

Working Paper/2018/06

Indian English Fiction (IEF): Its Growing Significance

Dr. Prasenjit Das*



Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University
Guwahati : Assam
INDIA

*Assistant Professor in English, Padmanath Gohainbaruah School of Humanities, KKHSOU

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Preface

The publication of this series of working papers is a reflection of the endeavour of the University's commitment towards promoting research excellence among the faculty members of the University. Through this series, the University seeks to broaden the horizon of liberal thought, expression and ideas among the faculty members working in this University which is based on a liberal approach towards taking up fruitful discussions across fields and disciplines of socio-cultural relevance. Moreover, it also encompasses the conventional academic disciplines.

With the philosophy of encouraging free flow of ideas in view, the University has adopted an approach to do away with the process of peer review of the working papers. However, to provide an overall guidance, the University has made presentation of the working paper at an Academic Presentation mandatory, before its publication. We believe that this series of working papers would enable the faculty members to publish their advanced research works by bringing them into the public domain which would help them receive further constructive criticisms, feedback and suggestions from the readers across different space. Such working papers would also help the aspiring research scholars of the Universities in the region and beyond.

The broad areas of discussion in this year's working papers stems from the academic disciplines of Philosophy, Political Science, Education, English, Management and Technological Sciences. The working paper entitled *Indian English Fiction (IEF): Its Growing Significance*, authored by Dr. Prasenjit Das offers a discussion on Indian English Fiction (IEF) and its growing significance in the 21st century, the dynamics behind the term 'India', and how this term has been applied to the cultural history of India. In the paper, the author has argued that it is then very useful to understand how the motifs of 'Indianness' have been employed by the IEF writers, both resident and non-resident, who seem to know about India well through continuous stay, regular travel and frequent visits to and in the country. According to the author, the case is even more interesting with the rising popularity of the young fiction writers of India in the 21st century. Thus, the paper seeks to explore what remains so 'Indian' in IEF and what are the reasons behind the rising popularity and growing significance of the genre of fiction writing known as IEF. After a detail discussion on the issues, the author concludes saying that whatever trajectory IEF undertakes in the days ahead, one thing can be stated for sure that IEF is never going to die. It does have a growing future unless it fails to address lived experiences of the people in the 'young and emerging India.' It will never be an exaggeration to state that IEF has finally dominated the world of fiction in the 21st century.

January 01, 2018.

Arupjyoti Choudhury, Chairperson.
Bhaskar Sarmah, Convenor.

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Indian English Fiction (IEF): Its Growing Significance

Abstract

For a discussion of Indian English Fiction (IEF) and its growing significance in the 21st century, the dynamics behind the term 'India', and how this term has been applied to the cultural history of India, have to be explored in some detail. Since the term 'India' is an extensive term with different connotations, and has to be perceived against various relevant considerations of historical and cultural nomenclature, it becomes almost mandatory to refer to the sources that help to explain the term 'India' for discussing the foothold of IEF in the present contexts. It is then very useful to understand how the motifs of 'Indianness' have been employed by the IEF writers, both resident and non-resident, who seem to know about India well through continuous stay, regular travel and frequent visits to and in the country. The case is even more interesting with the rising popularity of the young fiction writers of India in the 21st century. These writers have excelled so well in representing India in the field of fiction writing, and they have assigned a new meaning to IEF in the 21st century by using the English language as a means of uniting the 'India' with myriad diversities. This paper is an investigative attempt to explore what remains so 'Indian' in IEF and what are the reasons behind the rising popularity and growing significance of the genre of fiction writing known as IEF. However, no attempt has been made to provide an all-inclusive literary history of IEF of the periods mentioned, as many significant authors including many accomplished women writers are excluded from the purview of this paper.

Key words: Indianness, nationalism, nativism, young India narratives

1.0 Introduction

Involved in the discussion of 'India' in IEF in contemporary times is an awareness of the nature of Indian civilization, the Indo-Western encounter, and the contemporary nationalist politics of identity formation. Available records show that the representation of 'India' in IEF and its possible 'Indian' character were driven by the needs to legitimize the very business of 'construction' by the Western scholars during the 19th century. Considered

in terms of IEF, such ideas work as prerequisites to show how certain generalizations can help in understanding the dynamics of knowledge-formation in India. However, knowledge-formation is both political and cultural, as Paranjape (2000) states that one need not specify what constitutes an accurate representation or spell out what the 'real' India is. One is only to identify and expose what one considers inaccurate or distorted representation, because India is 'constructed' out of a politics of inclusions and exclusions. Paranjape's main concern here is with certain prerequisites of the Indian English novels, as he believes that Indian novels have to be perceived against the backdrop of our rich and continuous narrative tradition, which had helped in the construction of the idea of 'India'.

