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Indian Writing in English-Indian Novelist

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Abstract

The journey of Indian English literature, spurred by the emergence of Indian Diaspora writers and the brilliance of literary giants like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, and Amit Chaudhary, has been a transformative odyssey. This exploration spans the rich tapestry of Indian history, culture, and language and resonates on a global scale. The post-1980 era marked a literary renaissance, with Indian Diaspora writers unveiling the captivating world of Indian myths, folklore, and cultural dialogues that had thrived in villages for generations. Salman Rushdie's groundbreaking work, "Midnight's Children," heralded a new era, inspiring countless writers to embrace the genre. These literary pioneers, each with their unique narrative styles, have made an indelible impact on the literary landscape. Amitav Ghosh's historical narratives, Shashi Tharoor's satirical wit, Vikram Seth's poetic verses, and Amit Chaudhary's nuanced storytelling have captivated readers worldwide. The global acclaim garnered by Indian English novelists underscores the universal appeal of their works, often surpassing native English-language counterparts in prestigious literary awards. This recognition not only validates their literary prowess but also celebrates India's rich storytelling traditions. Indian English literature, transcending geographical boundaries, resonates with readers from diverse backgrounds. The future promises a continued flourishing of Indian literature in English, offering more captivating narratives that will enrich the global literary tapestry. The odyssey of Indian English literature stands as a testament to the enduring power of storytelling, cultural exchange, and the universal human experience, ensuring its place as a treasure trove of narratives for generations to come.

Keywords: Indian novelist, English literature, English fiction

Introduction

Indian literature, with its rich tapestry of languages and cultures, has a legacy that stretches back millennia. Amidst this vibrant literary tradition, the emergence of Indian novelists writing in English has carved a unique niche. The Indian English novel is a literary marvel that encapsulates the ethos, diversity, and evolving narratives of the Indian subcontinent. This essay delves into the evolution and impact of Indian writing in English, exploring the intersection of Western literary form with Indian content, and highlighting the significant contributions of Indian novelists.

The Indian English novel is a product of historical, social, and linguistic forces. It began to take shape during the British colonial era when India became a crucible of cultures and languages. The colonization brought English to the Indian shores, making it the language of administration and education. While English was initially perceived as a tool of colonial dominance, it soon evolved into a medium of creative expression.

One of the earliest Indian novelists in English was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, whose novel "Rajmohan's Wife" (1864) marked the birth of the Indian English novel. This novel not only laid the foundation but also set the tone for subsequent

literary endeavors. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, Indian novels predominantly addressed social and, to some extent, historical issues. They drew inspiration from British fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the works of Defoe, Fielding, and Scott.

As Indian society underwent profound changes in the wake of the British Raj and the struggle for independence, the themes of Indian English novels began to evolve. The early novels often explored social issues, reflecting the prevailing concerns of that era. For instance, novels like Ram Krishna Punt's "The Bay of Bengal" (1866) and Tarachand Mookerjee's "The Scorpions or Eastern Thoughts" (1868) engaged with social intricacies and cultural nuances.

However, it was during the early to mid-twentieth century that Indian English literature witnessed a transformation. Writers like Rabindranath Tagore and R. K. Narayan emerged as prominent figures. Tagore's works, such as "Gora" (1910) and "The Home and the World" (1916), delved into complex themes of nationalism, identity, and the clash between tradition and modernity. R. K. Narayan's novels, set in the fictional town of Malgudi, offered a delightful glimpse into the everyday lives of ordinary Indians^[1].

Indian English novels hold immense cultural significance. They serve as mirrors reflecting the multifaceted Indian society, capturing its traditions, dilemmas, and aspirations. These novels have played a pivotal role in preserving and showcasing India's linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. The concept of hybridization is central to Indian English literature. It represents the amalgamation of Indian content with Western narrative forms. Indian novelists adeptly interweave their storytelling with diverse linguistic influences, creating a literary landscape that is uniquely Indian yet globally accessible. The seamless fusion of Indian cultural motifs with the English language has not only expanded the scope of English literature but has also enriched the global literary arena.

Indian English novels encompass a wide array of themes and narratives that resonate with readers both within and outside India. These novels often grapple with the complexities of Indian society, exploring themes such as caste, class, religion, gender, and the post-colonial identity.

One recurring theme is the tension between tradition and modernity. Indian novelists, like Chetan Bhagat in "2 States" (2009), vividly depict the clash between traditional values deeply rooted in Indian culture and the aspirations of a rapidly modernizing society. Such narratives resonate with a generation navigating the complexities of a changing India.

