

TRENDS IN MODERN INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

This paper shall deal with a brief history of Indian English novels there by sketching down the development of the Indian English novel that is really the story of the changing India. The chapter shall highlight how with the coming of great Indian trio Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan the Indian English novel began its journey. The early novels were the patriotic depictions of Indian, but with the advent of Indian Independence India grew out of her own streak of imperialism during the emergency and thus the Indian idiom began to change. The publishing of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the entire scenario of Indian English novels went topsy turvy. He opened the doors to a plethora of writers. This paper shall study and unfold the major changes in Indian English novels thereby bringing in to focus the recent trends in Indian English novels.

Keywords: Trend, Modern India, Novel

BACKGROUND:

Indian literature in English refers to literature associated with Indians inside and outside India and produced by writers in India and outside India, unlike other world literatures. By far the largest part of Indian literature is written in the English language, but there are bodies of written works in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi, and other regional languages which have been translated into English. Translation from English into Indian languages has been a literary tradition in India. Translation writers have also played an important part in the development of Indian English-language literature, but the discussion is not appropriate here.

The Indian literary tradition goes back to the writings of the two epics – The Ramayana and The Mahabharata influencing the writers in India who looked the outside world soaking their minds and thinking process in them. No wonder then, the early Indian novels in English were modeled in the Sanscritised consciousness and later continued but questioned in the recent times. There is a shift in the voices of modern Indian writers in English painting India dynamic in an attempt to transform traditional India to modern India. Novel in English is the oldest and ongoing literary genre in India. Modern novel has facilitated the reader to receive life positively balancing personal and professional life. Family, society, religion, caste, politics, education, gender, marginality, outcaste, dowry, child labor, ragging are dealt. Relations, culture, faith, money, opinions, instruction, isolation, identity, masculinity, femininity, idiosyncrasy are the most

discussed themes. The human mind has been probed. Everything is viewed differently. Every angle of man's life is experimented. Technology is integrated. Civilization is questioned. Emotions are put to acid test. Culture is imbibed. Rat racing is challenged. Modern man is carved in the leaves of Novel – world by eminent writers in English resulting into Indian English. Definitions of Indian literature are bound up with historical shifts of Indian identity. Territories in which Indian literature have been written have never been subject to a single statehood, nor been defined by a single language. The historical spread of the English language brought about a label – 'Indo - English literature' now considered anachronistic. Changing perceptions of English identity, national identity, regional identity, nationalism, and the effects of British imperialism have altered construal of how the literatures of Indian subcontinent have interacted.

The impact of nationalism that led to the partition of country after independence has coloured Indian Literature and is not considered to be entirely idealistic. The entire modern novel may fall within the overlapping identities of the native and the immigrants and Indian literature in English where the naming of the land has always been, in fictitious, geological or chronological contexts, a politically stimulating action. Indian literature in English (previously called Indo Anglian literature) is the works written in the English language by Indian writers in and outside when especially their subject matter relates to India. The writings of the immigrant writers have been recognized as a distinctive entity only in recent times. The need for a separate identity for this kind of writing arose because of the parallel development of modern world literature in English language.

The use of the label 'Modern fringe' as applied to traditionally non-English-speaking territories to marginalize these cultures, has been analyzed as a colonial attitude, and the novels of recent Indian writers in English may be studied through the methodology of post colonialism. But a legacy of Indianness also exists at present in the literary world: a shared history of British presence and cultural influence in India as produced a substantial body of writing in English by many regional writers, known as Indian writing in English.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE NOVEL

Major novelists were the grand trio – R.K.Narayan, Rajarao, Mulkraj Anand while women fictions of various kinds also were flourished. The works by the women writers critique the novels of awareness of modern India and are part of the transition to realism. Their plots, though fundamentally natural highlight the dependence of women on marriage to secure social standing and economic security. Their writings bring to light the hardships women faced, who usually did not inherit money, could not work and where their only chance in life depended on the man they married. Their writings further reveal not only the difficulties women faced in her day, but also what was expected of men and of the careers they had to follow. This has been done with endings where all characters, good or bad, receive exactly what they deserve. The second half of the 20th century saw a proliferation of their scholarship and the emergence of a fan culture.

