

## Post Colonial Literature with Reference to Indian English Writing

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### Abstract

Postcolonial Literature means literature of countries that were colonized mainly by European countries. It exists on all continents except Antarctica. Post colonial literature deals with problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country, especially questions relating to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people. It also refers to the themes such as racialism and colonialism.

Decolonization was not just brought about by politicians and freedom fighters. Writers also played a very important role. Post colonial literature emerged at the same time when many colonies were fighting for independence. It really began as a coherent literary movement in the mid-twentieth century. Many post colonial texts were published between the 1950s and 1990s.

Drama and poetry are important in post colonial literature. It is really the novel that defines this movement. What the post colonial writers did was as important as what the anti-colonial freedom fighters and activists did. Post colonial writers challenged some of the basic assumptions (like white people are better) that had justified colonialism in the first place. Post colonial writers—emerging from Africa, South Asia, East Asia, South America and other places expressed their feelings to the empire. Indian authors like Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Rohinton Mistry, Meena Alexander, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Salman Rushdie, R. K. Narayan, Nissim Ezekiel and others have written about their post colonial experiences.

**Key Words:** Post colonial, Post imperial, Decolonization, Racialism, Literary movement, Post colonial literature etc

### Introduction

The seed of Indian writing in English was sown during the British rule in India. Now the seed has blossomed into an evergreen tree, fragrant flowers and ripe fruits. It happened only after the constant caring, pruning and feeding. Gardeners like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao etc looked after the tender plant night and day. In modern time, it is guarded by a number of writers who are getting awards and accolades all over the world.

Indian English literature is an honest enterprise to demonstrate the rare gems of Indian writings in English. Indian writing has turned out to be a new form of Indian Culture and voice in which India converses regularly.

Indian Writers – poets, novelists, essayists and dramatists have been making momentous and considerable contributions to world literature since pre-Independence era. The past few years have witnessed a

gigantic prospering and thriving of Indian English Writing in the global market. Indian English Literature has attained an independent status in the realm of world literature. Wide ranges of themes are dealt with in Indian writing in English. This literature continues to reflect Indian culture, tradition, social values and Indian history through the depiction of life in India and Indians living elsewhere. India's substantial contribution to world literature is largely due to the profusely creative literary works generated by Indian novelists in English. Their works contemplated on multifarious range of issues like nationalism, freedom struggle, social realism and individual consciousness. This literary movement is fortified by the overwhelming output by novelists. This has been achieved by novelists who sought to prove their inner creative urges in English language which is indeed an alien tongue for them. Indian writing in English has commended admiration in both home and abroad, is now in its full swing. Indian English literature is two hundred years old. Sri Aurobindo stands like a huge oak spreading its branches over these two centuries. The contribution of Sri Aurobindo as a perfect writer and craftsman is undoubtedly great. He is the first poet in Indian English writing who has given the re-interpretation of myths. Sri Aurobindo's famous works *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Society* show the humanistic trend in his thought. Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore produced a substantial corpus of dramatic writing.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is a celebrated name in the sphere of English literature. His creative genius and his

literary output make him exemplary and outstanding writer. He won Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his immortal poetic work *Gitanjali*. Besides being a great universal poet, the genius Tagore is also a novelist, dramatist, short – story writer, musician, philosopher, painter, reformer and critic in every field. The setting of his novel is representative and reflective; their characters are natural, realistic, full blooded and life –like. The socio-religious culture of Bengal is brilliantly portrayed in his novels.

K.S. Venkataramani (1892-1952) is an Indo-Anglian writer of the pre-Independence era. He is a novelist and short – story writer. He interweaves the centrality of the novel keeping in view the Gandhian ideology of a self-sufficient, morally and economically integrated village community.

Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-1988) is one of the novelists of the older generation of Indo-Anglian writers. He is endowed with positive vision of life, explored and expressed artistically in his novels.

Indian writers like R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand promoted the conventional mode of writing. The crusaders of the contemporary and modern era include Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth and many more. They elucidate and substantiate strength of the emerging modern voice of India, which has the vibrancy and energy to experiment and explore new avenues of writing novels.

