

Introduction

The phrase *East-West Conflict* stands for the conflict between religion and rationality, tradition and modernity, spirituality and materialism, superstitions and scientific outlook, tyranny and democracy. The conflict between the West and the East or between Innovation and Tradition is a perennial theme in Indo-Anglian fiction. R. K. Narayan depicts the clash of deep-rooted values of Indian culture, characterized by Hindu culture, with those of the modern West in many of his novels.

Modern world has undergone so complete a transformation under the impact of globalization that international community has become increasingly interdependent on one another. Hence the theme of East-West conflict or encounter may sound irrelevant and inconsequential in the present world. But that was not the case of India as depicted by R. K. Narayan in his fictional world of Malgudi from the nineteen thirties to seventies. Most of the novels of R. K. Narayan were written when India was under the British. Therefore the characters in the novels bear the imprint of colonized people.

The West was propped up by its innovativeness, advancement, adulthood and scientific temper. East has acquired connotations of imitativeness, sluggishness, childishness and sorcery. The West led, the East lagged. This view, unfortunately, has endured. The West is the centre to the rest of the world because the belief systems it engendered during the Enlightenment phase created permanent fissures between the Orient and the Occident.

The British tried to make Indians cultured and civilized through English language, thereby creating a power structure with the English and English speaking people at the top. All others were marginalized. "Hence a dichotomy between the savage East and the

civilized West: primitive Calibans and civilized Prosperos. Repeated attacks on the native language reduced the native's sense of self and as a result the colonized began to imitate the colonizer. This placed him neither here nor there, like Caliban in *The Tempest*, confused and victimized" (George 71).

Colonialism refers to the attitudes and behaviour patterns of a culture that exercises hegemony of some kind or other on cultures different from itself. As K. Ayyappa Panicker comments:

The term colonialism could then be used to the situation of a culture that is dominated by another culture. One of these is identified in terms of assumed superiority which does not brook any questioning by the other, while the other is tacitly assumed to be the recipients of the so-called benefits of contact with the dominant culture. The two are conceived as opposites and the relationship is dialectical. The privileged culture, it is believed, bestows respectability on the under-privileged one. It has obviously greater military power, economic viability, and political authority, and hence establishes an influence on the other. Post-colonialism in this context will be understood as the condition of continuing dependence or servility, even when the imperial power may have physically withdrawn from the scene for the time being. (1)

The colonization of the country is followed by the colonialization of the culture of the colonized. In the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the Indians in government offices and schools started wearing a shirt, tie and coat over the dhoti and often a turban or hat on the head. This servile tendency to ape the west was

visible in the intellectual attitudes as well as the behavioural patterns of the educated Indians. In the words of Panicker:

Educated in those days meant only trained in the western way in new model schools. The impact of imperialism on culture was thus institutionalized and was the most visible aspect of the hegemony of the British. The worship of everything British was built into the psyche of the educated Indians, who were happy to be willing slaves under the foreign masters. (2)

The East or the Orient is an invention by the Europeans and it “had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories, landscapes and remarkable experiences” (Said 1). The East is the place of Europe’s oldest, richest and greatest colonies. Again, it is the cultural contestant of Europe. “In addition,” as Said writes, “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture” (1-2). Orientalism has become a style of thought and a large number of writers have accepted the basic distinction between East and West which they elaborated in theories, novels, social descriptions and political accounts. From the beginning of the nineteenth century till the end of the World War II the Orient was dominated by France and England. Then it came under America. The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, domination and varying degrees of complex hegemony. A distinct sensuality, tendency to despotism, aberrant mentality, habits of inaccuracy, backwardness etc. are the

characteristic features of the Orient which makes it separate from the Occident. In short, Orientalism is based on the superiority complex of the Occident. Said writes:

. . . in short, Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought than it is simply as a positive doctrine. If the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction. (42)

Said's analysis of Orientalism as a discourse is rooted in Fanon's notion of binarism which negates the other and privileges self. The other is antagonistic to self and hence there is perpetual tension. Abdul R. Jan Mohamed is of the opinion that

the dominant model of relations in all colonial societies is the Manichean opposition between the putative superiority of the European and the supposed inferiority of the native. Such a division makes colonial societies sites for everlasting antagonisms. To be colonized means to be removed from all the privileges of the colonizer. There is no room for individual worth because the negative signs cloud the positive aspects of the binary opposite. Similarly, the evils in the colonizer are covered up by his superior status. Since the colonial discourse contains strategies for imposing this state of mind, it contains fissures, which can be identified in order to subvert the colonizer's assumptions about his moral superiority. (qtd. in Thomas 16)

This thesis, entitled “East-West Conflict brings out the influence of Western values on the East, and conversely, the influence of Eastern values on the West. The conflict of values may not be found everywhere. There are several instances in the novels where the values are accepted and absorbed without much conflict.

R. K. Narayan deals with the Hindu ethos in all his novels. The phrase Hindu ethos stands for the characteristic spirit, moral values, ideas or beliefs of the Hindu community or culture. Narayan portrays people of Hindu religion, especially the lower middle class to which he belongs.

