
MODERN NOVEL OF EXPERIMENTATION AFTER INDEPENDENCE

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Abstract:

The possible literary form for a writer to keep himself always in touch with the common readers is the fiction. It is in this area we find that the Indian writers in English have made the most significant contribution. So, of all genres, the novel is the most popular form today. According to H. M. Williams (1976: 109), “It is undoubtedly the most popular vehicle for the transmission of Indian ideas to the wider English speaking world.” We in India, on a greater extent are indebted to the European and English novel because as an art form, it has been imported to India from the West. In other words, it is a gift of Western literature.

Keywords; *Literature Review, literature pertaining.*

INTRODUCTION

In the nineteenth century with the publication of Bunkim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife* (1864) and Lal Behari Day’s *Govind Samanta*(1874), Indian novel in English has grown by leaps and bounds in respect of thematic variety and linguistic maturity

Both of them have used an acquired language to comment on the Indian social context. But compared to the recent output, most early novels in English were almost imitative and faulty. It is assumed that Indian novel in English has its roots in the nineteenth century realistic tradition of English novel.

The impact of English education, national awakening and the influence of European models are the chief factors responsible for the rise and development of Indian novel in English. But with the passage of time the Indian novel in English has become thoroughly Indian in terms of the themes, techniques and the human values. In this regard, Meenakshi Mukherjee (1985: viii) observes that: „The novel in India can be seen as the product of configurations in philosophical, aesthetic, economic and political forces in the larger life of the country“. “Despite obvious, regional variations, a basic pattern seems to emerge from shared factors like the Puranic heritage, hierarchical social structure, colonial education, disjunction of agrarian life and many others that affect the form of novel as well as its content.”

In order to understand rise and development of Indian English Novel, it is necessary to take into consideration its emergence, developing stages and continuing traditions. The Indian novel in English has been divided into three successive periods such as: a) novel from 1875 to 1920, b) novel from 1920 to 1947, and c) novel from 1947 onwards, by the Indian scholars like K.R.S. Iyengar (1962), M.K.Naik (1982) and Meenakshi Mukherjee (1985), considering the socio-political changes in India before and after the Independence. On the other hand, the classification of the novel by P. K. Rajan (1995: 9) refers to a) Early Realism: From 1864 to 1935, b) Critical Realism: From 1935 to the 1960’s, c) Modernism: From the 1960s to the 1980s, and d) The New Novel: From 1981 onwards. However, such classification has its own

limitations as placing an individual writer in a specific period creates several problems. Besides an individual writer practices several literary modes and values of representation at the time of writing. Hence, the whole corpus of Indian novel in English may be divided into three broad groups:

1. The traditional novel of social realism before Independence.
2. The modern novel of experimentation after Independence.
3. A new contemporary novel since 1981.

The intellectuals in India before Independence concentrated on the national awakening and the society in a realistic manner. Bengal seems to be the source of the Indian novel in English for the prominent pioneers of the nineteenth century were upper-class Bengali writers, for instance, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Toru Dutt, and Rabindranath Tagore, who dealt with the social problems within their reach. These writers were not merely the imitators of the West but they had in the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee (1971: 19), “direct involvement in values and experiences which are valid in the Indian context.” The pioneer novelists were trying to establish a new sense of social morality in place of the age-old social values. They were social reformers and with them, the novel became an exercise in social realism.

“The Indian novelists in English have their roots in two traditions – the Indian and the Western. It was a challenge for them to express distinctly an Indian sensibility in an acquired language.”

Though the novels were being written in the regional languages, for instance, in Bengali, Hindi, Marathi and Malayalam, they had no English tradition. Naturally, at the formative stage, the Indian writers were greatly influenced by the European masterpieces of Leo Tolstoy, Henerie Balzac and Fyodor Dostoevsky in English translations. There was a great impact of the novels of the romantics and the early Victorians, Dickens and Thackeray. Yet they were not the blind imitators of the Western models. On the other hand, they tried to establish their own tradition of novel writing in accordance with the age-old Indian tradition of story-telling. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s only novel in English Rajmohan’s Wife laid down the foundation for the first generation novelists to record the rich heritage and social transformation in India. Both the male and female novelists who emphasized their personal and private experiences followed him. The early novels were, therefore, sketchy, domestic and aloof from the political happenings. The early novelists depicted rural and domestic life, filled with superstitions and religious whims, with an equal emphasis on morals and social ills. In spite of that their creative efforts were very poor. “The deeper issues of national as well as human life do not enter into their novels. the women writers wrote about nubile romances and marital male adjustment and their male counterparts wrote about socio-political issues.”

