

RISE, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

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Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the English education in India under colonial rule. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Macaulay recommended English language education in India. The British-style education also had the effect of linking Indian writers to literary traditions of the West, enabling Indian writers' writing in English to reach audience in Europe as well as in India.

In the nineteenth century, both progressive and orthodox reformers supported female education in India, believing that social evils could be eliminated through education. Christian missionaries and British rulers, especially in Bengal where the British had made their first inroads in the mid-nineteenth century, started girls' schools, and in the 1880s, Indian women started to graduate from universities. However, the vast majority of girls did not attend school because the education for women was mainly confined to the larger towns and cities.

So, prior to the rise of the novel, many Indian women composed poetry and short stories in Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. Women were the chief upholders of a rich oral tradition of story-telling, through myths, legends, songs and fables. The novel was not at first a common form, perhaps because the majority of women had less access to education than men. It was not until prose began to be used in the late nineteenth century by Bengali writers who had been exposed to European culture that the novel form took hold in India. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks: **“One of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling, the novel, as we know today, was an importation from the West”** (Naik. 1985: 99).¹

The Indian English novel originated from Indian regional language, Bengali. It was in Bengal that a literary renaissance first manifested. The first Indian English novel was written in Bengal by an Indian. Promod Kumar Singh observes: **“Probably the credit of writing the first novel in English by an Indian goes to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who wrote the *Rajmohan's Wife (1864)*”** (Singh. 2005:16).² *Rajmohan's wife*, it seems, is the first published English novel by an Indian. This novel is the real origin of Indian English novel. It has also the distinction of being Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's debut novel as a writer. It is valuable in the

sense that he never wrote in English again and turned to Bengali writing. The novel is first serialized in 1864, but it did not appear as a book until 1935. In fact, his Bengali novels paved the soft way for the novel, *Anandmath* (1884), India's first political novel which gave the Indians their national song, "Vande Mataram". Dr. Rai Usha remarks: **"Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's 'Anand Math' was full of revolutionary and patriotic idealism. 'Vande Mataram' was the call which he gave to young India"** (Dr. Rai. 2008:55).³

After that a number of novels were published in English. The novels published from the eighteen sixties up to the end of the nineteenth century were written by writers belonging to the presidencies of Bengal, and Madras. Most of these novels are written on social and political issues, and for their models they draw upon eighteenth and nineteenth century British fiction, especially that of Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Walter Scott. It is the most interesting development that the early women novelists appeared on the literary scene. Toru Dutt, Krupabai Sathianandhan and Sevantibai M. Nikambe these three women novelists also gave their great contribution for the development of Indian English novel.

The most significant event in the history of Indian English fiction in the nineteen thirties was the appearance on the scene of its major trio Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao who were the founders of true Indo-English novel, though almost all the time they inevitably portrayed the village life and the concomitant effect of freedom movement. But it is in this phase that we come across excellent novels for the first time, as is evident from Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), R. K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935) and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938). In the words of Sisir Kumar Das: **"the novels in Indian English grew in the twentieth century mainly as a response to the contemporary political movement"**. (Das. 2006: 289)⁴

Novelists turned their attention away from the past to concentrate on contemporary issues. In their novels prevailing social and political problems that Indian found themselves in were given prominence. M. K. Naik writes: **"the Indian English novel of the period was deeply influenced by the epoch-making political, social and ideological ferment caused by the Gandhian movement"** (Naik. 2006:152).⁵ Each novel is a great work of art having definite plot, simple structure, lucid language and high philosophy of life. His novels portray Gandhian period, presenting nationalism and social awakening during the period.

