. Theme, though an ordinary, it brings conflict between traditional notions of love and loyalty and the postmodern moods and moments of love. Her other works are *Shiva Dancing* (1998), *Sharmila's Book* (1999), and *Pastries* (2003).

Radhika Jha's Smell (1999) is a story of a young girl, whose well settled comfortable life is disturbed in Kenya. Her father is murdered by the natives by setting fire to his store. The protagonist girl is sent to Paris to live with her paternal uncle. She has a keen sense for smell and becomes a wonderful cook. But her life is drifted from one lover to another when she is thrown out of her uncle's home for revealing her uncle's extra-marital affairs. She is obsessed with smells, and is terrified that she herself gives off an unbearable smell. Smell becomes a metaphor for cultural differences.

Sunetra Gupta : Her Sahitya Akademi Award winner novel, *Memories of Rain* (1992) depicts life of a young Bengali girl, who is deceived by her husband and returns back to India from England with the child. Gupta's second novel, *The Glassblower's Breath* (1993) is set in the cities of London, New York and Calcutta. The narrative technique used here is original and is the equivalent of the second person narration. It depicts a young Indian woman in search of ideal love and companionship. In her third novel *Moonlight in Marzipan* (1995), Gupta uses present tense to narrate a large portion of the novel. She also uses second person narrative in many passages. It is a story of young scientist from Calcutta who after his important discovery goes to England with his wife. Her fourth novel is *A Sin of Colour* (1999). In this novel the protagonist falls in love with his elder brother's wife but goes to England marries Jennifer and again disappears. He comes after a long span of 20 years. He has then lost his eyesight but Jennifer looks after him as a devoted wife.

Shobha De is a modern novelist, became renowned by her debut novel, *Socialite Evenings* (1989). She has become famous for revealing the sexual mania of the commercial world in a very straightforward manner. Her other works are *Starry Nights* (1991), *Sisters* (1992), *Sultry Days* (1994), *Strange Obsession* (1992), *Snapshots* (1995), *Second Thoughts* (1996), *Shooting from the Hips* (1994-95), *Small Betrayals* (1995), *Surviving Men* (1997), and *Speed Post* (1999). She believes that one can be properly judged if we are able to reveal one's interior.

Shashi Deshpande is a novelist with the most sustained achievement. Her first novel is *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980). The protagonist of the novel Santa is unhappy in her married life. She has been rejected by her mother and held responsible for her brother's death. Santa becomes a successful doctor and does intercaste marriage but her husband denies her position as a bread winner. But at the end she realizes that she cannot escape the reality or run away from her husband, instead has to take the lead to reestablish her relations with him. Her next two novels *If I Die Today* (1982) and *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), belong to detective fiction. *Roots and Shadows* (1983) is a story of a young woman who has rebelled against her authoritarian and traditional joint family system. Her *The Long Silence* (1988) is about the narrator an upper class housewife in Bombay has to move to a small flat in a poorer locality because her husband is suspected of fraud. The novel depicts the hollowness of modern Indian life. Her next novel *The Binding Vine* (1993) is a story of grievance of the protagonist over her dead baby daughter. Her another novel *A Matter of Time* (1996) attempts to depict the complex web of human relationships in an extended family over three generations. Her latest and the most successful novel, *Small Remedies* (2000) is a novel of the study of motherhood and the consequences of a woman centring her life on a child. Deshpande makes the heroine as the narrator and employs stream of consciousness as technique. Though her works are concerned with women,

she cannot be referred as feminist because she simply portrays in-depth the meaning of being a woman in modern India.

Meena Alexander: Her novel *Nampally Road* (1991) is set in Hyderabad and her novel, *Manhattan Muisic* (1997) deals with the lives and problems of Indian immigrants living in America. The two chief characters are Sandya and Draupadi, whose life or works are narrated by the omniscient narrator. The Draupadi is a Hindu who speaks for herself. Thus the writer here uses complex narrative technique.