TRENDSETTERS:

The major novelist and a trendsetter is Salman Rushdie who was not only a highly successful novelist, but the best and distinct influence on fiction in modern times. Rushdie, with his Pidgin English, has signaled a fresh style in writing as well as giving influence to multicultural concerns. The writers followed the path and established the genre. Besides his popular works, *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *Fury*, and *Shalimar the Clown*, the work that propelled him into the limelight was his *Satanic Verses*. However, he is today widely read and the source for future writers, while the trio was neglected. The novels of Rohinton Mistry, V.S. Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shashi Tharoor, and Upamanyu Chatterjee are also significant, as well as being an example of post colonial fiction. It was in the modern contemporary times that the novel became the leading genre in Indian literature in English. It saw the rise of social novel that arose out of the social and political upheavals. This was in many ways a reaction to rapid progress, and the social, political and economic issues associated with it, and were a means of commenting on abuses of government and industry and the suffering of the poor, who were not profiting from nation's economic prosperity. Stories of the working class poor were directed toward middle class readers to help create sympathy and promote change. The writers are most admired, much read and known exclusively. There are other significant novelists - Chetan Bhagat, Shobha De, Chitra Benarjee, and Sudha Murthy whose novels caused a sensation when they were first published but was subsequently accepted as classics. Among them, Chetan Bhagat has been a successful writer who contrasts the lifestyle and usually frames his stories as critiques of contemporary attitudes. He has always emphasised the role of man, with complex narratives and dynamic characters.

Anita Desai was one of the most successful, prolific and respected novelists of the modern era. Some of her best-loved works are set against India and Abroad. She portrayed the lives of the all classes of women in India. Her works include: *Fasting, Feasting* (1999); *Journey to Ithaca* (1995); *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988); *In Custody* (1984); *The Village By The Sea* (1982); *Clear Light of Day* (1980); *Games at Twilight* (1978); *Fire on the Mountain* (1977); *Cat on a Houseboat* (1976); *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975); *The Peacock Garden* (1974); *Bye-bye Blackbird* (1971); *Voices in the City* (1965); *Cry, The Peacock* (1963). The writings of Shobha De are important examples of literary realism, and are admired for her sketch of elite society in detail combined with an intellectual breadth that removes them from the narrow geographic confines they often depict. A serious approach is seen in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, one of the foremost writers of today's India, who scales new heights.

A realist Vikram Seth was influenced Philip Larkin (1922 – 1985), an English poet and novelist. Both in his novels and poetry, he reinvented Indian tradition. “His poetic styles are a curious mix of the Modern and the Victorian.” (S. Patke). He wrote ceaselessly contributing voluminous work in poetry and fiction and reached maturity in later novels. . “His best known novel *The Golden Gate* is set in the San Francisco Bay area. Topics of Seth's comment include, among others, the role played by the Roman Catholic church in social activism, the struggles of homosexuals and bisexuals, the struggle of unknown artists against the fecklessness and fickleness of art critics' reviews, the roles of workers in Silicon Valley, the defense industry's endangerment of local and global life, and the beauty of the Bay Area, the ocean and life's natural wonders.” (June Edvenson Thjomoe, *Poetic Technique in Vikram Seth's The Golden Gate*, 2008)

Shashi Tharoor, in his *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), follows a narration mode as in the Mahabharata depicting his ideas by swinging back and forth in time. His work as UN official living outside India has helped to reconstruct Indianness.

Bapsi Sidhwa is Pakistan's salient diasporic author. She has fashioned four novels in English that echo her own know-how of the Indian subcontinent's separation, exploitation of women, immigration to first world country, and association in the Parsi or Zoroastrian people. She states: "What legacy have these women left us? I believe that their spirit animate all those women that have bloomed into judges, journalists, Ngo official, filmmakers, doctors and writers-- women who today are shaping opinions and challenging stereotypes" (<http://voices.cla.umn.edu/>).

