



# The Dawn of Indian English Novels

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## Abstract

*The paper examines the classical view of a remarkable role of novels in Indian writing in English in the modern era from the socio-cultural set up. Indian English writers have also explored variety of concepts from various set up in an extensive way. They talk about the culture, tradition and the set up of Indian roots with values and principles and identity are deeply explained and in order to analyse the individual pattern from the perspectives of Indian writers. The present dissertation is the critical analysis and the comparative study of Arun Joshi and Sudha Murty from existential background.*

**Keywords:** novella, novel, background, history, culture, root

*You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist." - Nietzsche*

The novel as a literary form originated in nineteenth century in India. The Indian writing in English projected the social, political and economic conditions of the country which created the awareness and social reforms during those period. The abolition of sati, prevention of child marriage, female infanticide and the prohibition of throwing a child in the river Ganga for the fulfilment of religious vows are the social amendments implemented for the betterment of the people. This is mainly because of the moral support of the efficacious person Raja Ram Mohan

Roy. The radical transformations of religious attitude is highly visible during this era. For example, downgrading of superstitious believes started emerging.

During the period of colonization the westerners influenced the western ideas through western education. There was a steady increase in the development of schools, colleges and universities were many young men and women were educated from these prestigious institutions. The Indian writers during those period were not appeased by the perception of western influence and therefore they started exposing Indian culture and ethos in English education. Hence, English education is obligated for the development of social reforms and transformations in India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is



the primary influential person for the adoption of liberal and creative English expressions in the new epoch of English literature.

The first novel in India was *Rajmohan's wife* written by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya in the later half of the nineteenth century in Bengali. This was roughly called as "a generation after Macaulay's 'Minute' decreed English as the language of higher education, exposing an entire class of urban Indian men to British narrative models." (Mehrotra 106). The novel was first serialised in the journal *The Indian field* in 1864 and later it was published in the book in 1935. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya devised a platform for the emergence of the novel as new literary genre in Indian writing in English.

The Indian English novels emphasises on the themes of glorification of Indian heritage, independence struggle, various freedom movements like Non-violence and the partition, communal violence, social and economically suppressed and exploited people in India. The social, political and economic concern of the novelists are well incorporated in their works. The Gandhian movement and his principle enabled many writers to speak about the freedom struggle, communal riots and the economic condition of landless farmers. The earliest novels *Murugan* (1927), *The Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan, the Patriot: A Novel of New India in Making* (1932) were written by K.S. Venkataramani. *Athavar House* (1937), *Chronicles of Kedaram* (1961) were written by Krishnaswamy Nagarajan which beautifully explores the theme of Gandhian principle, social and economic vicissitudes of Indian landscape.

The great Indian English novelists Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan are called the trios of Indian English fictions. The three great novelists of 1930s and 1940s dominated the entire literary fictions till the later part of the twentieth century. However, these writers belongs to the Pre - Independence era, they highly focuses on the Indian scenario during freedom struggle. In India, the communal riots were bursted out due to the advent of Islam and other communities who became more conscious of their religion and God. Due to this

communal tension there was a clash between different communities which lead to crisis. Many Indian English novelist took up this major issue and projected in their novels. The Indian English novels attained its own identity by the dominance of these great novelists. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *The Vendor of sweets* deals with one or the other of Gandhian themes, freedom struggle and communal riots.

Mulk Raj Anand demonstrates the study of oppressed not only in *Untouchable* but also in *Coolie* and *Two Leaves and a Bud*. The major concern from caste conflict is being switched over to class conflict. However, *Coolie* encounters with the incarnations of domestic slave, rickshaw puller, pickle maker, factory worker which is the outcome of the oppressed class. Anand's trilogy *The Village*, *Across the Black Waters* and the *Sword and the Sickle* moves around the geographical locations of India. Lal Singh in *The Village* is oppressed with sexual puritanism, patriarchal ethos and superstitious believes which finally leads him to Boy Scouts movement to join the army. Probably, the only novel that projects The First World War in Indo-English fiction is *Across the Black Waters*. Finally, *The Sword and the Sickle*. Despite being odd, the introduction of 'pidgin-English' in Indo - English fiction gives way for th[o]pe linguistic and cultural translations of the Indian English writers.

Raja Rao exhibited Gandhism and revolutionary experience of women in *Kanthapura*. The next novel *The Serpent and the Rope* is nominated for a Sahitya Academy Award continues with the complex experiments of cultural translation and the blending elements of European novels and Indian epic. In *The Cat and Shakespeare* the combining portions of Upanishadic sapience with Shakesperian dogma creates the picture of two friends Ramakrishna Pai and Govindan Nair. *Comrade Kirillov* depicts the picture of Marxists in India. Eventually, the novel gives the culmination "You can take the Marxist out of India, but - the novel insists - you cannot take India out of the Marxist" (Mehrotra 208). Rao's idiosyncratic novel *The Chessmaster and His Moves*



shows the authoritative signature through the characteristic features of cosmopolitanism.

