

## **Contemporary Trends in Indian Writing in English -Post-Independence Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The development of English writing since Independence has taken a new direction. The Indian English writers perceived India at a post-colonial view. The new ideas flourished but most of the focus was shifted towards the problems like- social, economic, religious, political and familial as bases; which were also enveloped with the feel of National Movement which drew attention of the creative writers. The partition, the communal riots after partition, the problems of casteism, subjugation of women, the poverty of illiterate masses became the flavour of the day. The outcry is enormous and many up-surgings writers have enhanced the view of the Literature with passage of time. This paper will help analyze and understand the development of English writing over the decades beginning from the Post- Independence period till date. It also compares the veterans of writing who posed the realism of fifties in their writing, with the upcoming writers of present who elaborate on the ideas of the past with their modern perspective. It also diverts the reader's attention towards the changing patterns of using language.

**Keywords:** - Problems, Perception, creativity, realism, modern outlook.

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### **Introduction**

Postcolonial literature (or Post-colonial literature, sometimes called New English literature(s)), is a body of literary writings that reacts to the discourse of colonization. Post-colonial literature often involves writings that deal with issues of de-colonization or the political and cultural independence of people formerly subjugated to colonial rule. It is also a literary critique to texts that carry racist or colonial undertones.<sup>[1]</sup> Postcolonial literature, finally in its most recent form, also

attempts to critique the contemporary postcolonial discourse that has been shaped over recent times. It attempts to assimilate this very emergence of post-colonialism and its literary expression itself.

Postcolonial literary critics re-examine classical literature with a particular focus on the social "discourse" that shaped it. Edward Said in his popular work *Orientalism* analyzes the writings of Honoré de Balzac, Charles Baudelaire and Lautréamont, exploring how they were influenced, and how they helped to shape a societal fantasy of European racial superiority. Postcolonial fiction writers might interact with the traditional colonial discourse by attempting to modify or subvert it. An example of this is Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), which was written as a pseudo-prequel to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Here, a familiar story is re-told from the perspective of an oppressed minor character. Protagonists in post-colonial writings are often found to be struggling with questions of identity, experiencing the conflict of living between the old, native world and the invasive forces of hegemony from new, dominant cultures. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the protagonist is shown to be re-named and exploited in several ways.

The "anti-conquest narrative" recasts indigenous inhabitants of colonised countries as victims rather than foes of the colonisers.<sup>[2]</sup> This depicts the colonised people in a more human light but risks absolving colonisers of responsibility for addressing the impacts of colonisation by assuming that native inhabitants were "doomed" to their fate.<sup>[2]</sup>

First, literal colonization is not the exclusive object of postcolonial study. Lenin's classic analysis of imperialism led to Antonio Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" which distinguishes between literal political dominance and dominance through ideas and culture (what many critics of American influence call the "Coca-Colanization" of the world). Sixties thinkers developed the concept of neo-imperialism to label relationships like that between the U.S. and many Latin American countries which, while nominally independent, had economies dominated by American business interests, often backed up by American military forces. The term "banana republic" was originally a sarcastic label for such subjugated countries, ruled more by the influence of the United Fruit Corporation than by their own indigenous governments.

Second, among the works commonly studied under this label are novels like Claude McKay's *Banjo* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* which were written while the nations in

question (Jamaica and Nigeria) were still colonies. Some scholars attempt to solve this problem by arguing that the term should denote works written after colonization, not only those created after independence; but that would be "postcolonization" literature. Few people understand the term in this sense outside a small circle of scholars working in the field.

Third, some critics argue that the term misleadingly implies that colonialism is over when in fact most of the nations involved are still culturally and economically subordinated to the rich industrial states through various forms of neo-colonialism even though they are technically independent.

Fourth, it can be argued that this way of defining a whole era is Eurocentric, that it singles out the colonial experience as the most important fact about the countries involved. Surely that experience has had many powerful influences; but this is not necessarily the framework within which writers from--say--India, who have a long history of precolonial literature, wish to be viewed.