Indian novelists writing in English have not only made their mark within India but have also gained international recognition. Writers like Arundhati Roy, whose debut novel "The God of Small Things" (1997) won the Man Booker Prize, have achieved global acclaim. Roy's evocative prose and exploration of themes like social hierarchy and political unrest have garnered readers worldwide.

Another notable figure is Salman Rushdie, whose magnum opus "Midnight's Children" (1981) earned him the Booker of Bookers Prize. Rushdie's work is renowned for its magical realism and its portrayal of post-independence India through the eyes of its protagonist, Saleem Sinai ^[2].

The Indian English novel has not only enriched literature but has also contributed significantly to cultural and societal discourse. These novels provide a platform for critical examinations of contemporary issues, fostering dialogues on topics such as identity, diversity, and social justice.

Furthermore, Indian novels in English have transcended the literary realm to influence other forms of art and media. Many of these novels have been adapted into successful films and television series, reaching broader audiences and sparking discussions on pertinent social issues.

In conclusion, Indian writing in English has evolved into a dynamic and influential literary tradition. It encapsulates the multifaceted nature of Indian society, navigating through its rich history, diverse cultures, and complex challenges. Indian novelists writing in English have masterfully blended Western narrative forms with Indian content, creating a literary genre that is both unique and globally resonant.

The themes and narratives explored in these novels offer profound insights into the cultural, social, and political landscape of India. They provide a window into the intricacies of Indian society, offering readers a deeper understanding of its nuances and contradictions ^[3].

Moreover, Indian English novels have not remained confined to the realm of literature but have permeated popular culture and discourse, making a significant impact on society at large. As the world continues to explore the rich literary heritage of India, Indian novelists writing in English remain at the

forefront, shaping narratives, challenging conventions, and leaving an indelible mark on global literature.

The Rise of Women Novelists in Indian English Fiction

The evolution of Indian English fiction has been a fascinating journey marked by the emergence of women novelists who defied the constraints of their time. In an era when female education was not widespread, these pioneering writers made their literary presence felt. Before the turn of the nineteenth century, three notable female fiction writers dominated the literary landscape: Toru Dutt (1856-77), Krupabai Sathianadhan, and Shevantibai M. Nikambe.

As the twentieth century unfolded, it ushered in a new generation of women novelists who made significant contributions to the genre. Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909), a prominent figure, translated his Bengali novels into English. Works such as "The Lake of Palms: A Story of Indian Domestic Life" (1902) and "The Slave Girl of Agra, an Indian Historical Romance" (1909) showcased his literary prowess.

Sarath Kumar Ghosh's novels were exemplary examples of the evolving East-West relationship. Meanwhile, Sirdar Jogendra Singh, a Punjabi novelist, explored historical themes in works like "Nur Jahan, The Romance of an Indian Queen" (1909), "Nasrin, An Indian Medley" (1919), "Kamla" (1925), and "Kammi" (1931).

The literary landscape saw sporadic appearances of novels, primarily by writers hailing from the Bengal and Madras presidencies. Notable among these were ST. Ram's "Cosmopolitan Hindustani" (1902), M. Venkatsiya Naidu's "The Princess Kamla or The Model Wife" (1904), and LB. Pal's "A Glimpse of Zanana Life in Bengal" (1904). SM. Mitra's "Hindupore, A Peep behind the Indian Unrest-An Anglo Indian Romance" (1909), SB. Banerjea's "The Adventures of Mrs. Russell" (1909), and Balkrishna's "The Love of Kusuma An Eastern Lvoe Story" (1910) added depth to the evolving literary landscape.

BK. Sarkar's "Man of Letters" (1911), M. M. Munshi's "Beauty and Joy" (1914), Svarna Kumari Ghosal's "The Fatal Garland" (1915), T.R. Krishnaswamy's "Salma: A Tale of the Times of Old" (1916), and T.K. Gopal Pannikar's "Storm and Sunshine" (1916) continued to contribute to the growing body of Indian English fiction. Srinivasa Rau's "Varanasi: The Portuguese Ambassador" (1917) and C. Parthasarthy's "Sangili Karuppan, or The Wheel of Destiny" (1920) further enriched the literary tapestry of the era ^[3].

These women novelists and their male counterparts paved the way for the evolution of Indian English fiction, demonstrating resilience and creativity in an era marked by societal constraints. Their works remain a testament to the enduring power of storytelling and the indomitable spirit of Indian literature.

