

The Significance of Culture in Indian English Fiction

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Abstract

The Indian English literary scene owes much of its richness to the influence of Indian culture. The culture has been instrumental in shaping the narratives and stories that have emerged from the Indian literary world. The value of Indian culture in Indian English fiction cannot be overstated, as it lends a distinct perspective and essence to the literary works. The fascinating history, diverse traditions, and unique customs of India have provided authors and writers with a treasure trove of inspiration to draw from. The infusion of Indian culture into Indian English fiction has not only helped to preserve and promote this culture but has also given readers a glimpse into the vibrant and colorful world of India... here we going to discuss how cultural aspects are important in literature.

Culture is one of the most elusive words to define like a language or life. Culture is a particular way of life. All the achievements of humanity as a member of society can be called culture. In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) Arnold defines "culture" as "a study of perfection. It moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good". Culture, then, has an intellectual and an ethical component, and the aims of culture, according to Arnold, are identical with those of religion, which Arnold calls "the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself, - religion, that voice of the deepest human experience." What they have in common also is the cultivation of inwardness: religion preaches that "The Kingdom of God is within you," and culture "places human perfection in an internal condition". Culture expands our gifts of thought and feeling, and fosters growth in wisdom and beauty.

India is a multireligious country. There are multiple religions and each religion has its own unique culture. Everyone has their language and also their literature. In terms of literature, India has ancient and rich literature in their language like Sanskrit. Two world classic epics, Ramayana and Mahabharat, are enriched with classic language and represent Indian culture and tradition. Now what is Indian culture? And what makes Indian culture different from other cultures? India is well known for its 'Unity in Diversity' across the world. That means India is a diverse nation where many religious people live together peacefully having their own different cultures. The culture of India comprises clothing, festivals, language, music, dance, architecture, food, and art. The values that are most important to Indians vary depending on their religion and region. However, some values are common across the country. These include respect for elders, family unity, and a belief in karma. Indian culture is extraordinary when compared to all other cultures. It is India that remains a remarkable country with a great cultural heritage. The traditional values of our people are phenomenal as they have been followed for centuries.

In literature, English is not an Indian language. It is the language of England. Although Americans, Australians, Canadians, and South Africans write in English, their creative work is described, not simply as English literature, but as American, Australian, Canadian, or South African literature. Many English writers wrote about India and their culture. But the work of Kipling or Forster belongs properly to English literature, just as Pearl Buck and Louis Bromfield, even if they choose to write about India, should be classed only as American writers. Because of that Indians must have to write in English. They have to describe Indian creative writing in English. It is Indian literature, even as the work of Thoreau or Hemingway is American literature. But Indian literature comprises several kinds of literature in different languages of India like Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Kannada, Maithili, Malayalam, Marathi, Panjabi, Tamil, Urdu, not to mention Sanskrit, for people continue to write in it though the readers are few and far between- and Indian writing in English is but one of the voices in which India speaks. No doubt, it is a new voice, but it is as much Indian as the others.

Indians have written and are writing in English for communicating with one another and with the outside world, to achieve self-expression artistically, using English, if necessary or necessarily, in an Indian way. After independence, Indian English literature played a significant role in English literature. There are a lot of writers who wrote about Indian culture namely Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mulk raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Nissim Ezekiel. In Indian English literature, feminism, casteism, culturalism, and social and political issues are eminent themes. Now Indian culture is known all over the world. Through the Indian language, food, music, art, architecture. Literature is an element in culture and India has been adopting it for thousands of years. In the 21st century, Indian English literature is known all over the world because of Indian writers like Arundhati Roy, Arvind Adiga, Vikram Seth, and many more.

R.K. Narayan, the most prominent writer wrote several works. His *The English Teacher* is a remarkable novel that delves into various cultural aspects of India. The story revolves around the life of a young English teacher, Krishna, who is trying to come to terms with the recent loss of his wife and to find meaning in his life. One of the cultural aspects that the novel explores is the importance of family in Indian society. Krishna's relationship with his father-in-law, a traditional and conservative man, is a significant part of the story. The clash between their different views and values highlights the generational and cultural differences that exist in India. Another cultural aspect that the novel touches upon is the role of education in Indian society. Krishna's passion for teaching and his desire to inspire his students is a testament to the importance of education in Indian culture. However, the novel also highlights the challenges that teachers face in a system that prioritizes rote learning over critical thinking. Overall, "The English Teacher" is a thought-provoking and insightful novel that offers a glimpse into the complexities of Indian society and culture. Narayan's masterful storytelling and vivid descriptions make this a must-read for anyone interested in exploring the cultural richness of India.

In Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, one of the most prominent themes is the cultural divide between the untouchables and the higher castes. Anand vividly portrays the daily struggles of Bakha, a young untouchable boy, as he attempts to navigate through a society that is inherently biased against him because of his lowly status. Throughout the novel, Anand highlights the various cultural aspects that contribute to the discrimination faced by the untouchables. For example, the practice of untouchability itself is deeply rooted in the traditional caste system, which has existed in India for centuries. Additionally, the untouchables are often subjected to degrading jobs such as cleaning latrines and sweeping streets, which further reinforces the notion that they are somehow less worthy or deserving than those in higher castes. Anand also explores British colonialism's impact on Indian culture and society, particularly the caste system. Although the British officially abolished the caste system, it continued to be deeply ingrained in Indian society, and the untouchables continued to face discrimination even after independence. *Untouchable* is a powerful commentary on the cultural and societal factors that contribute to the marginalization of certain groups within Indian society. Anand's vivid depiction of Bakha's struggles serves as a reminder of the ongoing need for social and cultural change to promote equality and justice for all.

Raja Rao's *The Serpent and The Rope* is a novel that digs deep into the cultural aspects of India. The story is centered around the protagonist, Rama, who is a young Indian man trying to navigate his way through life in a changing world. The novel explores the themes of identity, tradition, and spirituality, and how they are all interconnected. One of the most striking cultural aspects of the novel is how it portrays the caste system in India. Rama is a Brahmin, the highest caste in Hindu society, and he struggles with the expectations and limitations of that identity. The novel also explores the tensions between modernity and tradition, as Rama tries to reconcile his education and Western influences with his cultural heritage. Another important cultural aspect of the novel is the role of spirituality in Indian culture. Rama is deeply spiritual, and he seeks guidance and wisdom from a variety of sources, including his guru and the Bhagavad Gita. The novel explores the idea of moksha, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth, and how it relates to Rama's journey. *The Serpent and The Rope* offers a rich and nuanced exploration of Indian culture and tradition. Through Rama's experiences, the novel grapples with the complexities of identity, spirituality, and modernity in a changing world.

Another writer Arundhati Roy, in her famous work *The God of Small Things* is a novel that deeply explores cultural aspects of Indian society. The author masterfully weaves together themes of caste, gender, religion, and tradition to create a rich and complex narrative that illuminates the complexities of the Indian experience. Through her vivid descriptions of the setting and characters, Roy highlights the way that cultural norms and expectations can shape individual lives and relationships. At the same time, she also exposes how these norms can be oppressive and damaging, particularly for marginalized groups. *The God of Small Things* is a powerful exploration of the complexities and contradictions of Indian culture and a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* explores the cultural aspects of India in a thought-provoking and nuanced way. The novel examines the societal issues that arise as a result of India's complex caste system, providing insight into the struggles faced by those living in poverty. Through the protagonist Balram's journey, we see how deeply ingrained corruption and exploitation are in India's political and economic systems. Adiga's writing exposes the flaws in India's cultural values and challenges readers to question their own beliefs and perspectives. *The White Tiger* is a powerful and insightful work that sheds light on the complexities of Indian culture.

Literature can share history and it becomes the history of a certain place or world. The documentation of an event or even a story made up can change the culture. Expressing cultural values in literature is done by the individual author. It's his way of showing an audience the traits and concepts that define culture from his perspective. Another factor is that cultural background makes language learning easier. We are cultural learners from an early age. Our native language influences the way we receive new information. And, when we grow, cultural references are essential for learning a language. Learning a language without understanding the culture behind it is tasteless. The relationship between language and culture is a complex one. The two are intertwined. A particular language usually points out to a specific group of people. When you interact with another language, it means that you are also interacting with the culture that speaks the language.

Therefore, literature from any region somehow shows you their particular region's cultural aspects. when we discourse about Indian English literature, its main purpose is to acknowledge the whole world of the unique culture and rich literary skills of Indian writers by using the English language as a medium. By using the English language Indian writers express their thoughts, ideas, and beliefs about the Indian culture and tradition.

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