Indian English novelist while upholding the concept of "Art for Art's Sake' contends:

Art must preach, but unobtrusively, by its vivid interpretation of life, art must
preach, but only by virtue of its being a vehicle of truth.\footnote{1}

Bhattacharya is of the view that the novelist should carefully observe the world
around him and catch the pulse of the people he happens to live with. He must
develop a habit to note the general behaviour of the people and should not miss a
"single opportunity of observing incidents, happenings, incidents where he can gain
something for the writer ... in him"\footnote{2}.

Therefore, social reality is an important aspect which a novelist should take
into account while outlining his work. It is the artist's inner urge to create a work of art
that constitutes the core of his aesthetics in pursuit of which, his social awareness,
his vision of life along with the command of expression, play a significant role.

Literature which has rightly been termed as the mirror of society, is a perennial
source of knowing and studying the social ways, its people, its institutions and their
decline and growth as well as its structure and the patterns of behaviour of the
people. It is the growth of this knowledge that establishes a close relationship
between literature and society.

The twentieth century India witnessed the flowering of the Indian English
novel, considered as the most socially-oriented genre of literature. It staged its impressive presence in the British India in the late twenties and the early thirties of the twentieth century. The period experienced the creation of the realistic novels depicting the society in its varied aspects of enterprise and struggle, chaos and anarchy along with all the socio-cultural changes taking place owing to various reasons. The appearance of the four great Indian English novelists -- Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya, augmented the scope of the Indian English fiction. It was because of their committed efforts that the Indian English fiction stood on a sound footing and achieved an identity of its own.

Being a more socially-conditioned form of writing, intended to represent the wide spectrum of the everyday life and the contemporary culture and events, the novel is taken as an appropriate medium to explore and express a social purpose. Making great strides right since its genesis, i.e., with the writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, etc., the novels of the early Indian English writers, like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao remained confined to the contemporary reality- the atrocities of the alien regime, poverty, social evils like untouchability, casteism, socio-political injustice, corruption, and the plight of the women, the underprivileged and the downtrodden sections of the society.

Anand's *Coolie, Untouchable* and *Two Leaves and a Bud* raise the issues pertaining to the deprived section and the downtrodden class. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* reflect the Gandhian ethos. Likewise, Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* focuses on the Quit India Movement of 1942 and the Bengal Famine.

The Post-Independence India in early years witnessed the emergence of the
younger generation of novelists, though the earlier writers like R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand also continued writing novels with different notions. The Partition of India owing to the widening chasm between the Hindus and the Muslims, existing social evils, preservation of human values, the upsurge of the middle class, rural poverty, gender-based oppression besides the corruption and the emerging notion of class consciousness, dominated the themes of the Indian English fiction. Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* embodies the horrors of the Post Partition violence. Manohar Malgaonkar’s Distant Drum presents those fateful days in Delhi and later in Kashmir. Nayantara Sahgal focusses on the individuals placing them against some historical events, i.e., the juxtaposition of the personal world of men and the impersonal world of politicians.

The Post-Independence India also witnessed the evolution of some new trends in the socio-economic set up of the Indian society. Many factors constitute a culture. The inherent contracts in a social system result in a new set of challenges and they alter and then reshape a suitable scene of human life. Thus a new culture evolves out of the socio-political and economic factors encountered by the society of a particular age. Besides, the amalgamation that takes place owing to this encounter of different cultures also paves the way for a new culture.

India got freedom on 15th August, 1947 and became a republic on 26th January 1950. Despite corruption at all levels, various welfare schemes were introduced which brought about radical changes in the social structure and consequently, in the lot of the common man and opened various opportunities for the progress of the country and the society. The Five Year Plans increased and extended the avenues of employment. Besides, the infrastructural facilities augmented the pace of urbanization and revolutionized the life style of the average
Indian. Money became a very significant factor which intensified the scope of money-dream.

The process of the empowerment of women initiated a new phase of social transformation. Besides, the patronage of the state for the poor and the downtrodden through various constitutional provisions, also intensified the process of social development in India. The expansion of education at all levels and swift pace of urbanization also worked as a catalyst in changing the socio-cultural character of the country. This brought about an end to the well-tested and widely respected ethos of the Gandhian era.

Money became the measuring rod of all relationships which culminated in various positive and negative attributes of the Indian society- making it contradictory in character. Thus the Post-Independence socio-cultural changes as a significant feature, deeply affected the psyche and behavioural patterns of the people which the novelists observed very critically and adopted them as the dominant themes of their novels in various ways.

The Indian English novel offers a very interesting study of gradual development in terms of its themes. It has journeyed a long distance from the Pre-Independence era to the present times (Post-modern period) which is evident from the subject matter and its presentation from the earlier times to now embodying the socio-cultural character of the Indian society in different ways.

