



ISSN 2349-638X

REVIEWED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

**AAYUSHI
INTERNATIONAL
INTERDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH JOURNAL
(AIIRJ)**

MONTHLY PUBLISH JOURNAL

VOL-II

ISSUE-X

OCT.

2015

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**“A CRITICAL STUDY OF PROTAGONISTS IN KIRAN NAGARKAR’S
SELECTED NOVELS”**

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Introduction:

Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. In recent years it has attracted widespread interest, both in India and abroad. It is now recognized that Indian English literature is not only art of commonwealth literature but also occupies a great significance in the world literature. Fiction, being the most powerful form of the literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. Post colonialism in IEL is a category of writing produced by authors born in countries which were formerly colonized and which, in most cases gained their independence in the post world war-II era. Basically it deals with cultural identity, matters of colonized societies and the dilemmas of developing a national identity after colonial rule. Modernist Indian English literature begins with Raja Rao’s Kanthapura (1938) and Postmodernist with Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children (1981). Postcolonial literature emphasizes on poverty and social financial instability and cultural upheaval, uncertain national and cultural identities of peoples, international conflicts and experience of the immigrant within the former empire, race, nationalism, myth, legend, history, hybridization, search for identity etc. In post colonialism, various postcolonial aspects regarding the protagonists are skillfully handled by the eminent writers through their creative writing. i.e. Anita Desai’s-Fire on the Mountain (1978), Kamala Markandeya’s-Pleasure City (1982) Arun Joshi’s- The Last Labyrinth (1982), The City and The River (1990), Nayantara Sehgal’s-Rich Like Us (1985), Rohinton Mistry’s- A Fine Balance (1985), Ruskin Bond’s- A Flight of Pigeons (1986), Amitav Ghosh’s- The Circle of Reason (1986), The Shadow Lines (1988), The Glass Palace (2000), An Antique Land (1992), Upamanyu Chatterjee’s- English August: An Indian Story (1988), Shashi Tharoor’s-The Great

Indian Novel (1989), Riot (2001), Vikram Chandra's- Red Earth and Pouring Rain (1995), David Davidar's- The House of Blue Mangoes (2002), Shiva K. Kumar's - A River with Three Banks (1998), The City and The River (1990) etc.

Kiran Nagarkar's notable novels are –

Seven Sixes Are Forty Three (1974), Ravan and Eddie (1994), Cuckold (1997), Gods Little Soldier (2006), and The Extras (2012). He has written the plays like – Bedtime Story (1978), Kabirache Kaya Karayache (1994), Stranger Amongst Us etc. Besides this, his screen plays are – The Broken Circle, The Widow and Her Friends, The Elephant on the Mouse. His 1985 screen play, The Highly Improbable Adventures of Ravan and Eddie, is currently being filmed by Dev Benegal, critically acclaimed Director of English August. Researcher intends to convey the narratives of the protagonists. Protagonists are the main characters of the story. Usually everything evolves around the central character. They want to reach towards a goal but they face many obstacles in their path which are deliberately created by antagonist. Minor characters help the protagonist to reach his goal or do not interact with the protagonists. There can be more than one protagonist or antagonists in the story. In order to improve their predicament, they often learn new skills and arrive at a higher sense of self awareness and capability. These central characters are crushed in a callously stratified society and are drifted towards the world of sin and evil for which they are not at all responsible. Their crisis involves a twofold journey-one is at social level, the other one is at the personal level. They try to live their own lives and are consequently often engaged in treason. Their fates are governed by the divine design.

His first novel, **Seven Sixes Are Forty Three, 1974**, tr. of Marathi novel, **Saat Sakkam Trechalis** is considered as a milestone in post-independence Indian literature. Kushank Purandare is a young Bombayite protagonist, is a young writer living off the goodwill of a host of friends, relatives, and lovers while he waits to gain recognition for his work. Kushank narrates different incidences of his life in a non linear fashion making it hard for the reader to grasp the thread of each character and narration. It is the private view of Kushank looking at him self and at the world. His involvement with the woman with whom he shares a flat, the influence of his landlord on his life, friends momentary craving to molest a woman in college which ends in a violent way are some of the key fragments that elaborated in the novel in a effective manner. From the self immolation of Pratibha, the upstairs neighbor who beats his daughters every night,

from Kushank's ill-starred romance with Chandani to his more meaningful and more painful love for Arotie, Nagarkar takes us on a tour of his protagonist's life, which impresses us as a series of snapshots in black and white. Nagarkar represented his rigorous struggle, alienation, squalor, violence, and loss of hope as a modern Indian through his burlesque and bitter description. It explores the dimensions of relationships in terms of an empty physicality and loneliness as an inherent element in modern lives