Since R. K. Narayan is a postcolonial writer elements of postcolonialism is evident in many of his works. Postcolonialism deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously or currently colonized countries, or literature written in colonizing countries which deals with colonization or colonized peoples. It focuses particularly on the way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonized people. It also focuses on literature by colonized people which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past’s inevitable otherness. (“Some Issues”)

Postcolonial writings are attempts at reviving the ethnic cultures, traditions, beliefs, languages etc. The postcolonial literature inculcated pride in one’s own ancient culture and traditions. It abounds in patriotic feelings. Postcolonialism aims at developing the national identity in the wake of colonial rule. The term “postcolonialism” is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept meaning the time after colonialism ceased. It includes rather the colonial period also. Postcolonialism deals with the colonized people’s response to the colonial legacy by writing back to the centre. The

indigenous peoples start to write their own histories, legacies, using often the colonizer's language. In the words of E. A. Thomas:

The postcolonial creative and critical discourses are overtly counter-discursive. Their concern is not merely questioning or problematizing but resisting and subverting. The postcolonial writers are engaged in a radical dismantling of the European codes and an appropriation of the dominant European discourses. For the postcolonial writers, writing itself is a search for regeneration, an attempt to redefine their past by interrogating the Western construct of their history. So the postcolonial is supposed to designate a counter-discourse of the colonized others against the cultural colonization of Europe. It challenges the very concept of identity, which has occupied the colonial discourse during the days of imperialism. (17)

Indian Writing in English is comparatively a new literature and it has a history of not more than 150 years. It is also known as Indo-Anglian literature, Indo-English literature or Indian English literature. Indian Writing in English forms part of Commonwealth literature, the literature of the former colonies of the British Empire. Americans, Australians, Canadians and South Africans write in English and their literatures are not termed English literature but American, Australian, Canadian and South African literature. Since there are several other vernacular literatures in India, the English literature here cannot be termed as Indian literature, though it is one among the many which constitute Indian literature.

There are many critical issues regarding Indian English literature. Most of these issues are centred on the choice of English for creative expression since the Indians who use it have highly developed vernacular languages and literatures. That is what makes the Indian English literature distinctive from American, Canadian, Australian, New Zealandan, West Indian and even African. There are various approaches to Indian English literature. As Amritjit Singh puts it, “Indo-English literature has been regarded: (a) as part of English literature; (b) as part of Commonwealth or ‘third-world’ literature; (c) as part of Indian literature; (d) as a representative Indian literature that crystallizes and synthesizes responses and traditions in ways that no single Indian regional literature perhaps can” (2).

Indian English literature should be considered as a part of Indian literature. The main issue of critical focus on Indian English literature is whether it deals with Indian themes or not. Amritjit Singh writes, “The Indo-English writer must steer clear of the Scylla of invoking excessive ‘local colour’ reference and the Charybdis of embracing some ‘Indianisation’ theory that asserts a limited or biased view of Indian religion, philosophy and politics” (3). English language has created a psychological and linguistic impact on Indian life since 1835. It has considerably changed the syntax and expression of Indian languages and introduced levels of subtlety, irony and variety. English enriched the multilingualism, a basic principle of Indian social and cultural life. India has demonstrated that provincialism has no place in literary and cultural expression.

Indian literature includes several literatures—Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Maithili, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit and Indian Writing in English. To think and feel as an Indian and express it in a Western

medium is a novel experiment in creative mutation. Naturally there will be successes and failures and failures will be more than successes. Still there are men and women who try at it and reach the goal and they deserve due recognition. Indian Writing in English, like other Indian literatures is greatly influenced by the British literature and there are Romantics, Victorians, Georgians and modernists. Indian English literature has contributed much to the World English literature, the major partners being British literature and American literature. Indian writing in English is thus both an Indian literature and a variety of English literature. It has an appeal both to Indians and English men. Indian Writing in English faces a real challenge. To quote Iyengar:

The Indian is apt to think that Indo-Anglian literature is not—and could never be—as good as Bengali or Marathi or Tamil literature. It is all misdirected effort and a miscarriage of creative talent. One can never really hope to master a language not one's own, and an Indian writing in English is rather like one animal imitating the steps of another. Some have even gone to the extent of calling this literature a “parasitic” literature! Diffidence and lack of right training, have done as much harm as complacency and lack of right training, and Indian Writing in English has suffered in consequence. . . . On the other hand, the English man is apt to think that Indo-Anglian literature is not—and never be—as good as English literature (he felt in the same way once about American, Australian, Canadian or South African literature, though a more liberal attitude would appear to be prevalent now). We cannot therefore quite blame him if he now damns Indo-Anglian literature with faint praise. (6-7)

It was an accident of history that brought us Indians into contact with English language. During the 150 years of our association with it we marched along nationhood to independence. According to Rajaji English is the gift of Saraswati to us. Saraswati is the Hindu Goddess of Learning and Arts. If we reject this light from the West it will only ruin us. The position of English in India at present is that people continue to talk and write in English; it is the language of the higher administration and law courts; English is the medium of teaching and examinations in most colleges and universities; the proceeding of numerous all-India conferences and congresses are in English; examinations and interviews for Indian Administrative and other all-India services and provincial services are conducted in English.

Rammohan Roy, Ranade, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Tilak, Gokhale, Tagore and Gandhi were our prophets and poets who wrote in English and cherished our national literature. Parallel to the continuous western critical tradition from Aristotle to T. S. Eliot, there is an Indian critical tradition which emphasises rasa, dhvani, bhavas and alankaras. We have a long list of law-guides from Bharata, Bhatta Nayaka, Mammata, Anandavardhana and modern thinkers like Tagore and Aurobindo. Indian English is the product of Indian geography and the grammar and speech habits in different linguistic areas but still it retains the imperatives of Standard English in England.