Beginning since the inception of the Indian English novel with the works of Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Raj Laxmi Devi, the novel in English in India became an effective weapon of social criticism in the hands of R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya. Later, celebrated novelists like, Khushwant Singh, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita
Desai also joined the band among others to give a different character to the Indian English fiction. The canvas of the Indian English fiction witnessed the presence of a galaxy of well-established writers. The Sunday cover story presents a categorical view about the expanding character of the Indian English fiction:

It is difficult to identify a literary quality that the new branch of writers shares. They are varied in style, content and purpose. But what perhaps distinguishes them from the earlier Indo-Anglian authors is their confident and unselfconscious approach to the novel.3

There are a number of well established novelists who have made a great contribution to the Indian English fiction in various ways. Besides, those mentioned earlier, K.S. Duggal, Chaman Nahal, Menon Marath, Attia Husain, Amitav Ghosh, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor and Salman Rushdie have illumined the scene with their wonderful creations.

Another important feature of the Indian English novel is the emergence of the women writers which include Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Geeta Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Bharti Mukherjee, Manju Kapoor and Mahasweta Devi and many more. They have left their indelible marks on the readers of Indian Fiction in English.

R.K. Narayan, being a product of the South Indian Hindu family, shares their beliefs and superstitions and draws from his personal experiences the characters of the Indian middle class. His malgudi, the semi – industrial town is the pivot round which the events portrayed in his fiction turn. Malgudi is a compromise between the oriental age old traditions and the modern-occidental civilization.

A lawyer by profession and columnist journalist and literary artist by choice, Khushwant Singh owns a multi-faceted personality. He is greatly respected in the intellectual realm of not only India but abroad as well. Having received his education at the Inner Temple, London, he practised law at the Lahore High Court and later joined the Indian Ministry for External Affairs in 1947. Outspoken by nature and a lover of individual freedom by temperament, Khushwant Singh is a versatile genius exhibiting his attributes in various spheres of life by dint of his mighty pen and keen awareness of and insight into the events around him. He loves history, while journalism is his commitment, and literary writing his passion. His works include, "History of the Sikhs", "Ranjit Singh, Maharaja of the Punjab", "Indira Gandhi Returns". "Khushwant Singh's India" tells a lot about his deep understanding of the contemporary India. His novels "Train to Pakistan", "I Shall Not Hear the Nightingales" and "Delhi" establish him as a literary artist of renown. Khushwant Singh's "Train to Pakistan" tells about the "horror, accompanying the transfer of population as a sequel to the Independence and the Partition of India". With extraordinary power and unrelenting realism, he has exposed the dark forces of violence and revenge and the massacre of Muslim residents of Mano Majra, a village in 'North West border of India. The novel is a very admirable work keeping in
view the mistrust of the two major communities and the need for the life of compromise for a cohesive and progressive society.

Train to Pakistan is not just a political novel, but a social one – a politics polluted society, played with by the bureaucrats for their personal and private ends, under the pretensions of executing the so called policies of the so – called Government.  

His controversial novel "Delhi" covers a long span with various events this city has witnessed from the period of the great Mughals to the tragic assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1984 and the harrowing incidents of violence which claimed the lives of thousands of innocent Sikhs in Delhi, the Capital of Indian republic. Thus "Delhi" is a literary survey of all the important historical events from the days of Kutub-ud-din -Aibak to the fateful days of the genocide as a reaction to the assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India by her fanatic Sikh security guards in 1984.

Both the novels bring to light the estranged human relationships and disturbed communal harmony. By portraying the various events in the Post-Independence India, Khushwant Singh brings to light the venomous atmosphere politics can produce for realizing petty vested interests thrashing aside the tenets of love, understanding and humanitarianism.

Kamala Markandaya (1924) is one of the famous Indian women English novelists who have made an impressive entry in the arena of fiction – writing. Though she has made a deep psychological study of her protagonists yet she is extremely interested in their sociological interaction and behaviour. Her novels may be grouped on the basis of various themes, i.e. East-West encounter, poverty and hunger, tradition and revolt and struggle for independence Markandaya started
writing novels when India achieved the Independence. She acquired international fame by virtue of her deep understanding and portrayal of the social life of India. Her keen power of observation coupled with crucial acumen and the depiction of feminine sensibility has assured her a comfortable position among the Indian women novelists writing in English. She has taken up all these issues through various incidents and characters of her novels written in chaste English.


