



## Reflection of Indian Culture and Society in Post-Independence Indian Fictional Writings

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### Abstract

The concept of culture is a complex one and in recent years has become a more interesting topic for literary discussion. Raymond Williams defines culture as “an individual habit of mind; the state of intellectual development of a whole society; the arts; and the whole way of life of a group of people.” According to Raymond Williams, culture is a way of life which has its bearings not only on art and learning but also on institutions and ordinary behavior. He argues that culture is a process of training, not merely a body of intellectual and imaginative work. With the passage of time, culture gained newer dimensions with respect to social, economic and political changes. On the other hand, society acts as a system of interconnected relationships and institutions that structure human behavior and cooperation. Culture can be imbibed directly from social contacts. Culture can be imbibed directly from our social contacts and indirectly from television, movies, books, magazines, etc. Since it is basic to the defining of individuals and society, its role in preserving the character of human race is great. In India we witnessed the growth and functioning of so many cases, creeds, cults, cuisines, languages, religions and faiths at one and the same time of history. This unique plurality and diversity have given India a unique cultural identity. The literary artists try to re-affirm and re-enhance India’s cultural identity. They are the authentic voice of the novelists move more and more towards experimentation. They present Indian culture and society in a new perspective. Most of their literary writings are centred on Indian themes - Culture and Society. A new pattern of writing emerged during post-Independence era that places an individual’s mythical, social, political and cultural history at the centre with gradually enlarging concentric circles depicting his or her stories of a family, a community and finally, of a nation. They also focus on the problems and challenges of plural societies. They portray the multidimensional facets of Indian culture and society.

**Keywords:** culture, society, identity, intellectual development, perspective, multidimensional, experimentation, growth, contemporary times.

## Introduction

In the post-independent era, fiction writing moves more and more towards experimentation presenting Indian culture and society in a new perspective. In the hand of great literary artists, a new pattern of fiction writing emerged, which places an individual's mythical, social, political and cultural history at the centre with gradually enlarging concentric circles depicting his or her stories of a family, a community and finally, of a nation. Their writings show the problems and challenges of Indian society. Their works do succeed in broadening and enlarging our understanding of the country's great cultural heritage. Literature is more than a realistic depiction of human life. It highlights the whole panorama of human life by subsuming in it the cultural aspects of a society including its belief, knowledge, values and practices. Further, literature embodies social, cultural and universal values which can affect human life in various ways. Literary creation has its roots in various social spheres such as language, economics, politics, race, ethnicity, class, gender and culture. A text thus is an organic unity of socio-cultural relations, racial differences, religious ideologies, class conflicts, gender biases, etc. Through it one can view the web of human relations and values of a society. The study of literature of a country, therefore, can be enlightening.

## The methodology & data collection

The methodology involves a close and an in-depth analysis of all the above-mentioned fictional works along with selected pertinent and relevant examples, extracts and quotes from his fictional writings. An attempt has been made to analyse major fictional works of Post-Independence Indian from various points of view. In order to unearth India's cultural diversity and plurality I have highlighted the mode of narration in their novels. They are

much concerned with Indian cultural heritage. Most of the literary writings are centred on Indian themes. They have focused on India's cultural heritage. Data for this paper are collected from the secondary source such as reference books, research articles, journals, and books on Indian fiction writing.

## Reflection of Indian Culture and Society

Post-Independence Indian Fictional Writers are well aware about the remarkable feature of Indian culture. India is a country where natives work together even when they don't look like each other, don't speak the same language, don't practice the same religion and eat the same food, don't have the same colour of skin. We have this one cultural background which has exerted a powerful influence on our life. Even the entirely uneducated and illiterate share this background. This background is a fine mixture of popular philosophy tradition and history, myth and legend. India became a free nation in the modern sense only eight years ago, but in a real sense it has existed for thousands of years. The story of India is a tale of incredible drama, great invention, enormous diversity, phenomenal creativity and the very biggest ideas. But it is also the history of one of the world's emerging powers. The age-old life goals of Indian civilization paved the way for open society and a vibrant democracy, with formidable practical and language skills, and, as a civilization that has attempted to be pluralist and tolerant over a vast period of time, can draw on huge cultural resources from its past. No doubt, India is a land of diversities woven together as a complex culture. It has been characterized as an indigenous civilization. Indian society got redefined in August 1947, when the country attained its freedom from British colonial rule. It was also partitioned then with the creation of Pakistan, with a wing each in the Western and Eastern parts, separated

from each other by nearly 1,600 km of intervening Indian corridor. Post-Independence India is a nation united against several odds and obstacles. The idea of unity of India is inherent in all its historical and socio-cultural facts as well as in its cultural heritage. India is a secular state. It has one Constitution providing guarantees for people belonging to diverse regions, religions, cultures and languages. The country is inhabited by people belonging to all socio-economic strata.

