

Joy T.T. "Indianness in Indian Writing in English: A Study of Amitav Ghosh's Novels." Thesis. Research and Postgraduate Department of English, ST. Thomas' College, Thrissur (Autonomous), University of Calicut, 2021.

Chapter1

Introduction

Today Indian literature in English as well as in vernacular languages is emerging as a great literary force in world literature. The contemporary readers, writers, scholars and critics in almost all languages have shown great interest in the unique heritage of India's earlier generations and the translations of Indian classics like *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata* and *The Bhagavad Gita* in different languages including English have received wide recognition all over the world. During the pre-Independence period, the colonizers took great effort to spread English education in India. The colonial administration gave utmost encouragement to the translation of Western texts that would facilitate the process of acculturation. It is true that once English was considered as a colonial language and a tool for oppressing native Indians. Consequently, many nationalists, opposed strongly against the spread of English language in India. With the passage of time, the new language, English, became a symbol of power and mastery in the language opened up a whole new world of opportunities to the people of India. Soon, there emerged throughout India a section of writers and intellectuals using English in every society.

Later globalization and computerisation gave a new impetus to English language. The 1990s and 2000s witnessed a dramatic boom in Indian writers working in English, while the study of India's many literary traditions has grown in strength in universities outside of India. Being the second largest populated country of the world, people all over the world show much interest to know more about India and its people. Hence it is quite natural that they turn to Indian Writing in English. The basis of their curiosity lies in their search for diversity

about India's rich, social, geographical, religious and cultural heritage. This can be seen in Indian Writing in English and this is the chief inspiration in undertaking a research on Indianness in Indian Writing in English .

This project aims to explore as far as possible two different aspects of Indian life and literature. Firstly, the phrase "to be Indian" produces a sense of 'unity' or 'homogeneity' among the people residing in India and abroad. Secondly, 'being Indian' means being in one of the twenty-nine states in India whose topography, history, language and culture drastically differ from each other, producing an ever-increasing sense of 'heterogeneity'. In other words, homogeneity as well as heterogeneity, is the essence of Indianness. The same idea is reflected in the popular phrase 'unity in diversity' which is evident in almost all fields of Indian life. Unfortunately, colonial and western scholars, historians and critics viewed these two aspects of Indian life with their own preoccupations and branded them as something backward and less civilized. Being an Indian research scholar, it is our responsibility to highlight the values and merits of Indian life before the world. At the same time, as a responsible well-wisher of mankind, it is our duty to point out the defects, failures, drawbacks, inhuman social and cultural practices that prevailed in the past and continuing in the present age and to suggest practical solutions for solving them. Definitely I hope that a study of Indianness based on Indian Writing in English will be highly useful not only in India but abroad also. It will open up a new ray of light into the so far unknown and unseen aspects of Indian life.

Indianness is reflected in the social, historical, economical, political, religious, philosophical and cultural fields. Its salient features are seen in almost all the genres of Indian Writing in English. As it has to cover personal, official, social, cultural and religious aspects of Indian life, the writers need a wide canvass to describe what they see around themselves. In this case, fiction, exactly novel is a more suitable genre to analyse the various elements of Indianness in Indian English literature. Therefore this research gives emphasis to

novels for finding out Indianness in different realms. Being a product of Bengal Renaissance, Amitav Ghosh is the most meritorious and suitable novelist in the Indian Writing in English to analyse the specific features of Indianness in the varied aspects of Indian life. His six novels are selected in this thesis for a careful and detailed study to assess Indianness.

Research in brief

The chief task of this research is to define 'Indianness' from different perspectives based on the opinions, assumptions, experiences and suggestions of eminent scholars and critics. For this purpose I have visited a number of professors and writers belonging to English as well as Malayalam. I would like to mention at least three of them who have suggested valuable guidelines for the fruitful completion of this project. In the beginning I discussed with Prof. Dr. Sankaran Raveendran, the former Head of the Department of English in Calicut University. He has helped me a lot to prepare my dissertation for M.Phil course at University of Calicut. He read the synopsis of this research diligently and suggested me that I should prepare a brief summary of Indian Writing in English, focusing the origin, various stages in the evolution of different genres and limitations in general. He did his research in the U.S. and therefore he was lucky enough to acquaint himself with the latest trends in research and the most modern critical theories of criticism emerging all over the world. He welcomed the choice of Amitav Ghosh as the case study to analyse and highlight Indianness in Indian English novels. He pointed out that Indianness can be found out in his novels related with cosmopolitanism, terrorism, dangerous trends in the new form of nationalism, economic exploitation, social evils, environmental issues, exhaustion of natural resources, cultural disparities between the east and the west, gender discrimination, etc.

The next competent personality whom I contacted to discuss 'Indianness' was Sri T.D. Ramakrishnan, who is one of the most popular writers in contemporary Malayalam literature. He retired as the Southern Railway Chief Controller in 2016 after 35 years of service. Now he is a full time Malayalam writer. His debut novel *Francis Itty Cora, Alpha, Mama Africa* and latest novel *Sugandi Enna Andal Devanayaki* earned him a permanent place in the minds of Malayalam readers. He is the recipient of Kerala Sahitya Akademy Award, Vayalar Award and Malayattur Award. Many literary and cultural organisations have recognised him as a great writer by conferring their honours upon him. Sri Ramakrishnan thinks that the concept of 'Indianness' is relative in each phase of Indian history. In the ancient history of India, life and literature was closely associated with vedic texts in Sanskrit language. In Mughal period, there happened a great change in the vision and attitude of Indian society. In the colonial period, western culture, education and languages affected considerably the Indian social life and it lost many of its ancestral values. In the post colonial period many Indian writers followed blindly the western style in their themes and narration. He has summed up his words saying that there is no hard and fast rule to define Indianness. He added that Indian culture is a broad-minded one and it has welcomed almost all sorts of world religions irrespective of their rituals and practices in daily life. This is a remarkable aspect of Indianness which is evident in its life and literature.

Another prominent resource person whom I visited to discuss this research is Prof. Dr. Thomas John, Head of the Department of English, St Alosyious College, Thrissur, who is an authority in the faculty of the Indian Writing in English. He suggested that examining 'Indianness' from a single dimension would be far from perfection. Instead it should be reviewed from different perspectives based on social, historical, economical, geographical, political, cultural, linguistic and religious aspects. He meant that these aspects should be analysed and found out how they are reflected in the leading Indian English

writers. Then these findings should be compared with the depiction of Ghosh in his novels and it would pave the way to assess how far Ghosh has contributed to highlight Indianness in his novels.

Data collection for this research was done mainly by visiting libraries of the first grade colleges in Thrissur district other than the general and departmental libraries of St. Thomas College, Thrissur. The authorities of other colleges, especially Vimala College, Thrissur and Sree Kerala Varma College, Thrissur permitted me to refer the books in their libraries. Besides, being a former M.Phil student of University of Calicut, I was allowed to refer the Departmental and General libraries of the university.

To prepare a brief summary of the beginning, development, and salient features of Indian Writing in English, I depended mainly K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English* of Sterling Publishers, Delhi, 1962 edition. M.K. Naik's *A History of Indian English* published by Sahitya Akademi in 1982 also helped me much to outline the evolution of Indian Writing in English. To analyse and evaluate the theme of the Partition, I referred mainly one of the most popular books *Freedom at Midnight* by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre published in 1975. Nisid Hajari's *Midnight Furies* published by Penguin Books in 2015, is also very useful to know the unknown truths connected with the fatal consequences of the Partition.

I used the original six novels of Amitav Ghosh as the primary source for my research. At the same time, I read most of his works to get a general view of his themes and narrative techniques, especially his unique way of using English language. In the case of the novel *Sea of Poppies* I am fortunate to avail the Malayalam translation *Aveen Pookalute Kadal* by Anoop Chandran published by D.C. Books, Kottayam in 2015, which is highly useful for a better and thorough study of the novel. Besides a large number of printed and online

resources like books, journals, periodicals, newspapers, blogs, forums and websites were collected and made use of in this project. Seminars, conferences and workshops related to the research topic were attended and research papers were presented, to have a deeper knowledge on the subject.

The introductory chapter briefly analyses the current status of English in India, the beginning of Indian English Literature and criticism against Indian English Literature. Then the topic of the research 'Indianness in Indian Writing in English: A Study of Amitav Ghosh's Novels' is introduced in general. After that Indianness is analysed in Indian English poetry, prose, short story, drama and novel. Indianness in social, political, historical, religious, economic, geographical, cultural and philosophical aspects of different Indian communities are assessed elaborately. As a case study, six novels of Amitav Ghosh, the postcolonial Indian English writer has been selected and they are: *The Circle of Reason* (1986); *The Shadow Lines* (1988); *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996); *The Glass Palace* (2000); *The Hungry Tide* (2004); and *Seas of Poppies* (2006).

In Chapter II, under the title 'Socio-Political and Historical facets of Indianness and their reflections in Ghosh's novels', Indianness is analysed from the social point of view. There the various age-old social features of the Indian society like caste system, untouchability, male domination in the society, widowhood in Indian society, east-west encounter, cultural interaction between the East and the West, etc. are revealed in detail with proper examples from famous Indian novels. It is pointed out how Ghosh has reacted to these social elements in his novels. In this chapter, the major historical and political events in Indian history are mentioned and how they are depicted in Indian English novels. Freedom Struggle, Gandhism and the Partition of India, communal riots, etc. are generally estimated. It is summarised how Ghosh has viewed these events in his novels.