There is no comparison between the British women novelists and our Indian English women novelists. However, their world was different from the socio-ethical world of the British novelists. The early novelists in India imitated the Western novel in respect of plot-construction, characterization and narrative technique.

In spite of this the Indian novel in English has definitely taken many steps forward after the First World War. The First World War stimulated the nationalist spirit among the Indians and further the freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi became an all India experience.

Indian Novel in English was affected by socio-political upheavals during the 1930’s onwards. The writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao attempted to explore the contemporary Indian

society from their specific views without distorting the reality. They were reformists and didactic, yet, the motive of propaganda remained with them

Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao emerged on the literary scene in 1930. It was the real beginning of Indian novel in English. They were labelled by William Walsh (1990: 62) as “The founding fathers”, “the genuine novelists”, “and inaugurators of the form.” They made their appearance in the thirties with the publication of *Untouchable* (1935), *Swami and Friends* (1935) and *Kanthapura* (1938) respectively and established the tradition of Indian English fiction.

Indian novel in English around 1930s needed the novelists who could grasp the social scene with an insight into the human consciousness and who could interpret the real Indian world, distinctive in themes, issues and treatment in their fiction. Mulk Raj Anand is humanist and a novelist with a purpose. He writes from his personal experience and the experiences of real people. 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

He deals with the themes related to human predicament such as protest against social and industrial evils, the status of women in India, exploitation caused by caste system, class system and imperialism. G. S. Balarama Gupta (1977: 115) aptly says, “The moot point to be noted about Anand is that he has firmly believed in the role of a writer as essentially a crusader in the cause of humanity: no hotchpotch of Vendanta’s, no hazy mysticism, but inalienable faith in man”. Anand’s early novels, *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940) *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) and *The Big Heart* (1942) justify this point, as Anand has brought in them the lower class down-trodden people such as the scavengers, the coolies, the leather-workers, and the untouchables who form the bulk of Indian society. His novel *Untouchable* is a classic experimentation in respect of theme and technique. It represents a day from morning till evening in the life of a sweeper boy named Bakha who is in the words of E. M. Forster (1981: 9) “a real individual, lovable thwarted, sometimes grand, sometimes weak, and thoroughly Indian.”

R. K. Narayan, on the other hand, is the novelist of middleclass sensibility. He is a natural story-teller in his novels from *Swami and Friends* (1935) to *The Painter of Signs* (1976). His novels *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945) and *Mr. Sampath* (1949) brilliantly and realistically describe the South-Indian life. William Walsh (1983: 250), says that R. K. Narayan’s writing is “a distinctive blend of Western technique and Eastern material.” The world of R. K. Narayan’s novels is Malgudi, an imaginary South-Indian town. In the words of Alan Warner (1961: 190) Narayan “writes admirably plain English.” His is a very simple and straight-forward style of narration.

OBJECTIVES;

1. Study on short history of the Indian English novel in order to understand the trends in its growth from the very beginning till the turn of the millennium.
2. Study on We will try to identify the concerns and themes of the novelists.

Indian English literature

Indian English literature (IEL), also referred to as Indian Writing in English (IWE), is the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. Its early history began with the works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Michael Madhusudan Dutt followed by Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao contributed to the growth and popularity of Indian English fiction in the 1930s. It is also associated, in some cases, with the works of members of the Indian diaspora who subsequently compose works in English.

It is frequently referred to as Indo-Anglian literature. (*Indo-Anglian* is a specific term in the sole context of writing that should not be confused with *Anglo-Indian*). Although some Indo-Anglian works may be classified under the genre of postcolonial literature, the repertoire of Indian English literature encompasses a wide variety of themes and ideologies, from the late eighteenth-century to the present day, and thereby eludes easy categorization.

