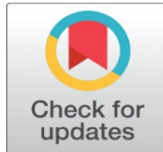
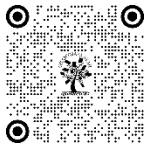


CHANGING TRADITIONS IN INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

Indian English fiction started as a major force with three pillars of Indian English fiction where stories more or less moved around freedom struggle and Gandhian philosophy to country life in India with their traditions, class, caste, religious affairs. But from mere user to English language to major force in style and output was achieved with Indian diasporas contributing to English literature their original tell of living abroad as Indian and their urban stories as well as stories of modern urban Indians. They are well travelled and they can see Indian stories objectively. They are well read and has good idea of Commonwealth literary output. They are writers who are living abroad and they at ease with language and modern in their outlook. These new stories they tell is about youth, urban world, affluent Indians etc. have changed the typical Indian fiction concept. They are the new face of India

Keywords: Indian Fiction, Commonwealth Writers, Urban Stories

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian Writing in English fiction has evolved and come a long way from the mere use of English language to the authentic tool for expressing one's ideas, thoughts, concepts and imagination. Indian writers in English have made the most significant contribution to the field of the novel. Ever since the publication of Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* in 1864, Indian novel has grown considerably in bulk, variety and maturity. With globalization and English as medium of education English language readership has increased significantly and number of writers have emerged and they have made their mark at the international level as original storytellers.

2. INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION

Indian English fiction started as a major force with three pillars of Indian English fiction where stories more or less moved around freedom struggle and Gandhian philosophy to country life in India with their traditions, class, caste, religious affairs. But from mere user to English language to major force in style and output was achieved with Indian diasporas contributing to English literature their original tell of living abroad as Indian and their urban stories as well as stories of modern urban Indians. They made their marks and also awarded for it.

Upamanyu Chatterjee, with his novel *English August* (1988), got great success. His tone was ironic and he hit all the foibles of the Indian bureaucracy. Chatterjee brilliantly uses Indianised English in the novel. Arundhati Roy is one such talented writer of the post- *Midnight's Children* era who shows real psychological depth while conveying the realities of culture and history. Her novel *The God of Small Things* has earned much critical attention all over the world and fetched her the Booker Prize. Undoubtedly, Roy has managed to free her from the shackles of conventional writing. She successfully experimented with the language, and has been duly rewarded for that.

3. INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION: CONTEMPORARY SCENARIO

As the number of readers Indian English fiction has increased. So the quality of writing has also improved. The writers are now no longer active users of English but they have English as their first language (Lingua franca). They express themselves with native proficiency. They are the writers who think and write in one language, which is English. They have travelled in various continents and they have something substantial to tell their readers. Indian English fiction is now a world literature. It has struggled, endured indifferences of the west and now finally emerged as a clear winner among the recent fiction writers.

4. MATURING THE STORY TELLING AS AN ART

Modern Indian English fiction writers have stunned the literary world with their works. Their works have enriched the world literature, and they have been awarded with accolades and prizes in the field of literature. But a careful study of their development makes it clear that there are two kinds of writers who contributed to the genre of novel: The first group of writers focused on the various social problem of India like poverty, class discrimination, social dogmas, rigid religious norms etc. which has an appeal to the West. The second group of writers includes those who are global Indians, who are Indian by birth but they have lived abroad, so they see Indian realities objectively. They are at ease with the English language and have enriched English language with their creativity. Even though handling Indian sensibility these writers are no longer the slavish imitators of English. They have used English so creatively that the freshness becomes a prominent feature in their language.

They have experimented with the language and fused Indian spirit in the foreign language. They have coined new words and idiomatic expressions in English and added a new flavour in English language. Some of these terms are now accepted as English words. The West relished it with zest and they have their permanent place in the world literature.