Myth is a major influence on any literature which enriches it. India is a country which abounds in diverse myths and naturally Indian Writing in English is or should be full of such myths. P. Lal in his essay "Myth and the Indian Writer in English: A Note" writes on the importance of myths thus, "Myths feed or nourish the pagan outlook; myth holds communities and races more strongly than language, territory, and government;

myth provides insight into the mysteries of life and death with a poetic richness that has startling truth and immediacy. There is no secular substitute for myth.” (15). It is a pity that modern Indian literature, with the exception of a few, is ignorant of Indian myth. The modern writers in India seem to be imperfectly aware of the Western myth as well. They try to inject the composite serum of Sigmund Freud, D. H. Lawrence, Jean-Paul Sartre, Soren Kierkegaard and Che Guevara in high doses to revive a moribund literature. But it is a futile attempt and the “only possible revival will take place if one’s own myths are studied, loved, absorbed and used with creative and critical imagination” (Lal 16). Anglicized Indians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were familiar with their mother tongues as well as Sanskrit and so they could enter into the stream of the Indian traditions if they wanted to. On the other hand the present Indo-Anglian writers, mainly living in the little sub-culture islands of the cities ignore the larger tradition. They are ignorant of the difference between “Dharma” and “Svadharna”, “Avatara”, “Karma” and “Moksha” etc. To quote P. Lal again:

What should an Indian writer in English, or a creative writer in any language, be writing about if not love, and hate, and war, and pride, and peace? And where will he find the complexities of these feelings and activities if not in the myth-world? The gods and goddesses are not out there, separated permanently from us; nor are the anti-gods and *rakshasas*.

They populate the earth; to know them is really to know ourselves. (17-18)

When one makes a voyage through the history of Indian Writing in English till R. K. Narayan, one meets several great writers. The first prominent name that comes to mind is that of Rammohan Roy. He pleaded with the British government for English

education in India instead of Oriental education. The renaissance in modern Indian literature began with Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833). Even as a young boy he mastered many languages—Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Hindustani and Bengali. Later working with two British officials—Woodforde and Digby—he completed his mastery of the English language. The plight of the widows, the darkness of superstition, the miasma of ignorance, the general backwardness of the country all stirred him to action and he founded Brahma Samaj. He wanted India to become a modern country and the Indians a virile new people. “Rammohan Roy, although he could be named as the first of the Indian masters of English prose, was great in so many fields that he belongs to Indian history more than to mere Indo-Anglian literary history” (Iyengar 33). He mastered English language and used it well in speaking and writing years before Macaulay wrote his Minute.

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1931) was a Portuguese-Indian, his father being a Portuguese. He became a teacher of English literature in the Hindu College, Calcutta at the age of eighteen. “A poet as well as a teacher of poetry, Derozio loved India and loved Nature” (Iyengar 34). He was influenced by the Romantic poets. Derozio was fond of the sonnet form.

Kashiprosad Ghose (1809-1873) was one of the first Indians to publish a regular volume of English poetry. He was educated at the Hindu College, Calcutta. Ghose edited an English weekly named, *The Hindu Intelligence*. His poetry was imitative poetry made up of conventional descriptions and moralizing.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1827-1873) was a gifted writer. A Hindu by birth, he followed Christian faith and worked in an English paper in Madras. He wrote English

prose, verse and drama. Dutt was also influenced by the English romantics. He is remembered more for his Bengali writings.

Kashinath Telang (1850-1893) belonged to the movement called Prarthana Samaj, a religious institution. A scholar in English and Sanskrit, he translated *Bhagvad Gita* into English. He was an able lawyer and Vice Chancellor of Bombay University.

Another important man of the Prarthana Samaj was Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901). He held eminent position in all departments of knowledge. He was a scholar, economist and jurist of unquestionable distinction. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was his disciple. In the days of his 'nonage', he taught history, geography, mathematics, logic, economics, and English poetry and contributed articles to the *Indu Prakash*.

Toru Dutt (1856-1877) had her education in Europe along with her elder sister and elder brother. Her father was a good linguist and a man of literary tastes. The Dutt's were attracted by the glamour of the West and the gospel of Christ. Toru's brother Abju died in 1865 at the age of fourteen. The second blow to Toru was in 1874 when her elder sister Aru died of consumption. Before Toru succumbed to the fatal disease in 1877 at the age of twenty one she had contributed memorable poems to Indo-Anglian literature. The *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Bhagavatgita* gave her woman's imagination free play. Her Christian faith was not a barrier for her attraction to Hindu epics and she re-enacted those deathless heroes and heroines in her poetry. As H. A. L. Fischer writes, ". . . this child of the green valley of the Ganges has by sheer force of native genius, earned for herself the right to be enrolled in the great fellowship of English poets" (qtd. in Iyengar 73).

Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909) was the cousin of Toru Dutt. After getting I. C. S. from London he entered Indian Civil Service and after his retirement he became the president of the Indian National Congress in 1899. He was a great historian, novelist and translator of Indian poetry into English. He took the Herculean task of translating the sacred texts like the *Rig Veda*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* etc. from Sanskrit to English verse.