Markandaya probes deeply in the psyche of her characters and makes their categorical study (both male and female) with varied/ different national identities, socio-cultural backgrounds and classes. Be they Nathan and Rukmani and Dr. Kenny in *Nector in a Sieve*, Ravi in *A Handful of Rice*, Caroline and Val in *Possession* or Helen or Bashiam, in *The Coffer Dams*, Markandaya studies their social interaction with a sincere faculty of observation. The reflection of the Post-Independence socio-cultural ethos is evident in their behaviours and acts. Set against the background of the East-West confrontation, the conflict between the Indian spiritual faith and modernism owing to the West is evident in many of her novels, i.e., *A Silence of Desire, A Handful of Rice, Two Virgins, Possession* and *The Coffer Dams*.

It is not the political or the cultural level but the economic pressure owing to the end of the British rule in India in the light of which the East-West conflict has been treated. Therefore, the dilemma of Valmiki (Val) is symbolic of the dilemma of the Independent India in “Possession”.

Born in 1948 in___________________ in Maharasthra, Shobha De nee Kalichand
Rajadyaksha, was the youngest child in a typical middle-class Maharashtrian family of a government officer. Having received her primary education in Delhi where her father was posted, the family was shifted to Bombay (now Mumbai) owing to her father’s transfer in 1958. Since then Mumbai has been her home and the centre of her manifold activities as a student, model, columnist, journalist, social activist, wife, mother and also writer. As a young person, Shobha De found Mumbai “fashionable, affluent and sexy” in which she had finally found, “my kind of environment, my kind of people and my kind of fun”. The colour of the mega city started exerting its impact upon her right since her teen years, and secretly defying the dictates of her conservative father, she was deeply lured by the attractions of the city- its fashionable ways, its environment. which accelerated in her the process of liberation. As a model and journalist, she has a vast knowledge of the labyrinth of Mumbai life, its elite, its sociology and economics which she has very categorically and analytically presented in her novels. Having made her own discovery of Mumbai, she has a vivid knowledge of its behavioural patterns, its catalytic effect upon its dwellers and inmates, which she has skillfully portrayed in her novels. Her fictional output in terms of various novels viz. Socialite Evenings, Starry Nights, Sisters, Strange Obsession, Sultry Days-Snapshots and Second Thoughts has been immense. Her first Socialite Evenings tells the story of Karuna, who is a Mumbai based socialite who tries to escape the nightmare of a broken marriage. The city exerts its powerful impact upon her and she loses the peace of mind and is overpowered by the sense of social insecurity. The Second Thoughts is a novel showing the futility of marital bond and the extra-marital affairs of a Calcutta-based girl Maya who is married to Ranjan of Bombay. Her married life and dream of Bombay yield nothing but frustration and the city throws her in the pool
of extramarital affairs yielding nothing but another defeat.

The glamour of the city and the feministic air of her female protagonists like, Asha Rani (Starry Nights) Meenakshi Iyengar (Strange Obsession) Nisha (Sultry Days) besides other male and women characters yield nothing but stunning defeats, illusion and frustration and their dreams of success are completely belied. The social cultural changes in the city prove fatal to its dwellers and they are compelled to be lost in the glamour of the city.

There is no dearth of research work on the novelists in question as they are well established ones in the realm of fiction. They have been worked upon and their works have been explored from different angles in different countries yet putting them to a close scrutiny in the light of the given topic is expected to yield some interesting findings which may be of some use to the scholars of Indian English writing in general and Indian English novel in particular.

Therefore the objectives of the study will be-

1. To analyse the factors affecting the basic characters of Indian society and culture in the Post-Independence period.

2. To determine the essential nature of the Post-Independence socio-cultural ethos.

3. To trace the development of the Indian English novel Vis-à-vis the Post-Independence socio-cultural changes.

4. To examine the psyche of the novelists in question and their individual responses to these socio-cultural changes.

5. To make a comprehensive study of the situations and characters of the novels of the four writers selected for the purpose.

6. To draw a concrete conclusion based on the comparison and the contrast Vis-à-vis the Post-Independence socio-cultural changes on the basis of the novel selected for the study.
CHAPTER-SCHEME

Chapter I – Introduction

(a) The Post Independence Indian Socio-Cultural Ethos Under Transition.

(b) The Post Independence Indian English Novel.

Chapter II – R. K. Narayan


Chapter III – Kushwant singh

Estranged Human Relationships Conflicting Loyalties and the Crisis of Values (A Train to Pakistan and Delhi.)

Chapter IV – Kamala Markandaya:

Indian Spiritual Values Versus the Materialistic Civilization (Silence of Desire, Possession and The Nowhere man)

Chapter V - Shobha De:

The City as a Catalyst: The Feminist Concerns and Erosion of Basic Values (Socialite Evenings and Second Thoughts)

Chapter – Conclusion

Need for a National Character: Concern for Basic Human Values