In Chapter III, under the title ‘Indian elements in the Religious and Economic dimensions and their depiction in Ghosh’s novels’, themes of asceticism and renunciation in the life of Indian society are reviewed. Religion has great impact in the daily life of an average Indian. It is customary for people in India to visit places of worship before and after important occasions in life. It is observed how Ghosh has depicted such Indian situations in life. This chapter also deals with how colonial authorities have exploited India economically. It is clearly mentioned how they have encouraged the migration of Indians to plantations and labour camps in new British colonies. It is also mentioned how they compelled the Indian farmers to stop the cultivation of food crops and encouraged the farming of opium in their fields. The ruthless exploitation of poor Indians by the colonial authorities for their own monetary benefits is uncovered realistically. It is assessed how Ghosh has reacted to this genuine Indian theme.

In Chapter IV, under the title ‘The Geographical and Cultural aspects in India and Ghosh’s Narrations of Them’, our cultural diversity is explained. It highlights the great idea of ‘Unity in Diversity’ in most of the Indian novels. People belonging to different castes, regions and religions stay together at one place. As a dreamer of a new world without any sort of boundaries or limitations, Ghosh describes such situations in his novels. It is estimated how the Indian English novels have described the geographical and climatic features of the subcontinent. The significance of rivers, seas, cities, hills, forests, deserts, etc. is subjected to analysis, as they are reflected in Ghosh’s novels.

Chapter V entitled, ‘Type Characters in Indian English Novels and Their impact on Ghosh’s Novels’ analyses the stereotype characters in Indian English novels and how they influenced Ghosh’s works. The exploited Indian labourer, The Sati-Savithri or Sacrificial Mother Figure, The Memsahib, The Sahib, The Anglicised Indian, the Royal follower to the

British empire, ascetics, etc. are some common characters in Indian English novels. It is explained whether Ghosh has been influenced by such type characters.

Chapter VI, 'Ghosh's Unique Talent in Using English with Indian Native Languages', analyses the changes that happened to the language of English in India. An Indian English writer will have a certain influence of his First Language or native language in his writing in English. Besides, each writer shows his own skill in transliterating an Indian situation or dialogue from native language to English. These aspects of certain eminent Indian English novelists are reviewed and compared with that of Amitav Ghosh.

In Chapter VII titled 'Conclusion', Ghosh's contribution to world literature, Ghosh as a prophet of cosmopolitanism, his attitude towards ecology or environment, his experience as a writer, and his positive and negative utopian thinking are assessed in general. Then the significance of this research is mentioned briefly and observations made in this project are summed up. Indianness is once again briefly examined and their relevance is verified in Indian English novels. From chapters two to four, the various aspects of Indian life, related with social, political, historical, religious, economic, geographical and cultural spheres are examined in detail. Besides, they are compared with the presentations of the same points in Ghosh's novels. This comparative study will help the literary community to find out the greatness of Ghosh as a historian and anthropologist. Chapter V is exclusively allotted to the type characters in Indian English novels. Certainly they have influenced Ghosh's craft as a writer. At the same time, he has been quite successful in presenting such characters with more genuineness. Chapter VI examines the changes happened in Indian English in general and Ghosh's contribution to Indian English as a linguist. In comparison with his predecessors, 'Conclusion' asserts the unique role of Amitav Ghosh in the themes of Indianness and its varied aspects including the style of English language itself. This chapter is concluded with the scope of this research.

Significance of English in the contemporary India

English has become a part of our lives – personal, social and official. It is the preferred language of higher education, advertising, marketing, Indian Parliament, courts, armed forces, etc. Being an international language the power and use of English is increasing day by day. It is the lingua franca of the world wide web and Internet. Countries like Japan and Germany have taken up the initiative to teach and use English in their countries in order to keep pace with the IT revolution worldwide. India is the third largest English-using nation after the USA and UK which has about 35 million users of the language. English has the status of an ‘associate’ official language in the constitution. It is the state language of four states and of most of the union territories. India has a large network of English print media with a pan-Indian circulation and is one of the world’s three major book publishers in English. English happens to be the primary language of inter-regional interaction in India and of course of India’s interaction with the outside world. English is fast getting assimilated into Indian languages.

English in India has a long history of growth and development. The discovery of the sea-route to India by Vasco da Gama in 1498 brought the Portuguese and the Dutch to India long before the British. Later, Queen Elizabeth granted the East India Company to start trade relations with India on 31 December 1599. It was the beginning of a new era in the colonial history of India. The East India Company’s real aim was to promote business and secure maximum profit. The company had no idea to conquer and rule the land. But the gradual disintegration of the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century gave a golden chance to the company to undertake the rule of the country.

In the beginning, the British rule had no official education policy. Soon the colonial authorities were convinced that there was an urgent need for Indian clerks, translators and

lower officials in administration. So they were forced to initiate the spread of English education among the people of India. The British imperialists encouraged the spread of English education for the smooth functioning of their administration in India. They thought that it would help Indians to assimilate western culture and be loyal to the foreign rulers. However, the natives welcomed English language and began to express Indian sensibility effectively through the language of the colonizer.

Indian English literature began as a by-product of the Indo-British encounter. Indians first started learning English for the purpose of trade and commerce. The beginnings of Indian English writing are not fully documented. Cavelley Venkata Boriah's "Account of the Jains" published in 1809 in a journal has been considered the first published work by an Indian in English. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's essay "A Defence of Hindu Theism" (1817) is the first original publication in expository prose in the history of Indian writing in English. Bengalis have made an outstanding contribution to early prose writing. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote the first Indian novel in English, titled *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864). He wrote several essays in English. With the growth of English education, a large number of Indians started writing distinguished scholarly books. Romesh Chunder Dutt, a member of the Indian Civil Service, translated *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* to English. Swami Vivekananda made great contributions to Indian English prose through his great speeches in the field of religion. He spoke of the spiritual uniqueness of India, and the greatness of Hinduism. He used simple diction and short sentences. Rabindranath Tagore, another Bengali, contributed much to the development of Indian writing in English. Tagore's prose writings in English were primarily in the form of lectures.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the great social and religious reformer of modern India, wrote thirty - two essays originally in English on various subjects within the first three decades of the nineteenth century which are the early prose writings of Indian English Literature.

It is a fact that Indian writing in English continues to be the bone of contention in the Indian literary world even today. Many of its writers have won national and international awards. Even then critics in other Indian languages and many others believe that it is impossible to do creative writing in English since it is an alien language. Its cultural register and verbal associations are simply inaccessible to us. They maintain that it is closely associated with colonial elitism and does not address to any specific community in India. That is why writers like Budha Dev Bose and S.H. Vatsyayan charge Indian English as primarily urban, middle-class and Western-oriented. It stands far away from the reality of rural-ethos and native traditions.

Murali Das Melwani has made the following observation in his book, *Themes in Indo-Anglian Literature* (1977): 'In 1965 alone, out of 20,115 books published in India, 10,438 were in English.' (English in India. 76) He adds:

'Besides books, we have a wealth of written material in English. Serious literary magazines - 15 of them published from various cities all over the country - the numerous English newspapers with impressive circulations, all reveal in style and format the high standards we can achieve with what critics call, 'an alien language' '(77).

During the last few decades Indian Writing in English has gained much importance in the academic field. In the beginning this branch was known as 'Anglo – Indian Literature'. It comprised of the writings of British or Western authors concerning India. Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster, F.W. Bain, Sir Edwin Arnold, F.A Steel, John Masters, Paul Scott, M.M. Kaye and many others have all written about India, but the nature of their work apparently belongs to British literature.

Later different designations like ‘Indo-Anglian Literature’, ‘Indo-English literature’, ‘Indian - English Literature’, and finally ‘Indian Writing in English’ were given to this branch of literature. Prof. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar was a pioneer historian and critic of this discipline, and he gave the title to his first book on the subject as follows: *Indo-Anglian Literature* (1943). But when he published a comprehensive study of the subject in 1962, he changed the title as Indian Writing in English. However, the various appellations given to this branch of literature have caused a bit confusion about the content of the discipline. In this context it is better to remember the definition given to Indian English Literature by Prof. M.K. Naik in his book *A History of Indian English Literature* (1982). ‘Strictly speaking, Indian English Literature may be defined as literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality’ (2). Braj B. Kachru, another authority on Indian writing in English makes the following remark in his book *The Indianization of English* (1983): ‘The term Anglo - Indian writing is used with reference to that body of creative writing which focuses on the Indian subcontinent as the central theme, and is written by those who use English as their first language; e.g., E.M. Forster, Rudyard Kipling, John Masters and Paul Scott’ (86). It also implies that translations from different Indian languages into English cannot be considered as part of Indian English Literature, unless they are translated by the same authors. By the above definition the author hints that Indian Writing in English must be a sincere attempt to nativize the English language to express the Indian sensibility. In short, Indian writing in English refers to a body of work written by Indian writers who write in the English language and whose mother tongue is usually one of the numerous languages of India. At the same time, some scholars and critics point out that Indian literature comprises of several prominent Indian languages like Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Marathi, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, etc. These different languages have their own great tradition in style and content as well as exceptional unity or

harmony. Therefore, there is nothing wrong in translating excellent creative works from native languages to English by eminent Indian English scholars and such works should be included in Indian Writing in English.