In this context, I am also reminded of A. K. Ramanujan, who stated in his essay "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?" that "[t]here is no single Indian way of thinking. There are great and little traditions, ancient and modern, rural and urban, classical and folk. Each language, caste and region had its special worldview" (as cited in Chattarji & Chakravarty, 2004). Such opinions clearly suggest that there has never been a single definition of 'India', and that the contexts in which reference to 'India' is made, help in defining 'Indianness' in a particular period. Placed in a very specific socio-political milieu of the nineteenth century, the English language became instrumental in bringing remarkable changes in the realm of Indian Writing in English. It is therefore so interesting and challenging to read IEF against such a backdrop following which the Indian writers were constrained to define their 'Indian' experiences through an alien language. George (1997) in his *Masterpieces of Indian Literature* has done an excellent literary mapping of Indian literature written in many Indian languages. This book is one of the very few endeavours to familiarize, through a link language like English, the readers of the world with the rich repertoire of language literatures from India.

However, the question "What is so 'Indian' about IEF after Independence?" still remains unanswered. There cannot be any single acceptable answer to a query like this, although a survey of the last three decades of the 20th century as well as the beginning of the 21st century is very useful in this context. However, such a survey also encompasses, within its periphery, works of Indian poetry and drama by different 'Indian' authors who are found to be working with the idea of 'Indianness' in their own ways. While discussing the notion of 'Indianness' in the context of IEF, other three questions remain very vital: What is 'India'?, What does 'India' represent?, and, What represents 'Indianness'? Some answers to these questions can be drawn from the attempts made by a fiction writer like Naipaul who sees India as a 'wounded' civilization, and India's failure as a nation during the Emergency, according to him, is a deep crisis in civilization. Such views help in assuming that studying 'India' as an 'idea' also entails many of the imminent problems of definitions. Because, critics like Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) would like to state that the nation as a set of 'invented tradition' also comprises national symbols, mythology and history. It is against such a background that one needs to reflect on the idea of IEF in general.

2.0 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The Objectives of the paper have been:

- (1) To make a very short survey of the generic formation of Indian Writing in English
- (2) To explore some of the narrative strategies in Post-Independence IEF that have been deliberately used to explain the notion of 'Indianness'
- (3) To make a survey of the nature and types of IEF in the 21st century

2.2 Methodology

While writing this paper, historical and descriptive research methodology has been used. Analysis of the contents has been done on the basis of specific representative periods and traditions in Post-independence literary history as well as on the emergent cultural forms of the 21st century. At the same time, the periods in which the novels are published, and the way they have helped in the emergence of 'India' as an idea, has also been entwined with the methodology used.

3.0 Indian English Fiction: Its Generic Formation and the Notion of Indianness

Though the history of IEF can be traced back in nearly two hundred years of scholarly renderings over sources, histories, influences, formal aspects, narrative traditions, and so on, the generic formation of IEF and the evaluation of its aesthetic values are also informed by the Nativistic expression and articulation of identity. The expatriate Indian English authors, whose main literary language is English, find themselves in a privileged position to deal with such a situation more productively. Although, the Western critical theories have rendered powerful influences by providing methods to analyse a text written by an author of Indian origin, the tendency to explore the inner sources of criticism in India has resulted in a renewed concern over Nativism around 1970s and 80s. Following this, 'Indianness' in the discussion of the Nativist critics like Devy (1992) Nemade (2009) denote a search for roots in the Indian narrative traditions that establish connections with India's cultural past. This is important, because such an examination helps in rejecting the views of discontinued traditions propounded mainly by the Orientalist histories of India and Indian culture.

