



Early Phases of Indian Writing in English

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Abstract:

Indian English Literature is an attempt of displaying the rare masterpieces of Indian English writing. The artist in India conquered the globe through their writings. Since Pre-Independence, the Indian dramatists, novelists, essayists and poets have made significant contribution in the literary world. Many literary awards have been won from Pulitzer to Bookers and the eminent artists made a history in publishing. Different genres like poetry, drama and prose have been tried by the writers who have dreamt to keep themselves abreast with the average readers.

Key Words: *colonization, nationalism, freedom struggle, reality*

The colonial period in India not only introduced new educational and literary paradigms but also created a platform for Indian authors to articulate their experiences in English. The Indo-Anglian fiction is just a century old. The first Indian English novel emerged from Bengal, *Rajmohan's Wife* written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee which was published in a weekly periodical as a series in 1864. This novel was Bankim's first attempt in English whose fame basically rests on his Bengali novels. His nephew Sachin Chandra Chatterjee has been stated that this English novel was left unfinished by Bankim. While undergoing the flies of the prominent the Hindu patriot, Anglo-Bengal paper for 1864 discovered that the binder had tied all but first three of the Indian Field in which the novel of Bankim had appeared. In this manner this

coincidental mistake of the strange binder brought into open the first Indian English novel. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee curved a niche for himself with an excellent skill into a magnificent tool in respect of his stories and novels. For more than two thousand years, tales of romantic adventures, stories and fables had been known to India but as the term is known today, the novel is a western importation. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's experiment made the western form a native writings which describe his supremacy extensively on his beneficiaries and contemporaries.

In the beginning, the Indian English novelists avoided any crucial connection. Progressing on parallel and liberated lines the novelist believed of not having two or three plots. S.M. Mitra's *Hindpore (1909)* deals with



the theme of love of Lord Tata for princes Kamala but this fable is too much loaded with political discussions and ridicules British Sultanate and communal leaders. Various adventures have been stung in *One Thousand and One Nights*. The novel *Vasudev Shastri* published in the book form *Rambles in Vedanta* which is left unfinished by B. Rajam Iyer, attempts to depict the character of Vedantin, a truly great Brahmin but it is overburdened with an undercurrent of Vedentism. In addition to these deficiencies their limitations and range struck the individuals. These novels have very little inclusion of current topics, public affairs, mainstream thoughts and the art. The subjects of these novels never appeared significantly and clearly. The novelists could not prevent such arguments and thought process but in a very indirect way they appeared in these novels and they are not realistic also. The limitation of the subject lessens often the scope. The most successful creation, Narayan in *One Thousand and One Nights* and *Vasudev Shastri*, Barah in *The Prince of Destiny* are types instead of individuals and human behavior to be studied deeply. In these novels inner battle is a rare phenomenon. The core issues which are of principal interest are characters in human life, lacks or are totally absent in Indian English novels of the times. The effect is that a fine portrayed character is a sheer idealized depiction and thus far from the real life characters. In case of Indian English novelists it would be very misleading a comparison with the western novelists compare with the certain standards of the west. Indian English literature was still in its crib and the novelists then had no

idea of the novel as a genre. Most of the Indian English novelists did not reach to the level of their original speakers of the language. Although the medium of writing was English but the novelist could not adopt the imaginative perspectives of those writers. Proficient novelists were yet to appear and so the prior attempts paved the way of natural writings in English.

The writers in the early age, especially from the South of India were accolated by the British Raj and their words are copied from the works of Victorians or the English Romantics. Even the clear impact of Sir Walter Scott is featured thorough the historical novels of this are in form as well as structure. The stories however were weak in artistic efforts written in the nineteen and the first two decade of twentieth century. They featured social evils praised the beloved, qualities of Indian feminine and portrayed rural life of India. The things that affected every reader is that they are just on the track of early Victorian novelists. It would not be incorrect to say that there is a huge distinctness in moral values as depicted by the writers and some difference in subject matter and the range of subjects chosen were broadened by every writer. T. Ramkrishna's *Padmini* depicts a historical theme whereas S.K. Ghosh's *One Thousand and One Nights* is a romantic mimesis of the Arabian Nights. In this manner they have attempted miscellaneous subjects, their viewpoints or the uniqueness of vision being essentially Indian. But the distinctness is much less than similarities from the literary point of view and the structure of the