Manmohan Ghose (1869-1924) was the elder brother of the more famous Aurobindo Ghose. Along with his brothers he had his education in England. He was the Professor of English at the Presidency College, Calcutta. His literary genius was in poetry. “George Santayana thinks that reader of Manmohan’s poems “would readily take them as the work of an English poet trained in the classical tradition”; and Amaranatha Jha goes even further and remarks that Manmohan’s poems “give no indication of any characteristic, any imagery, any sentiments that can be said to be peculiarly Indian” (qtd. in Iyengar 89).

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the only Indian to get Nobel Prize for literature, is undoubtedly the most outstanding and popular Indian writer. He wrote primarily in Bengali, but had a mastery of English also. He translated his own poems and plays into English, often changing the originals. Tagore also wrote poems and stories in English. To quote Iyengar:

He belongs unquestionably to Bengali literature, but he belongs to Indo-Anglian Literature too—indeed, he belongs to all India and the whole world. He was a poet, dramatist, actor, producer; he was a musician and a painter; he was an educationist, a practical idealist who turned his dreams

into reality at Shantiniketan; he was a reformer, philosopher, prophet; he was a novelist and short-story writer, and a critic of life and literature; he even made occasional incursions into nationalist politics, although he was essentially internationalist. (99)

Of the innumerable works Tagore wrote in the different genres of literature, the most outstanding ones are *Gitanjali*, the collection of poems which won for him the Nobel Prize, *Gora*, the magnificent novel, *Mukta-Dhara*, his greatest play and “The Postmaster,” his most beautiful short story.

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) is the one uncontestedly outstanding figure in Indo-Anglian literature. As Iyengar writes:

. . . Sri Aurobindo, in so far as he was a writer, was not merely a writer who happened to write English but really an English writer—almost as much as, say, a George Moore, a Laurence Binyon or a W. B. Yeats. To acknowledge and salute the poet and the master of the ‘the harmony’ of prose is not, of course, to deny the teacher or the fighter or the patriot, the Yogi, the philosopher or the prophetic engineer of the Life Divine. (144)

Aurobindo had his education at Manchester, London and Cambridge. His stay there in England for fourteen years made English his mother tongue for all practical purposes. He was the Professor of English in Baroda College, and later editor of an English daily. As a poet and a critic of poetry he is ranked among the supreme masters of our time. He has written about three thousand pages of poetry. About his monumental work *The Life Divine*, Professor Wilson Knight writes, “I was constantly struck to find how much of his

visionary structure was covered by the lucid couplets and four fold plan of Pope's *Essay*." (qtd. in Iyengar 169).

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), the nightingale of India, is more than a poet; she is one of Mother India's most gifted children. She occupied some of the highest unofficial and official positions of the public life of India. Her education at London and Cambridge helped her to master English language. Sir Aurobindo spoke in 1935 about Sarojini Naidu's poetry, "Some of her lyrical work is likely, I think, to survive among the lasting things in English literature and by these, even if they are fine rather than great, she may take her rank among the immortals" (qtd. in Iyengar 222-223).

M. K. Gandhi (1869-1948) was not a systematic thinker. He was no doubt a man of God, but also a practical man. Truth was his pole star and his words and ideas were in relation to his religion of Truth and his Karma Yoga. Although Gandhi worked for the freedom of India he had no hatred for the British. He hoped that Hindustani might one day become the lingua franca of the country. Still he continued to speak and write in English, fully understanding the power of English as the world language. The Gandhian revolution in politics gave birth to a revolution in writing also. Gandhi's writing in English had a simplicity, pointedness and clarity that was in refreshing contrast to the heaviness often characteristic of earlier Indian Writing. Thanks to the Gandhian example, Indian Writing in English became recognizably functional. As a result of the Gandhian revolution Indian writing and speaking in English became utilitarian and expressed clarity, directness and brevity. Gandhi's writings came out mainly through his weekly papers *Young India* and *Harijan*, which were widely read and discussed by the public.

Gandhi's *Autobiography* or *My Experiment with Truth* is acknowledged as a world classic.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) had his education at Harrow and Cambridge. Returning to Allahabad after his education, he was drawn into the vortex of Indian politics. Though his epicurean father, Motilal, and his saintly leader, Gandhi, were more unlike, Jawaharlal was greatly influenced by these great personalities. Nehru's writings are inseparable from his life and in a way inseparable from the history of India for forty years. When one reads his *Glimpses of World History* and *The Discovery of India*, his *Autobiography* and his *Speeches*, merely as a literary student, one cannot long escape the fascination of the personality of the writer and speaker, nor the force of the currents of the recent Gandhian Age in India's national history. Nehru educated his daughter, Indira, through letters from his prison life and the letters grew to an enormous length of about one thousand pages in rather less than three years. These 196 letters comprised the *Glimpses of World History*, an unpremeditated legacy from the British. Another product of his prison life was *The Discovery of India*, written at terrific speed and under the pressure of heavy concentration. This semi-historical work of 600 pages was written in five months, from April to September 1944.

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) is one of the great trios of Indian English Novel. The others are R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Iyengar is of opinion that

Of the Indo-Anglian novelists, only Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan have shown anything like stamina and stern consistency of purpose. . . .