*R. K. Narayan exhibits a particular distinctiveness through humour, absurdity and comedy in his special characters. The intellectual insight of Narayan is seen through the realistic depiction of the characters. He dominates the power of fiction by portraying the humanistic perspectives and popularising his works globally. His first novel Swami and Friends created the imaginary world Malgudi which shows his unique style. The setting comes alive in all the novels of Narayan. For example in The Dark Room the beautiful depiction of the river Sarayu in the evening atmosphere shows his preeminence of writing. The fascinating illustration of the cheerful and breezy ambiance of Albert Mission College in The Bachelor of Arts, and the striking peacefulness in Mempi's Guest House in The Guide which won the Sahitya Academy Award shows the supremacy of his novels. Narayan's Waiting for Mahatma shows the backdrop of political struggle during independence added with the unconventional love story of Sriram and Bharati. Through R. K. Narayan's autobiographical novel My Days it is conceded that he is not a writer for the sake of writing and does not impose a deliberate style of writing. The depiction of India in a realistic manner was the ultimate aim of Indian English fiction. The great trios focused on the nationalistic movements, social and political events, casteism and feudal practices.*

The Indian English fiction reached its pinnacle in 1950s and 1960s. Women writers started emerging at this stage and they concentrated on subjugation and sufferings of women. The East - West conflict and the impact of colonization plays a prominent role. The post Independence writers focused mainly on the realistic situation of India after independence. Kushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Arun Joshi shows the new perspectives of contemporary India. The women writers like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai started emerging during this period. The voice of women gained its identity at its peak during this course of time.

India after the colonization there is an emergence of postcolonial Indian English literature. It consists of the factors of decolonization, political, social and the cultural independence of the people that was subdued by colonialism. The post-independence writers mainly concentrated on the theme of search for identity, and the intriguing exposure of East-West encounter that emphasises on the conflict between diverse cultures in India. The Indian writers achieved their own identity after Independence. According to M. K. Naik, "After 1947 Indian English writers have gained a very strong foothold and pursued their venture with greater confidence and farsightedness" (Naik 191). Kushwant Singh's debut novel *Train to Pakistan* speaks about the partition of India and Pakistan. The second novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* which was set in the background of 1942 depicts the central theme of freedom struggle and the blending of religion and satire. The novels during this course of time underscores the tottering possessions of the partition. Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*, uploaded the exact rampage of partition. The next novel *Distance Drum* projects the energetic and immaculate picture of Indian army. Hence, it is understood that History is the primary theme that elicited the study of many novelists. According to Iyengar, "History as the theme of creative fiction seems indeed to exercise a special fascination for many an Indian novelist of yesterday and today" (Iyengar 737).

It is noted that there is a remarkable difference in the novels of Kushwant Singh, Kamala Markandaya, Manohar Malgonkar, Arun Joshi and Anita Desai from that of the great trios. There is a shift in the genre and theme of these contemporary writers. These writers drafted the inner psyche and fluctuating thoughts of human being and they concentrated on the subjective self. Apart from the projection of Indian socio-economic and political backdrop the novelists came out of the circle and concentrated on psychological tensions, existentialism and the quest for identity. The individual's conflict is highlighted in these writers and they give way for the subjective themes.



Kamala Markandaya deals with the subject of East-West encounter, superiority of women, spirituality, urban influences and modernity in her novels. *Nectar in a Sieve*, *A Handful of Rice*, *The Golden Honeycomb* speaks about the tradition versus modernity and East-West conflict. *The Cofferdams* and *Pleasure City* shows the effect of neo-colonialism and the result of urbanisation in the country. *The Nowhere Man* is the confident work of Markandaya where she writes about her own class.

Nayantara Sahgal concentrated on the wealthiest part of the Indian society. She also focused on the Indian heritage and much on the educated Indian. Her debut novel *A Time to be Happy* resembled Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography*. She projected the attitude of the educated elite class people who dominated the political power. In *A Time to be Happy* she writes about the birth of Independence, *Storm in Chandigarh* shows the partition of Punjab, *Rich Like Us* beautifully deals with the entrapment of women in sati and conventional marriages. The novel *Rich Like Us* won the Sinclair Prize for fiction and the Sahitya Academy Award. The later novels of Sahgal *Plans for Departure* and *Mistaken Identity* deals with the Independent movement.

The development of globalisation leads to migration and thus the diasporic writers brilliantly interlinked the Indian cultural ethos and ideologies with the hostland that leads to a cultural conflict in their works. The writers like Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, M.G. Vassanji, Chitra Bannerjee, V.S. Naipaul, Bharathi Mukherjee, Kavita Dasvani are exceptionally concentrated on immigrant issues, consequences of dislocation and cultural conflicts from the native country to the hostland. Anita Desai is the youngest women novelist of 1950s and 1960s. Anita Desai's characters in *Bye Bye Blackbird*, *Cry, the Peacock*, *Clear Light of the Day*, *In the Custody*, *Journey to Ithaca* are emotionally

disturbed and entangled into the web of trauma. Their growing disillusionment and psychological insights are palpable.

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