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**The Effect of History and Post-Modernism in Today's Indian English Literature****Solanki Milind Kantilal***Research Scholar, Kadi Sarva Vishwavidhyalaya, Gandhinagar***Abstract**

This paper deals with the advent of Postmodernism and how it has affected the Writings in India. It also throws light on the chief characteristics of Post Modern works and important themes, elements and techniques used by the authors worldwide. Indian writers as Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, Arvind Adiga and Salman Rusdie have successfully used this form in their best works. The most significant aspect is 'History' in most of the post modern works and the paper deals with that aspect providing key concepts on it to understand 'History and Narration' and 'Historiographic Metafiction'.

**Key Words** Post Modernism, History, Fiction, Historiographic Metafiction, Narration

**Advent of Post-Modern Era and English Literature in English**

Since 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, our growth in Indian English Writers, Readers and Speakers is overwhelming. Today we are among the top three readers and writers in English. The scenario today in the twenty first century is quite different from the day when we got independence. The early writers in English in India were less in number as were the readers of it. We can trace back from Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, and Sri Aurobindo to today's Chetan Bhagat, Arvind Adiga, Kiran Desai, Rohinton Mistry and many more. We too had eminent figures like Raja Rao, Mulkraj Anand, R.K. Narayana and Kamala Markandaya. They all are path makers for Indian English Literature. We can trace the journey after Independence gain a new pace and momentum. After independence we had a wide exposure to the world and in the nineties we got LPG – Liberalization,

Privatization and Globalization, which changed the face of India. It gave new heights to the English in India we were becoming a growing economic power in the Asian subcontinent and English was gaining the similar power in India.

**Post-Modernism and Literature**

Postmodernism in itself is a complex phenomenon. *Merriam Webster's Dictionary* defines postmodernism as "of, relating to, or being any of various movements in reaction to modernism that are typically characterized by a return to traditional materials and forms (as in architecture) or by ironic self-reference and absurdity (as in Literature) or of relating to, or being a theory that involves a radical reappraisal of modern assumptions about culture, identity, history or language".

The term postmodern literature is used to describe certain tendencies in past World War II Literature. It is both a continuation of the experiment and a reaction against

Enlightenment ideas implicit in modernist literature. Post modernism fully came into its own in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, whereas modernism can be traced back between 1910 and 1930. 'Literary Postmodernism' as Steven Connor says "has tended to be focused on one kind of writing, namely, narrative fiction" (Connor). Theorists came out with various new dimensions and definitions of the term 'Postmodern'. Jean Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard have provided the philosophical framework for postmodernism. Lyotard's book *The Postmodern Condition* has proved to be the benchmark for debates on postmodernism, whereas Baudrillard's *Simulations* theorized the 'loss of the real'. Linda Hutcheon came out with, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* in 1989 and Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction*, which are devoted to the postmodernism. Linda sees postmodernist fiction as subversive and complicit at the same time she places a lot of value on its parodic and self critical mode.

Last few decades have seen the growth and development of postmodernism in literature especially in Indian writings. It is not a term that evolved and spread over and by literature but has wide impacts on all art forms. Dr. Clayton Whisnant describes three ways that people use the term 'postmodernism'.

- First, to describe a specific era, sometimes dated from the end of World War II but more frequently starting as late as the 1970s;
- second, to describe a body of philosophical ideas and critical studies that date back to the late 1960s with such

poststructuralist thinkers as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard, but then in the 1970s and 1980s comes to include a whole series of different analyses involving language and symbolic systems that utilizes some of the insights of these earlier poststructuralist thinkers;

- And, finally, a whole body of different artistic works that makes reference to or embodies the ideas promoted by the above thinkers.

#### Chief Elements of Post-Modernistic Literature

We cannot confine 'Postmodernism' term in a box but it has various angles, philosophy, beliefs and practices. But we can churn out some of the characteristics as:

- There is no Absolute Truth.
- Truth and Error are synonyms.
- Traditional Authority is false and corrupt.
- Ownership
- Disillusionment are valid
- Liberal Ethics
- Pro-Environmentalism
- Use of History as a Tool.

#### Indian Writings in English under the Roof of Post Modernism

Postmodernism has wide and at length effect on Indian Writings in English. This effect is seen in today's literary works. The best Indian works, the Booker winner works such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* reflects the Post modernistic effect. So the

question in our mind arises what are the key concepts, elements, terms related to Post modernism. The common elements and techniques used in postmodern work are:

- Irony, Playfulness, Black Humour
- Pastiche
- Intertextuality
- Metafiction
- Temporal Disorder
- Historiographic Metafiction
- Faction
- Techno culture and Hyper reality
- Magic Realism
- Fragmentation and
- Paranoia

In *Midnight's Children*, "Saleem the oral narrator is perfect instance for postmodern unreliable narration. The similar unreliability is present in Balram's narration in *The White Tiger*" (Jyothsnaphanija). Narration in postmodern works is not easy to grasp as it can have multiple narrators. We trace history as the key force in many postmodern works such as Julian Barnes' *The Flaubert's Parrot* and Graham Swift's *The Waterland*. The story in Swift's work deals with history professor who narrates the story to his students while teaching 'the French Revolution' and another work of Swift *The Last Orders* deals with multiple narrators. Similar is the case with *God of the Small Things* and *The Inheritance of Loss* where the constant shift of narration strengthens perplexed history. "These novelist are not merely a story tellers, but attempted to preserve the past in giving new interpretations to historical context, challenges accuracy of history and relates

national history with individual's life" (Jyothsnaphanija). One of the key features of the postmodern works is the depiction of history or connections with History. Historiographic Metafiction rejects present beliefs and standards over to the past, and asserts for the specificity and particularity of the individual past events.

### Conclusion

Indian Literature in English took a new turn in the 1980s with the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the novel traced the history of the protagonist Saleem Senai born on the eve of Indian Independence. It juxtaposed Saleem's personal life with the history of the Indian nation. The distinct narrative style of the novel, use of Magic Realism and Indian words in English gave a new definition to Indian literature 'Modern Indian writers have freed English from the baggage of colonial legacy and indianised it to suit their own cultural needs.

Post modernism emphasizes the role of language, power relations and motivations and is against the sharp distinctions such as male versus female, straight versus gay, white versus black and imperial versus colonial. Post modern Indian English literature writers have taken excessive advantage and liberalized in painting out social, cultural and economical issues of different sections of the society. The Postmodernist has made the issues of Identity and nationality more complex and it has provided a new vague and impetus to Indian Writing in English.

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