Roughly contemporaneous, Anand hails from India's (or what, before the Partition of 1947, used to be India's) North-Western frontier, and Narayan

from almost the Southern end of the Peninsula. Between them they comprise as it were the North and the South, extension and concentration, vigorous and urbanity, vitality and artistic reticence. (331)

Anand had his education at Lahore, London and Cambridge and took a Doctorate in Philosophy. Instead of becoming a Professor he selected the hazardous profession of letters. Some of his popular works are: *The Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Village*, *Across the Black Waters*, *The Sword and the Sickle*, *The Barber's Trade Union*, *The Big Heart*, *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess*, *Seven Summers*, *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, and *Morning Face*. "Of all his novels, *Untouchable* is the most compact and artistically satisfying. *Coolie* is the most extensive in space and time, evoking variegated action and multiplicity in character, while *Two Leaves and a Bud* is the most effective as a piece of implied indictment" (Iyengar 335-336).

Raja Rao (1908-2006), contemporary of Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan, is one of the greatest novelists and short story writers in Indo-Anglian literature. He too is a child of the Gandhian age. After his education from Madras University, Raja Rao had his post graduation in France in French language and literature. He published his first stories in French and English. Raja Rao deals with themes of the traditional Hindu culture. His major works are: *Kanthapura*, *The Serpent and the Rope*, *The Cat and Shakespeare*, and *The Cow of the Barricades*. Poetry and politics is fused in *Kanthapura*. Thus it is a distinctive novel, a new species of fiction. As Iyengar states, "*Kanthapura* is a veritable Grammar of the Gandhian Myth—the myth that is but a poetic translation of the reality. It will always have a central place in Gandhi literature" (396). *The Serpent and the Rope* is a semi-autobiographical novel.

Coming properly to Indo-Anglian fiction, the history begins with the translations of various fictions in Indian language into English, notably from Bengali into English. Tagore's novels *Gora*, *The Wreck*, *The Home and the World* and short stories were originally written in Bengali. Tagore used the old-fashioned form. His contribution to Indo-Anglian fiction is the use of realism. The themes of the early novels were social, historical, detective and romantic. Indo-Anglian fiction was greatly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy. The struggle for independence, the Indian National Army, the Indian Army, the present-day politics, the debacle of princely India, the partition and independence were the major themes during and after the Freedom Struggle. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and *The Cow of Barricades*, K. A. Abbas's *Inquilab*, R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Sword and the Sickle*, C. N. Zutshi's *Motherland*, Aamir Ali's *Conflict*, Zeenut Futehally's *Zohra*, Manohar Malgoanker's *Bend in the Ganges* and many other novels deal with Gandhi, his way of achieving freedom, revolution, satyagraha, Quit India movement etc. The post-independent politics is the theme of Nayan Tara Sehgal's *This Time of Morning*, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Manohar Malgaonker's *Bend in the Ganges*, and Attia Hossain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. East-West conflict as the major theme is found in the novels like Raja Rao's *Serpent and the Rope*, J. M. Ganguly's *When East and West Meet*, S. K. Ghose's *Prince of Destiny*, K. S. Venkatramani's *Murugan the Tiller* and B. Rajan's *Dark Dancer*.

The credit of bringing a name and reputation to Indo-Anglian fiction goes to the great novelists Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and Nirad C. Chaudhari. Anand introduced to India the new technique of stream of consciousness. Raja Rao

adopted the autobiographical form of narration. Other luminaries who have enriched the Indo-Anglian fiction are Khawaja Ahmed, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandeya, Anita Desai, Ruth Praver Jhabavala, Lumber Mascarenhas, Mrs. Vimala Raina, Kushwant Singh etc.

Though themes and techniques are different for the Indo-Anglian novelists there are certain features which are common to them. They are: the presentation of a personal narrative against the background of modern Indian history, the conflict of values between the family and the individual, East-West conflict or the conflict between Innovation and Tradition, and the awareness of social change.

The Indo-Anglian novelists write their novels with the hope of presenting them before the Western readers. Hence they select subject-matter which fascinates the Westerners. Thus one finds Sadhus, Fakirs, Caves, Temples, Vedanta, Gandhi, Rajahs, Nababs etc. in their works. At the same time there are elements of Indianness—Nationalism and Patriotism, Glorification of India's past, and sympathy for the millions of fellowmen.

The major concerns of the Indo-Anglian novelists also differ for various writers. A humane concern for the underdog is the major theme of Anand's novels; in R. K. Narayan one finds the comic mode as equivalent to the tragic; K. Nagarajan deals with the human significance in the religions and the logical labyrinth so characteristic of Hindu society; Raja Rao handles the magnificent myth of Indian antiquity; the women writers, especially Kamala Markandeya, Santha Rama Rao and Anita Desai deal with urbane scenes. Bhabani Bhattacharya and Khushwant Singh give us insights into the

pathos of economic impoverishment, mal-distribution of wealth and human degradation caused by political upheavals.

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Ayyar Narayanaswami was born at Rasipuram, a small village near Salem in Tamil Nadu, on 10 October 1906. His father was a provincial headmaster. Narayan was the third of the eight surviving children. It was at the suggestion of Graham Greene that he adopted the name R. K. Narayan. His mother, Gnanambal became very ill after his birth and he was fed by a wet-nurse. When she became pregnant again, the two year-old Narayan was sent to his maternal grandmother, Parvathi's house at Madras. He lived there till his teenage. He studied for eight years at Lutheran Mission School and then for a short time in the CRC High School. Narayan grew up speaking Tamil and learned English in school. When his father Rasipuram Venkatarama Krishnaswami Iyer became the headmaster of Maharaja's High School in Mysore, Narayan joined his parents. He was not a bright student. He graduated from Maharaja's College in Mysore in 1930.

