

INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION: AN ANALYSIS

Dr. Vikas Jaoolkar

(Prof. & Head)

Department of English

Govt. Hamidia P.G. College, Bhopal

Tanuja Sharma

Research Scholar

B.U. Bhopal

Abstract

The emergence of the pre-Independence Indo English novel out of its early romantic phase into social realism runs parallel to the gradual intensification of the national movement for freedom. The socio political situation existing in the country is faithfully mirrored right from the early phase of reformist exuberance to the growth of a revolutionary consciousness among the common masses of India. With the intensification of the struggle for national independence, the Indo-English writers rightly realized that literature too had a vital role to play in it. Since the primary aim of the Indian novelist in English has been the portrayal of society, it would not be out of place to have a comprehensive view of the social background against which these novels were written.

Key Words – friction, realism, freedom, political, revolutionary etc.

Introduction

The first world war also had its impact on the writers. It brought them face to face with the actual reality. This impact on the Indo-English writers was two fold, they now sought to portray more realistic, less idealized and a more earthly presentation of life in their works, the writers, inspired with a nationalistic fervour, found in literature a convenient medium to dramatize and popularize their cause. They felt that nationalism and liberty were prizes worth fighting for the struggle for Independence in India was not merely a political struggle, but an all pervasive experience that became a part of the life of almost all the sensitive and enlightened Indians. It is this coincidence which is responsible for a flowering maturity of the Indo-English fiction in the thirties during which period the freedom movement percolated to the very grass-roots of Indian society.

Impact of pre Independence Era

The socio-political movement, which had caught the imagination of the entire nation, also inspired the Indo-English writers. They had the added advantage of western liberal education. With the intensification of the struggle for national independence, the Indo-English writers

rightly realized that literature too had a vital role to play in it. The struggle for Independence in India was not merely a political struggle, but an all pervasive experience that became a part of the life of almost all the sensitive and enlightened Indians. It is this coincidence which is responsible for a flowering maturity of the Indo-English fiction in the 'thirties during which period the freedom movement percolated to the very grass-roots of Indian society. Parallel to this struggle for political freedom was another one on the social plane. It was a fight against superstition, caste system, poverty, illiteracy and many other social ills. No Indian writer, writing in that decade, could avoid reflecting this upsurge in his work.

The constructive programmes launched by Mahatma Gandhi and other national leader's deepened the political and social consciousness of the writers. Along with the nationalistic fervour the other movements like socialism, communism, fascism etc. also became an obsession with the angry young intelligentsia of the times. These political ideologies, emerged in the country in the thirties as a reaction to the prevailing conditions, oppression and tyranny of British imperialism, gross futility and waste brought by the world war I, economic exploitation of the poor and underprivileged class, illiteracy and evils of the caste system. The visit of Tagore and Nehru to the soviet Land and the formation of the All India progressive writers association in the thirties made the writers portray the Indian peasantry in the hope that social transformation of society could be feasible only through mobilizing the opinion of the under privileged classes, the economically exploited plytically subjugated and socially oppressed Indian populace.

The three great names that have left an over whelming impact on the twentieth century writers – Gandhi, Marx and Freud. Gandhi's impact on Indian writer is more direct and widespread. The Indo-English novelist, receiving a powerful ethical stimulus, began to see his country not in terms of self adulation or glorification of the splendid past, but in terms of self analysis, of facing the reality, of being acutely aware of the problems that beset his country. The impact of Gandhi on the Indo-English novelists of the pre independence era can be discerned not only in their selection of themes but also in their presentation. No more attracted by high flown, artificial, oratorical style, they now sought to write in a simple and direct, compact and incisive manner, shorn of all superfluties and flamboyance. Gandhi wielded so much influence on Anand that he started wearing homespuns, found himself transformed from Bloomsbury intellectual to a more emphatically self-conscious Indian and decided writing only about the poorest of the poor human beings, whom he had known.

Aim of the Novelist -

The primary aim of the Indian novelist in English has been the portrayal of society, it would not be out of place to have a comprehensive view of the social background against which these novels were written. Dividing the history of Indo English literature into five periods, Iyenger characterizes the period between 1920-1947 as the era of the Gandhian Revolution and the modern heroic age. Not that the Indo-English Novelist was doing something unique by selecting his theme and narrating it against the contemporary social background. Almost a similar attempt was made by writers in other regional languages of the country as well. It was not a sudden overnight break from the old. Old tendencies, old themes, old technique and old traditional sentimental, didactic novels continued to exist. The appearance of the realistic novel with a purpose is what identifies the thirties during which the Indo English writer, like his counterpart in the regional languages soon realized that his salvation lay, not in reproducing the imitative voices of his colonial masters, but in seeking the strength and fertility of his own cultural sensibility and socio cultural experience. This resulted in the creation of a socially meaningful

literature, remarkable for its intellectual maturity, technical sophistication and artistic vision. The decade of thirties was indeed a blooming period for the Indo-English-fiction. The appearance of the first novels by the big three :

Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), Narayans *Swami and friends* (1935), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938). Anand modeled his novels on the contemporary European and American novelists, borrowing the stream of consciousness technique from James Joyce, and D.H. Lawrence, psychological analysis and social realism from Zola, Dickens, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Narayan sought to deal exclusively with the lower middle class families of southern Indian with gentle, sympathetic irony in a tragic-comic mode, where as Raja Rao dwelt on the puranic Harikatha tradition of storytelling and made an old village granny unfold the narrative in autobiographical form.