After the 1950's, however, Indian novelists' interest moved from the public to private sphere. Novelists like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandanya, Manohar Malgaonkar Arun Joshi and Nayantara Sahgal changed through their works the face of Indian English novel and their works contain seeds of future development. The novel after independence got the real momentum of its development and the eminent novelists contributed for it. M. K. Naik writes states: **"Post-**

Independence Indian English fiction retains the momentum which the novel had gained during the Gandhian Age. The tradition of social realism established earlier on a sound footing by Mulk Raj Anand is continued by novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar and Khushwant Singh, who made their appearance during fifties and the early sixties” (Naik, M. K. 1995: 212-13).⁶

After gaining independence, India had many challenges to face and many changes come over Indian life. The convention of social realism in Indian fiction, established by Mulk Raj Anand was handled by Bhattacharya, Malgaonkar and Khushwant Singh while Sudhin Ghosh, G. V. Desani and Anantanarayanan enlivened the trend of the experimental novel, oriented by Raja Rao in his *Kanthapura*. In addition, the fictional works of B. Rajan present the combined effect of realism and fantasy.

The emergence of the first body of poetry by women in India could be attributed to the advent of Buddhism. Like the women poets, there is also a significant school of women novelists in the post-independence period. The growth of Indian women novelists is an important feature of this period. Their appearance on the literary scene added a new dimension to enrich Indian English fiction only after India’s freedom. They presented the social realism in their novels. Prof. (Miss.) Bansiramani writes: **“The depiction of social scene has been the most silent characteristic of women novelists in the post-independence era” (Prof. (Miss.) Bansiramani. 1998:59).**⁷ Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by a patriarchal society. Thus, the theme of growing up from childhood to womanhood, that is, the Bildungsroman, is a recurrent strategy. The dominant women novelists in this period are Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai.

Anita Desai is one of the most eminent Indian English novelists. K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger writes: “Anita Desai has added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian women writers in English fiction” (Iyengar. 2004:464).⁸ She is the most prominent among the Indian English novelists who have tried to portray the tragedy of human souls trapped in the circumstance of life.

After 1960s, Indian English fiction is considerably changed in its themes and technique. The fiction shifted its focus from the public life to the private sphere. The mass destruction was caused by nuclear weapons in the World War II and it brought unrest and anxiety all over the world. This situation gave rise to psychological disorders and loss of moral values and it profoundly disturbed man’s mental peace and harmony. The world literature responded to the new era and started to deal with different gloomy faces of modern society.

The new generation novelists are very popular in Indian English Literature. The novel after 1980s and 1990s began the period of so called “new fiction”. In this period a breed of new novelists emerged. This period is also called as “third generation of Indo-English novelists. In the words of Jon Mee: **“The 1980s witnessed a second coming for the Indian novel in English. Its messiah seems to have been Salman Rushdie. The appearance of *Midnight’s Children* in 1981 brought about a renaissance in Indian writing in English which has outdone that of the 1930s. Its influence, acknowledged by critics and novelists alike, has been apparent in numerous ways”** (Jon Mee. 2008:318).⁹

Women novelists seem to say rights of women must be preserved. It means that the Indian English women writers say that woman should be treated as a human being and not as an animal in the family. So, like Deshpande, a number of Indian English women novelists gave their contribution for the growth of Indian English novel. So Bijay Kumar Das observes: **“Indian English novel had its luxuriant growth in the hands of Amitav Ghosh, Upamanya Chattaterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande and a few others in the nineteen eighties and after”** (Das. 2003:55).¹⁰

The constructive contribution of Indian women novelists in post-independent India especially in the past two or three decades has been unquestionably great and continuously increasing. All the above novelists have written their novels with a realistic mode and their novels are narrated with a good narrative technique. Anita Myles observes: **“These novelists, some established and some others beginning to create powerful narratives, have provided a fresh re-orientation to Indian fiction in English”** (Myles. 2006:129).¹¹

Today, Indian English literature has won for itself international acclaim and distinction. Fiction is the most powerful form of literary expression and it has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. It has won for itself an international acclaim and distinction. A number of Indian English writers have won the international awards for their works. Now, Indian English Literature is very popular in all over the world. Today, the novel is the most powerful and important literary form of expression. It has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English Literature.

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