5. COMMONWEALTH WRITERS

These writers are inspired by post-colonial commonwealth writers like Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka. These writers have similar experiences as suppressed, and from these they emerge with their creativity to stun the West with their literary genius. Achebe was a conscious artist of the language. In his essay "*The African Writer and the English Language*" (1964), Achebe wrote (Barlow, 2001: P.34) that the African writer should "aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience... a new English... altered to suit its new African surroundings". This statement clearly suggests Achebe's attitude to the use of English what he wanted in the writing was local flavor in the foreign language.

6. THE FICTIONS

The English language has that inherent quality to absorb these new elements. In the words of C.D. Narasimhaiah (Barlow, 2001: P.8) "English is not a pure language but a fascinating combination of tongues welded into a fresh unity." The readers often come across words which are culture specific. However such uses of language as untranslatable words have an important function. They signify a certain cultural experience which they can not hope to reproduce. In the foreward to his novel *Kanthapura* Raja Rao explains the particular tasks faced by the writer in conveying cultural specificity in a different language. He writes,

The telling has not been easy, one has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word alien, yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make up like Sanskrit or Persian was before – but not of our emotional make up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. (P.VII)

The use of the English language is often a vital issue when we approach the post colonial texts. The obvious reason is that the native writers were using a medium that was a foreign language and it did not naturally reflect the culture and experiences that they wished to convey, they have had to shape it to suit their purpose often changing of language is seen as their refusal to be dominated by the culture of their earlier masters Rushdie was the major Indian English writer who experimented with the language. He was highly praised for his creative use of language in his magnum opus *Midnight's children* (1981). It attempts adventurously in the narrative style and what could be done with Indian material in the English language in particular. Rushdie almost takes a linguistic risk with the abundant use of street language of the cities, daring to translate idioms and metaphors and occasional bilingual puns. But we cannot deny the fact that there is a generation of Indians for whom English is like their day to day language. They are at ease with it and therefore, capable of using it in playful, creative and impure ways, mixed with other Indian languages. We often come across such mixed English at various informal places but to write a novel with this is quite bizarre but Rushdie ventured and he conquered. In the novel, Rushdie showed the attitude as he himself claimed 'the empire writing back' with a vengeance. He writes

Those of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real word.... To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free."
(Mukherjee, 1999 : P.71)

We can see a typical post-colonial attitude in his writings. Having been taught the masters language, one may "know how to curse" (The master?) in it, as famously did Caliban in what has now become a post- colonial tenet (sutra).

7. THE NEW AGE BOOKER WINNER INDIANS

If we go back to the list of Indian Booker Prize Winners, we see that the writers of the Indian origin like Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and the recent winner Kiran Desai have one thing common in their writings – they are not traditional Indian English writers. All the three are at ease with the English language, rather English is their first language. So medium is not at all a problem for them. They can use English as naturally as they breathe. And what is more important is that these writers have lived abroad for major part of their life, so they have imbibed and assimilated the Western trends and it lends them the distance to have an objective view on India and Indians. These writers have come across many Englishes of the world and showed the world their English unhesitant.

In the eighties, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) attracted the world's attention both by its language and the narrative mode. It has been seen as the quintessential fictional embodiment of the postmodern celebration of decentring and hybridity. It's a good specimen of what could be done with Indian material in the English language. Rushdie almost took linguistic risks by using street language, translated idioms and metaphors to create bilingual puns. We see devices like code-mixing, code-switching and he has also coined new words. In a typical line like "Godown, gudam, warehouse, call it what you like", we have Indian English followed by Hindi followed by proper English. Rushdie himself admits in an interview:

The English language is, I think, less of a problem than people make it out to be. ... But I think also that by now English is very domesticated in India. (Mukherjee: p.223)

8. CONCLUSION

Storytelling has always found a place in literature but telling in others' tongue is difficult. Indian writers started as practitioners of English language and today they have their niche. These writers, who have created a new form, have been handsomely rewarded. It can be a narrative innovation or linguistic experimentation. Such writers have native-like proficiency of the English language, they know how to handle English creatively. So for them form and style are equally important in their story. Often we find autobiographical elements in their works. These writers have reached the height from where they can tell their own tale in the language suitable for their native set. They represent new India with aspiration and also shows essence of Indianness.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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