Anjana Appachana's novel, *Listening Now* (1998) deals with some of the common themes such as discrimination against the daughter, the silence of women and the lack of communication between the sexes. The novel is marked by drama and emotional intensity. It has six different female narrative voices.

Suniti Namjoshi has used fantasy and surrealism in her fiction. Her work does not rely on any particular social context. She is of feminist concern and her feminism is depicted through allegory and fables in her novels. In *The Conversation of Cow* (1985), the protagonist is a lecturer of Indian origin. Her Guru appears in form of a cow and the tale slips into the realm of fantasy with the cow and Suniti moving around Canada. Her *The Mothers of Maya Diip* (1989) is a tale of matriarchy found in the Island of Maya Diip. The boys are drowned. Maya Diip is free from conventional norms of male dominated society but cannot keep aloof from common human failings like jealousy and love of power. *St. Suniti and the Dragon* (1994) is an extended fable about love and sainthood. Her latest work *Building Babel* (1996) is an indication of how some Indian English novelist daringly experiment with the language of fiction and its creative vitality within fictional narratives. The book is about constructing culture under the ages of time and is filled with characters from fairy tales and myth.

Dina Mehta's only novel, *And Some Take a Lover* (1992), reveals the picture of Parsi life. This novel is a sensitive study of young woman's growing up in the politically conscious Bombay of early 1940.

Gita Mehta's *Raj* (1989) paints a picture of Indian royal family and deals with the coming of Indian independence as well as emancipation of the heroine. Mehta's second novel *A River Sutra* (1993) presents Indian life. The exotic aspects are highlighted. The river discussed in the novel is Narmada.

Sunny Singh's novels *Nani's Book of Suicides* (2000) and *Krishna's Eyes* (2005) are feminist fables in search of cultural identity. The narrative structure in *Nani's Book of Suicides* has a 'myriad minded' blend of details that constitute an exchanting story pendulating between adult experiences and childhood memories. Her another novel *Single in the City* (2000) gives a kind of legitimacy to the cultural identity of single women and 'Sisterhood of Singles' in the context of modern urban realities and aspirations of single woman coming into conflict with traditional expectations.

In view of the foregoing survey of women writers, we can see what M.K. Naik (2007:92) has to say about them,

A number of women novelists have made their debut in the nineties. Their first novels are quite effective in revealing the true state of Indian society when it comes to the treatment of women. All these writers are born after Indian Independence and English does not have any colonial associations for them. Their work is marked by an impressive feel for the language and a completely authentic presentation of conternporary India with all its regional variations. They generally write about the urban middle class, the stratum of society they know best.

Kiran Desai is a rising star in the galaxy of the post-modernist Indian English Novel. She bagged the most coveted prestigious Man Booker Prize 2006 for her second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* and created a space for herself. Kiran Desai, daughter of renowned novelist Anita Desai and

renowned industrialist Ashwin Desai, was born on 3rd September 1971 in a very rich family of Chandigarh. Kiran Desai's father a Gujarathi, mother a Bengali, her maternal grandfather a refugee from Bangladesh and maternal grandmother a German, she inherits multiculturalism in her blood. Her paternal grandfather hails from Gujarat. She has two brothers and one sister. She is the youngest child in the family. She has spent her early childhood in Pune and Mumbai. Then with her parents she moved to Delhi and at the age of 14, she went to England and then to U.S. There she settled alongwith her mother. Though she leaves abroad, she has kept herself related to India through the means of her father. Her father *Ashvin Desai* stays in Delhi. Once in a year, she comes to India to stay with her father. It is her father who in January after the first publication of *The Inheritance of Loss* predicted that Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* will recieve the Man Booker Prize. In one of her interview with *India Today* October 2006, Kiran Desai said, "The Indian diaspora is a wonderful place to write from and I am lucky to be a part of it." In the same interview she told "My father is my closest link to India. I meet him every year, and stay in his house while in Delhi. Kiran Desai and her mother Anita Desai live in the same house, Kiran on the upper floor and Anita Desai on ground floor. At first she had an intention of becoming a scientist but she developed a strong desire for writing and joined a graduate writing programme at Hollins College, Virginia. Kiran Desai admires the old writers like R.K. Narayan and she has also read the work of Mahashwetadevi translated in English. According to Kiran Desai, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amit Chaudhari are her most respected writers. She is more interested in their writings. The Indian English male writers that she likes the most are Rohinton Mistry, Suketau Mehta and Moushin Hamid from Pakistan. As Athawale Ashlesha (2006:79), observes "She candidly accepted Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Bapsi Sidhwa who influenced her more and she learned much about writing from them." Martyr Nina(2007:97)says, Kiran Desai considers herself in the tradition of Salman Rushdie of whom she says "He has wizard energy, nothing exhausts