India has always been a multilingual civilization and culture with special elite languages and a constant interaction between local, regional and all-India language. Unity and assimilation at various interactional levels have been specific features of the Indian subcontinent. Amidst vast diversities, the doctrine of a single language, essential for national identity, cohesiveness and unity, has been challenged from time to time. Since European countries are characterised by one dominant language, the problem of unity and cohesion is therefore different in Europe than in India. We have one nation-state, but many cultures, languages and religions. India's oneness lies in the community of the essence of all culture and languages formed in different parts and regions. Thus Indian cultural tradition is unique. The notions of Purusharthas, which entails the particular four--dharma, artha, kama and moksha (the aim or goal of life); Karma (personal moral commitment) and Jati (caste) as the hierarchical principles of social stratification are basic to Indian culture. A certain level of configuration of these elements and consensus have brought about persistence and equilibrium in Indian society, and hence no major breakdown has taken place in its culture. It is said that the change is in the cultural system and not of the system. The uniqueness of the Indian culture does not simply refer to its esoteric nature. It requires a thorough study in terms of its history. Absorption and assimilation characterised social and cultural change. Aryans and Dravidians lived together. Hindus and

Muslims lived in close proximity – socially and culturally. Later on, Christians joined them. Today, Hindus, Jains, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and people of other faiths participate together in the government, industry, commerce and other sectors of public life. Thus, there has been a continuous unity even in the situation of stark diversity. Diversity is reflected in thousands of caste groups, each having its own rituals, rites, rules and customs. It can be seen in terms of linguistic, religious and other ethnic variations. The styles of life differ from region to region and vary even between different castes and religious groups within the same village. Some rulers made conscious efforts to ensure unity in diversity.

India can rightly be characterized as a society that embodies unity in diversity and diversity in unity, as it is a pluralistic society both in letter and spirit. Despite innumerable challenges, India has maintained its unity. Unity in India is visible in its historical and cultural dimensions. India today is a secular state with one Constitution and a uniform rule of law for all its citizens living in different regions, speaking different languages, and practicing different religions and faiths. Hindus, Jains, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and people of other faiths participate together in administration, politics, and public life. Ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversities do not hinder the realization of common national goals.

The cultural heritage of India stands as a living example of the synthesis of diverse cultures. India is rich in culture, social values, customs, and traditions. The novel as a literary form has successfully charted the social, political, and economic events that have progressively transformed India in the modern era. Both cultural and social backgrounds provide a vivid and authentic picture of Indian life. Political conflicts after independence created new challenges in the lives of the people. These developments enabled novelists to present a realistic portrayal of Indian society.

Post-Independence Indian English fiction has exposed many hidden issues within Indian society and made the world aware not only of the problems faced by Indian society but also of the richness and greatness of Indian culture. Indian novelists reflect on diverse social and cultural issues and offer meaningful insights that contribute to the enrichment of Indian culture. Post-Independence Indian novels, along with Indian cultural traditions, possess the potential to guide the world toward a better and more harmonious way of living. This paper explores how the culture and traditions of India enrich Post-Independence Indian English fiction.

Post-Independence Indian novelists attempted to break away from the slavish imitation of colonial fiction writing. However, Indian English writers espoused English as a tool and used it in diverse ways to explore cultural experiences. Indian writers use it as a dynamic medium to express the complex Indian reality, native forms, and sentimental thoughts, customs, and cultures. They have greatly succeeded in registering an inner shift in the use of English metaphors through the literary history of post-colonial Indian societies.

Indian society was burdened with many problems and social evils such as untouchability, sati, the caste system, widow remarriage restrictions, and various forms of hegemony. The main focus of the novelists of this period in most of the Indian vernaculars was to alert people to the consequences of these social evils and to create awareness among them. In post-independence Indian English fiction, great emphasis was placed on the process of colonialization, and an attempt was made to record resistance to the exploiters of colonized societies while insisting on the contemporary truth of life. It deals with literature written in colonized countries about the ill-treatment of lower-class people and the resistance of those who were at the receiving end.