One way to examine the idea of 'India' in IEF, is to consider the synthesis between India's past and present. Historical survey informs that IEF, since its formative stage, has gone through a process of socio-cultural cross-fertilization, and following decolonization, this cross-fertilization had become very enriching. Therefore, the examination of the English language to narrate Indian experiences in fiction, and how it has synthesised the East and the West, from which Indian Writing in English had actually emerged, help in discussing 'Indianness' in the present times. Such realizations also ensure an understanding of Europe's scholarly quest for Asian civilizations as a tool for the consolidation of power and imperial control which indirectly helped in 'othering' the East from a fundamentally different and necessarily superior West (Raychoudhury, 1988). Then, the kind of response that had evolved out of such processes reflected the problematics involved in concept-formation. Consequently,

the roots of 'Indianness' could be located in the ways Indian intellectuals perceived 'Orientalism' which helped them to delve deeper into their own Indian heritage. Although 'Orientalism' in some way became instrumental in the 'discovery of India', the silent and continuous flow of pan-Indian cultural elements had the power to even dismiss all the claims on the 'discovery' made by the Indologists and Orientalists.

The first reference to the idea of 'India' can be traced in the Vedas and the Hindu epics. However, the first reference to the term 'India' as a definable entity is to be traced in the narratives of the Muslim travelers to India. As Sanskrit was a major pan-Indian language until the 11th century, the two Indian epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were constantly being appropriated to newer contexts in subsequent times. Even after the advent of the Urdu language, the unifying ethos in literature remained Hindu with Sanskrit as its source language. An Indian author, whether native or immigrant, while producing a fictional text should never ignore the fact that he derives the symbols, images, and references from the same stock of cultural forms unified through the processes of assimilation in the political history of India. However, a major rift with such a tradition was caused by European influences, which divided the consciousness of the Indians. Following this, the representation of 'Indianness' in the works of the fiction writers too got divided between an inclination towards tradition and an obsession with the modern world of specification, alienation, separation, and objectification.

However, along with a reference made to the Hindu traditions, one should also take cognizance of the religious and linguistic diversity within India by acknowledging the contributions of even the non-Hindu traditions to India's rich cultural heritage. However, with the emergence of the Nativist critics, the discussion over the issue of traditions and its impact has undergone noticeable changes. One must be cautious that no discussion of Nativism can be apolitical. On the one hand, the ideas of 'India' and 'Indianness' had almost been hijacked by the religious Hindu jingoists following the rise of Shiva Sena and RSS in the Indian politics around the last decade of the 20th century; on the other, one is fast moving towards a consumerist market society whose interpretations of 'political freedom' does not connote ideas of autonomy. Satchidanandan (1999) in his essay "Indian Literature: Nativism and Its Ambivalence" states that any discussion of Nativism in this context will have to be conducted against political separatism, because it may degenerate into a form of rustic revivalism and an unconditional valorization of the feudal values. The Nativistic task of 'deconstructing' the Indian narrative tradition must also be a part of the greater project of constructing unity at a higher and more realistic conceptual level, of the plurality within the nation, and of interconnectivity within the cultures.

Against such a background, the study of 'Indianness' in IEF both as a source and a problem should be considered significant. Also important is the exploration of what constitutes the main research agendas of the authors. In India, where certain class and caste identities are taken to be representative of some essential Indianness, those excluded from such identities risk marginalization and victimization. A study of the fictional works of

authors like Salman Rushdie, who in fact shaped Indian Writing in English as a distinguished literary genre since 1980s, are useful in this context. Because the experience of 'marginality' is quite explicit in the fictional works of such authors, who find it quite difficult to conform to the contemporary definition of what this 'marginality' should be. Also important is their discussion of the 'constructed' nature of facts, reality, ideas, histories, and traditions. It is observed that unlike the first generation Indian English authors thriving for a kind of international exposure, Rushdie and his followers often replace that exposure with the idea of travel, dislocation, mass movement and settlement, and the problem of 'us' and 'them'. Therefore, the discussion of IEF can be made productive against this intellectual background.

