

Core 304 Indian English Literature: Post Independence Age & Modern Period.

UNIT 1

Q.2 Major Trends in the Novel of the Period of Fifty Years After Independence of India:

1. Introduction:

Δ Post-Independence Indian English fiction *is virtually synonymous with Post-colonial Indian English fiction.*

Δ The visibility of Indian English fiction dates *back to the fourth decade of the twentieth century when Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao published their novels in English.*

2. The Pioneers:-

Δ *Anand's Untouchable (1935) and Coolie (1936),* *Narayan's Swami and Friends (1935) and Bachelor of Arts (1936) and Raja Rao's Kanthapura (1938) are the pioneering Indian English novels based on socio-political realism.*

Δ Then came the partition of the sub-continent and a number of significant novels on the theme of partition were published. They include *Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan (1956), B.Rajan's The Dark Dancer (1959), AttiaHosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961) and Manohar Malgaonkar's A Bend in the Ganges (1964).*

****3. Major Types of Realism:-****

Δ If we take a look at the trends in Indian English fiction, **we will be struck by realism that underlies this genre in the post-Independence period.**

Δ We come across **five broad types of realism – social realism, psychological realism, historical realism, mythical realism and magic realism** in Indian English fiction.

Δ Women novelists like **Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal and Shashi Deshpande lay emphasis on social realism and family relationships.**

Δ The woman in women's fiction seeks an identity of her own, independent of her husband.

Δ **Shiv K. Kumar** has rightly observed this with reference to **Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence.**

****4. Social Realism:-****

Δ In *That Long Silence*, **Jaya the protagonist, resents the image of a wife 'yoked' to her husband – 'a pair of bullocks yoked together'.* Δ This is **the image that haunts her all the time.**

Δ So **married to Mohan – a sedate, well-placed business executive** – she secretly wishes to savour existential freedom through some disaster befalling him.

Δ So she **feels 'relieved' when he is charged with embezzlement and they have to live in a sort of hide-out.**

Δ She now **feels redeemed as a woman with an identity of her own, seeing her husband rudderless and pathetically dependent upon her.**

****5. Psychological Realism:-****

Δ Nayantara Sehgal writes about *the political situation in the country, and politics becomes a metaphor for her fiction.*

Δ *Anita Desai, *on the other hand, dives deep into the human psyche and writes about psychological realism.*

Δ Even when *two characters meet, they use this particular type of language – the language of their thoughts, their interior selves.*

Δ Anita Desai *experiments this in her SahityaAkademi Award winning novel, Fire on the Mountain.*

Δ The *novel depicts the predicament of women in a society that fails to satisfy their desire and fulfil their hope.*

Δ There is a *need for women to understand each other.*

6. Mythical Realism:-

Δ Mythic realism we find in the fiction of *Shashi Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel and Kiran Nagarkar's Cuckold.*

Δ Tharoor by *borrowing names from the Mahabharata for his characters makes an effort to give the myth contemporary relevance.*

Δ. Nagarkar's *Cuckold won him the Central SahityaAkademi Award for 2000.*

Δ Cuckold is a *different kind of novel, the like of which we don't find in Indian English literature.*

Δ It is a *culmination of history and legend, artistically woven into the framework of fiction.*

Δ Nagarkar has done *a good deal of research in Rajput history to write the novel.*

Δ The time of the novel is the *sixteenth century India and the locale is the Rajput Kingdom of Mewar.*

Δ The novelist has *made an attempt to reiterate the text in the historical context.*

Δ The protagonist is *Bhojraj, Meerabai's husband and the novel is depicted from his point of view in the first person narrative.*

Δ The canvas of the novel is vast – it encompasses four kingdoms : *1. Rajput Kingdom of Mewar (Capital : Chittor),*

2. Muslim Kingdom of Gujarat (Capital : Ahmedabad),

3. Muslim Kingdom of Malwa (Capital : Mandu),

4. Muslim Kingdom of Delhi (Capital : Delhi) – and the characters of the novel are drawn from history & it contains 49 chapters.

7. Magic Realism:-

Δ Indian English novelists have experimented with *magic realism following Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children (1980).*

Δ *Amitav Ghosh is very successful in handling magic realism in his fiction.*

Δ His best known novel *Shadow Lines (which won the SahityaAkademi Award in 1989).*

Δ For him *'History is Textuality/Textuality is History'.*

Δ His *Glass Palace and The Hungry Tide* are well known novels.

Δ *Gita Hariharan makes use of magic realism in her novel, The Thousand Faces of Night (1992) and When Dreams Travel (1999).*

Δ *Vikram Chandra's Red Earth and The Pouring Rain brought a new kind of experimentation with myths of the land.*

Δ His *re-creation of myths in fictional terms is very successful.*

8. Feminist Criticism:-

Δ *Feminist criticism and gender studies have emboldened women writers the world over to write freely about love and sex and above all about a woman's right* to consummate love the way she likes.

Δ This gave rise to the description of *lesbian relationship in fiction as ManjuKapur has done in A Married Woman.*

Δ A woman's right *to choose a lover and have a love child* became favourite themes with women novelists as we find in *R.P.Jhabvala's Heat and Dust and Margaret Atwood's Surfacing.*

Δ *ManjuKapur depicts the love relationship between a woman-student and a married professor resulting in marriage in Difficult Daughters.*

Δ Arundhati Roy depicts *love and sex boldly in The God of Small Things.*

9. The Impact of Indianess in Indian English novels:-

Δ Indian English fiction faces two challenges – *one, at home posed by Bhasa literature novels and two, abroad posed by English language novels written the world over.*

Δ Indian English novelists belong to three groups - *one group of writers like Shashi Deshpande and Kiran Nagarkar and many others who stay in the country and write in English,*

the second group of writers like Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh and many others who divide their time between the country and abroad and write about their country and also other countries, and

The *third group of immigrant writers (or writers of Indian origin) like Bharathi Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie and many others also write about India and the Indian sub-continent.*

Δ Shiv K. Kumar's *A River with Three Banks (1998), is a brilliant novel on communal hatred and tension between different communities in our country.*

Δ It portrays *the communal holocaust in the aftermath of partition in 1947.*

10. Various Aspects in Novels:-

Δ Indian English novelists writing in India or abroad or those *who write both in India and abroad, are essentially writing in the same way and producing national literature in the English language.*

Δ This *new national literature in English is not very much different from Bhasa literature written in different regional languages of our country.*

Δ Bruce King emphasizes this point when he says that, *‘‘Just as there is no clear dividing line between the new national literatures in English and their overseas branches in the United States or England, so there is no clear division between the new national literatures in English and in local languages’’.*

11. Conclusion:-

Post-Independence Indian English fiction is *post-colonial Indian English fiction because* it continues to *evoke colonial legacies in the contemporary society and seeks to compete with English language fiction for international prizes like the Commonwealth Fiction Prize, and the Booker Prize, etc.*

In sum, post-Independence *Indian English fiction is rich in thematic content and it has been acquired as an idiom of its own which can be called, ‘Indian English Idiom’. It is immensely readable.*

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