

Vol III Issue VII August 2013

Impact Factor : 0.2105

ISSN No : 2230-7850

Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal

*Indian Streams
Research Journal*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

Indian Streams Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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THE INDIAN NOVELS REFLECT THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY OF INDIA

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Research Guide
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Abstract: When we look at the history of the Indian English novel, we understand that the social and political reformers of modern India have also contributed to Indian writing in English literature. The works of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurbindo Ghosh, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were changing the face of India. The works of Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand reveal the aspects of changing India in their works. We come to know the development of Indian English novels traced out from pre-independence and post-independence era. Pre-independence Indian novel is characterized by the social awareness and desire for social and political changes. We see Gandhian impact on pre-independence Indian literature. The humble beginning of Indian English novel with Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's 'Raj Mohan's Wife' in 1864 has come to an age where it can compete with the British and the American novel, in style and narrative.

Keyword: novels , contemporary society , political reformers , characterized.

INTRODUCTION:

The real beginning of the Indian English novel is considered in the mid 1930's with Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan the triumvirate of the Indian English novel. They started their writing in the Gandhian age and continued to write thereafter and brought the novel to maturity. The contribution of post independence novelists cannot be underestimated. The contribution of post independence writers perhaps preponderate over that of older generation and this is no over statement. At the same time it is indisputable that the younger novelists cannot get beside Anand, Narayan, Bhattacharya, Malgaonkar and Markandaya prolifically. But as for quality, modern sensibility and technique; the new novelists would appear to have a distinct advantage. One, therefore, modestly differs from the statement of professor M.K.Naik that:

“The achievement of the post independence novelists cannot on the whole, be said to match that of Anand and his two major contemporaries”.

The Indian English novels came to blossom in the post independence period. The mid 1950's and 1960's mark the second important phase. The novelists of this phase such as, Manohar Malgaonkar, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Pravar Jhabwala, Arun Joshi, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Anita Desai came out with their works with the new face of Indian English novel. Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya dealt with the socio-economical cultural work of the characters, the psyche of the characters also became equally important.

A notable development in the emergence of Indian

English novel is the contribution of women novelists, who added a new dimension which mark the arrival of Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande. Their inclusion of new themes such as female identity and awareness of female sensibility reflect in their novels. They have voiced their sweets and spoils, joys and sorrows, ills and blessings. It is clear that women novelists are more realistic in their portrayal of life than the earlier writers. The second phase is continued up to 1980.

The second phase starts from 1980. The novelists such as Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Thumpha Lahiri, Kiran Desai belong to this phase. During the eighties Indian Fiction made its own platform and got international recognition and distinctions in the western academic world. In 1981 Salman Rushdie won the Booker Prize for his novel “Midnight Children”. In 1993 Vikram Seth got a fabulous amount as advance royalty for 'A Suitable Boy'. Arundhati Roy has been awarded the Booker Prize in 1997 for her novel 'The God Of Small Things'. Thumpha Lahiri's “Interpreter of Maladies” won the 2000's Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Moreover the Indian origin Trinidad writer V.S. Naipal is crowned with the Nobel prize for 2001. This is an award in recognition of his lifetime achievement in fiction and non-fictional works. It proves that the Indian novelists are planting their firm roots in the field of world fiction.

Indian English writers started writing with new confidence. Writers like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanya Chatterjee, Manju Kapur, Shashi Deshpande and Kamala Markandaya have emerged as

modern Indian novelists, writing in English.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, modern Indian English novelists are interested in themes and techniques and their experimentation in technique and language. The recent fiction after 1980's is flourishing more vigorously than the previous. In theme and style, feeling and form, Shri. Aurobindo writes:

“The future of English is indeed immense and as the human mind of the future progressively acquires an international pulse, what is more likely, English rising to the highest heights and achieving a global comprehension there by ending the half-real, half-mythical, east-west dichotomy once and for all.”²

The question whether Indian are really capable of using English for creative purposes is already a matter of the past. Indian writing in English has been considered worthy of consideration in India and abroad. As Bhabani Bhattacharya writes:

“The fundamental right of a creative artist to express himself in whatever manner he likes cannot be denied and the concept of creative freedom would include the medium of expression to which the writer, out of his inner urge, commits.”³

If a writer has been able to communicate his thoughts, vision and experiences authentically in a language of his choice, it is justified Kamala Das effrontery would silence all denigration and deliberate attempts to exercise English from the Indian creative scene,

“Why not let me speak in
Any language I like
The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions. its queerness,
All mine; mine alone.”⁴ (An introduction)

The Indian writers in English have proved the quality of their work that they can write effectively in English. The growth and development of Indian English writing, is no longer viewed with cynicism and skepticism.

But the writings from the sixties onwards introduced various dimension of new themes and concerns. The Pre-independence, independence period has witnessed an interesting development of the ethnic novel as well as the novel of existentialism. The more recent Indian English novels give the expressions to the Indian experience of the modern predicament.

During the last century women writers occupy important place in Indian English literature for more reasons. Woman writers have their distinctive mark, with their own perception of life, be it feminine or feminist or female. Feminism is not something entirely new to the Indian literary scene. Initially Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Tagore Subramaniya Bharati created memorable portraits of a new woman. But the novels such as Nayantara Sahgal's, “The Day In Shadows” and “Rich Likes Us,” Arundathi Roy's, “The God of Small Things” and Shashi Deshpande's, “That

Long Silence” and Kamala Markandaya's “Nectar In A Sieve” are different from the earlier ones. In that they no longer glorify and admire women's lot or damn them with faint praise but portray them with social and psychological realism. Although novel is a simple and self-contained literary form, Indian English novelist has taken up the challenge with competence and resourcefulness. Written by-

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