Needless to mention that English was legitimized by the early Indian English novelists as a tool to homogenize the spirit of India under the idea of Indian Nationalism. This aspect also laid the foundation of the modernist ideology of pan-Indianism. For example, Raja Rao despite the individual differences with his contemporaries, subsumed their literary world under the grand narrative of the nation-a strategy that continued till 1960s. However, it was none other than Rao who inculcated among his fellow writers a sense of national identity and cultural revivalism. Consequently, both in temper and tone, IEF during that time, continued to nostalgically revisit the Raj with a borrowed notion of an identity that was needed to be forged. However, paradoxically the emergent notions of Indian nationalism continued to plague Indian writing until 1970s when a new kind of writing, followed by Salman Rushdie and his contemporaries, brought about a fresh creative breakthrough (Nanavati & Kar, 2000). However, in the process, the West has also been recreated as a psychological category from where there is no escape for the Indian English authors like Rushdie. Simultaneously, there also continued a resistance to such forms of 'colonial' impact. Thus, it is interesting to find out how the authors of the IEF are trying to deal with the problem of identity and articulation. However, they have to make choices too. Those who have chosen their alternative within the West have also re-evaluated the 'occident' to discuss their relationship with the 'orient', which as a course of action, has enriched their own oeuvre.

With such available critical baggage in mind, the contemporary fiction writers from India provide a thread on the different notions of 'India', which are both political and cultural. It seems that these authors have subscribed to the idea of 'India' both as a metaphorical construct and as one based on minute observation of the particularities of Indian life and history. By providing an alternative reading of Post-colonialism itself, these authors are perhaps trying to articulate the paradoxical discourse on 'marginality' in Postcolonial discussions which can be seen as yet another major intellectual rendering in IEF. However, one also needs to seriously consider the fact that the notion of 'Indianness' in the works of author like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Amit Choudhury, Vikram Seth and others, is to be discussed in terms of specific representative periods, traditions, languages, and literary cultures. However, this is also important to examine the ways they have presented their own specific views on 'India' and 'Indianness' at various phases of their intellectual life. Besides, their being Non-Resident Indians has also helped them to address their spatial dislocation from India and the consequent socio-cultural displacements.

4.0 Narrative Strategies in Indian English Fiction

Several attempts have gone into analyzing the narrative strategies or the representational modes adopted by the authors of IEF, which underwrite the politics of cultural representation in the arena of Indian Writing in English. Critics like Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty tend to argue that in the processes of British Imperialism, the making of the Indian national narrative from within India are shifted, appropriated, and redeployed in the forms of new experiences of the emerging Indian nation (Chakrabarty, 2000; Chatterjee, 1993). However, the 'historical' and 'cultural' are not to be deemed as matters of false consciousness. Instead, they actively influence the shifting and re-ordering of events from the vast array of traditional source materials. It is interesting to note that the authors are often seen to engage themselves in asserting their standpoints by intertextually referring to the historical and cultural traditions of India. Such a shifting and re-ordering of events from India's traditional source materials become very relevant to the discussion of a text under IEF in the later part of the 20th century.

The theoretical tools like Deconstruction have provided the methods for analyzing an Indian English text written in the present times. However, the various shifts and trajectories in Cultural Studies, that registered itself as a discipline under the auspices of Stuart Hall, have been influencing the Indian intellectuals of the 1990s and afterward since 1970s. Posing a challenge to the old centers and discourses of humanities, they privileged storytelling and popular culture both as a source of value and as an area of study. This provides a valid background to study the Indian authors' adoption of storytelling as a technique to explore India. According to Choudhury (2008), the British Cultural Studies of the 1970s was almost repeated in India during 1990. However, by 2005, it was almost difficult to ask where it was going. As he further states, Indian Cultural Studies became a rewriting and extension of British and American Cultural Studies by defining itself in terms of its relationship to Western humanities through specific lens and angle. Following this, 'Indianness', Postcoloniality, and popular culture were conflated into a single entity recuperated against the humanist assumptions of Western liberal arts. But, the important point Choudhury (2008) raised is that Indian Cultural Studies' emphasis on conflating postcoloniality with popular culture also meant that it effectively refused to recognize, engage with, and most importantly, explore the formative history of tension with its own 'high' cultural space.

A number of attempts have been made in Indian Writing in English to trace its origin in the secular ideas that prevail in India. Both writers and scholars alike seek to address IEF in terms of secularism, which is also because they implicitly or explicitly endorse the Nehruvian notions of a secular nation that might work as an antidote to the current problems of pluralist politics. They often take the National Emergency (1975-77) as an important event that destroyed Nehru's vision of a secular India. Subsequently, a host of authors like Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor and Amit Choudhury, often sought to find out what does 'being Indian' actually mean in today's context of political turmoil.