Indianness in Indian Writing in English

Indianness is the key feature of Indian Writing in English. It is essentially an important criterion for examining the worth of Indian Writing in English. Really it is an abstract in essence to express the problematic issues of identity and cultural politics involved in the production of literary texts. Many dominant races had invaded India and their contributions and legacies have been transformed and assimilated into an Indian cultural past which can be straightforwardly treated as its Indianness. The cultural history of India, according to A.L. Basham, introduces us to the development of India as a cultural concept. That is why, the term 'Indianness' (*Bharatheeyatha*) becomes a common and popular usage in Indian Writing in English. Indianness as a way of life, as a culture, as a socio-political and economic ethos, is highly complicated to be accommodated into a concept. Indianness is an amalgam of various factors like traditions, culture, regions, religions, languages, national identity, civilisation and many other things closely associated with Indian life. Any attempt to conceptualize the idea of Indianness is marred by a variety of matters like caste, region, religion, language, superstitions, food and dress habits, etc. Therefore, its meaning is relative depending on the perspective. However, it is based on the perception that a Nation is not merely geographical or physical, but it is like an individual, a living entity with body, life, mind, soul and with a unique temperament and genius. According to this perspective, to be an Indian, means to be consciously or unconsciously open to and in tune with the soul and mind of India. There the term becomes very complex and complicated because India is a vast country of 1.2 billion people with 29 states, more than 100 languages and dialects. It has a unique socio-cultural heritage where the yellow, brown, white and dark races live together

and mingle easily. There are races like Dravidians, Aryans, Mongloids, etc. and religious followers like Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Jains, etc. who follow their own beliefs, customs, worship practices, rituals and traditions. The diversity within the country is much greater than the one that is found among the various nations of Europe. Yet underneath the surface of diversity, there are certain commonly shared features, emotions, taboos and sentiments that contribute to a unified vision of Indianness. India has become an amazing land of cultural wonders and paradoxes. There is no exaggeration in the phrase 'Incredible India'. It highlights the most interesting thing about India that India is not located in any one particular place.

'Indianness' is a controversial topic since it has a number of interpretations. Each interpretation has its own sound arguments and hence an average reader is more confused by them. Its source and meaning begin from the history before Christ and we can call it as the ancient concept of Indianness. Its sense is twisted under Mughal and colonial rule. It assumes a wider implication during the freedom struggle and post independent period. This research has tried to analyse each aspect of Indianness in those different stages and make some generalisations.

Ideas and notions are formed historically and culturally. The notion of Indianness thus provides grounds for discussing the relevance of the various cultural forms made available in India through Indian Writing in English. The term 'Indianness' which grammatically suggests an abstract essence that is often used to address the problematic issues of identity and cultural politics involved in the production of literary texts. Generally it is seen that the idea of Indianness has been used, more than anything else, as a representational mode by Indian English writers. It has become a construct of literary devices and practices that intends to critique and represent Indian realities or realities experienced by the Indians. This realization necessitates a reflection not only on the socio-political and

cultural stances of the writer, but also on the relevance of certain narrative traditions, styles and modes of presentations. When we analyse the various aspects of the notions of 'India' and 'Indianness', we are forced to go through the historical, topical, literary, journalistic, political and cultural aspects of the narration of Indian English writers.

It is generally agreed that the notion of Indianness has been a perennial source of debate among the critics as well as writers in and outside India since the Independence. Here it is noteworthy how Raja Rao has defined India in his book *The Meaning of India*: "India is not a country (desa), it is a perspective (darsana): it is not a climate but a mood (rasa) in the play of the absolute - it is not the Indian who makes India but "India" makes the Indian, and this India is in all." (Rao 17-18) A.K. Ramanujan has made another interesting argument about Indianness in his essay entitled "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?". He says, "There is no single Indian way of thinking. There are great and little traditions, ancient and modern, rural and urban, classical and folk. Each language, caste and region had its special worldview." (Chattarji & Chakravarty, 143) The famous American writer Mark Twain wrote about India that "India is the cradle of the human race, the birth place of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great – grandmother of tradition." Max Muller said about Upanishad that - "there is no book in the world that is so thrilling, stirring and inspiring as the Upanishad."

The above mentioned remarks clearly suggest that there has never been a single definition of India or Indianness. Any reference to India is closely associated with a particular period and 'Indianness' of that period is represented in the specific work.

The very term 'Indianness' reflects the religious practices, beliefs, food habits, dress code, attitudes and the lifestyle of an average Indian. It hints that anything which is associated with an Indian way of thinking and living comes under this term. In spite of the

different historical, racial, social, cultural and religious differences, there are certain things which unite all Indians together and they are collectively known as the salient aspects of Indianness. Eminent writers highlight the diverse traits of Indianness according to their understanding, experience and imagination. We painfully realize that colonial or western historians and critics evaluate Indian life, society and culture from a superficial point of view. That is why they branded India easily as ‘a land of snakes and superstitions’.

Harrex says that Indianness of Indian novels in English makes him accepting of the criteria of inwardness, sensibility, values and the deeper life of vision. Besides this, he relates the problem of Indianness to the question of style which, according to him, is a fundamental test of a writer’s originality and of his Englishness or Indianness, Americanness or Africanness, as the case may be (13). He has a word of praise for those writers of India who write creatively in English in order to render language with a sensitivity which genuinely evokes those currents and nuances of Indian life that are his sources of vision. Amar Nath Prasad has made the following remark about Indianness like this:

Today English is not the heritage of only England but it is gaining ground all over the world. Perhaps this is why these days England has changed its conservative domination over English. It has given space to a number of Indian words in the new English dictionary. Recently England has given the prestigious Booker Prize to Arundhati Roy, an entirely home-grown Indian, who portrays a typical Indian society in her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*. This book contains more than hundreds of words of Indian origin, idiosyncratic use of italics and grammatical constructions (1,2).

Poets, novelists, essayists, dramatists, etc. in India have been speaking about India and Indian way of life to the outside world through Indian Writing in English. The British

who came to India in the 17th century brought their culture and religion. These two social forces are so influential that their impacts are still found in Indian literature. The Indian English poets were more obsessed with the matters of culture and religion in their writings during the Pre-Independence period. Then they imitated the style of ‘‘English’’ poets in their content and craft. Besides, they faced the problem of publication of their works because the western publishers were not interested in publishing the works of Indian English poets. Since Independence, the poets freed themselves from the clutches of Englishness and started writing in a very Indian manner, which gives high impetus to Indian literature. Indian English poetry has marked a very promising bright future in the field of literature.

Indian English poetry is very different from its western counter part in the theme, language, style of writing, imagery, etc. Every poet has his/her own source of inspiration or influence. It is this source that makes Indian English poetry ‘Indian’. Indian poets are very much influenced by the Indian culture, customs, traditions, etc. The poet writes mainly for Indian audience and therefore it is his/her responsibility to maintain an Indian appeal, which is likeable to all people. Besides, they have to consider non-Indian readers, and to them the feature of Indianness makes it exotic and gives a deep feeling and experience of real India.

Indian English poetry marked the beginning with Henry Louis Vivian Derozio who was not only a poet but also a teacher of poetry. He was an Indian in a sense, because his mother was an Indian and his father was a Portuguese. He inherited a great love for India from his mother, and a strong prejudice against Hindus and Hinduism from his father. His writings were criticized for being too western and Christian in outlook. However, his writing has stirred many English – educated Indians to write poetry. His poem such as the *Harp of India* shows genuine interest for India.

Indianness is an element of the poem, which shows India through its language, imagery, sensibility, which marks the Indian as 'Indian'. Indianness in a poem is something that is not really definable yet remains a discernible character in Indian English poems. Indianness can be defined in terms of what and how Indians are and what makes what they are. Broadly speaking Indianness is the quality which must be present in the great works of all Indian writers. Some regard Indianness as "life – attitudes" and "modes of perception". Prof. V.K. Gokak defines Indianness as a composite awareness in the matter of race, milieu, language and religion. A few others think that Indianness is nothing but depiction of Indian culture. Thus, Indianness is the sum total of cultural patterns of India, deep rooted in ideas and ideas which form the minds of India.

Indian poets writing in English around fifties have produced a large number of poems that is often deeply rooted in the traditional Indian sensibility and yet is strikingly modern in its expression. The question of Indianness is not merely a question of the material of poetry but it is tied up with the factor called audience. Indian English poets write not only for Indian audience but also for non-Indian, western audience. Therefore consciously or unconsciously they make use of their Indianness to a greater or lesser extent in their poems. Every human being is influenced by the environment, culture and tradition of his time and place. Just as western poets show their culture, Indian English poets also show the same characteristic. Indian English poets such as A.K. Ramanujan depict the Hindu tradition of cremation and the process of throwing the ashes in the river in his poem, 'The Obituary'. Likewise, Kamala Das wrote 'the dance of the eunuchs' when she saw them dancing on the streets of Calcutta.

For an Indian English poet living in India would really be influenced by the things happening in and around him. In this process what a poet can do is try to be as natural and honest as possible. An Indian English poet expressing an Indian sensibility will speak more authentically and achieve greater depth, and possibly greatness, than by assuming

cosmopolitan stance. The Indian English poet is writing in a foreign language, which was adopted and used by Indians in a very small percentage, most for formal, official or professional purpose, and it is not really a language of the streets. It has been observed that many Indians use English that are outdated and wooden. So it is the responsibility of the Indian English poet to write in a language, which the reader can understand and feel to be real.

