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(University with Graded Autonomy Status), Chennai

Papers Presented in
In-House Seminar on Changing Contours of
Contemporary Indian Writing in English

Editors: Dr. R. Pushkala, Dean, English
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An Overview of Contemporary Indian Novels in English

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Abstract

This paper centers on the evolving trends in Indian writing in English with respect to modern writers. As for its seven decades of evolution, Indian writing in English crossed many milestones and has fulfilled the expectations of world standards. The study of eminent works of Indian English fiction sums up the various trends and expectations of the readers which further has gained momentum to follow the Western trends and more particularly adheres to global issues in all genres of literature. The various issues concerning modern Indian society and the influence of an average Indian's lifestyle can be interpreted through analyzing the themes of contemporary Indian English fiction. Due to technological advancements global trends are reaching the rural masses rapidly and it is reflected in literature. The paper explores this new sense of identity of Indian English Writers by analyzing their works.

INTRODUCTION

Books have become a source of knowledge as well as entertainment. In the modern world readers consider books as a sort of escape from reality. It has even become a fashion to kill time by reading books. Whether it a stressful day or a holiday, people love to count on books to lift their mood. Moreover, people believe in considering book as a great companion in their stressful times.

In recent years, of all the genres in literature, novel is said to be the most convincing of all the genres of literature. Novel as a genre serves to be a more extensive and impressive form for bringing up creativity and themes as according to the trends. Indian English fiction has been accepted as a great literature with lot of unique elements representing Indian English literature. The uniqueness of this Indian English fiction has incorporated the global trends which has uplifted the acceptance of it, worldwide. The Indian English Novel has evolved to the level of being on par with the literary works of other western countries. The novels of the Indian English fiction can be grouped and classified based on trends of the time in which it was written.

- i. Traditional and social aspects of the novel before Independence.
- ii. The Experimentation of the novel after Independence.
- iii. Contemporary novel since 1980

The development of this genre can be traced right from the time it began. Novels were read and written by a large number of people. Both men and women writers sprang up with unique concepts and themes establishing their creativity and literary skills. Apart from poetry and prose, novel also can be considered as a flexible genre especially during the modern times. There is an astounding range of themes present in Indian English fiction. The vastness of the themes of novel is a feather to the cap. There are so many genres such as political novel, realistic novel, Novel of Magic Realism, The Partition Novel, Novel of Diaspora, Historical Novel, Regional Novel, the Children's Fiction, the Campus Novel and other such varieties.

The first Indian novel published in English was Rajmohan's Wife in 1864 written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. The novel written during the early stages of the evolution of this genre was high in quality as well as quantity. These novels were usually written addressing the socio-religious creating a great impact on the religious and social life of the people. As the genre progressed through time the quality and creativity of the form did not undergo any change. In

the 19th century there was no development and was not considered as a very important genre.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research made were based on analytical and descriptive approaches. Efforts were made to collect secondary sources from different places. Research articles and publications were made as an effort to improve the standards of this genre. Many scholars were determined to make the novel form as a serious subject, and it served to be an encouragement to study the novel from different perspectives.

In recent times the quest for research became more introspective and individual. New writers of the modern era like Salman Rushdie and Post-Rushdian novelist such as Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Allan Sealy, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Rohinton Mistry, Amit Chaudhari, Anurag Mathur, Manil Suri, Ajay Sahgal, Farukh Dhondy, Pratap Sharma, Vikram Chandra, Makarand Paranjape, Kiran Nagarkar and Rajkamal Jha also believe in such approaches. Salman Rushdie's *The Midnight's Children*, Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and Upamanyu Chatterjee *The Last Burden* are popular novels.

CHARACTERIZATION

Among the contemporary writers, Amitav Ghosh has been considered as a genius writer of the modern world in the Indian English fiction. His two novels –*The Circle of Reason* (1986) and *The Shadow Lines* (1988) established Ghosh as “the finest writer who were born out of the post Midnight's Children revolutive ion in Indo-Anglian fiction. Vikram Seth gained fame with the publication of *The Golden Gate* (1986) and *A Suitable Boy* (1993). His novels are lengthy and its forbidding size can be compared with Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. Upamanyu Chatterjee, with his novel *English August* (1988), impressed the modern readers. The tone of his writing is witty, humorous and ironic mocking at the inabilities of Indian Bureaucracy. Chatterjee brilliantly uses the elements of Indian English and the vocabulary range is simple and clear. His contemporary Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) is one of the greatest achievements of Indian English fiction. In the 1990s, Rohinton Mistry has emerged as a significant novelist. His *Such a long Journey* (1991) is his attempt in inculcating various aspects of modern life in the Indian society. Among women novelists Arundhati Roy, Meena Alexander, Suniti Namjoshi, Kiran Desai, Anita Rao Badami, Jhumpa Lahiri, Radhika Jha and Anita Nair are successful writers who

established their writing with great fervor. Arundhati Roy's *A God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* have been appalled by the modern audience. Women novelists of the modern Era have dealt with themes such as global culture, multi-culturalism, nationalism, internationalism, interpretation of history and politics, religions, philosophy and existential angst.