After graduation Narayan tried teaching for short period and it was a failure. He understood that his vocation was in writing and so plunged into it as a full time writer. It was a profession almost unknown in India then. Though his family members were shocked at his decision they were fully supportive. "I chose to be a writer," he later told a radio interviewer, "mainly because it is the only career which guarantees absolute freedom to live as one pleases" (quoted in Crossette). His contributions were accepted by *The Merry Magazine* and by *The Hindu*, where he eventually obtained a weekly column in the Sunday edition.

In July 1933 Narayan fell in love with a girl called Rajam when she was drawing water from the street tap. The incident was in Coimbatore when he was staying with a sister. Rajam was fifteen years old at the time, tall, slim and good-looking. There were many obstacles for their marriage. She was taller than him and the horoscopes were not matching. He had “sevvai dosham.” Narayan managed to get permission from her father, a book-loving headmaster, and they got married on 1 July 1934. A daughter, Hemavati, was born in March 1936. Their happy married life did not last long and on 6 June 1939, Rajam died of the dreaded typhoid. The death of his wife was a great shock to him and he plunged into a period of depression during which he became obsessed with communication with her through spiritual mediums. His fourth Malgudi novel *The English Teacher* (1945) reflects this experience. Narayan never remarried. He decided to bring up his daughter, Hema, by himself.

R. K. Narayan is one of the few Indian English writers who spent nearly all his time in India. He made a visit to the United States in 1956 at the invitation of the Rockefeller Foundation. Later he visited a few other foreign countries. He spent most of his time in Mysore. Though the regional language is Kannada, he wrote only in English. K. R. Shrinivas Iyengar writes on it:

Whereas Anand finished his education in Cambridge and London, Narayan had his education entirely in South India. He is of India, even of South India: he uses the English language much as he used to wear dhotis manufactured in Lancashire—but the thoughts and feelings, the stirrings of the soul, the wayward movements of the consciousness, are all of the soil of India, recognizably autochthonous. He is one of the few writers in India

who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing with a sense of dedication. (quoted in Ramteke xiii)

Narayan lived in Mysore with his daughter Hema and her family. Hema died of cancer in 1994. On 13 May, 2001 Narayan expired at the age of 96 due to cardio-respiratory failure. As Natwar Singh said, “It is a great loss to world literature”—a fitting epitaph for one of the greatest writers of our time” (quoted in Narasimhan). Narayan is survived by his brother, the cartoonist, R. K. Laxman, and two grandsons.

Born in an upper middle class Brahmin family of Madras, Narayan found South India as a fundamentally conservative Hindu society which he realistically presented in most of his novels and stories with the lower middle class common man as his base. Narayan is not a social critic and he is not interested in propagating any idea. The novelist makes his common man hero aware of his talents and potentialities which help him rise above his destined role in the society. Narayan in his novels subscribes to the Hindu ideals enshrined in the ancient Hindu scriptures. What makes him original is his truthful interpretation of Hindu ideals. A product of Hindu high caste family, Narayan shares its beliefs, superstitions, traditions, customs and rituals in Indian life.

Malgudi, Narayan’s fictional world, is deeply traditional and caste-ridden. Arranged marriages and studying horoscopes are common phenomena. *Varna Vyavastha* which has come down to the present Indian society through generations has not freed Indian mind, and it is realistically portrayed in Narayan’s novels. Most of the characters in Narayan’s novels are innocent people and they are pitted against unsympathetic environment. They are orthodox and superstitious. The characters believe that everything

on earth is preordained. Thus the heroes of his novels do not control the events but events control them.

R. K. Narayan won numerous awards and honours for his works. He won the National Prize of the Sahitya Akademi for *The Guide* in 1958. He was honoured with the Padma Bhushan for his distinguished service to literature in 1964. In 1980, R. K. Narayan was awarded the AC Benson Medal by the Royal Society of Literature. He was an honorary member of the society. Narayan was elected honorary member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1982. He was nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 1989. The University of Mysore, Delhi University and the University of Leeds conferred honorary doctorates on him. He was awarded Padma Vibhushan in 2000. R. K. Narayan's name was proposed many times for the award of Nobel Prize, but he was not honoured with it. C. V. Narasimhan writes on it:

The Swedish Academy reminds me of a tycoon who had a big placard on his desk facing any visitor--"There is no reason for what I do--it is my policy." It has been fit to award the Nobel Prize for Literature to two most unlikely awardees--Bertrand Russell (1950), and Winston Churchill (1953). Churchill was of course a great statesman, also a historian and biographer. Russell was a mathematician and philosopher. They had no pretensions to literary merit, but there they were! On the other hand, H. G. Wells, and among R. K.'s contemporaries Graham Greene, Somerset Maugham, and E. M. Forster never made it. R. K. was in very honourable company. ("Remembering R. K. Narayan")

Coming to the works of R. K. Narayan, he has to his credit more than a dozen novels, nearly two hundred short stories, several essays, some non-fiction works and three books of mythology. His major novels may be classified into early novels, domestic novels, novels dealing with Mammon-worshippers, and political novels. His early novels deal with school and college life. They include *Swami and Friends*, *Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*. *Swami and Friends*, his first novel was completed in the latter half of 1932. About its publication C. V. Narasimhan writes:

A young friend of his, Kittu Purna, was an undergraduate at Oxford at that time. R. K. sent the manuscript to him, and Kittu was eventually able to get the already well-known author, Graham Greene, who had a home at Oxford, to take an interest in getting this novel published. Surely this was destiny at work. Greene became R. K.'s guardian angel, so to speak, and eventually *Swami and Friends* was published by Hamish Hamilton on October 24, 1935. (“Remembering”)