For instance, R. K. Narayan--one of the most popular and widely read of modern Indian writers--displays a remarkable indifference to the historical experience of colonialism, a fact which results in his being almost entirely ignored by postcolonial scholars. V. S. Naipaul is so fierce a critic of the postcolonial world despite his origins as a descendant of Indian indentured laborers in Trinidad that he is more often cited as an opponent than as an ally in the postcolonial struggle.

### **Genres In post Colonial and modern Indian literature**

India had turned Independent in the wake of the middle of a struggling 1947 and this very sudden and gushing change of governmental and administrative policies was sure to create its ill impacts upon the newly renamed `Indian citizens`. The Partition of India, the consequent `frozen period` of Indian economy made itself very much perceivable in Indian literatures - a country which was almost thrust into native- native and almost-alien systems after solid 200 years of colonial ruling. This called for reasons enough for genres in Indian literature to become apparent by themselves, a nation plunged into the era of post-colonialism sickness to end, with only sporadic writers and authors taking upon their shoulders the task to be conscious of social norms. Postcolonial Indian literature also gave birth to the Indian diaspora, with clusters failing to identify

themselves with the native mode of administration, migrating to the land of once `white` masters, looking down upon Indians as `slaves`. Genres of unnaturalness and unimaginable wonders began to crop up every other day in literature from India, with the now emerging tribal literary communities voicing their outcry of protests of helplessness and angst. The postcolonial generation always has perhaps suffered in a void of dichotomy, with two of the most extremities pulling at each other hard for want of importance and lack of it. And this perhaps is most visible in the rather dark genres in Indian literature, with English predominating above every other regional language.

Indian English literature has best brought out the pathos and ethos of quintessential Indian literature that was begun during the once-gone Vedic Period. And this very genre of post-colonial genre in Indian English or regional literature, had also given birth to a overwhelming reaction of modernism in Indian literature. Modernism however is not confined to a constricted sense of being omnipresent in the 20th or 21st centuries only. It also does not define that Indian literature with its touch of modernism is only narrowed down to English authors only. Indian literature of ancient times was also very much adhered and akin to being modernistic in their approach, with Tagore being referred to a man `much ahead of his times`.

### **Factors which Influenced Literature In colonial and post colonial India**

The colonial period, which was at first dealt with much subtlety and humour in the literal sense, did take on many momentous and grave proportions due to the British Raj and its cruel domination. In fact, European arrival on Indian soil was one such aspect, which had begun already during the times of Mughal Emperor Jehangir. Yet, British domination, beginning with the East India Company perhaps had surpassed every other literary influence on Indian literature, with 200 years of ruthless reigning. Be it the Company or the later British Empire under the Crown annexation, Indian literature never did remain the same again. Indian regions were turned into provinces and the leading port cities, into Presidency administration. Each of the administrative system was overhauled, which began to gradually make a profound impact upon the mass and the class alike. The cultural ethos, the cultural distinctiveness that India owned, was completely shattered owing to English power and ascendancy. This no doubt was to make its shielding as well as protesting a mark in regional Indian literature, which again was a societal duty for any author. Cultural influence on Indian literature was mostly viewed in the limelight, with writers attempting to at times make headway for nationalists, or, the others, supporting the beneficial cause of the rare-

to-find kind-hearted Englishman. Whatever was the case, Indian literature was tremendously influenced from its every single angle of advancement.

Yet another path breaking aspect was the arrival and permeation of English language was a major means of communication for the class first, and later, the mass. Those kind-hearted Englishmen, who had taken the task upon them to bring natives to justice, had planned to create special position in native heart, by spreading English language and literature into every Indian soul. As such, one of the main influencing factors on Indian literature was the English language. English language thoroughly had influenced the Indian literature. Colonial influence in Indian literature was so much an aspect of everyday basis, that after some time, neither the ruler nor the ruled were very much taken in by it. If India was made a colony under British Empire, it was very very much obvious that colonialism would make its everlasting influence upon any kind of literary work from Indian nationals, be it in English, or be it in the regional languages. However, a distinct thin line still remained between these `ruler-ruled` relationship, in terms of communication, with the latter forever trying effectively to root out the former. And this very element very much became a reality in 1947, with India gaining Independence after 200 years of merciless suppression!