fiction. Secondly the principal patterns of the novels have individualized differences which are similar. These stories contain vast diversity of incidents and characters brought together around the lead character or a hero who is bound unitedly in a very quiet way by an intrigue and ending in a happy marriage. This is true with all be it Lihiri Kalikrishna's *Roshinaraor* S.K. Ghosh's *Prince of Destiny* or T. Kamkrishna's *Dive for Death*; it is applicable to all novels of the time. For instance, in *Prince of Destiny* besides its individual indivertible difference, the central story runs in the same old perpetual rut- a prince, his loves and his ambitions and culmination with marriage bells. Incidents change, names change but the pattern remains common. The third excellent thing about the novels is that they consist a fantastic blend of strength and weakness. Some novels like *The Hindu Wife* are in all respect bad and most of the novels are average. Each one of them is distorted by false sentiments, melodrama and wooden characters, including the hero who himself is wooden. S.K. Ghosh's *Prince of Destiny* may be considered as the most significant novel of that time. The novel is crowded with a number of interesting discussions with comprehending the conflict in the projection of the point of view of the East and the West. But the character of Bharat is full of vitality and life.

The novel is in which the story is indicated as an organic whole of which each character and incident forms an inevitable part having a conventional plot. It also has and fills

it along characters and a setting with which it has no organic relation. The conclusion is that the central interest of the novel lies in scenes and characters relevant to the stories. The story of Bharath in the *Prince of Destiny* is woven with a very delicate thread. It is studded with unrealistic relations, political discussions, superstitious incidents and even imaginary love scenes.

Mainly the pre-independence social novels were connected with religious fervor and women redemption in social reform philosophy and propaganda rule these novels. In Indo-Anglian novels reflects the social life of those days. It was the period of liberation of women and religious reform. Political agitation was there but a burning desire for full freedom had captured the minds of the people who wanted home rule at the earliest. *Vasudev Shastri* depicts a common ideal Brahmin of those days which is true till date. Though *The Hindu Wife* attempts to keep before the readers the Indian ideal of the Hindu Wife, Nasrin and Sarata and Hingana express the troubles and loves of Indian families. The concept of love in love stories are all dominated families by the traditional of love in which the women even die for her lover. The novels like *The Fatal Garland*, *The Love of Kusuma* are the examples of the same. The politics of the day is reflected in some stories like *The Tales of Bengal* and the novel *Hindapore*. The reflection of the religious reform which was the course of the day finds its reflection in the novels like *Vasudev Shastri* and *Thillan Govindan*. It must be concealed that to portray the life of the



day, high efforts were made but the novels remain far from being satisfactory and highly impractical. There were not any originality or touch of historical perspective in the pre-independence historical novels. They are to an extent and study required by the historical romances. The characteristics of such historical romances competently sums up by Uma Parameshwaram. The stories in these novels are of intrigues and murders, love and betrayed woven round some historical events.

Before 1920 short stories were written but they were transformed artistically into the Indian English fiction which was almost nonexistence at that time. During the period 1920-1947, which is known as the era of awakened national consciousness, short stories were written with an elited artistic quality in them. The notable writers like R.K. Narayan, Humayun Kabir, Mulk Raj Anand, S. Nagarjun, Venkatramani and other produced volumes after volumes of collected short stories that appeared in rapid progression and stories included in them were above average in literary merit as far as the matter of form, plot, technique and style is concern. This period truly bounced with a great number of short stories and novels of abiding literary merit and lot of these novels had preserved the taste of the time. But a void remains as till now the Indian English novel could not create the works which would have recognized the depth of human misery. Perhaps *Men and Rivers*, the novel written by Prof. Humayun Kabir is one of the best novels of this period and can stand

excellently with any good English novel in comparison.

The impact of the First World War which ended in 1918 found its way in literature after 1921. The horrendous bloodshed had stirred the conscience of the whole world. The war doubly affected the Indian artists because it awakened the consciousness of the nation, independence and liberty were prizes worth fighting and dying for. The influenced of the freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi spread all over India. In this era many a writers wrote the songs of martyrdom and freedom and also wrote novels and stories of the independence struggle. The war that startled mankind also introduced new sources of inspiration. All, these subjects were mirrored in the short stories and novels of Indian English writers. This era also produced heroic success and exciting experiments like the western writers, getting close to their literary standards. Initiators and swindlers shoved with men of originality and genius. It was a moment of transformation with highly skilled writings. The happenings all over the world jolted all especially the creative writers and their emotions and creativity found its way in their works. This movement motivated not only the writers and artists but also made its space dramatically and deliberately. Old techniques, topics and ethical novels did not vanish with the new inventions on the contrary the old tradition continued along with the new ones. The realistic novel came into existence in its own right and with a purpose, bringing with it new vision, technique and inspiration.