History

IEL has a relatively recent history, being nearly two centuries old. The first book written by an Indian in English was *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*, a travel narrative by Sake Dean Mahomed, published in England in 1794. In its early stages, IEL was influenced by the Western novel. Early Indian writers used English unadulterated by Indian words to convey an experience which was essentially Indian. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894) wrote *Rajmohan's Wife* and published it in 1864; it is the first Indian novel written in English. Lal Behari Day's *Govinda Samanta or the History of a Bengali Raiyat* was published in 1874 and the same author's *Folk Tales of Bengal: Life's Secret* was published in 1912. *Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878) by Toru Dutt was the first novel written by an Indian woman. Both Toru Dutt and Krupabai Sathianadhan, two promising Indian English writers of the nineteenth century died untimely in their early twenties and thirties respectively. Sathianadhan's autobiographical novel *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* was published serially in *The Madras Christian College Magazine* from 1887 to 1888. The only other novel by Sathianadhan is *Kamala: The Story of a Hindu Life* (1894).

The non-fictional body of prose-works, consisting of letters, diaries, political manifesto, articles, speeches, philosophical works etc. in Indian English literature of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, is rich and varied. The speeches of Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Chittaranjan Das, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose, to name only a few, shaped the destiny of modern India and also the destiny of English language in India (Auddy, 9-10). Gandhi's *Indian Home Rule or Hind Swaraj* (1910) was written in an indigenised variety of the English language and challenged successfully 'the hegemony of Standard English' (Auddy, 169) even before R. K. Narayan, M. R. Anand and Raja Rao.

Raja Rao (1908–2006), Indian philosopher and writer, authored *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*, which are Indian in terms of their storytelling qualities. Kisari Mohan Ganguli translated the *Mahabharata* into English, the only time the epic has ever been translated in its entirety into a European language. Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) wrote in Bengali and English and was responsible for the

translations of his own work into English. Dhan Gopal Mukerji (1890–1936) was the first Indian author to win a literary award in the United States. Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897–1999), a writer of non-fiction, is best known for his *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951), in which he relates his life experiences and influences. P. Lal (1929–2010), a poet, translator, publisher and essayist, founded a press in the 1950s for Indian English writing, Writers Workshop. Ram Nath Kak (1917–1993), a Kashmiri veterinarian, wrote his autobiography *Autumn Leaves*, which is one of the most vivid portraits of life in 20th century Kashmir and has become a sort of a classic.

R. K. Narayan (1906–2001) contributed over many decades and continued to write till his death. He was discovered by Graham Greene in the sense that the latter helped him find a publisher in England. Greene and Narayan remained close friends till the end. Similar to the way Thomas Hardy used Wessex, Narayan created the fictitious town of Malgudi where he set his novels. Some criticise Narayan for the parochial, detached and closed world that he created in the face of the changing conditions in India at the times in which the stories are set. Others, such as Greene, however, feel that through Malgudi they could vividly understand the Indian experience.

Narayan's evocation of small town life and its experiences through the eyes of the endearing child protagonist Swaminathan in *Swami and Friends* is a good sample of his writing style. Simultaneous with Narayan's pastoral idylls, a very different writer, Mulk Raj Anand (1905–2004), was similarly gaining recognition for his writing set in rural India, but his stories were harsher, and engaged, sometimes brutally, with divisions of caste, class and religion. According to writer Lakshmi Holmström, "The writers of the 1930s were fortunate because after many years of use, English had become an Indian language used widely and at different levels of society, and therefore they could experiment more boldly and from a more secure position."^[1] Kamala Markandeya is an early writer in IEL who has often grouped with the trinity of R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. The contributions of Manoj Das and Manohar Malgoankar to growth of IEL largely remains unacknowledged.

Poetry

Early notable poets in English include Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, Romesh Chunder Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, and her brother Harindranath Chattopadhyay. Notable 20th Century authors of English poetry in India include Dilip Chitre, Kamala Das, Eunice De Souza, Nissim Ezekiel, Kersy Katrak, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Kolatkar, P. Lal, Jayanta Mahapatra, Dom Moraes, Gieve Patel, A. K. Ramanujan, Madan Gopal Gandhi, and P C K Prem among several others.