that imagination. He has managed to change the confidence levels of the Indian writers like no one else.” Her favourite writers are Ichiquira, Kenzabura, and Gabriel Gracia Marquez . Her favorite American writers are Truman Capote, Williams Flanner, O’Connor, Winfred George, Haruki Issack Bassevis, Saul and Tanizaki and Patrich White. She recommends that everyone must read the work of Affiq Rahimi’s “ *Earth and Ashes*” Kiran Desai admits, “Naipul’s ‘*Bend in the River*’ and Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*(website) together changed the way I wanted to write about being Indian in the world.” Though she admires and respects many Indian and other novelist, she admires her mother more. So she says, I am sure she did have a big influence, because all my life I have grown up hearing her talk about writing on literature and books.

Kiran Desai is a diasporic writer who differs from her mother, Anita Desai, in her sensibility. Anita Desai, an 'insider' deals with the psychological quest of her characters located in the Indian situations, while her daughter is an 'outsider-insider' and writes nostalgically about her motherland from abroad in an acquired tongue, that is English.. Her novels are typically post-modernist in their themes, technique, style and language. The techniques of post-modern are of subversive intent. These are often combined with 'outrageous' subject matter. Magic realism is used as a narrative technique mostly in the post-modern fiction. Magic realism embraces both reality and fantasy. Some of the characteristic features of this kind of fiction are mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic or bizarre, skilful time-shift, convoluted and even labyrinthine narrative and plots, use of myths, dreams and fairy tales, expressionistic and even surrealistic descriptions. There are some elements of surprise or abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexplicable. Desai portrays social realism garbed in fantasy and magic realism. She tries to find out her cultural heritage. Her first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) is set in a small dusty town of Shahkot in North India and revolves around the family of Sampath

Chawla. The novel beautifully presents the problematics of survival in an adopted language through eccentric characters. It is a magical tale of a world gone slightly mad. Fantasy is the mode of narration. It seems that Kiran Desai has presented India through her crazy imaginary characters to delight the Western reader. It is a delightfully sweet, comic novel that ends in a raucous bang. India has often been as mystic land of sadhus, strange magic charms, spicy exotic cuisine and intricate religious rituals for the West. Kiran Desai's absorbing book is a brilliant satire that makes these theories light in a comical manner. A satire has the social, political, economical, filial and even spiritual dimensions wrapped in layers of absurd humour with a dash of fantasy. The novel raises significant issue of the world and its mad ways that applies not only to the fictitious town of Shahkot but equally to other parts of India. Kiran Desai in her recent novel *The Inheritances of Loss* (2006), deftly shuttles between first and third worlds and captures the terror of an immigrant experience. The setting is from the peaks of Himalayas to New York. Desai writes about the nations – imagined and real, depicting history – personal and political and the consequences of colonialism and global conflicts of religion, race and nationalism by using fantasy and magic realism. This needs to be considered in the literary terms concentrating on psychological and social perceptions, language, imagination, and narrative device.