A host of contemporary post-colonial writers like Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Meena Alexander, Anita Nair and Jhumpa Lahiri have initiated the process of decolonizing the Colonial English and using it as a

medium to express Indian thoughts and sensibilities with a distinctive Indian style. The freedom movement spearheaded by Gandhi inspired a flurry of activity in the literary world. Therefore, there was a flourish of novels in both regional as well as in the national stream.

The dual combination of independent movement and nationalist consciousness gave much impetus and spur to the outflow of novels in which affection for motherland was the crux and this served to invoke the patriotic sentiments of the masses. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), K.S. Venkataramani's *Kandan*, *The Patriot* (1934) and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) revolved around the themes of the Independence struggle. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan were the novelists who stabilized and fortified the Indian English Fiction with their ample works and unique literary style. The majority of Mulk Raj Anand's novels bring to the limelight of the inequalities of society and trials and tribulations of the poor and lower castes. *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *The Village* and the private life of an Indian Prince addresses the evils existing in the society. *Untouchable* targets the evil of casteism and brings to the surface the issue of segregation of people on the basis of their profession. In *Coolie*, he presents a poverty-stricken protagonist, Munoo who portrays the hollowness of the society and the curse faced by the proletariat. He was instrumental in bringing about an awareness of the inequality that existed in India. He also advocated solutions for the issue. Both novels are: "a plea for downtrodden, the

poor and the outcast, who face economic hardship and emotional humiliation in a rigid social structure". R. K. Narayan (1906-2001) enjoys a unique position in the crowded literary scene of Indian fiction. He is undoubtedly the master of portraying the socio-comic aspects of the ordinary Indian's family and idiosyncrasies of human which form the crux of his novels. The greatest merit of his language and style lives in its simplicity. His fiction revolves around the imaginary sleepy South Indian Town of Malgudi and expresses an outlook which has universal appeal. His famous novels are: *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The Painter of Signs* (1933), *Swami and Friend* (1935), *The English Teacher* (1945), *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955), *The Guide* (1958) and *The Sweet Vendor* (1967). His writing occupies a remarkable position in the history of Indian English Fiction. Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Upamanya Chatterjee are the writers who reigned supreme with their momentous work and harsh depiction of reality.

Among the women writers Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Das, Anita Nair and Susan-Viswanathan charmed the readers with their writings. Novelists like Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai captured the spirit of Indian cultures and its traditional values.

Women writers in India are moving forward with their strong strides, matching the pace of the world. We see them bursting out in full bloom spreading their own individual fragrances. They are recognized for their originality, versatility and the indigenous flavor of the soil that they bring to their work. Indian women writers like Kamala Markandaya, Bharathi Mukherji, Anita

Desai have played a pioneering role in conveying the readers a wild range of indigenous Indian issue. It is amazing to note that these writers have climbed the ladder of success in a slow and painful way.

Kamala Das is a major Indian, English poet and a leading Malayalam author from Kerala state, South India. Her popularity is based chiefly on her short stories, autobiography. She is noted for the fiery poems and expressions.

Anita Desai (1937) is another remarkable novelist who has experimented with diverse themes which eventually emphasize the plight of the Indian women in post colonial India.

Bharati Mukherjee (1940), the expatriate of the Indian origin in the U.S.A., is one of the remarkable women writers to have contributed an explicit fiction to the much debated vein of post- modernist literature.

Shashi Deshpande, Geetha Hariharan and Anita Nair have focused on the domestic aspects which eventually steers the novel away from historical events. They uphold the female centric themes and delineate the

various issues faced by the women characters in a domestic spear.

Githa Hariharan (1954) is a post colonial Indian woman writer. She was born in 1954 in Coimbatore, India. Her fictional world includes novels, short stories, essays and newspaper articles.

Anita Nair, an eminent modern novelist has focused on the marginalization of women in Indian society. Anita Nair is one of the finest writers in Indian writing in English with an International reputation.

### CONCLUSION

But a paradigm shift took place in the post-independence novels both in terms of content and style and novelists like Mulk Raj Anand wrote novels extensively dealing with social evils such as exploitation of the untouchable, the landless peasants, tea garden workers and the problems of industrial labour. Anand's novels concentrated on social reforms. Many women novelists in post colonial period like Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shobha De, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal and Kiran Desai carved a niche for themselves in Indian English fiction.

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