This form of narration has been effectively useful in analyzing a situation and unraveling the multifaceted personality of a character. With the appearance of the first novels of these three eminent writers in the thirties, the Indo-English novel may be said to have ripened into maturity. These writers brought in new themes, new techniques, new style and new approach to the novel.

Writers of thirties & their themes -

The Indian creative writers – Tagore, Premchand, and sarat Chandra seem to have influenced Mulk Raj Anand directly. Tagore's universal humanism and idea of brotherhood, Premchand's sympathy for the underdog and Sarat Chandra' deep understanding of the heroic sufferings and essentially noble heart of the humble folk – all these seem to have influenced the artist in Anand, and this influence can be traced throughout his creative works. By portraying the rural India's poverty, Ignorance, privation and perpetual suffering on the one hand, its enduring heroism, purity of heart and fellow feeling on the other, Anand can be said to have achieved in artistic terms what Premchand could not encompass in his works. From the thematic point of view, he did something new, combining all that was best in the East with that in the west from the point of view of form and technique. It is Anand, who first experimented in this field. The credit of furthering the humanistic tradition of Tagore, Premchand and sarat Chandra and bringing the form of the novel in line with the contemporary developments in Britain and France. In his novels he presents the recitalist oriental manner of story telling being replaced by the western dramatic technique of fiction. Gandhi's idea of Indian women to participate actively in the freedom movement made them conscious of the much needed liberation and equality of opportunity in social, political and personal life. This need for woman's liberation and her urge to be considered as an equal and honourable partner of man seems to be one of the central concerns of Nayantara Sahgal's novels with these writers the novel can be said to have stuck deep roots in the Indian soil. By imaginatively treating the contemporary themes, these novelist have sought to explore and interpret India significantly in its various aspects – social, economics, cultural, political etc.

Critical Analysis

The Indo-English criticism is in many ways a haphazard growth and its fortuitous development is partly the product of subjective and biased approach. The lack of objective critical tools and genuine awareness of the craft of criticism often tends to have an adverse impact on the work of art. Some authors of Indo-English fiction have achieved a spurious international reputation, while others have suffered an undue denigration and woeful in ignorance of their high merit because of these critical aberrations. Malgonkar is one of several cases. Contemporary Indian

Literary scene would be complete if it failed to take none of the writings of Ruth Prawar Jhabvala. Here is a unique situation among those writing in India. Born and educated in Europe but married to an Indian and settled in India, which distinguish her writings from those of the foreigner passing through India and the writer native to the soil. She brings to the contemplation of the life around her certain advantages and limitations. Thoroughly familiar with the life and manners of her adopted country, she has been at the same time, gifted with the western sensibility which endows her with an uncommon insight into the typical traits of Indians, particularly the urban upper and middle classes as they keep on undulating between tradition and modernity.

Conclusion

Indian writer in English tend to make a virtue of mysticism and sentimentalism. Raja Rao's meandering into the vedantic philosophy and Narayan's descriptions of the rituals to get rich are not every body's subject matter. A study of the emergence of the novel in India has to more than a purely literary exercise. The factors that shaped the growth of this genre since the mid nineteenth century arose as much from the political and social situation of a colonized country as from several indigenous though attenuated narrative traditions of an ancient culture that survived through constant mutation. English education and through English an exposure to western literature were by far the strongest influences at work. It is not an accident that the first crop of novels in India in Bengali and Marathi, appeared exactly a generation after Macaulay's educational minutes making English a necessary part of an educated Indian's mental make-up were passed. When the novel assumed a distinct generic identity in Europe in the eighteenth century its form was quite different from that of the existing structures of earlier narrative such as the epic, the romance and the Saga. Novel is the second youngest major art form, there has been considerable critical and philosophical speculation in the west. Realism is one of the determining characteristic of the novel in its formative stage, reflected a basic shift in man's view of reality. Many theories about the rise of the novel in the west the two major theories emphasize the novel's close connection with the changing economic and moral bases of society and its member's awareness of the temporal and spatial axes of reality. The consciousness of time and space is a special feature of the novelists apprehension of reality. A whole new world became available to educated Indians in the middle of the nineteenth century. The society represented in the novels of Scott, Dickens and Thackeray was very different from the society Indians knew and lived in. The development of the novel in India is an indirect result of the spread of English education consequent exposure to Victorian literature.

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