Poem such as ‘‘The Railway Clerk’’ by Nissim Ezekiel makes intensive use of English as it is used by Indians. The suffix, ‘-ing’ is used in a wrong manner unnecessarily; this is very typical for Indian users of English. The sentence constructions used by Indians are not up to the standard use of language. It is pointed out that a few Indian English poets highlight these drawbacks of Indian English as a vehicle for humour and satire in their poems. The educated Indians writing English poems are ‘bilingual’ or ‘multilingual’ and they interact in several languages other than English. A.K. Ramanujan has published two collections of verse in Kannada and translated some from Kannada to Tamil. Kamala Das has written prose in Malayalam. It is natural that the poet’s mother tongue will surely affect, to a greater or lesser extent, the way he or she writes. This aspect of ‘bilingualism’ of Indian English poets can be attributed to many Indian words in their poems.

Being Indian English poets they try to represent Indianness in their poems. They increasingly feel the need to evolve an Indian idiom, and not stick to British rule of correctness. When they write about the superstitions of crows or details about the cows, the non-Indian readers think of them as being written for an exotic appeal. The validity of Indian English poetry depends on the creation of a new idiom – Indian English idiom which is distinct from the idioms of the writers all over the world who write in English. It is a fact that the poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, Shiv K. Kumar Daruwalla and a few others have succeeded to some extent in creating a new idiom for Indian English. For example, Ezekiel

uses a number of Indian words like “guru, goonda, burkha, chapatti, pan” etc. These words obviously make their writing more Indian in sensibility.

Jayanta Mahapatra depicts the Orian landscape and presents Indian sensibility in his poems. In “Dawn at Puri”, Mahapatra underlines the importance of Puri and what it means to the Hindus. Women wish to die at Puri to attain salvation. The worshipping of the widows and their rites, crow’s cawing, the images of the skull indicating the poverty of Indians, etc. are good examples for Indianness in his poems. Similarly, Indian sensibility is strikingly evident in the poems of A.K. Ramanujan. His Indian sensibility is sharpened by his western education and environment. He portrays the Indian scenes, from across the Atlantic, with complete artistic detachment and irony. His poem “A River” is a good testimony for a typical Indian English poem. “A River” is Indian in its theme and location. Vaikai River in Madhurai is presented in the poem. The straw and women’s hair clogging the watergates, the stones like buffaloes and crocodiles, etc. are Indian images. The names of the cows taken away by the flood, Gopi and Brinda are typically Indian. Nissim Ezekiel is another Indian English poet who brings out the quality of Indianness in many of his poems. His poem “The Railway Clerk” deals with the relationships between the railway clerk and his wife. The idioms and expressions used in the poem are only possible in India. They show an Indian situation very touchingly and reveal the quality of Indianness convincingly.

Indianness is as inherent and integral to the poet’s true core as the peels of onion. It finds an authentic expression on the levels of both experience and idioms. Beliefs, attitudes, thought processes, perception of the past and present, images, allusions, myths, ritualistic pattern, etc. reflect Indianness in the poems. In short, Indianness is just one of the characteristics of Indian English poems. At the same time, Indianness by itself cannot become a criterion or guarantee of aesthetic value. As an Indian, the poet cannot hope to escape from Indianness even though the Indianness in the poem may be very subtle.

The western education in English brought about a renaissance and a reawakening in India during the colonial rule. This renaissance first broke out in Bengal in the early years of the nineteenth century. The pioneer of the Renaissance in India was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was the most articulate spokesman of intellectual opinion in Bengal. He urged his fellow Indians to embrace European civilization through the medium of the English language and literature, and English ideas and institutions. He believed in the worship of One Supreme Soul and was a great humanitarian and a social reformer. Macaulay's *Minute on Education*, which made the study of English a compulsory language in schools in India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy welcomed this reform in education wholeheartedly. Soon the traces of the Bengal renaissance could be seen in Madras , Bombay and the other parts of India.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is regarded as a great Indian master of English prose. His English works are mostly journalistic essays which appeared in his own weekly papers. The essays were on Vedanta, to uphold the quintessence of Hindu religion, on Christianity, on social reforms essential to restore self-respect and dignity of Hindu women as individuals, on political issues, etc. His friends requested him to write a short autobiographical sketch. This sketch is the first exercise in the Indian English literature in a prose style which was later on emulated by Nehru and Nirad Chaudhary. Roy's journalistic articles inspired several Indians and they converted to Christianity. They began to attack the errors and inconsistencies of Hinduism through journalism.

In Bombay, Bal Shastri Jambhekar, the Sanskrit Pandit began to study English and started an English – cum – Marathi journal to encourage among his countrymen the pursuit of the English literature and to open a field for free and public discussion. In Madras, Gazulu Lakshmi Narsu started a newspaper with the aim of ameliorating the condition of the Hindus. Cavelly Venkata Ramaswami published a biographical sketches of the Dekkan poets, the first literary biography in Indian English literature of about hundred Indian poets in Sanskrit,

Telugu, Tamil and Marathi. So the literary renaissance in India was ushered in by the journalistic articles and pamphleteering.

Bengal and Bombay dominated in the development of English prose. Bankim Chander Chatterjee, the renowned Bengali novelist, wrote essays in English on the Hindu festivals, philosophy, Vedic literature and Bengali literature. Romesh Chunder Dutt, a pioneer in the literature of travel and literary history, published a history book under the title *A History of Civilization in Ancient India* in three volumes. He wrote another book, titled *The Two Volumes of The Economic History of India*. The trio - Tagore, Aurobindo and Vivekananda – in Bengal contributed much to Indian English prose. Tagore's prose writings were essentially lectures. Sri Aurobindo wrote several prose articles on religious, metaphysical, social, political, cultural and literary subjects. He contributed them to journals and newspapers. Swami Vivekananda stressed the essential unity of all religions and gave an exposition of Vedanta in his lectures abroad.

Gandhi's autobiography *My Experiments with Truth* (1927) translated by Mahadev Desai is an outstanding work in Indian English prose. But some of his lectures in English, for example, the Benares Hindu University speech of 1916, the speech of the Trial of 1922, his English articles in his journals and letters showed Gandhi solidly grounded in the ancient Indian tradition. He possessed a profound moral earnestness which enabled him to rediscover the ethical values of Indian tradition. He applied his findings boldly to the political and social realities of the colonial India. The contemporaries of Mahatma Gandhi who showed their mastery in English prose were Rajagopalachari, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Jayaprakash Narayan, V.D. Savarkar, etc.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the political heir of Gandhi was a public speaker and a prolific writer. His first book *Soviet Russia* is a collection of sixteen articles, which reveal Nehru's

impressions of Russia after his visit in 1927. *Letters from a Father to his Daughter* consists of thirty-one letters written to Indira Gandhi, who then was ten years old. *Glimpses of World History* comprising letters written to his daughter from prison during 1930-1933 is a summary of the world history from the very beginning of the civilization to 1930s. The book reveals Nehru's secularism, his scientific temper and socialist sympathies. Nehru's *Autobiography* is the crowning achievement of Nehru as a writer. The autobiography presents a vivid picture of both the man and his milieu. Many faces of Nehru's complex personality are uncovered in this work: his scientific outlook, his aversion to organized religion, his admiration for Marxism and nationalism. The autobiography also shares Nehru's emotional and imaginative nature and his aesthetic sense. Nehru's sincerity, objectivity and his capacity for self – analysis are also evident in this work.

The Discovery of India (1944) was written by Nehru during his imprisonment at Ahmednagar fort. Nehru surveys the history of India from the times of the Indus Valley Civilization to the 1940s. The book makes clear Nehru's ideas on secularism, democratic socialism and humanism. Nehru's prose reflects the salient aspects of his personality: sincere and idealistic, urbane and cultured, vigorous and graceful, endowed with sharp mind, strong emotions, a feeling for beauty and a keen comic sense. His prose is free from Latinized words and phrases. His language is simple but the choice of words is apt and remarkable. e.g. *Tryst with Destiny*.

Sir Radhakrishnan was the exponent of religious and philosophical prose. His first work *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy* examined Western philosophical thought. His second book *Indian Philosophy* is a comprehensive account of the Indian philosophical thought. *The Hindu view of Life* is a forceful vindication of Hinduism as a way of life and refutes the popular notion that it is only a rigid set of outmoded doctrines and superstitions. *The Future of Civilization* emphasizes the perils of mechanization and

standardization in the modern technological civilization and pleads for a world order based on harmony of the spirit. Radhakrishnan wrote quite a large number of books after India gained independence. Being a good speaker, his style is rhetorical and epigrammatically brief. His sweet-sounding words and phrases affect his sharp argumentation and logic. Radhakrishnan was a bridge builder between the two cultures of the East and the West.

Nirad C. Chaudhuri is the ‘Grand Solitary’ among Indian English prose writers. His works include *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, *A Passage to England*, *The Continent of Circe* and *To live or not to live*. *The Autobiography* made him suddenly famous. It is acclaimed as a ‘national than personal history’. *The Continent of Circe* is described as an ‘essay on the people of India’. He has always maintained a sort of love – hate relationship with India and the people of India. His great merit as an intellectual is that he is not ever too lazy to avoid doing his own thinking or too timid to hesitate to give outspoken expression to his views. He has the supreme faith of the moral man in an amoral society.