This also indirectly means that one feels far more comfortable defining oneself in the context of the secular—a notion, the Indian constitution has helped to realise. Thus, the fictional works of such authors, which try to narrate the story of Post-independence India, can be seen as specific responses to the political situation of their time. But, most of these works mark out an important phases in Post Independent India's political history—the breakdown of the Nehruvian secular consensus that began with Indira Gandhi's imposition of the National Emergency from 1975-7, and the subsequent rise of an alternative national ideology called Hindutva based on the supremacy of Hindu religion and culture. Hence, it has been experienced that the works of these authors allegorise the idea of an Indian nation by incorporating into the fictional space different versions of the national past. In this sense, they represent patterns of specific historical events in India's colonial and postcolonial history.

In another context of the 'secular' in IEF, Shrivastava (2007) opines that the novels that represent the Indian secular canon in English are 'historical' in the sense that they respond to specific moments of India's historical and political context at the time of publication. In her book *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel*, Shrivastava (2007) explores the connection between a secular Indian nation and fiction written in English by a number of postcolonial Indian writers like Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, and Rohinton Mistry since 1980s. She investigates the different aspects of postcolonial identity within the secular framework of the Anglophone novel. In particular, this book examines how these authors have used the form of the novel to rewrite colonial and nationalist Indian history, and how they radically reinvent English as a secular language for narrating their state of mind. Ultimately, Shrivastava (2007) delineates a common conceptual framework for secularism and cosmopolitanism, by arguing that Indian secularism can be seen as a located indigenous form of a cosmopolitan identity. Besides, the works of the authors in question create an 'imagined community' of readers who are not defined by national boundaries, but by the transnational scope of English. The novels like *Midnight's Children*, *A Suitable Boy*, *A Fine Balance*, *The Great Indian Novel*, *The Satanic Verses*, and *The Shadow Lines* are some examples that narrate the radical shift in the perception of the public sphere in India. These novels have adopted different approaches and narrative strategies to address the idea of the state, which had undergone an important evolution between the end of the Emergency and the beginning of the 1990s.

The authors mentioned above have almost gained the status of celebrity mainly because of their postcolonial 'juggling' of literary forms and genres. These novelists have ignored a kind of cultural essentialism, which is also the basis of grand narratives that accommodates diverse cultural significations. That is why perhaps, Rushdie's 'chutnification' and Ghosh's 'weaving' are to be seen as significant strategies in their fictional narratives about India. Hype created by Western media and publishers, the observations of critics on the representation of India by immigrant writers, the supposed advantages of the Non-Resident Indians, the Indian intellectuals joining hands with the Westerners, the recent fad around the use of deconstructive mode of writing—all these have rejected the views of India being based on

essentialism. Thus, most of the works under IEF become part of their attempt at narrativising experiential reality, suggesting at the same time that Indianness is a 'continuum', and 'India' is an 'imagined community' to borrow Anderson's term.

Since the time of its emergence as a distinct genre of literature, two questions on the nature of Indian English Writing have led to lot of speculations-a. Which audience does an author write for? b. Is he/she exoticising India for a Western audience? Both the questions however are integrally related to the nature of Indian Writing in English. These questions are also related to the representational politics as well as the intellectual compulsions that go into the very act of writing by an Indian English author. However, the issue of readership was another preoccupation for the Indian authors choosing to write in English. Thus, an inquiry into how the notion of Indianness has evolved out of its discussion in different contexts necessarily draws attention to the fictional strategies adopted by the Indian English authors. These strategies mostly include the narrative forms, motives and images by which they tend to make the readers realize that what they offer is just a 're-presentation' of India, not the essence of India, and that the tradition, to which they belong as writers, also provides the means for such representation.