The Impact of Social and Political Change in Indian English Novels

The Indian subcontinent's literary landscape has been profoundly shaped by its rich history, societal transformations, and political movements. The Indian English novel, a significant literary genre, has played a pivotal role in reflecting and responding to these changes. This essay explores the influence of social and political movements on Indian English novels, tracing the evolution of the genre through the works of prominent authors.

The nationwide movement led by Mahatma Gandhi during India's struggle for independence brought about significant

social and political changes. This period of upheaval found its expression in Indian English literature. Novels such as K.S. Venkatramani's "Murugan, The Tiller" (1927) and "Kandan, The Patriot: A Novel of New India in Making" (1932) reflected the zeitgeist of the era. These works delved into the complexities of a changing India, where the fight for freedom was intertwined with societal reforms.

A.S.P. Ayyer and Tamilian novelist Krishna Swamy Nagarajan further exemplified the confluence of realism and irony in Indian English novels. Their writings captured the multifaceted nature of Indian society during a time of great transition.

The foundation of the Indian English novel, as we know it today, can be attributed to the pioneering efforts of Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao. These literary stalwarts defined the parameters within which Indian novels in English would operate.

Mulk Raj Anand, with works spanning from "Untouchable" (1935) to "Nine Moods of Bharata: Novel of a Pilgrimage" (1998), brought to life the struggles and aspirations of the downtrodden. His novels, such as "Coolie" (1936) and "Two Leaves and A Bud" (1937), laid bare the stark social disparities in India. Anand's writing was deeply influenced by his autobiographical experiences and his exposure to the works of Sarat Chandra and Prem Chand.

R. K. Narayan, on the other hand, created the fictional universe of Malgudi, where he portrayed the idiosyncrasies of everyday life. Through works like "Swami and Friends" (1935) and "The Guide" (1958), Narayan provided a window into the quirks and nuances of Indian society. His novels, set in a timeless and imaginary Indian town, celebrated the ordinary and the extraordinary in a rapidly changing nation.

Raja Rao, often regarded as the most Indian of Indian novelists in English, was a stylist, symbolist, and mythmaker. His novels, including "Kanthapura" (1938) and "The Serpent and the Rope" (1960), explored the philosophical and cultural dimensions of India. Rao's writing painted a vivid picture of the East-West encounter and the complexities of an evolving nation [5].

Post-Independence Renaissance

The dawn of independence ushered in a new era for Indian English literature. The complexities of a newly independent India became fertile ground for literary exploration. Authors grappled with the joys and tragedies of a free nation, broadening their thematic horizons.

Bhabani Bhattacharya, deeply influenced by Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi, believed that a novel should have a social purpose and convey the society's viewpoint. His novels, including "So Many Hungers" (1947) and "A Goddess Named Gold" (1960), addressed themes of exploitation and societal change. Bhattacharya's fiction embodied the idea that art should teach through its vivid interpretation of life.

Evolution of Indian English Fiction: A Journey through Prominent Novelists

The realm of Indian English fiction has witnessed a transformative journey, with each novelist contributing a distinct facet to the literary landscape. This narrative traverses the trajectories of renowned Indian novelists and explores the evolution of this genre, encompassing political realism, social complexities, and intricate human relationships.

In the realm of political realism, Indian English fiction found its early trailblazers. Malgonkar's magnum opus, "The

Princess" (1963), emerges as a shining example of a political novel. This work masterfully weaves intricate political narratives, offering readers a profound understanding of the socio-political milieu of the time.

Khushwant Singh, an iconic figure in Indian English literature, emerged as a prominent exponent of crude realism. His novel "Train to Pakistan" (1956) vividly depicts the harrowing partition of India, delving into the brutal realities of that tumultuous period. Subsequent works like "I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale" (1959), "Delhi" (1992), and "The Company of Women" (1999) continue to reflect his unflinching commitment to portraying the stark realities of Indian society.

Moving beyond political realism, the landscape of Indian English fiction encompasses a rich tapestry of realist narratives. J. Menon Marath, with novels like "Wound of Spring" (1960) and "The Sale of an Island" (1960), presents a nuanced portrayal of human experiences. His works delve into the complexities of life, capturing the essence of the human condition.

Bal Chandra Rajan, on the other hand, skillfully blends realism with elements of fantasy in novels like "The Dark Dancer" (1959) and "Too Long in the West" (1961). These works offer readers a unique literary experience, fusing the mundane with the imaginative [6].

Indian English fiction is not confined to realism alone; it has also ventured into experimental territory. G.V. Desani's "All About H. Hatter" (1948) marked a bold step into the realm of experimental novels. This work challenged traditional narrative structures, paving the way for innovation in Indian English fiction.