The sudden darkness and lack of light that was felt with the Partition of India, intensely had impacted upon any quintessential Indian, mirrored very much in the then-framed `Indian Diaspora` and its cluster of writers and authors. Post-colonial influence on Indian literature is that very sphere, which can still be viewed in the Indian English literature, not forgetting the sporadic regional literatures of 21st century. The abstract anxiety of helplessness, the angry young man restlessness, or the masked features of any Independent Indian human mind is still perfectly intact in the core of Indian literature, which however has taken towards fresh directions under the gradually arriving globalisation and its influence onto Indian literature.

### **Birth of Contemporary Indian Literature**

Contemporary Indian Literature which is only one and a half centuries old is marked by amazing variables in both the litterateurs and the regions through which it was produced.

Before delving deeply into the exceedingly diversified genre of contemporary Indian literature, it is of tremendous importance to comprehend the fraternal terms of `modern`,

`modernity` and `modernisation` in the Indian context. These three terms in the modern context are quite significant and highly condensed terms for historical experiences. Keeping in mind the chronological pattern, the twentieth century is considered to be more modern than the nineteenth century, but that does not exclude the 19th century from contemporary literature in India genre. The criterion involved here is not qualitative, but rather simplistic. Furthermore, anything which is fashionable today is considered modern whether it is desirable or not.

However, the more significant aspect of modernity is a value-based approach. Particular attitudes and ideas are conceived more progressive and hence it is natural to condition them as modern as opposed to what existed before. The chronological sense is in a way implicit in this concept. The Indian context of contemporary literature bears an essential relation with the social and political history of the country during the mid-19th century, which indeed had marked a breakthrough. English education had gradually disseminated in India during the first half of the 19th century, but its effect is seen manifestly in Indian literary creation only in the second half of the century. A new approach towards literature had emerged in the major languages. There indeed had existed an unambiguous novelty in form and content, mostly in both literatures, as form and content are always cohesively bound together.

### **Language in Contemporary Indian Literature**

The distinct Indian flavour was back in the English language and thus the works of the modern Indian writers reflected the Indianised English. Be it Salman Rushdie, ShahshiTharoor or AmitavGhosh the deconstruction of the British of English was quite evident. The regional languages were freely used in the prose forms; thus once again breaking, restructuring and adding a new twist and dimension to the traditional narrative patterns. . Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Marathi writers adhered to the `modern` and `post modern` idiom of writing. For instance, Mulk Raj Anand`s work is replete with Hindi and Punjabi words like `haanaa<sup>i</sup>`, `saalamhuzoor<sup>ii</sup>`, `shabashshabash` (**Coolie**). Most path breaking is Arundhati Roy`s use of untranslatedmalyalam words in day to day conversations in her **The God of Small Things** like `chacko sir vannu`, `she is very beautiful sundarikutty`, `oower, orkunniley, kushambi.<sup>iii</sup>

As far as poetry was concerned, it did not necessarily rhyme. Rather rhyme was done away with consciously to bring forth the discordance in the life of modern man. Both Indian English and regional poems deliberately distanced themselves from rhythm.

### **Themes in Contemporary Indian Literature and Post-Colonialism**

Post independence, India was faced with a number of crises including social, political and economic. The society was in a continuous state of flux. This time the writers were no more eulogising their nation. Rather they were bringing to the forefront the reality through their works. Both verse and prose were time and again emphasising on the dominant crises. In order to establish a new narrative, to break away from the colonial mind set, contemporary Indian writers adapted new narrative patterns to put through their notions.

### **Experimentation in Contemporary Indian English Literature**

Making a move from the 18th or 19th century, that had indeed sowed the budding phase of then referred contemporary Indian literature, writers belonging to contemporary India are additionally very conscious about their own culture and traditions. Hence can be witnessed a massive body of vernacular language and literature flourishing in it. While some of the authors pen in English, most of them continue to write in their colloquial languages. The philosophy and thought behind their works exhibit influences of western thoughts and principles. It is quite laudable that these authors have been successful enough to maintain the unique flavour of their region in their works and tinge it further with a modern dimension. The literary genre of the contemporary Indian literature are manifold. Present Indian readers have novels, plays, short stories, literary criticism, science fiction and poetry to choose from.