However, the latest trends in contemporary fiction reflect a kind of development in cultural studies following which the term 'culture' itself connotes specific world-views. Also, the segments in literary writing that are being identified as 'popular' or 'best sellers' are the spinoffs from the publishing houses that see themselves as being under threat from a readership that has found a new irreverence thanks to the World Wide Web. Hence, it is time we found ourselves engaged with a reading fraternity who are consciously monitoring such developments. However, in such a situation, there should also be some ways to categorise literature. For example, we all are aware of the fad around the J. K Rowling's Harry Potter series that had rejuvenated the idea of Children Writing in contemporary times. Similarly, there is a rejoicing over the different processes of oral storytelling finding place among the contemporary writers. Therefore, the other kinds of the targeted writing, which the publishing houses are sponsoring, based on their market research on readership, will have names too. This reminds me of the latest arrivals of Metro Reads and Young Adult Literature, targeted mainly at the fantasy-crazy young generation; writings by the medical fraternity; Travel Narratives that don't just enlist the names of people met or places visited; Journalistic Writings that often blur the distinction between documentary and fiction, and so on. Thus, this paper offers itself as a diagnosis of the latest fad around targeted writing in the field of IEF, why they are becoming so popular, how they are reflecting contemporary reality, and how much sustainability they will have as IEF.

5.0 Indian English Fiction in the 21st Century

In the context of Indian English writing in the 21st century, it is time to move the debate beyond the Postcolonial and enter into the Post-Millennial, as explored by Varughese (2013) in her book *Reading New India: Post Millennial Indian Fiction in English*. It is therefore quite important and relevant to look at the themes and questions raised in Post- Millennial IEF, which can be studied without referring to the ideas of the postcolonial theories. And,

here comes the issue of culture and 'targeted' writing. India till 2017, has succeeded in establishing a developed literary scene thanks to the global economic liberalisation that has provided visibility to Indian English Writing by Resident Indian Writers like never before. There is abundance of new literary forms and voices and modes of representations. However, one should also look at the fact that such unprecedented rise in literary activities is also affecting the readership of IEF in significant ways.

The 21st century has its own specific shifts and turns. We now have a body of literary works from India in the English language, which are to be studied with certain new perspective. This can be seen as a turn towards domestic India among the post Rushdie generation of Indian English authors. It is the idea of a New India that writers are trying to both represent and target as readership.

In this context, I am reminded of the fact that 21st century educated generation often tend to read those novels that are relevant to their personal experience. Frye (1964) in *The Educated Imagination* stated about how the so-called educated reader can overcome the fissure between intellect and emotion with which teachers often struggle and can even connect the two in a seamless synthesis of lived-through experience and critical analysis. He also makes the point that the reader with the educated imagination can tell the difference between convention and reality; he or she knows the difference between fiction and fact and can, therefore, learn from fiction without risk of losing touch with reality or making rash life decisions simply to mimic a character in a novel. In my view, this has been quite apparent in the readership of the fictional works of the emergent new writers of IEF in today's context.

Before looking at the idea of fiction writing in the 21st century, we should first consider some of the latest development of the modern day world of affairs while examining the narratives that address the 'young' India. As an exploration of the life of India's young generation, the Young India Narratives are just the right kind of vehicle to expose what lies beneath the brain, and the innate desire for storytelling will never let the novel die. These Young India Narratives have also been informed by developments in the use of social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Whatsapp, Instagram and all other sorts, which are the most prolific invention of the last decade of the 21st century. It has almost collapsed the boundaries of geography, time, and hierarchy, structure of power, and has helped to use the English language as a means to unite the whole of India. It is surprising that suddenly there has been a significant rise in the sale of novels in India, thanks to piracy as well as heavy discounts in online commercial websites. It seems that novels do have a future in the Indian context. In the contemporary web-based society, Blogs have changed the ways one expresses to others, television watching has replaced reading habits, BPO activities have replaced the traditional job profiles, and the transitory life style of the young workers looking to move towards US, UK and other developed country is becoming a new culture. How contemporary IEF addresses these issues is matter of serious discussion. Online book release is the best form of press release, and writers have used it quite judiciously in the 21st century. This is the background, against which I would like to consider the rise of IEF in the 21st century.