The genre short story also has made its own contribution to the Indianness in Indian Writing in English. A large number of Indian English short story writers have successfully dealt with new issues like postcoloniality, multiculturalism, indigenization, nativism, the social and political agenda of criticism, etc. in their writings. T.L. Natesan, who wrote under the pen name Shankar Ram, is an early short story writer. His stories in *The Children of Kaveri* (1926) and *Creatures All* (1933) deal mostly with the rustic life in Tamil Nadu. A.S. Ayyar published the following collections of stories: *Indian after – Dinner Stories* (1927), *Sense in Sex and other Stories* (1932), *The Finger of Destiny and other Stories* (1932), *Tales of India* (1944) based on ancient Indian legends and *Famous Tales of India* (1954). The plight of woman in traditional Hindu society, condition of young widows, marriage of young girls to old men for money, abandoned or persecuted wives, victims of the dowry system, the absence of birth control, etc. were some of his constant themes.

Mulk Raj Anand has brought about seven collection of short stories : *The Lost child and other Stories* (1944), *The Barber's Trade Union and other Stories* (1944), *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and other Stories* (1947), *Reflections on the Golden Bed and other Stories* (1953), *The Power of Darkness and other Stories* (1959), *Lajwanti and other Stories* (1966), and *Between Tears and Laughter* (1973). He also published two traditional Indian tales titled as *Indian Fairy Tales* (1946) and *More Indian Fairy Tales* (1961). His short stories reveal a genuine picture to the social and cultural condition of his period.

R.K. Narayan is another talented short story writer in Indian Writing in English. His main short story collections are the following: *Cyclone and other Stories* (1943), *Dodu and other Stories* (1943), *Malgudi Days* (1943), *An Astrologer's Day and other Stories* (1947), *Lawley Road and other Stories* (1956), *A Horse and two Goats* (1970). Gentle irony and innocent humour situations are the salient features of his short stories. He tries to present the inside of the Indian families and strong relationships prevailing among the family members.

Raja Rao has published only a dozen short stories which are collected in *The Cow of the Barricades and other Stories* (1947) and *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978). K.A. Abbas published four short story collections: *Rice and other Stories* (1947), *Cages of Freedom and other Stories* (1952), *One Thousand Nights on a Bed of Stones and other Stories* (1957) and *The Black Sun and other Stories* (1963). Most of his stories favoured militant Leftism. They also reflect his journalistic and film-world experience, both in conception and technique.

When we analyse the history of the evolution of the Indian English prose and short story works, we realize that Indians have mastered the alien language English with perfection. It was in an infant stage during the pre-independence period but now it has grown up . Indian English Literature, unlike the European literature did not begin with poetry but with the political writings of the great social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy. At the

same time, we find a variety of themes prevalent both in the pre and postindependence period. There has been much experimentation in the past and they are ongoing still. That is why, Indian English literature is widely acclaimed and popular with the readers all over the world.

India has a long and fertile history in Drama, starting from Sanskrit plays of Vedic Age. Dramatists of Indian Writing in English have scaled the length and breadth of experimentation in dramaturgy of India during and after independence. As India had been under the colonial shackles for a time period of three hundred years, the colonial language and culture had cast its direct shadow on Indian drama. At the same time, the Indian English dramatists were aware and closely related with modern trends in literature like Existentialism, Globalisation, Surrealism, Dadaism, Magic Realism and the Post Colonial issues.

The Indian English Drama began in the 18th century when British Empire came and strengthened its political power in India. It started with the publication of Krishna Mohan Banerjee's *The Persecuted* in 1813. It is a social play in which the author tries to present the conflict between the East and the West. The real journey of Indian English Drama begins with Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Is This Called Civilization* which appeared on the literary horizon in 1871. Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, the two great sage-poets of India, are the first Indian dramatists in English worth considering. R.N. Tagore wrote primarily in Bengali but almost all his Bengali plays are available to us in English renderings. His prominent plays are *Chitra*, *The Post Office*, *Sacrifice*, *Red Oleanders*, *Chandalika*, *Muktadhara*, *Natir Puja*, *The Mother's Prayer*, etc. These plays are firmly rooted in the Indian ethos and ethics in their themes, characters and treatment. Sri Aurobindo's complete plays are *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta*, *Radoguna*, *The Viziers of Bassora* and *Eric*. Each of these plays is written in five acts.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya added new dimensions to Indian English drama. He sympathizes with the underdogs same like Mulk Raj Anand. His collection of social plays include *The Windows*, *The Parrots*, *The Santry Lantern*, *The Coffin* and *The Evening Lamps*.

D.M. Borgaonkar's *Image – Breakers* (1938) is a problem play that aims to break the conventions of caste system, horoscope, dowry, etc. S.Fyzee – Rahamin's *Daughter of Ind* (1940) portrays the conflict between love and social barriers, featuring a low-caste girl loving an Englishman. Balwant Gargi's *The Vulture Mung – Wa*, *The Fugitive* and *The Matriarch* deal with themes which are engaging attention of people everywhere. Another dramatic voice on the Indian literary scene that demands attention is that of T. Kailasam. He wrote both in English and Kannada. Though Kailasam is regarded as the father of modern Kannada drama, his genius finds its full expression in his English plays such as *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfilment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Karna* (1964), and *Keechaka* (1949). Bharati Sarabhai is the modern woman playwright during the colonial era of Indian English drama. She has written two plays *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* with some considerable measure of success. Nissim Ezekiel's *Three Plays* (1969) including *Nalini: A Comedy*, *Marriage Poem: A Tragi Comedy* and *The Sleep Walkers : An Indo – American Farce* are considered to be a welcome addition to the dramaturgy of Indian English drama.

Girish Karnad contributed much to enrich the tradition of Indian English theatre. His well – known plays are *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq*, (1962), *Hayavadana* (1970) and *Nagamandala* (1972). He selected themes and plots for his dramas from history, mythology and old legends. Vijay Tendulkar symbolizes the new awareness and attempts of Indian dramatists of the century to depict the agonies, suffocations and cries of man, focusing on the middle class society. In the plays *Silence !The Court Is in Session* (1968) and *Ghasiram Kotwal* (1972), the main theme is oppression. *Sakharam Binder* (1972) is a study in human violence amounted to powerful dramatic statement.

It cannot be denied that post-Independent Indian Drama in English has not achieved the same level that poetry and fiction have accomplished. Four reasons are pointed out for this drawback of Indian English drama: (i) Drama is essentially a composite art involving the playwright, the actors and the audience in a shared experience on the stage. (ii) As Srinivas Iyengar attributed “the failure to the fact that English is not a natural medium of conversation in India.” (iii) Lack of living theatre in our country. (iv) The Indian playwrights do not give much importance to the rich and varied Indian dramatic traditions involving the native myth and Indian historical heritage.

There is no exaggeration in saying that today Indian Writing in English has acquired great recognition in English - speaking world and its credit mainly goes to novel. The novel during the colonial period has a different outlook and was more concerned with the problems of the Indian people suffering under the British Yoke. After independence the Indian writers looked at the Indian scene from the postcolonial point of view. Though there were new hopes, the creative writers focussed on the problems of social, economic, religious, political and familial spheres. They selected topics of the Partition, the communal riots after partition, the problem of casteism, the subjugation of women, the poverty of the illiterate masses, etc. as their focal points. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, etc. wrote novels of social realism in the fifties.

B.R. Agrawal and M. Sinha assess the Post-Independence Indian English fiction in the preface of their book, *Major Trends in the Post – Independence Indian English Fiction*, like this:

Like British, American, Australian, Canadian or South African Literature, Indian English Literature highly complex, varied and rich in content and form is at once a literary piece, a social protest and medium of political assertion. So far as Indian

English novel is concerned, it is one of the voices in which India speaks. The Indian English novelists of the Post-Independence era use not only the thought, imagery and consciousness of their country's milieu but also a familiar rhythm in order to project the growing major trends in Indian milieu. They have successfully projected the growing trends of change in attitude, outlook and aspirations of a nation committed to ameliorate the lot of crores of people living below poverty line and subjected to economic constraints and orthodox social obligations. The complex social forces, historical vicissitudes, individual limitations, East- West encounter, Marxist approach, Gandhi's philosophy and industrial advancement, and other political, religious and cultural issues form the fabric of the Indian English novels of the first and second generation written during forties to eighties (Preface vi).

The first Indian novel in English, *Rajmohan's Wife* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was published in 1864. But Indian English novel has achieved amazing growth during the last eight decades or so. Salman Rushdie won the Booker Prize for his novel, *Midnight's Children* in 1981. It was the first well-known international award for an Indian English work since the historic Nobel Prize for Tagore's *Gitanjali* in 1936. Vikram Seth was given a fabulous amount as advance against royalty for his novel, *A Suitable Boy* in 1993 and thus he became India's first millionaire novelist. Arundhati Roy secured the prestigious Booker Prize for her debut novel *The God of Small Things* in 1997 and amassed a large amount of money on account of that work. Jhumpa Lahiri's Pulitzer award and Shauna Singh Baldwin's Commonwealth award are the golden feathers of Indian English fiction. All these things have established the fact that Indian English novelists have advanced a lot like their counterparts in English-speaking world. It is also pointed out that Indian English poetry and Indian English drama have taken a long time to achieve their present status, whereas Indian English novel has shown a variety of themes and excellence in narrative skill within a short time.