Definitely there was a change in the themes of the novels. A man like Mulk Raj Anand would plug in the profundity of humble life and demonstrate majesty or dignity in the humanity of an *Untouchable* or a *Coolie*. Novelist like R.K Narayan would come up with topics of the humdrum life that often touched the souls and declared, ‘the world of greatest age begins anew’. Ahmad Ali or Muhammad Habib would search his solution from fancy-lands forlorn in weaving sensual word picture; and yet another writer of the same age A.S.P. Ayyar alienated with the men of ancient Indian Gupta period from prevailing ordeals and currents of live. High flown prose, poetic and artistic narration of Raja Rao illuminated the glare novel. The writers like Mulk Raj Anand, D.F. Karaka, R.K. Narayan, Ahmad Ali, Ahmad Abbas and many others whose contribution to the progress of Indian English novel is of great order produced in this period. The use of the techniques in the Indian English novels is near to the most recent novel of the west. In Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*, the incidents of the freedom struggle are narrated by the village granny. Raja Rao utilized very well the autobiographical form of narration in analyzing the character so useful. His technique is Conradian and the grandmother takes the place of Marlow in this novel. In all his novels, Mulk Raj Anand applies an advanced technique of story-telling. In *Bombay Murder*, S.K. Chettur has produced a well turned out detective story on the lines of Agatha Christie. Simultaneously fighting for the cause of poor and the Pauper Karaka, Ahamad Abbas and the rest with their journalistic writing created such effective

stories which gave an impression crisp fresh air of new and realistic writings.

Actually the Indian Independence movement was not solely a political struggle but for Indians rather an extensive emotional experience that was national in nature during the 1920s and 30s. This national evaluation could have been avoided by the Indian writers. During this century, the Indian English novels dealt with this national experience as theme or indirectly a personal narrative with a significant public background. The political movement in India was not only a political movement alone for freedom but it also linked difference forces which united for ushering India as a Sovereign Independent nation washed out of all evils like political, social, communal, economical which had eschewed very vital national life. Behind the backdrop of national unrest Gandhian ideology was the only moving force. The ideology of M.K. Gandhi not only became a life’s philosophy but also a way of life. The writers in Indian English literature relied on the extensive and intensive use of the ideologies of Gandhi, with the evolution of the all Mahatma Gandhi’s pervasive influence. These novels were dominated by the Gandhian thought and his recurring presence that suited the art of almost all the writers of the period. This very art was used in a distinctive way. He has been treated as a tangible reality, a symbol, a myth, an idea and a philanthropist. In some of the novels he appears in person while in most other novels his presence is invisible or incarnation of a character symbolizing Gandhi. The influence of Mahatma Gandhi on Indian



literature has been two folded. First, the style he developed as a writer is pure, simple and lucid which influenced the modern writings. Secondly he influenced the content with a profound theme. The novels of this period deals directly as the central theme with the national experience. The novels written during this period are clearly describes the various momentous events like the passive resistance movement of Mahatma Gandhi against Black Revolt Act, the Khalifat Movement in Amritsar, the inhuman massacre in Jalianwala Bagh, the boycott of Simon Commission, the famous Dandi March, the prohibition of the foreign goods, the emancipation of women, the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, The Government of India Act of 1935, the Quit India Movement of 1942 and a lot other facts of the movement of Mahatma Gandhi.

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* which was published in 1938 is about Gandhi's Satyagraha Movement in a south Indian village. It is the most poetic novel which was launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920s to give freedom to India from the rule of British. His work reflects Raja Rao's eternal interest in philosophical themes. Raja Rao was greatly influenced by Gandhian thought in the early phase of his life. A.V. Krishna aptly points out:

“Raja Rao has made an effective literary transcription of the Gandhian myth by artistically attuning the reality of his tale to the poetry of truth and its myriad miraculous

transformation in the prism of historical consciousness.”

The Early Indian novels were mainly the historical and most of the novels dealt with princely India. The early attempts of writing the fiction include *The Prince of Destiny* by S.K. Ghose and *Hindpore* by S.M. Mitra both published in 1909. These novelists also took up a romantic approach like the Anglo-Indian writers but failed to stick to historical reality closely. These novels show that the history is romantic entirely with no reality.

Conclusion: Under the British rule, the society was squashed and provided the novelists different themes and forced them to think once again over the various national and social problems. It can also be said that it was a period of realization and of self-awareness. In fact, it was this period in which some of the most significant themes like East-west relationship, struggle for freedom, the exploitation of the underdog, quest for identity, the treatment to rural life, search for justice and fair play was displayed through the Indian English novel.

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