6.0 Some Important Categories in Young India Narratives

Fictions under the concept of Young Indian Narratives are specific to India only with references to India's cultural and societal aspects, which are recognisably Indian. In this regard, I am first reminded of the narratives of the corporate world that beautifully describe experiences in call centers based in Bangalore, Mumbai, Delhi and other emerging business hubs. In this type of narratives, the protagonists are usually in their teens or 30s. The characters are at the crossroads with modern day India as they are caught between aspirations and ambitions vs family expectations, challenges of careers vs personal relationship, finding one's own life partner vs arranged marriage by parents and so on. References in this category may be made to the 'Metro Reads' such as Partha Sarathi Basu's *With or Without Love* (2010) or Amrita Setty's *Love Over Coffee* (2010)-launched in 2010 by Penguin Books India. The term 'Metro Reads' is derived from the metro transport systems across India, and usually deals with how they have changed the landscape of the Indian cities that have brought in important changes in people's life styles in the 21st century. These are light-weight and easy reading books with tag lines: "Fun Feisty Fast Reads", "For The Reader On the Go", and "Every life has a Story" and so on. Even the cost of these books is also not more than Rs. 150. They have stated: "How many times, have you wished for books that won't weigh you down with complicated stories, do not ask for much time, don't have to be logged around? Penguin Books India proudly announces the launch of its latest series, Metro Reads that does all that and more" (<http://www.metroreads.in>). To encourage readership, they even announced contests by stating that the 10 best comments will be awarded a copy each. This is a unique thing happening in the 21st century India.

Then, I am reminded of the body of fiction writing written mostly by women with a female protagonist who goes beyond the issue of patriarchy, and in many ways, challenges, questions, and changes contemporary Indian society and its ethos. The writers of this genre often explore emotional domestic territories and personal spaces like detailed descriptions of interior spaces of home, the negotiations of roles and hierarchies as well as lives in bedroom and kitchen. What usually makes these works look different from earlier tradition of women centric fiction in IEF is the ability to take decision on the part of the protagonist. Examples are *Neti, Neti, Not This, Not That* (2009) by Anjum Hassan, *No Deadline for Love* (2011) by Manasi Vaidya, *Losing My Virginity and Other Dumb Ideas* (2011) by Madhuri Banerjee, *Dreams in Prussian Blue* (2010) by Paritosh Uttam and so on. Anjum Hassan's book *Neti Neti* displays how a woman finds herself in an urbane center with an independent working life, a group of friends and a boy friend.

Another significant genre of the new literatures has been fiction about cricket in India-a national obsession of modern times. Following the launch of IPL in 2008, this type of works has gained unprecedented popularity. Examples are *The Premiere Murder League* (2010) by Geeta Sundar, *Bowled and the Beautiful* (2009) by Shubhasis Das, *Doosra* (2011) by Vish Dhamija, *The Game Changers* (2010) by an anonymous blogger. Then we can take the name of Crime Writing and Murder Mystery that includes works like *The Monochrome Madonna* (2010) by Kalpana Swaminathan, *The Man with Enormous Wings* (2010) by Ester David, *The Temple Goers* (2010) by Aatish Taseer etc. Graphic Novels such as *The Harappa Files* (2011) by Sarnath Banerjee that provides a generational and cultural museum for an India that is

changing at pace; Kashmir Pending (2007) that provides a graphical description of Kashmir amidst violence, imprisonment and death in full colour is yet another emerging trend. Retelling of Hindu epics and religious stories such as Shiva Trilogy by Amish Tripathi -The Immortals of Meluha (2010), The Secret of the Nagas (2011), The Oath of the Vayuputras (2013); Bali and the Ocean of Milk (2011) by Nilanjan P. Choudhury; Asura: Tale of the Vanquished: The Story of Ravana and His People (2012) by Anand Neelakantan are also being sold in thousands. Other entrants have been the 'Metrosexual Fiction' and 'Young Adult Fiction' targeted mainly at the fantasy-crazy and techno-savvy young generation of present India, works by the medical fraternity, Travel Narratives, and Journalistic Writings and so on.

The different categories of young India narratives mentioned above exemplify the meaning of Targeted Writing in the context of the 21st century, because certain aspects of the society determine readership. Basing the assumptions on contemporary urbane societies, it can be stated that India's urban centers are playing an important role in dictating what to read and what to write. For example, the idea of the metropolis like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore, Modern IT hubs and Biotechnology parks, have been influencing the decisions of the publishing company regarding what to publish to showcase need and aspirations of contemporary India. In the present day India, readers are changing. Hence, the writers too need to change. It is important to find out exactly what it is that new emergent India is trying to read. Serious readers are reading novels as one can refer to Amazon book reviews, which have exposed many of the complaints people have about a novel. The new popular fiction has diverted the attention of every thoughtful intellectual of the 21st century India.