### **Contemporary Indian Regional Literature**

Besides the Indian English Literature, the regional literature of the subcontinent reflected significant changes as well. For instance, in Marathi literature changes were creeping in after 1800 which was the period of intellectual fervour and reformist didacticism. Many English books were translated in Marathi. Ram Ganesh Gadkari and Prahlad Keshav are also shared the stage with stalwarts like, Mohan Agashe, Sriram Lagoo, Kashinath Ghanekar, Prabhakar Panshikar started playing many immortal characters written by geniuses like Vasant Kanetkar, Kusumagraj, **Vijay Tendulkar**. This movement in drama was suitably supported by Marathi films which did not

become a roaring success. There were pioneers like V. Shantaram and Dadasaheb Phalke and Marathi cinema had a tremendous impact on contemporary film industry.

Modern Marathi poetry commenced with the works of Jyotibha Phule but the later poets like Keshuta Balakavi, Ravi Kiran Mandal wrote poetry inspired by romantic and Victorian English tradition. But the major paradigmatic shift occurred in the mid forties with the poetry of Mardhekar and in the nineties in the hands of Abhidhanantar and Shabadavedh. The Little Magazine movement which became powerful in the fifties because of radical and path breaking writings gained momentum in the nineties too in the hands of Manya Joshi, Hemant Divate and Sachin Ketkar.

Similar developments were also witnessed in the South Indian literary circles. In the 19th century the south Indian literature was inspired by European genres but in the end of the century things started to change with the help of modern writers like VVS Aiyar and Subhramania Bharati who started developing new forms. Modern south Indian literature boasts of great stalwarts who have left their imprint on the mind of numerous readers the world around.

### **Indian Contemporary Litterateurs and Post- Colonialism**

Contemporary writers like Jhaver Chand Meghani, Dharamvir Bharati, Mulk Raj Anand, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Jhumpa Lahiri and Amitav Ghosh have won international awards and put India firmly on the world's literary map. The two most famous names are the Mumbai born Salman Rushdie who received a Booker prize for his *Midnight's Children* and the Kerala author Arundhati Roy who also bagged a Booker for her *God of Small Things*. Other important writers are Shashi Deshpande whose *A Matter Of Time* revolves around the problems in the middle class household when the husband leaves; Rohinton Mistry's *Family Matters* and *Fine Balance* where he deals with Indian society keeping Mumbai as the background. R.K. Narayan is another renowned south Indian writer who scaled great heights with his works revolving around the south Indian small towns of Malgudi. His chief works are *Swami and his Friends*, *The Financial Expert*, *The Guide*, *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *Malgudi Days*. Kamala Markandaya's *Nector in a Sieve* describes the heart wrenching struggle of a south Indian woman against the ravages of time and the destructive forces of nature.

Kaka Saheb Kalelkar is another celebrated writer in pre-independent India. His philosophical writings demonstrate his vast erudition, his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*, his essays on



culture, his travelogues, his translation of Gitanjali had won him applauding appreciation from all quarters. The other eminent personalities that contributed to the literature world redefining contemporary Indian literature during this period comprise: VempalliGangadhar, K.K.Munshi, Joy Somnath, Khushwant Singh and many others.

## Conclusion

Indian contemporary literature is colossal in its scope and encompasses literature of various genres and styles. Contemporary literature in India is influenced considerably in content by the western philosophy and thought. However it knows how exactly to maintain its unique Indian flavour and assorted richness. In the arena of international literature, contemporary Indian literature occupies a position of pride for its sumptuous affluence and originality. Literature of India still bears some of its ingrained colonial impact and present-day writers often base their works in the colonial backdrop. However, this is not something heavily peculiar for a nation under colonial rule for such an extensive period of time. Contemporary Indian writers have taken to writing in English but time and again their themes are based upon an Indian backdrop and household.

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<sup>i</sup>AnandMulk Raj, ‘*Coolie*’

<sup>ii</sup>AnandMulk Raj ‘*Coolie*’;

<sup>iii</sup>Roy Arundhati, ‘*God of Small Things*’;