Post-colonialism can also be considered a historical phase because it deals with literature that emerged after decolonization. Post-independence Indian English fiction writers engaged themselves in exploring the emergence of a new language and a new way of looking at the world. Their universal themes focus on issues such as national identity, hybridity, partition, cultural heritage, contemporary realities, emotions, and human relationships.

Indian novelists like Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shobha De, Nayantara Sahgal, Amitav Ghosh, and Kiran Desai have written about the rich cultural values and social aspects deeply rooted in Indian society. They have explored the dignity of their nation and culture, social and cultural conflicts, the dynamics of domination and resistance, and various social and historical aspects embedded in Indian consciousness. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, they create a new sensibility in fiction writing.

Indian English writers like Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Bharathi Mukherjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri are trying to explore the political, social and cultural issues which constitute the very fibre of Indian life in his novels. Their novels dealt with historical, cultural, philosophical and many more themes beyond feminine issues. They portray the changes that have brought about in the traditional, religious and social set up of India in an artistic way. Their characters touch grassroot realities based on perfect cultural understanding. The powerful ally of patriarchy is another powerful component of Indian society. In India, the patriarchal society breeds cultures that always draw a line of demarcation between male and female. Discrimination against the women in the society has become the part of the Indian culture. The variety and the complexity of the achieved contain of their novels represent a major trend in the history of Indian English novels. Their works have given a distinct dimension to the image of woman in the

family and society. Women novelists present the dilemma which modern women are facing in recent times. The novelists have exploited their skill in projecting convincingly the position of women in family and society. Their portrayal of women characters invariably bears authenticity to their feminist approach, outlook and perspective. The awareness of other cultures teaches them to respect the composite pluralistic reality of India.

Amitav Ghosh is an outstanding Indian writer in English who is seriously concerned with multi-dimensional facts of Indian culture and society. He has tried to show through his fiction how to understand Indian cultural history. His novels basically deal with the issues related to religion, caste, loyalty, corruption and poverty in India. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* deals with socio-cultural, economic and political relationships in the new India after Independence. *The White Tiger* traces the effects of globalization on modern India with stereoscopic vision. The authors are deeply rooted in native national culture and highlight the political, social and cultural issues which constitute the very fibre of Indian life in their novels. Culture and customs are at the centre of the social order in India. The novel does not present in traditional Indian lifestyle. All the characters portrayed in the novel are influenced by the postcolonial aftermath. He is deeply rooted in native, national culture and highlights the political, social and cultural issues which constitute the very fibre of Indian life in his novels. The aim of the novelist is not to describe the lifestyle of people in a remote part of India with their traditional culture, but rather to show the relationship between the East and the West. Kiran Desai's fictions are so fascinating that they cast the canvas of our contemporary society, in which the themes of alienation, cultural clashes, displacement, and exile are presented in the broad perspective of globalization. The sensitive socio-political issues concerning hybridism, insurgency, immigration, intercultural communication, identity crisis, loneliness,

multiculturalism, poverty, racial discrimination, social realism, and the search for home also find expression within the ambit of her novels. Kiran Desai has used the technique of magic realism and socio-cultural realism in her novels. Her first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, has presented different perspectives of life. In her second Man Booker Prize-winning novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, she has analyzed several current issues of modern civilization.

### Conclusion

Post-Independence Indian Fictional Writings as an expression of the consciousness of life and society has witnessed socio-cultural, economic and political changes of our nation. Post-Independence Indian Fictional Writings explore the diversity of culture in his native India. We are fortunate that Indian society preserves noble values like truth, honour and valour, the guiding principles of life that can pave the way to human happiness. The socio-moral vision of the Post-Independence Indian Fictional Writers reflects aspects of modern Indian life. The novelists of the period dealt with social problems for bringing in rapid social awareness. Actually, it was an era of socio-cultural and national consciousness in which Indian English novelists gave their outmost contribution through their writings. Understanding cultural differences is still a societal and educational issue. More understanding, commitment and research is needed for truly embrace Indian cultural identity. Independence brings profound influence on political, social and ideological changes. The culture and tradition of India have a distinct entity of their own, and the Indian English Novelists, without losing their cultural identity, moved by a genuine desire to present before the western readers a true picture of India through their Novels.

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