



## **Study of the Post-Colonial Indian Fiction- an Academic Discourse**

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### **Abstract**

Literature is always the treasure of knowledge. It provides us information, people and their culture, languages, political, social and economic condition. Indian writing in English fiction is an integral part and significant contribution to post- colonial literature, this paper examines the relevance of post- colonial literature in academics in the higher education in the Indian perspectives. The purpose of teaching Indian English fictions in our classroom should be for the language and not for the story inscribed in it.

Key words: post-colonial, discourse, contemporary, significant, academic.

This paper represents itself to the question of teaching postcolonial Indian English fictions in the higher classes, where the socio-cultural issues emerge as the prominent topics of discussion. Any kinds of academic discussion can never be an innocent act. The hidden perspectives of an Indian English novel that determine our reading and discussion in the classroom are much more important than just the obvious ones visible on the surface.

There are some questions regarding the recommendation of such texts in our graduate and postgraduate classes. Is it to give the students just a taste of Indian writings in English? Is it for the quality and literary merits of work? Alternatively, is it for making the students aware of a post-colonial worldview and looking a relatively contemporary socio cultural condition adapted to the nuances of an international language in English? There may be many more questions depending upon what we would like to find from such a context.

The Indian Diaspora around the world used it a medium of being in touch with their country of origin. Does the writer of Indian English novel have this in mind? Who is the reader of these novels? Definitely, it is not the Indians living in India and desirous of getting a glimpse of what India is in the post-independence era? Almost all Indians are bilingual at the least. Besides English, they can read good novels written in any of the regional languages. This is the first assumption that comes to our mind in a classroom condition. The second perspectives is that Regional writings translated in to English and meant for the English knowledge reader, I believe, do not quality of our discussion. It is because these works cannot be called English writing. Strictly speaking, "Socio- Cultural" issues that find place in post- colonial Indian English novel typically are of academic interest to the critics and more so to the teachers and students.

Norman Jeffares, in one of his lectures delivered in 1964 at the university of Leeds, says, "English at the moment is being enriched by the new usages of overseas writers. "He also lists a few

reasons why one reads these authors like Narayan, Khuswant etc. It is because they tell us about the way their countries are evolving.... They enrich our pleasure in the English language for the supernatural qualities in their works... and they bring new ideas, new interpretation of life to us. Ultimately, we read them because they are good writers. The most important of all is that the standards of judgement are not national standards”.

Interestingly we are talking of post-colonial writings as “open to British Influence but reflecting local setting”. Does the English educated intelligentsia still carry a cultural baggage-, which is difficult to get rid of? Are not we entering into a problematic area when we try to define “Post-Colonial Socio-Cultural” issues as they found in Indian English novel? Certainly, these writers are R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Khuswant Sing down to Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Upamanyu Chatterjee and Vikram Seth, all provide a critique and question the assumption I have mentioned above.

We are yet to clear the ground- What basic academic purpose does teaching of Indian English novel serve? Again, a simplistic answer would be to give a glimpse of the Indian English – Now that we are evolving and emerging as a powerful community of users of English language-, these works provide us convenient texts. We are comfortable with them in our classrooms. We are proud of our creative writers who have mastered the language and adopted it suitability to express the Indian ethos.

The problem of Socio-Cultural issue- we can see the works of Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* speaks of a social condition of India in graphic details. It was a society in flux, on the eve of Independence, of the Gandhian era. The sanitized view of English society and Babus referred in it, serves the backdrop to terribly caste- ridden, poverty- stricken, morally corrupt Indian society. Any kind of metamorphosis is very painful experience. The optimism envisaged in this novel is yet to be realized even after several decades of independence. Now I am at a loss to figure out the advantages of this book being written in English

language. It could well be a translation of a regional novel.

Kushwant Singh’s *A Train to Pakistan* highlights another issue. The trauma, the nation experienced due to partition, is a tremendous example and a motif for many Indian English writings. Well, Kushwant Singh is typical for his way of handling the English language. So, what could be the academic interest of reading such a text in our classrooms? For English or for the human problems built the texture of a postcolonial Indian society.

Anita Desai takes us to a different realm of experience in her novels. The post- Colonial experience is largely a personal problem of loss and dislocation. Unlike Anand, or Singh. The trajectory moves further with *English August* and *A Suitable Boy*. It is grappling with a middle class worldview of the post-colonial Indian experience. Social issues projected but largely these remain centered in individual consciousness.

The fictions of Bhabani Bhattacharya and Manohar Malgonkar written after independence- cover a wide spectrum of the nation’s concern with socio- cultural aspects of the nation. These fictions tell the nation’s story while presenting that of their protagonists. Bhattacharya and Malgonkar hail from different and distinct geographic regions and have their difference of socio- cultural perspective and temperament.

Largely, language determines the worldview of individual. No doubt, we have excellent works of postcolonial Indian English writings especially fictions. We feel it merely binding on us to talk about them in our classrooms. The Indian condition as reflected in these works provides us good points for academic discussions. Even we have the satisfaction that we have gone global, cutting across national boundaries. These writers are good, because they have given new interpretations of life.

My argument remains as it is. Why do we teach their texts? In addition, more important is how we interpret them to our students? Hardly do we notice the nuances of the language in which they are written. It is not the grounds of society and culture

that the postcolonial debate takes place. Significantly, the ground is the language in which they are written. The colony strikes back in the realm of English language. The academic and literary establishment in England responded to Arundhati Ray's *God of Small Things* as saying that she has brought in a kind of freshness to the English language which no other English writer can do. Here like the specialty of Indian English writing. Be it Narayan, Anand, Raja Raja Rao or any of the new crops of Indian novelists of Rushdie's generation or even 'Rushdie's Children' writing at present.

What we have made of the English language is our answer of the postcolonial debate. It is not the obvious socio-cultural issues integrated into these fictions. As teachers, they could enlighten our students how the principles of postcolonial approaches can be explained through a reading of the very nature of the language. To put it in simpler words, the purpose of teaching Indian English fictions in our classrooms should be for the language and not for the story inscribed in it.

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