Raj Kamal Jha (b. 1966) is an Indian novelist and journalist. His three novels - *The Blue Bedspread*, *if you Are Afraid of Heights* and *Fireproof* track the new India. From familial bloodshed to the urban-rural break up and, in his most recent novel, mass violence and communal tension, Jha's books take up with alarming subjects odd in contemporary writing in English but confine those realities of India that escape the mainstream media. His writing, simple as it appears, regularly calls for a lot of reader involvement which evokes sharp, divided reaction.

Rohinton Mistry, one of the most important contemporary writers of postcolonial literature, is of Indian origin, originally from Mumbai. He practises Zoroastrianism and belongs to the Parsi community. Mistry's fiction is embedded in the avenue of Mumbai which he left behind for Canada at the age of twenty-three. His writings may reflect recent India, its political history, his native Zoroastrian culture and ethos, and the confrontations of relocation.

Shashi Deshpande, the daughter of the renowned Kannada dramatist as well as a great Sanskrit scholar Sriranga, is a prominent name in Indian literature in English. Her novel "That Long Silence" brought her lot of commends and esteem. In her writings she unfolds the different experiences of Indian women. Their problems and lifestyles are projected tracing the hard times or difficult situations and the struggle they would undertake to shape life in a better, new, effective way.

Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian American author. "Lahiri's writing is characterized by her "plain" language and her characters, often Indian immigrants to America who must navigate between the cultural values of their homeland and their adopted home. Lahiri's fiction is autobiographical and frequently draws upon her own experiences as well as those of her parents, friends, acquaintances, and others in the Bengali communities with which she is familiar. Lahiri examines her characters' struggles, anxieties, and biases to chronicle the nuances and details of immigrant psychology and behavior. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jhumpa_Lahiri)

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award-winning writer, poet and teacher. Her themes take in women, immigration, the South Asian experience, history, myth, magical realism and diversity. Her books have been translated into 29 languages, including Dutch, Hebrew, Russian and Japanese. Two novels, *The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of My Heart*, have been made into films. She teaches Creative Writing at the University of Houston.

Bharati Mukherjee is an award-winning Indian-born American writer. The publication of *Darkness* in 1985 earned Mukherjee far greater critical applause than had either of her first two novels. Critics applauded Mukherjee's vibrant and pragmatic depiction of the life of Indian

immigrant. Her fiction impressively and delicately induces the cultural apprehensions and tattered personalities representing South Asian women. Her characters breathe the disjunctions of two extraordinarily separate worlds – east and west. Mukherjee published her first 2 novels from Canada: *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) and *Wife* (1975).

Kiran Desai is an Indian author and is a citizen of India and a permanent resident of the United States who turned into literary - celebrity with her novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*. She is the daughter of noted author Anita Desai. She paints the act of immigration as an act of cowardice: "Immigration, so often presented as a heroic act, could just as easily be the opposite; that it was cowardice that led many to America; fear marked the journey, not bravery; a cockroachy desire to scuttle to where you never saw poverty, not really, never had to suffer a tug to your conscience; where you never heard the demands of servants, beggars, bankrupt relatives, and where your generosity would never be openly claimed; where by merely looking after your own wife-child-dog-yard you could feel virtuous. Experience the relief of being an unknown transplant to the locals and hide the perspective granted by journey." (<http://www.mostlyfiction.com/world/desai.htm>)

MODERN TRENDS:

- A main progress in modern Indian fiction has been the augmentation of a feminist centered approach. Writers, especially women writers question sincerely and scientifically, and sometimes refuse long-established interpretations of women's role and position in society.
- Relationship between man and woman
- The psychic human state and quality of life
- College and corporate settings
- The grass-root details of the sociological, cultural, economic and political history of India
- A subaltern consciousness
- The techniques of hybrid language, magic realism peppered with native themes
- Reflect the history, society, political domain, economic status and tradition of Indian subcontinent

The country has given us some brilliant trendsetters – male and female - who project the postcolonial dichotomy at various levels. Their writings have been giving us a glimpse into the modern Indian society. They want to use fiction as a powerful medium to bring about the social change. They have an array of themes to offer us through their writings and to project the most topical but also the most controversial. A deep study of modern Indian fiction lead us to an interesting study of Indianness find in Indians.

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