In the post-independence era, a new wave of novelists emerged, enriching Indian English fiction with diverse perspectives. Anand Lal, M.V. Rama, Jatindra Mohan Ganguli, Roman Basu, and others contributed their unique voices to the literary canon.

Ruskin Bond, a literary gem, produced a series of captivating novels, including "The Room on The Roof" (1966), "An Axe for The Rani" (1972), "Love is a Sad Story" (1975), and "A Flight of Pigeons." His storytelling prowess and evocative narratives have charmed readers for decades.

The post-independence era also witnessed the rise of women novelists in Indian English fiction. These authors formed a significant school within the literary landscape, addressing a wide range of themes and issues.

Kamla Markandaya, a prominent figure among these women novelists, crafted narratives that showcased a rich variety of settings, characters, and effects. Her seminal work, "Nectar in a Sieve" (1964), delves into the trials and tribulations of an innocent couple in a South Indian village. Markandaya's exploration of the East-West confrontation in her novels sets her apart as a perceptive chronicler of her times.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala, known for her subtlety and skillfulness in unraveling intricate human relationships, presented readers with novels like "The Nature of Passion" (1956) and "The Householder" (1960). Her ability to navigate the complexities of human emotions is a hallmark of her literary legacy [7].

Nayantara Sahgal, through novels such as "Rich Like Us" (1985) and "Mistaken Identity" (1988), delved into the political turmoil of the outside world and the private torment of individuals. Her works serve as a poignant commentary on the intersection of politics and personal lives.

Anita Desai, a distinguished novelist, delved into the dilemmas faced by individuals trapped in adverse life situations. Her novels, including "Clear Light of Day" (1980)

and "In Custody" (1984), reflect the private torments of broken marriages and the breakdown of communication between individuals.

As the contemporary period unfolded, a new generation of women novelists emerged. Authors like Bharti Mukherjee, Raji Narasimhan, and Veena Nagpal continued to enrich Indian English fiction with their narratives, addressing a myriad of themes and experiences.

In essence, Indian English fiction has undergone a remarkable evolution, from political realism to experimental narratives and the exploration of human dilemmas. The contributions of novelists, both male and female, have shaped a literary landscape that reflects the complexities and diversities of Indian society. As these narratives continue to captivate readers, Indian English fiction remains a dynamic and evolving genre, offering profound insights into the human experience.

Pioneering Novelists of the 1980s and 1990s

The literary landscape of Indian English literature underwent a remarkable transformation during the 1980s and 1990s, marked by the emergence of several notable novelists. These authors, both male and female, contributed significantly to the evolving narrative of Indian literature. Let's explore the literary journeys of some of these distinguished writers.

Shashi Deshpande, born in 1938, is an exceptional novelist whose works delve deep into the middle-class fabric of Indian society. Her writing style, characterized by subtlety and restraint, has earned her acclaim. Notable novels by Deshpande include "The Dark Holds No Terrors" (1980), "If I Die Today" (1982), "Come Up and Be Dead" (1983), "Roots and Shadows" (1983), "A Matter of Time" (1996), and "Small Remedies" (2000). Deshpande's oeuvre predominantly revolves around the experiences of women and their struggles in society.

Githa Hariharan, born in 1954, is another influential writer whose literary journey began in the 1990s. Her debut novel, "The Thousand Faces of Night" (1992), introduced readers to her distinctive narrative voice. Subsequent works such as "The Ghosts of Vasu Master" (1994) and "When Dreams Travel" (1999) showcase her feminist perspective and her penchant for exploring complex identities^[8].

Mrinal Pande, born in 1946, made her literary debut with "Daughter's Daughter" (1993), a novel that intricately delves into the dynamics of generational relationships within Indian families. Her later work, "My Own Witness" (2000), continues to reflect her keen insights into familial bonds and the evolving role of women in society.

Arundhati Roy needs little introduction, having achieved global acclaim with her debut novel, "The God of Small Things" (1997), which won the prestigious Booker Prize. Roy's narrative style challenges conventional structures, inviting readers to navigate intricate storytelling. Her work explores themes of family, social hierarchies, and the post-colonial Indian experience.

While these women novelists gained well-deserved recognition, the literary landscape of Indian English literature in the 1980s and 1990s also witnessed the contributions of male writers. One notable figure is Ruskin Bond, known for his charming tales that resonate with readers of all ages. His works include "The Room on the Roof" (1956), "Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra" (1991), and "A Flight of Pigeons" (2003).