The younger generation of poets writing in English include Abhay K, Arundhati Subramaniam, Anju Makhija, Arnab Jan Deka, Bibhu Padhi, Ranjit Hoskote, Sudeep Sen, Smita Agarwal, Makarand Paranjape, Jeet Thayil, Jaydeep Sarangi, Mani Rao, Jerry Pinto, K. V. Dominic, Meena Kandasamy, Nalini Priyadarshni, Gopi Kottoor, Tapan Kumar Pradhan, Rukmini Bhaya Nair, Robin Ngangom, Vihang A. Naik, Anuradha Bhattacharyya, K Srilata and Nandini Sahu. Modern expatriate Indian poets writing in English include Agha Shahid Ali, Sujata Bhatt, Richard Crasta, Yuyutsu Sharma, Tabish Khair and Vikram Seth.

Time of commencement of rise and growth of Indian English writers:

The British arrived in India with the objective of being controllers of the spice trade. Then reality took a strange shape and they became the controllers of the whole nation. They needed a group of Indians who would be well adept in reading and writing in English. They needed such a human resource pool so that they could run the country and communicate with the vast majority of this country. In order to do that, they started influencing the method of delivery in the Indian education system. For thousands of years, the Gurus used to teach their disciples in the local languages. Then came a time during the British rule when, the teachers started using English language as the medium of delivery of their teachings.

This changed the entire scenario. The long lasting impact of this came when a generation of Indians were produced who were more comfortable in reading and writing in this foreign language than in their mother tongue. After independence the printing and publishing industry in India experienced a great development, just like most other types of industries. It was during this phase that great authors like R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Khuswant Singh were writing in English. Their writings were getting published and being distributed throughout the country. These books were being read with a lot of interest. There was a social side to it. Though India had achieved independence by then, but still the importance of English as a language had not diminished. It was the official language and the language in which education was imparted to the upper layers of the society. So people found it fashionable to read English books. An analysis of the above mentioned data about the time of commencement of rise and growth of Indian English writers reveals that their rise actually started after the independence. This was the era of the 1950s and 60s.

Impact of rise and growth of Indian English writers on society, language and literature of India:

The Indian English writers are mostly very highly educated and have studied in some of the best and costliest institutions of the country. They come from wealthy backgrounds. They are connected to the world. They are successful. They are rich. So, most of the time they are imitable and they produce great citizens of the country who can be imitated. English as a language was always the language of the ruling class. It was not merely a language in India. It was a carrier of class, education, grace, dignity, success, popularity and acceptance. Today with the emergence, rise and growth of the Indian English writers, the Indian society has more dependence on English as a language. It is viewed as an even greater emblem of success. There was a time when the Indian writers like R. K. Narayan used to use Indian words in their English writings. The explanation of those words was mentioned in a glossary or somewhere else in the book. Today the situation has changed. The rise and growth of the Indian English writers have given Indian literature the platform that it always deserved. As a result of that Indian words have been accepted throughout the world in other languages, perhaps a little bit more in English than in other languages. Words like 'chutney' and 'papad', 'roti' and 'sabji' are just not Indian words. They are global words. They are easily acceptable English words. Similarly words like 'station' and 'airport', 'school' and 'college' are not just English words. They are as much English as much they are Bengali, Marathi, Odiya or Assamese.

The rise and growth of the Indian writers have ensured that Indian literature has plots and characters which can be identified by Indians and by people from other countries also. Similarly, you have Indian writers writing stories and novels on foreign settings. 'Give and take' is the policy of the world today. Literature is a worldly matter. It is not free from that policy. Today, the rise and growth of the Indian English writers have ensured this give and take between the society, language and literature of India and that of the other parts of the world.

CONCLUSIONS

The interpretation of the data said that most of the Indian writers who write in English usually come from the upper classes of the Indian society. The conclusion reached on the basis of this was that this is the reason behind the fact that most of the writings of these writers portray the upper classes of the society. Even though when they write about the middle and lower classes they portray it in a manner that someone belonging to the upper classes will do. This helps them to connect to the world. But there is lack of connect with the vast majority of the population of this country. It is being recommended to translate the books of the Indian writers who write in English in the various vernacular languages of India. This will make their work available in front of entire India. That would increase the appeal of their work. That would help them to achieve further rise and growth.

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