7.0 Continuing the Debate

How often an Indian or a 'desi' writer living in the West returns to India in what he/she writes is an important question that has been meaningfully addressed in Post Independence IEF. Such a question marked not merely by a case of nostalgia followed by a terrible intellectual dilemma and a shift in perspective. The immigrant writers are discovering not only a new country, but also the 'place' they have left behind. Thus, a 'New' India has been continuously being explored and mapped in the imagination of the writers abroad. However, the very idea of a 'desi' writer has seen a significant change following the shifts and transformations in IEF in the 21st century. In this regard, one cannot but refer to the Post-millennial IEF enriched by a plethora of important young writers like Arvind Adiga, Amish Trivedi, Chetan Bhagat, Durjoy Datta, and a host of other writers whose works are being sold in millions. The global economic upsurge and its impact on "New" India of the 21st century are bound to affect the culture of IEF. The 'newness' in this body of fiction and the future of the English language in India will clearly impact how English fictions in India will develop further.

Thus, it is difficult to project the future of IEF on the basis of a comparison of the 21st century trends of fiction writing in India with the last 50 years of fiction writing by India English authors. What is important is to examine how the authors of the 'new' IEF are telling 'new' stories, not necessarily in the 'old' ways, and how they have beautifully explored ideas of 'Indianness' in the 21st century. Although IEF is enjoying a much superior status, still with the global economic liberalization affecting India more significantly, it is questionable

whether some production and consumption of this type of fiction will remain at the same level of popularity it currently enjoys in the future days to come. Another important concern being whether call center narratives will decline if India's service industry changes as part of its response to the changes in global economics. Alternatively, whether 'Bharat' centric fiction will see a new explosion as a return to 'Bharat' will be able to bear the challenge posed by increasing global and Western influences on India. There will be hundreds of such books. But, as long as there is a coming back to roots (as one can find in *Neti Neti*), such books will always remain. So many students in different educational institutes are taking creative writing courses now a days.

Needless to mention in this context is the fact that with the growth of fiction writing in the 21st century, there has also been a phenomenal development in the Publishing industries of India. Rupa and Co, Hachette India, Tranquebar, Zubaan Books, Roli and Harper Collins India, Srishti Publishers, have been offering books at a much cheaper price, unlike the foreign publishers targeting an international readership. In this regard, we can observe that the books from Srishti Publishing, which often publishes books by female writers, are sold in around Rs.100-120 Rs, which is cheaper than the Penguin Publisher's famous Metro Reads, which is fixed around Rs. 150. Important to note that this type of books are not only reflecting the young generation of Indians doing jobs in a metropolis, but are also trying to indicate towards important changes in tastes of a reading public and their sensibilities of the new emergent India. The point is that such works are going to gain tremendous popularity until and unless they do not stop referring to the contextual experiences of 21st century India. However, what is just being done now a days, in the name of writing fiction is to create a scene and then populate it with fitting characters. This may be a threat to the actual temperament of the writer. However, we all should wait and see how the Post Millennial IEF takes its own course in the days to come.

8.0 Conclusion

The global economic upsurge and its impact on "New" India of the 21st century are bound to affect the culture of IEF. The 'newness' in this body of fiction and the future of the English language in India will clearly impact how English fictions in India will develop further. The Indian diaspora as well as the resident Indian English writers will always keep influencing future publishing trends. However, it is difficult to project the future of IEF based on a comparison of the 21st century trends of fiction writing with Post Independence English fiction. What is important is to explore how the authors of the 'New' IEF are telling 'new' stories, not necessarily in the 'old' ways of the stalwarts like Salman Rushdie and others. Although IEF is enjoying a stage of much higher yield today, still with the global economic liberalization affecting India more significantly, it is questionable whether some production and consumption of this type of fiction will remain at the same level of popularity it currently enjoys in the future days to come. However, whatever trajectory IEF undertakes in the days ahead, one thing can be stated for sure that IEF is never going to die. It does have a growing future unless it fails to address lived experiences of the people in the 'young and emerging India.' It will never be an exaggeration to state that IEF has finally dominated the world of fiction in the 21st century.

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