Generally scholars and critics agree that there are three important stages in the growth and development of Indian English fiction. The first major thrust happened in the mid - 1930's when the big trio - Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao appeared on the scene. They made the real beginning of the Indian English novel. Their novels clearly depicted the socio-economic and political atmosphere of India in those days. Mulk Raj Anand is regarded as the Indian version of Charles Dickens when we analyse the social aspects of his themes. He raises his voice through his works for the downtrodden. His first three novels - *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and A Bud* (1937) - deal with socially and financially inferior people. Mulk Raj Anand wrote more than a dozen novels and all of them are varied in their themes and backgrounds. His novel: *Seven Summers Morning Face* (1970) secured him Sahitya Academy Award for the year 1972. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar sums up Anand's talent like this : "As a writer of fiction, Anand's notable marks are vitality and a keen sense of actuality. He is a veritable Dickens for describing the inequities and idiosyncrasies in the current human situation with candour as well as accuracy" (Indian Writing in English, 356).

Rashipuram Krishnaswamy Narayan seems to be a quite contrast to Mulk Raj Anand in all sense. Anand was born in the North Western part of India whereas Narayan comes from South India. Narayan's mother - tongue is Tamil, he settled down in Mysore, where the regional language is Kannada and he writes in English. When Anand completed his education in Cambridge and London, Narayan had his education entirely in South India. Anand is regarded as the prophet of the poor, Dalits and downtrodden, and he has raised his voice for their betterment through his works. Narayan doesn't raise his voice to anybody in particular, but simply presents his stories with a delicate blend of gentle irony and sympathy. That is why, his novels are called serious comedies, where his genuine social concerns are manifested through his characters and their backgrounds. He looks at the Indian panorama as

a human comedy. He does not highlight any particular social evil. He simply narrates what he sees around him. He is satisfied to present their frettings and struttings without either praise or condemnation.

Besides Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan, another Indian who has achieved national and international recognition through writing novels in English during 1930s and 1940s is Raja Rao. His novels are very popular for the elements of Indianness contained in them. He depicts villages before and after the coming of the British. He picturises the impact of Gandhian movement among the people especially in villages. He blends political and religious elements of the contemporary India harmoniously.

The second important stage occurred in the mid-1950s and 1960s when writers like Arun Joshi, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, etc. came out with their works and changed the face of Indian English novel. Arun Joshi was brought up in a family of scholars in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees from Kansas University and M.I.T in the United States respectively. He won the Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel *The Last Labyrinth* in 1982. Most of his characters are urban in lifestyle and speak English. Joshi lived a reclusive life and generally avoided publicity.

Anita's mother was a German, Toni Nime and father a Bengali businessman, D.N. Mazumdar. As an Indian woman novelist, Anita Desai is more interested in the interior landscape of the mind than in political and social realities. Most of her plots are sleek and airy dealing with the life of cities. As a writer she has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize for three times. She won the British Guardian Prize for *The Village by the Sea*. In 2014 the nation honoured Anita by awarding her Padma Bhushan. Her characters are mostly women

who have reached different stages in life. Most of them are fragile introverts who succumb to their fate completely.

The most famous of the Indo-Anglian women novelists is Kamala Markandaya. Kamala Markandaya portrays in minute details both the lives of the people and the setting of the selected regions. Of course, she has presented her female characters with greater understanding and sympathy than the males. The confrontation between the East and the West, between India and England is her main theme. Therefore, we find the difference between Indianness and Englishness in her novels.

Another woman novelist who has received considerable attention and the Booker Prize for fiction in 1975 is Ruth Praver Jhabwala. She was born in Germany of Polish parents but migrated to England just before the war. She received her education in London University, married an Indian architect, and has made her home in New Delhi. She is different from other Indo-Anglian writers in the sense that she has looked at the Indian social scene with an uncommitted eye. As a foreigner her reaction are likely to be different from those of an Indian, but that does not necessarily make her wrong or unsympathetic. Her understanding of Indian things might not be very deep, but at the same time she figured out certain things overlooked by the Indians because of excessive familiarity. The same things are very minutely observed by her. After all, the defects or even peculiarities of a society are more easily and clearly seen by the foreigners than the members of that society.

Being the daughter of Vijayalakshmi Pandit and niece of Jawaharlal Nehru, Nayantara had a better idea about the contemporary politics than other writers of her age. Of course, politics is one of her two major concerns. The other one is connected with the modern Indian woman's search for sexual freedom and self-realization. Her first novel *A Time to be Happy* (1958) and the next novel *This Time of Morning* (1965) are set in the post-Gandhian era and

witness the collapse of Gandhism. *This Time of Morning* narrates the political events in India in the last phase of Nehru's Prime Ministership. It is regarded as one of the best political novels in Indian English fiction.

The third important stage in the development of Indian English novel came in the beginning of the 1980s. It was then that Indian English writing received international recognition, mainly through writers of Indian origin who have settled abroad. Salman Rushdie, Khushwant Singh, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, etc. are some important novelists of this period.

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie is a British Indian novelist and essayist. His second novel, *Midnight's Children* (1981), won the Booker Prize in 1981. He combines magical realism with historical fiction; his work is concerned with the many connections, disruptions, and migrations between Eastern and Western civilizations. Khushwant Singh was an Indian writer, journalist and politician. His experience related with the Partition of India in 1947 inspired him to write *Train to Pakistan* in 1956 (made into film in 1998), which became his most well-known novel.

Vikram Seth is an Indian English writer and poet. He has received several awards such as Padma Shri, Sahitya Academy Award, Pravasi Bharatiya Samman, WH Smith Literary Award and Crossword Book Award. He has published eight books of poetry and four novels. His first novel, *The Golden Gate: A Novel in Verse* (1986), describes the experiences of a group of friends living in California. It is composed of no less than 690 rhyming tetrameter sonnets (more than 7000 lines). His next novel, *A Suitable Boy* (1993) earned him a universal reputation as a writer. It is the story of a young girl, Lata, set in India in the early 1950s. In this elaborate 1,349-page novel, Seth has combined satire and romance harmoniously. He took almost a decade to complete this lengthy novel which has earned him

comparison with Leo Tolstoy, Charles Dickens and George Eliot. *An Equal Music* (1999) and *A Suitable Girl* (2018) are his other novels.

Shashi Deshpande is the second daughter of the famous Kannada dramatist and writer Sriranga. She was born in Karnataka and educated in Bombay and Bangalore. Generally Deshpande doesn't write anything sensational or exotic about India. She is not at all interested in the long history of great kings. Similarly, she doesn't write about the grinding poverty of the Indian masses. She is more concerned about emotions especially of women. The woman deprived of love, understanding, and companionship is the main theme in her writings. She believes strongly that the traditional Indian society is biased against woman. At the same time, she recognizes that it is very often women who oppress their sisters based on the beliefs and practices of age-old centuries.

Suzanna Arundhati Roy is an Indian author best known for her debut novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), which won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997 and became the best-seller book by a non-expatriate Indian author. She is also a political activist involved in human rights and environmental causes.

In a review of the novel in *World Literature Today*, G.R. Taneja writes, “ The new Indian English fiction of the eighties is free from the self-consciousness, shallow idealism, and sentimentalism that characterized the work of the older generation of novelists..... who started writing in the thirties. The fiction of the eighties takes a maturer view of Indian reality.”

Amitav Ghosh as a Postcolonial Indian writer in English

Amitav Ghosh is the first Indian English writer who has received the prestigious Jnanpith Award in 2018. This award so far was bestowed upon the eminent writers in different regional languages in India by the Central Government. By declaring this honour to

Amitav Ghosh, the Central Govt. has recognized English as equal to one of the Indian languages. Hitherto English is considered as a colonial language and it has not been encouraged officially.

Ghosh was born in Calcutta on 11 July 1956. His father was first a Lieutenant Colonel in the army and, later, a diplomat. Ghosh grew up in East Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iran and India. He attended Doon school in Dehra Dun, and then received a B.A. (with honours) in History from St. Stephen's College, Delhi University in 1976 and an M.A. in Sociology from the same university in 1978. He received a diploma in Arabic from the Institute Bourguiba des Langues Vivantes in Tunis, Tunisia, in 1979, and then a D.Phil (Ph.D) in Social Anthropology from (St.Edmund's Hall) Oxford University in 1982. As part of that course, in 1980 he went to Egypt to do field work in the village of Lataifa.

Ghosh worked for a while as a journalist for The Indian Express newspaper in New Delhi. Since then he had been a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences at Trivandrum, Kerala (1982-83), a Visiting Professor of Anthropology at the University of Virginia (1988), the University of Pennsylvania (1989), the American University in Cairo (1994), and Columbia University (1994-97), and Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature at Queen's College of the City University of New York (1999-2003). In the spring of 2004, he was Visiting Professor in the Department of English at Harvard University. He spends a part of each year in Calcutta, but lives in New York with his wife, Deborah Baker, an editor at Little Brown and Company, and their children, Leela and Nayan.