In spite of getting the *Man Booker Prize*, critics have responded to her works of fiction differently. It is worth studying the variety of criticism on her fiction. Kiran Desai's debut novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* winner of Betty Task Award came into view when she won the Man Booker Prize for her second novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. ''Blurb says, The great novelist whose tradition Desai follows is Salman Rushdie, he appreciated the novel especially for language and style as "Lush and intensely imagined. Welcome proof that India's encounter with the English language continues to give birth to new children, endowed with lavish gifts". Like Salman

Rushdie, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni appreciates the language used by Kiran Desai. In her words, " *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, a delicious blend of humour and magic hilarity and wisdom and unexpected poetry. Kiran Desai's language will continue to delight you long after you turn the last page."(website) Another writer Githa Mehta has judged the novel for its "creative imagination."(website). Desai with a skillful hand has sketched the characters so live that they leave a permanent impression on our mind or long after reading the novel, the protagonist Sampat Chawla remains fresh in our mind. A critic says, the author delineates the characters with such wit and bemused affection that they insinuate themselves insidiously in our mind.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard appears to be a funny tale. It is a piece of comic satire and with a gifted virtue of story telling. the tale of a. It is said to be a cracking witty sharply visual prose, (Desai) is a delightfully funny, amiable satirist. An avid reader Vaijayanti Joshi considers *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* as a children's fiction while Jean, a children book author says, " Too good to miss." Of all the books I read in 2002, this is the best. I liked it so much that I bought several extra copies to give as gifts, the story not only offers an intriguing view of a different culture, but it also enchants the reader with quick and surprising humour".(website).The Cinema Monkey and ice-cream man are magical. In an interview when asked how would she like to classify her novel Desai stated,"I wouldn't really- it is a comedy and it is satiric in many ways I think, and it's fantastic. It reads very much like a folktale or a fairy tale.

Her second novel came round about eight years after *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* that is in 2006. *The Inheritance of Loss* is the recipient of the prestigious international award "Man Booker Prize". The Judges hailed her novel as a "radiant, funny and moving family saga" and praised the writing for its " humane breadth and wisdom, comic tenderness and powerful political acuteness". The novel though set in a remote hill side

area of Kalimpong in India but still the narrative spans the world in the sense it runs across continents, generations, cultures, religions and races. The author has well managed to deal with the themes of current issues like globalization, multiculturalism, modernization, terrorism and insurgency—that beset all nations. The theme of terrorism or the Nepalese agitation is well highlighted in the novel. A review by Charlotte Richardson (website) states "Kiran Desai's 2006 Booker Prize –winning novel explores the roots of terrorism and the inexorable process by which karmic chickens came home to roost." Kiran Desai appears to be a careful observer in and abroad India who has narrated the minute details in her novel and shows life's humour along with its other brutal side. The life, its whims, its harshness, and its delicate emotions and passionate commitments in a novel that is both beautiful and wise. In her second novel Desai proves to be from Rushdian tradition as Bhattacharya Soumya (website) states in his review on Desai's novel has echoes of Rushdie: breathless sentences; a string of adjectives without a comma as though one is tripping over the other; great energy; and a kind of clever playfulness." Honest to the title Desai tries to portray her characters inheriting some or other loss in their life. As in an article M.K.Naik (2008:1) says, "The overreaching theme of *The Inheritance of Loss* would appear to be indicated both in this title and the Epigraph from George Luis Borges. Each character in the narrative appears to suffer some kind of loss, which is its own dubious 'inheritance'. The loss is of different kinds, of varying magnitudes and intensity and diversity of impact. But there is no escape from it, and bear it they must."

Kiran Desai like her mother, is not a reputed and established woman novelist in Indian English fiction. A final assessment of Kiran Desai, however, is not possible. She is still engaged in creative writing. Her creative energy is unabated though her debut novel could not attract admirers. She is sensitive to her limitations and conscious of her individual powers. Her creativity thrusts into new promising areas of exploration. The

present dissertation seeks to make a comprehensive critical study of themes and narrative techniques in Kiran Desai's novels in order to assess her contribution to the genre of novel in the context of post modern fiction in Indian writing in English.