Swami and Friends is a classical school boy story about Swaminathan, written with objectivity. The fusion of humour and sadness, written in a very simple language, makes the novel remarkable and interesting. Greene then took upon the responsibility of publishing Narayan's subsequent novels and thus *The Bachelor of Arts* was published on 15 March 1937 and *The Dark Room* on 11 October 1938. *The Bachelor of Arts* tries to capture the feeling of Chandran, a young college student of twenty one. His vain hopes, frustrations and final gratification are narrated with simplicity and beauty. *The Dark Room* had a feminist view of South-Indian middle class family life and it received good reviews from Western writers. It is a lament on the disharmony of domestic life. Ramani,

a successful branch manager of an Insurance Company, has a middle-aged wife, Savitri and three children. He falls in love with Shanta Bai, an Insurance Organiser. The agony of Savitri is the key-note of the novel.

The death of Narayan's wife, Rajam in 1939 tore him to pieces and he could not produce any work in the coming years. The strength of his suffering, and his ultimate return to the normal world, are presented in *The English Teacher*, which was published in late September 1945. It is his third novel dealing with school and college life in India. Krishnan, the English Teacher, was a product of a system of education which makes us morons, cultural morons. Although the novel describes the life of Krishnan as a teacher of English in a college, the main part of the novel centres round the love between him and his wife Sushila who died of typhoid after a few years of happy life together. He then leads a life communicating with her soul. *Dodu and Other Stories* was published in 1943. Some of his best works came after the year 1945. They include *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories* (1947), *Lawley Road* (1956), *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970), *Malgudi Days* (1982) and *Under The Banyan Tree and Other Stories* (1985). It was his novels that took the readers by storm. *Mr. Sampath, the Printer of Malgudi* was published in 1949. Mrs. Sampath is the owner of the Truth Printing Works, and prints the Weekly of one Mr. Srinivas. He faces his misfortunes one after another with perfect equanimity. He cheats some, obliges others and is always optimistic. This novel has been written with delicacy and care.

The Financial Expert came out in 1952. It depicts the rise and fall of Margayya, the financial wizard. He has a trunk containing his diary, a bottle of ink, a pen and a few blank applications. With these minimum equipments he does his business sitting under a

bunyan tree. The character of Margayya has been very well portrayed in the novel. He is a lovable rogue because of his humour and confidence about his capabilities. The irony of his life was that he was mediocre and his area of operation was Malgudi, too small for the play of his imagination and experience. *Waiting for the Mahatma* was published in 1955. *The Guide*, probably his greatest novel, was published in 1958. These novels are going to be thoroughly analysed in the coming chapters. *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* came out in 1961. It is not the story of a tiger but of a cruel and ruthless taxidermist named Vasu. He is a cruel creature and has no regard for gratitude or obligations. This novel is hilarious, charming, and artistically successful. Narayan has blended realism and romanticism, humour and irony in the novel.

The Vendor of Sweets was published in 1967 and *The Painter of Signs* in 1976. These novels are also going to be analysed deeply in the following chapters. The next novel that was published was *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983). In this novel an aged tiger lies in its cage ruminating on its past. It thinks about its cubhood and wild days in the jungle and the captivity as a circus star. *Talkative Man* was published in 1986. TM or the Talkative Man is an aspiring journalist—a rich, well-read bachelor who makes a career of submitting to newspapers human-interest articles that never get printed. The novel traces his involvement with Dr. Rann, a mysterious stranger who appears in town one day claiming to be a native of Timbuctoo, visiting Malgudi on important United Nations business. At the center of the book is the contrast between the unpretentious, talkative, Malgudi-bound TM and the pompous, laconic, globe-trotting Rann. *The World of Nagaraj* appeared in 1990. Having inherited a very good income, Nagaraj leads an easygoing life. He spends an hour everyday sitting on his pyol, wearing ochre robes. He

works free of charge for his friend Coomar's sari shop; he eats in his favourite café and gossips with his neighbour, the Talkative Man. Mostly told through dialogue, *The World of Nagaraj* is a portrait of Nagaraj and the people around him, and through them of the town of Malgudi. *The Grandmother's Tale and Selected Stories* was published in 1993

R. K. Narayan's non-fiction works are: *Next Sunday* (1960), *My Dateless Diary* (1964), *My Days* (1974), *The Emerald Route* (1980), *A Writer's Nightmare* (1988), and *Like The Sun*. His mythological works include: *Gods, Demons and Others* (1965), *The Ramayana* (1972), and *The Mahabharata* (1972).

R. K. Narayan's novels are characterised by Chekhovian simplicity and gentle humour. He wrote about simple people trying to live their simple lives in a changing world. His characters are very ordinary down-to-earth Indians trying to blend tradition with modernity often resulting in tragi-comic situations. His writing style is simple, unpretentious and witty, with a unique flavour as if he were writing in the native language.