Ghosh's first novel, *The Circle of Reason* (1986), was written in defence of reason, logic and rationality. He feels that India is a place where irrationality is pursued almost like a religion. Superstitions, blind beliefs, prejudices, etc. prevailing in the collective psyche does not allow any fresh thinking. He published his next novel *The Shadow Lines* in 1988 which

earned him the Sahitya Academy Award for the year 1989. This book is not about any one historical event but about the meaning of such events and their effects on the individuals who live through them. His next work was *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveller's Tale* (1993), which was based on his experience in Egypt. Two years later in 1995 he published *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery*. It is a science fiction novel to give an answer to the west's monopoly over scientific discoveries and inventions. It is a metaphysical exploration of identity itself. *The Glass Palace* (2000) is a family saga which describes European greed and the cruelty of colonization. His next novel, *The Hungry Tide* (2004), is set in the Sunderban Islands in the Bay of Bengal which explores the plight of displaced people residing there. There are no borders to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea, even land from water. The tides reach more than two hundred miles inland, and every day thousands of acres of mangrove forest disappear only to re-emerge hours later.

Ghosh's novel *Sea of Poppies* (2008), is the first part of the *Ibis* trilogy. It is a historical fiction, set in the background of Opium War, between British India and China during the 19th century. It narrates two economic and social themes in detail. One is the cultivation of opium as a cash crop in Bengal and Bihar for Chinese market. The other is the transport of Indian indentured workers to work in sugar factories of the British colonies such as Mauritius, Fiji and Trinidad. Along with these two economic themes, Ghosh depicts the present social system in Bengal and Bihar, highlighting with all evil aspects of caste system.

The River of Smoke (2011) is the second part of the *Ibis* trilogy. It continues the narration of incidents on the *Ibis*, which was caught in a storm and eventually ended up in Mauritius. The shipwreck changed the lives of the inmates completely. The novel has a variety of characters belonging to different social, cultural and geographical backgrounds. The plot takes us to Canton, which is one of the primary centres of opium trade. It depicts the hostilities and

resentments that were building up among the Chinese authorities, the opium merchants and the East India Company. The novel begins with three ships - the Anahita owned by Bahram Modi, who was the Parsi merchant from India, the Redruth owned by Fitcher Penrose, which was in an expedition to find rare species and plants from China, and the *Ibis* transporting convicts and indentured labourers - all three of them were caught by a raging storm in the coast of Canton in 1838. The story primarily goes on to deal with Bahram Modi's struggle to become an opium merchant and also foregrounds the difficult life of the convicts AhFatt and Neel.

The third book in the trilogy, *Flood of Fire* (2015), predominantly describes the tension and conflict in the coasts of China with regard to the opium trade and deals with events that lead to the first opium war. The opium trade had been a significant event in history because it changed the destinies of various nations built up with that money. However, there are very few fictional works to recreate such a momentous event in history. The characters in this novel belong to different groups, communities and professions. They are Havildar Kesri Singh and Captain Mee, soldiers in the British army, the adulterous relationship of Mrs. Burnham with Zachary Reid, the Parsi community, and especially the life of an enterprising yet essentially lonely lady Shireen Modi, people of mixed blood such as Ah Fatt and Reid, and the chronicler of the times, Neel. We also have a lot of subaltern characters, merchants as well as persons in position of power who offer the reader multiple perspectives from which to interpret the history of the times.

Being a postcolonial Indian English writer who has lived and worked in different parts of the world, Ghosh is the right person for analysing Indianness in creative writing. He has introduced a large number of characters and their lives belonging to different countries. He has proved through his writing that people can migrate and live in any part of the modern world. Thus he stands for internationalism or a new world without frontiers. His themes and

characters are best testimonials for his universal concept. Besides, his father, Lieutenant - Colonel Shailendra Chandra Ghosh, fought in the Second World War as an officer of the 12th Frontier Force Regiment, a unit of then British - Indian Army. Thus the boy Amitav Ghosh got direct genuine tips from his own father about the nature of British colonization and imperialism. He has presented them in his works realistically with his high command in English, narrative skill and imagination. Thus they become proper examples for Indianness in Indian Writing in English.

Makarand R. Paranjape has made a noteworthy remark about how Ghosh has created his stories:

“They are built from scraps of information or factoids painstakingly strung together, then transformed by creative desire that imaginatively reconstructs them, imbuing them with an independent existence, breathing life into them”. (117)

M. Asaduddin, while making a review of the book *Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives* edited by Brinda Bose, he introduces Ghosh like this:

“Amitav Ghosh is the most prominent name in Indian English writing today. From *The Circle of Reason* to *The Glass Palace* he has built up an impressive *oeuvre* that will ensure him a permanent place in the hall of literary fame. A deep sense of history, contemporary politics and human destiny inform his writings and characterise the writer and the man.”(184)

James Clifford begins his book *Routes* with a commendation of Ghosh’s resistant means of doing ethnographic research:

“Amitav Ghosh – a native of India educated at an ‘ancient English university’ who has done anthropological field work in Egypt – evokes an increasing

familiar situation. This ethnographer is no longer a (worldly) traveller visiting (local) natives, departing from a metropolitan centre to study in a rural periphery. Instead, his 'ancient and settled' fieldsite opens on to complex histories of dwelling and travelling, cosmopolitan experiences. Since the generations of Malinowski and Mead, professional ethnography has been based on intensive dwelling albeit temporary in delimited 'fields'. But in Ghosh's account, fieldwork is less a matter of localized dwelling and more a series of travel encounters. Everyone's on the move, and has been for centuries: dwelling-in-travel.'(2)

A Brief Summary of the Six Selected Novels of Amitav Ghosh

***1.The Circle of Reason* (1986)**

Ghosh's first novel *The Circle of Reason* (1986) was enormously popular in India but it didn't receive high enthusiasm in the West. Really this novel depicts the social and political conditions in the post colonial India. The novel covers the middle decades of the twentieth century, the period of decolonization, and it concludes in the 1980s. More precisely, much of the story *The Circle of Reason* is set against the backdrop of the Bangladeshi war of independence in 1971. The protagonist of the novel is Alu, an orphan, who is involved in a quarrel between his foster father and the village strong man who is a police spy. The police falsely identify him as a dangerous rebel and set a special agent on his trail. When Alu flees to a Gulf kingdom, Assistant superintendent of police Jyothi Das, is assigned as a police detective to pursue him.

The plot of the novel is broadly classified into three parts most matchingly. In the beginning Alu's eccentric misadventures in India are narrated. Then it explains what he does in Al-Ghazira. Finally it reveals his life in Algeria. Apparently the reader sympathises largely

with Alu, who is an entirely innocent fugitive from the police. The other character Das also gets impression of the reader mainly because he has been recruited into the police force rather reluctantly. He is more interested in observing and drawing rare birds than in tracking convicts and criminals among human beings. By the end of the novel, Das abandons his pursuit and resigns his job.

2. *The Shadow Lines* (1988)

The central theme of the novel is that the line dividing past and present is only a shadow, that the past lives in the present and the present is shaped by the past. The title spells out another theme, that is, identical realities across territorial borders which were originally meant to mark out differences, or across communities that are imagined to be different turn out mere shadow lines. Ghosh draws attention to the vagueness of national boundaries with regard to the subcontinent, and questions the types that have defined the assumptions of nationhood. Besides Ghosh thinks that space and time too are shadows, misty categories of habitual perception.

An unnamed narrator tells the whole story in this novel. There are only two parts in this book: (i) Going Away and (ii) Coming Home. There is no chapterwise or sectionwise narration. There are two families in the background of the novel – The Datta Chaudhuries of Bengal and Prices of London. When the narrator explains his relationship with the members of the above-mentioned families, two love affairs - Tridib and May Price, and Nick Price and Ila - are revealed in full detail. Both affairs end in tragedy. With the affairs narrated above we pass through three distinct places in the world - Bengal (India), Dhaka (Bangladesh) and London (England). When we go deeper into the novel, we get a few unforgettable glimpses of some historical events -the freedom movement in India and the rise of insurgency in Bengal, England's war against Germany, the Chinese aggression and the Indo-Pak War, the

desecration of Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar in 1963, and the communal riots in Khulna.

Though the narrator mentions a number of persons, three of them play a significant influence in his life: his uncle Tridib, Ila whom he loves in vain and Tha'mma, his grandmother.

The novel has a first-person narration, but unusually, it is not the narrator's life and experience that is narrated. To the very end of the novel we are never told his name. We know who his parents are, who his friends are, relatives and neighbours are. Yet, we do not know his name. The logic of the novel demands that we should not. To a large extent, his uncle Tridib's experience that forms the subject of narration. It is very clear in the opening lines of the novel: "In 1939, thirteen years before I was born, my father's aunt, Mayadebi, went to England with her husband and her son, Tridib". The action of the novel, thus starts with the eight years old Tridib being taken to England in 1939 and ends in 1964 when he is murdered by a street mob near his mother's original family home in Dhaka.

3. *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996)

Amitav Ghosh's third novel, *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), a complicated lengthy one is based on the historical figure Surgeon – Major Ronald Ross and his discovery of the source of malaria, which took place in Calcutta in 1898 and which won him the Nobel prize for medicine in 1902. In this third novel Ghosh experiments successfully his ideas on science, fiction, philosophy, and sociology. It earned Ghosh the prestigious Arthur C. Clarke Award for science fiction and thus he became the first Indian writer winning such an award. There are three parallel searches in this novel; the first one is that of an Egyptian clerk, Antar, who was working alone in a New York apartment in the early years of the twenty – first century. He was trying to trace the adventures of L. Murugan, who disappeared in Calcutta in 1995. The second search is related to Murugan's obsession with the missing links in the history of malaria research. The third and last search is related with that of Urmila Roy, a journalist in

Calcutta in 1995. Urmila is doing research on the works of Phulboni, an eighty- five years old writer, who produced a strange cycle of “Lakhan stories” that he wrote in the 1930s but suppressed thereafter. Murugan, an employee of a Health Organization, finds the circumstances of Ross’s discovery incongruous and gets involved in searches to find out the truth. His investigations take him to Calcutta where he vanishes and reemerges years later on the computer screen of a former colleague of his, Antar. Murugan feels doubts on official science and history and puts together bits and pieces trying to uncover what have been left out by the official reports.