Chaman Nahal, a prolific writer, made his mark with works like "Azadi" (1975), a novel centered around the partition of

India. In the 1980s, Nahal continued to produce compelling narratives, including "The Crown and the Loincloth" (1981), "The Salt of Life" (1990), "The Triumph of The Tricolour" (1993), "Sunrise in Fiji" (1988), and "The Boy and the Mountain" (1997). Nahal's novels often grapple with themes of alienation, cultural encounters, love, existentialism, and materialism.

Emergence of Indian Diaspora Writers

The period following 1980 witnessed a remarkable transformation in the landscape of Indian literature, particularly in the realm of Indian English fiction. This era saw the Indian Diaspora writers taking center stage, unveiling the captivating world of myth, history, and culture that had been part of domestic conversations in Indian villages for generations. One of the most notable figures during this literary resurgence was Salman Rushdie, born in 1947. Rushdie's unique style, characterized by what he termed 'chutnification' of history and language, left critics and readers alike enthralled. His groundbreaking work, "Midnight's Children" (1981), ushered in a new era in Indian English fiction.

Salman Rushdie's influence extended far beyond his own works. He opened doors for a plethora of talented writers who would go on to make significant contributions to the genre. Among these literary luminaries were Amitav Ghosh (b. 1956), Shashi Tharoor (b. 1956), Vikram Seth (b. 1952), and Amit Chaudhary (b. 1962). Each of these authors brought their unique perspectives and storytelling prowess to the forefront of Indian English literature.

Amitav Ghosh embarked on his literary journey with "The Circle of Reason" (1986), followed by works such as "In an Antique Land" (1992), "The Calcutta Chromosome" (1986), and "The Glass Palace" (2000).

Shashi Tharoor, in his debut novel "The Great Indian Novel" (1989), showcased a mastery of post-modern fiction, blending history and satire in a compelling narrative.

Vikram Seth, known for his versatility, ventured into verse with "The Golden Gate" (1986) and later crafted epic narratives like "A Suitable Boy" (1993) and "An Equal Music" (1999).

Amit Chaudhary, with his four novels, including "A Strange and Sublime Address" (1991) and "Freedom Song" (1998), displayed a nuanced understanding of the human experience.

The Indian English novel, which had its share of challenges in its early years, achieved international recognition and acclaim. Rabindranath Tagore's Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 marked the beginning of this literary journey, and it culminated with V.S. Naipaul receiving the same prestigious honor. Indian English literature transcended geographical boundaries, resonating with readers worldwide^[9].

Indian novelists writing in English demonstrated their prowess by competing with native English-language novelists for major literary awards. This newfound global prominence not only validated their literary contributions but also showcased the richness of Indian storytelling traditions.

Today, Indian English novels have reached unparalleled heights of success, not only in the Indian market but also on the global stage. These novels are celebrated for their riveting stories, intricate plots, and the seamless fusion of languages and cultures. The journey of Indian English literature has been remarkable, yet there is much more to come.

Undoubtedly, Indian novelists have emerged as creative masterminds, weaving captivating narratives that resonate with readers of diverse backgrounds. The Indian English novel has secured a notable status in the literary world, and its influence continues to grow. As the world eagerly anticipates the next chapter in this literary odyssey, one thing is certain-Indian literature in English has a promising and enduring future.

Conclusion

The journey of Indian English literature, as illuminated by the emergence of Indian Diaspora writers and the remarkable contributions of literary giants such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, and Amit Chaudhary, is a testament to the enduring power of storytelling. This literary odyssey, which began with the rich tapestry of Indian myths, folklore, and cultural conversations, has evolved into a global phenomenon.

The post-1980 era witnessed a literary renaissance, where Indian Diaspora writers took the stage, introducing the world to the intricate blend of history, language, and culture that defines India. Salman Rushdie's groundbreaking "Midnight's Children" marked the dawn of a new era, inspiring countless writers to follow suit.

These pioneers of Indian English literature, each with their unique voice and narrative style, have left an indelible mark on the literary landscape. Amitav Ghosh's historical narratives, Shashi Tharoor's satirical wit, Vikram Seth's poetic verses, and Amit Chaudhary's nuanced storytelling have captivated readers worldwide.

The global recognition and accolades garnered by Indian English novelists underscore the universal appeal of their works. They have not only competed but often surpassed native English-language novelists in prestigious literary awards. This recognition not only validates their literary prowess but also celebrates the rich storytelling traditions of India.

Indian English literature stands as a testament to the enduring power of storytelling and cultural exchange. It has transcended geographical boundaries, resonating with readers from diverse backgrounds. The future of Indian literature in English is bright, promising more captivating stories and narratives that will continue to enrich the global literary landscape.

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