HYPOTHESIS

The problem taken up for the present study of the fiction of modern trend in Indian writing. This is the marked feature of the research article whereas other have studied only the impact of fiction and even neglected to study his technical aspect of it. The study takes up the detailed and in depth study of the recent novels and also JM Coetzee Romantic Realism. It is thematic and technical aspects of the fiction. It is integrated kind of author study in which the scholar takes up the analysis of the novels and short stories as well.

ANALYSIS

Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand tried their best to give new identity to Indian Writing in English. Actually speaking it is gratifying that the 'Big Three' have lost none of their authenticity and appeal in the eighties, although their distinctive earlier works appeared in the thirties. Moreover, a new group of writers have arrived on the Indian scenario, for example - Anita Desai, Chaman Nahal, Kamala Markandaya, Arun Joshi, Dina Mehta, Salman Rushdie, Shobha De and the Booker Prize winner Arundhati Roy.

Raja Rao is another prominent Indian novelist writing in English. But he is not as prolific writer as Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. His concern with philosophical and mythological aspects distinguishes him from Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. His first novel *Kanthapura*, a masterpiece, describes the village life and peasant sensibility. It shows the influence of Gandhian ideology on an ordinary Indian.

For Mulk Raj Anand (2000: 65), the novel is “the creative weapon for attaining humanness – it is the weapon of humanism.” He writes basically about the lower-class life. Widely read novelist Anand is influenced by Charles Dickens, H.G. Wells and Tolstoy in both form and characterization. He followed the ancient Indian tradition of story-telling, but his approach to themes and events, is of a social realist. Therefore, his novels are the novels of protest and

social realism. Anand is influenced by the two ideologies – the Western Marxism and the Eastern Gandhism

Arundhati Roy: For all those who have read **The God of Small Things**, Estha’s “**silence**” and Rahel’s “**emptiness**” would have been fascinating. The fact that these twins lived separately their whole lives and yet managed to be close to each other is heart-warming. The themes of betrayal, love, social discrimination and Indian politics are very cleverly included in the plot. The only novel she has written so far, Arundhati Roy can be termed as the true Indian ‘**Harper Lee**’!

Many other writers have created ripples with their work. And they have all gained commercial and critical success. These writers may belong to different eras and may work on different genres. One might think it unfair to compare these writers with each other as each of them belongs to a different league of their own. However, they have all equally impressed us with their works and in a way, helped in shaping the nation for what it is now. Books and novels would always play a vital role in a country like ours. And the work of these and many other writers need to be lauded and highly appreciated.

The need for expressing the values verities and heartbeats of one culture in the language of another poses its own problems and there is doubtless the inner urge to render in English the rhythms, idiosyncrasies, images, idioms and proverbs of the local speech." Thus, one of the most outstanding characteristics of Indian writing in English is that the background is Indian and the language though foreign has adopted itself to the needs of the Indians. Today Indian English as well as Indian writing in English has got its own identity. Actually, speaking the most interesting aspect of the fiction at the turn of the present century from the Indian point of view is the emergence of new talent. A number of recent Indian novelists have produced significant novels, making a mark in the literary world. However, on reading modern novels of India, one can get some idea about the following personalized trend such as emigration and domestic problems in Indian writing in English.

With reference to works of R.K Narayan whose stories are based in and around the fictional village of Malgudi, focuses on humanity and every day common lives which makes a clear point that maturity does not lie in speaking about big subject rather understanding small issues.

Midnight's Children portrays the journey of India from British rule to independence and then partition. The book travels to various parts of the country including Kashmir, Agra and Mumbai and incorporates many actual historic events. The book was also included in the list of hundred novels all the time. Jhumpa Lahiri – *The Interpreter of Maladies*- This is a collection of nine stories by Lahiri. The stories are based on lives of Indians and Indian Americans who are lost between the two cultures.

Any literary work is examined in terms of its theme and style. The theme is the subject or the meaning of a work. It can also be explained in terms of its style. Broadly, 'style' is the writer's manner of presenting his/her ideas to thoughts and feelings. It is also defined as the overall effect of a literary work. This effect is the result of the interplay of sentence structure, vocabulary, figures of speech, rhythm and many other stylistic features. A researcher has to identify the elements of style, to analyze them to show their structural significance and finally inter-relate them to suggest their total meaning.

CONCLUSION

Novel can be broadly considered as a prose excluding the dramatic elements of the genre. The dialogues, actions and other such descriptions written in the novel is centered in a narrative and it takes the reader to yet another world. Novel is always a work of imagination and creativity. The prototype of imaginations can be showcased through various narrative levels. It thrives to present a fictional world making the readers forget the reality of the narration. So novel is both, fantasy and truth. An expression that springs from the chaos of everyday life providing an aesthetic experience and satisfaction. In the process he distorts time and compresses or eliminates many details from commonplace experience. He selects events and people and organizes them to illustrate what he believes to be truth. As such, a novel comprises of setting, mood, story and characterization.

The Indian novelists before Independence were mainly interested in social, political and historical concerns. But later in 1950s a new kind of novel dealing with the contemporary issues appeared on the Indian literary scene. The psychological novel depicting the human personality and inner realities of life replaced the realistic novel. Makarand Paranjape says (1991: 25), "The novel interprets or creates reality." But the novel cannot be realistic or completely devoid

of social reality; therefore, there should be balance between the personal and the social. The novels written in the post-Independence period successfully render the Indian reality.

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