4. *The Glass Palace* (2000)

The Glass Palace is a historical novel about three generations of two closely linked families in Burma, India and Malaya from 1885 to 1956. It happens in the background of the British colonization of Burma. The novel has hundreds of characters but one of the protagonists is an 11-year-old orphan boy named Rajkumar. He is a refugee from India endowed with an entrepreneurial mind and a romantic heart. He begins his life as an assistant in a small food-stall run by a woman called Ma Cho who was half Indian. Later he rises to the level of a great timber merchant in Burma.

The novel begins with the Anglo - Burmese war of 1865. The story starts from the British Raj in Mandalay, the capital of Burma. As the Burmese soldiers didn’t defend the British sincerely, Burma’s king, King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat, and all their family members were under the control of British soldiers. The Burmese publicly viewed the palace with great awe and respect till then. They didn’t dare to enter the palace. But when they happened to know the defeat of the Burmese king, thousands of people rushed to its wide halls and looted whatever they saw there. They took away highly valuable crystals and mirrors, and they sold them in black market later. Similarly, the British soldiers, most of them were Indians, in charge of shifting the king’s precious jewels and costly ornaments from the

palace to the ship tried to pilfer what they could. The British authorities tactfully conquered countries and exiled all royal members to distant places in order to erase them completely even from public memory at home. They chose Ratnagiri in India as the place of the exile for them.

Rajkumar meets Dolly, a 10 year - old beautiful girl who is the favourite servant of the queen in The Glass Palace when the royal family is taken into exile in India. He falls in love with her instantly. He decides that he will make enough money in order to marry her later. While serving in Ma Cho's tea stall as an assistant, Rajkumar gets chance to contact with Saya John, a gentleman from east Asia (China) to whom Ma Cho has an attachment. Saya John also is an orphan like Rajkumar and he was brought up by Catholic priests in Malacca. Now he is a contractor supplying teaks from Malacca. His Chinese wife from Singapore died two years before. He has a little son called Matthew. Though Ma Cho wants to marry him, he says that he will never marry again.

The second part of the novel describes royal family's life in exile in Ratnagiri, a small fishing village in the suburbs of Bombay. Though King Thebaw is initially distraught in exile, soon he adjusts himself to the new living situation under British officials. Queen Supayalat is totally restless as she has lost all her social prestige. She finds it very difficult to manage her family with the ration allowed by the British. However, the villagers have received the royal family as the prominent figures in their place. A new ambitious collector, Beni Prasad Dey, reaches to Ratnagiri from the British India government and changes the social scene in the place completely. He threatens each and everyone around him. Dolly, the wife of Rajkumar, questions some actions of the new collector. But Uma, the collector's wife, apologizes for her husband's ruthless behaviour. Meanwhile Rajkumar becomes a young man and his close association with Saya John and his son, Doh Say, helps him to be a successful businessman. When he earns enough money, he tries to find out Dolly whom he had seen as a

maid of Queen Supayalat years before. Both of them are in their early 40s. He finds out that she is now employed at the collector's house in Ratnagiri. He goes there, meets Dolly, proposes her and persuades her to move back with him to Burma.

Rajkumar and Dolly get married. They do have two children, Neel and Dinu. Rajkumar's several timber ventures flourish. During World War I he tried his luck in rubber industry. It offers him double fortune. Unfortunately, during the World War II his business empire began to show the signs of decline. Japan invaded British Malaya and they did not show any mercy to the business ventures of the locals. They seized all assets of Rajkumar. Soon his family is ruined completely.

5. *The Hungry Tide* (2004)

The Hungry Tide, Amitav Ghosh's fifth novel, is appreciated widely as an ecological novel. It depicts a contemporary story of dislocations, disjunctions and destabilization. He combines his deep knowledge in anthropology, environmentalism, migration, travel, ethnography, photography and landscape with his unique talent in fiction writing in this novel. Comparing to his previous masterpiece novel, *The Glass Palace*, it is smaller in design and limited in the number of characters. This story happens only in one region – Sundarbans – a vast archipelago of islands lying below Calcutta on the gulf between India and Bangladesh. As a writer Ghosh raises his serious apprehension in this work about decay and degradation of the rich environment of the Sunderbans by careless activities of the humans. At the same time, he depicts the plight of the poor living in the most uninhabitable forests of the Sundarbans in West Bengal, particularly the island of Morichjhapi. It is the home of the Bengal tiger, which has killed thousands of people. Being an endangered species, the government has taken steps to preserve its natural environment.

This novel is divided into two sections – The Ebb: Bhata and The Flood: Jowar. Each section consists of several small chapters, dealing with a particular incident. It tells the story of Indo-American cetologist Piya Roy, who comes to the tide country of the Sundarbans in Bengal to study river dolphins. She is drawn into a strange love triangle involving the local fisherman Fokir, who helps her to locate dolphins in remote Garjontola pool. The other man is Kanai Dutt, a Delhi dilettante, who is visiting his aunt, Nilima.

Years earlier, Nilima's husband, the Marxist teacher Nirmal, had become involved in aiding and assisting a displaced refugee population who had settled on the Sundarbans island of Morichjhapi. Among these refugees was Kusum, mother of a then infant Fokir. In another love triangle, Nirmal had been motivated to help the refugees out of love for Kusum, who was also being assisted by Horen. Later Kanai returns to the tide country from Delhi to read a 'lost journal' written by his dead uncle, Nirmal. This recounts the final hours before Morichjhapi island was forcibly cleared of refugees by police and military troops following a protracted siege. Kusum was killed in the resulting massacre. At the conclusion of the novel, Fokir also is killed – in a cyclone, while guiding Piya on one of the tide country's many remote waterways. In an odd resolution, Piya decides to continue her aquatic research in the tide country, and asks Nilima to help her set up research trust, as a memorial to Fokir. She also asks Kanai to be her partner in this venture.

Ghosh has revealed his experience of writing *The Hungry Tide* in an interview with Alessandro Vescovi following the Pordenonelegge literary festival:

'What I liked most about writing *The Hungry Tide* was just spending time in the Sundarbans. With those people it was so beautiful to hear the language around me all the time and to hear the songs. It was such a wonderful thing to experience the simplicity of that life, because people like me, in Bengal, we all

come from a peasant background. And I certainly feel a very deep sense of connection with that sort of lifeIf I was to write ten books like *The Hungry Tide*, it would never do justice to the absolute magic of being there at night with the tide changing under, the moon, and to hear the tiger nearby. And you know, the quality of one's interaction with the fishermen-there is something so lovely in it, something so beautiful about the texture. I suppose you can experience that if you go to some rural part of Italy. It is something you cannot experience as a tourist. It is because I am Bengali, because I am of a certain age that they can interact like that with me. With that sort of simplicity and openness and a kind of trust.'(140)

6. *Sea of Poppies* (2006)

Sea of Poppies is a historical fiction, set in the background of Opium War, between British India and China during the 19th century. It narrates two economic and social themes in detail. One is the cultivation of opium as a cash crop in Bengal and Bihar for Chinese market. The other is the transport of Indian indentured workers to work in sugar factories of the British colonies such as Mauritius, Fiji and Trinidad. The novel is divided into three parts: 'Land', 'River', and 'Sea'. In the first section 'Land', the characters who were somehow related to the story are introduced along with the ship. The second part 'River' centres on the activities of the owner of the *Ibis* in Calcutta and also some of his friends. The third part 'Sea' is concerned with the inmates of the ship as it leaves Calcutta and moves on towards its destination in Mauritius.

The name of the ship is the *Ibis*, a schooner that was formerly a slave carrier between Africa and America. As the slave trade has been banned, it is rebuilt befitting to carry indentured workers from colonized countries to new colonies. Several main characters come

together in the schooner who belong to different strata of the society. Kalua, an untouchable man from a socially 'lower' class, rescues Deeti, a 'high caste' Hindu widow, from her husband's funeral pyre. They elope from their native village and get married. They fear the anger of her dead husband's relatives, become indentured workers to Mauritius and aboard the schooner. Another character Zachary Reid, who is the second officer (foreman) in the *Ibis*, is a mulatto from Boston. He has concealed his mixed-race status from his British employers, fearing discrimination and loss of livelihood. Paulette, another character is a runaway orphan French girl escaping from her British foster family also seeks refuge aboard the *Ibis*. Jodu is a Muslim lascar in the ship who feels attachment to Munia, a Hindu girl and both of them become victims to the wrath of religious bigots on the ship. Neel Rattan, the Raja of Raskhali, accused of forgery is being taken to a jail across the black water as a part of capital punishment. Ah Fatt, an ugly man is the co-convict of Neel Ratan. This first novel of his trilogy ends on a dramatic note of suspense and excitement. The ship faces a great danger in the mid-sea, with half of them trapped on board, and the remaining adrift on a raft amidst a stormy ocean. Ghosh makes use of this long array of characters to depict Indianness in its genuine grandeur.