The locale of Narayan's novel is an imaginary town called Malgudi. It is like Hardy's Wessex, Wordsworth's Lake District and Arnold Bennet's Pottery Towns. Narayan's India is symbolised by Malgudi. Since the early thirties the town has grown into a good city and added studios, hotels, a railway station and ultramodern flats. It is a town of pariahs, potters, printers, lawyers, teachers and small and big businessmen. It has grown from a conservative and backward town to a town of tourists' interest. Narayan did not want to go outside Malgudi locale and for that reason he is called a regional novelist. In the words of Iyengar:

His experience of life, his clarifying triple vision of Man, in relation to himself, his environment and his gods, his widening and deepening sense of comedy, all give new dimensions to his art as a novelist. But once he moves out of Malgudi, he is a little uncertain in his movements, and the old sureness of touch, the sense of utter exactitude in observation and description, is seen to falter ever so slightly. (384)

The basic theme of Narayan's novels is the place of man in this universe and his predicament. According to him the necessary ingredients in fiction are: the mood of comedy, the sensitivity to atmosphere, the probing of psychological factors, and the crisis in the individual soul and its resolution. Life, in his opinion, is illogical and man is always trying to translate his fantasies into reality. So through the reversal of fortune, Narayan completes the story of man's rise and fall, and this presents a total view of life.

The chief beauty of Narayan's novels lies in the characterization. Like the characters of Jane Austin, his range is limited. The people of Malgudi are lower middle class Brahmins, to which Narayan belonged. These characters are full of life and vitality. They are all human beings as ordinary or extraordinary as we are. He has portrayed a wide range of characters like—students, teachers, parents, grand parents, journalists, artists, financiers, speculators, film-makers, adventurers, eccentrics, cranks, movie stars, sanyasis, and women—pious and suffering, coquettish and seductive. Narayan's most memorable characters are his great comic eccentrics like Sampath, Raju, Margayya and Jagan. They are ordinary men caught in a web of illusions—money, success, love and happiness. They are individuals as well as universals in their human aspirations, follies,

foibles and ultimate resolutions. Narayan's characters are fatalists and they resign to the will of God. Fatalism is a major aspect of the Hindu ethos.

Humour and irony co-exist in most of his novels. Narayan's humour is the direct outcome of his intellectual analysis of the contradictions in human experience. The incongruous mixture of tragedy and irony creates bitter humour in his novels. Tears and laughter go together on many occasions. His novels are indeed pensive comedies. Although concerned about the place of man in this universe and his predicament, Narayan is a comic writer. He is a comedian of the sublime and the ridiculous. Narayan uses not only ironies of character, situation and fate but also a total ironic view of life. The whole existence from birth to death, according to him, is a ridiculous phenomenon.

Narayan has been blamed for his use of simple and direct English. Though he was a teacher and a journalist he never used sophisticated or highly complicated language. He is neither pompous nor vain. In the most ordinary situations and familiar language he depicted the ironies of life.

The relevance of this thesis is that though Narayan's works have been read and re-read, they have not yet been studied in the light of conflicting attitudes of the orient and the occident. This study offers the readers a fresh insight. Moreover this study may trigger more scholarly studies and discussions.

Chapter one of this thesis deals with Hinduism, Hindu ethos, Western philosophies such as materialism, rationalism, utilitarianism, Marxism, atheism, existentialism, fatalism, pragmatism, empiricism, skepticism and agnosticism.

Chapter two analyses the four selected novels, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, *The Painter of Signs* and *The Guide*. The chapter focuses on the conflict between tradition and modernity. References are made to other novels and stories, too.

Chapter three focuses on the conflict between religion and rationality in Narayan's novels. In addition to the selected novels, other important novels are also brought into the picture.

Chapter four deals with the conflict between spirituality and materialism. How the spirituality of the characters is affected by the western materialism is discussed. Though the main focus is the four selected novels, other novels are also discussed.

Chapter five is an attempt to bring out the conflict between tyranny and democracy in Narayan's novels. The despotic nature of some characters is confronted with democratic values in other characters.

Chapter six is the conclusion. It is a summing up of the arguments. The different aspects of the East-West conflict as delineated in the previous chapters are summed up and shown how they are conclusively proved.

On a worldwide scale, "The East" is typically eastern Asia, while "The West" is America and Europe. But there are very few "rules" for book titles. Grammar rules only apply to complete sentences, not to titles. If the title seems better without "the", that's fine. It is a good title. Capital letters: normally the first word of the title is capitalized (even "The") and after that words like "the, and, of" are lowercase: East and West The East and the West. You must log in or register to reply here. < Previous | Next >. Share His early novels focus on the conflict between Indian and Western culture. Swami and Friends chronicles an extroverted schoolboy's rebellion against his missionary upbringing. The Bachelor of Arts (1937) depicts an idealistic college student who attacks the bourgeois order but eventually reconciles himself to an obedient, lawful existence. In The Sweet-Vendor (1967; published in the United States as The Vendor of Sweets), a merchant abandons his profession and his family concerns for a life of tranquillity and meditation. In A Tiger for Malgudi (1983), Narayan makes use of Indian legends and folktales to suggest that beasts may be as capable of thought and feeling as human beings. The next novel, waiting for the Mahatma, loosely based on a fictional visit to Malgudi by Mahatma Gandhi, deals with the protagonist's romantic feelings for a woman, when he attends the discourses of the visiting Mahatma. The woman, named Bharti, is a loose parody of Bharati, the personification of India and the focus of Gandhi's discourses. While the novel includes significant references to the Indian independence movement, the focus is on the life of the ordinary individual, narrated with Narayan's usual dose of irony. Lyle Blair of Michigan State University Press (Narayan&apo... Narayan's next published work was the 1967 novel, The. Vendor of Sweets.