His second novel **Ravan and Eddie, 1995** brings the hilarious and realistic picture of Mumbai chawl life which is the symbol of divide-and-rule, the ruler's language and class consciousness.. The story revolves around the characters like Ravan, Eddie, Parvati Bai, Violet, Lalee, Shankar Rao, Shobhan etc. It is the sensitive, funny and utterly charming story of Ravan Pawar, a Maratha Hindu boy, and Eddie Countinho, a Roman Catholic boy who bound to each other by a same link of fate but their worlds are completely different. Both are from a vertical slum in Mumbai where their stories are intertwined: first as children, then teenagers and young adults. The story pivots around the lives of both, being neighbors' growing up to adolescence on the different floors of the CWD chawl No 17 in Bombay in the decade immediately after independence. It states about the relationship and conflict between Hinduism and Christianity, two religions which coexist closely in the Indian chawl. They both seldom confront throughout the novel and there is an unspoken rivalry growing between them. Thus Nagarkar projects the complexity of modern man living in a mixed society with mixed identity and multi cultural milieu. He reveals the intricacies of dual identity of the character in modern times. It then follows them through the twists & turns of their growing up, the pleasure, the pain, the horror, the angst, the guilt, responsibility, sin and sex, crime and punishment, power, expiation, domination, betrayal, and self-discovery etc. In **Ravan and Eddie**, we see terrible ways people suffer, the abuse of women and Dalits that is taken for granted, the day to day struggles just to survive, the many class markers etc. along the way. We see the influence of religion and how it divides people. This novel is compared with Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*. In this novel, Nagarkar focuses on the anxieties and cries of human persona. He makes use of mythical worlds from two religious cultures and puts forth the complicated predicament of modern man living in a multicultural society. It is about the heterogeneity of Indian culture and life. It is the conflict between two religions and cultures.

Nagarkars **God's Little Soldier, 2006** is a tale of a liberal Muslim boy's tryst with religious orthodoxy. It is compared with Dostoevsky's *The Brother Karamazov*. It explores fundamental, psychological and political issues and the dangers of religious extremism of all varieties. It underscores the incoherent ambiguities of good and evil, and the tragic conflicts. It is the story of a young extremist Zia Khan, the central character, who barrels through a series of epiphanies that take him from fundamentalist Islam to extreme versions of Christianity and Hinduism. He is a talented and intelligent young man, born into a rich, political liberal, Indian Muslim family. He is a person with master guerrilla strategies, Defender of the faith, who is willing to die for his beliefs, and to destroy anyone who comes in his way. His extremist approach towards life and his strong belief that he is the god chosen one destined to save the world., takes him through transformations, from a enthusiastic, energetic child, to a Jihadi, to a Missionary and finally to an arms dealer who becomes a prey of his own Extremism and Fanatism. He is self-involved, confused, violent, spiteful, and deluded. He is a person has to deal with the world but cannot see clearly and is shackled by his own failings. He considers himself as a god's little soldier: a terrorist. Zia's fate is linked with that of his brother, Amanat, who chooses the middle path. Their lives diverge and their beliefs clash, but both are confronted in their own ways with the dilemmas of faith and betrayal, god and morality. Finally Zia goes through three avatars of extremism: from Islamic terrorist to Lucens, a catholic anti abortion fundamentalist, to a tantric inspired gun runner, Tejas Nirantar. In all of these phases of his life, he kills hundreds of people and destroys innumerable lives. His errors and follies always buttressed by faith in the infallibility of some religious doctrine. In the end, Nagarkar reveals how an extremist can change his ideology and religion, but he always remains an extremist.

Kiran Nagarkar's recent novel **The Extras, 2012**, is a sequel to *Ravan* and *Eddie* written in 1994. It takes place in the late 1970s/80s Bombay in contemporary Bollywood. It is the engrossing tale of a epic struggle against obscurity and towards self-realization. It is about religious fundamentalism. It traces the adult lives of *Ravan* and *Eddie* as extras in Bollywood. Both grown up in Bombay, the city of movie. They have craze for glamour. They both dream of super-stardom. They both are from impoverished backgrounds and join the acting class and want to get a break in Bollywood. After a few months, both adjust their ambitions and try to get jobs as extras. But now their lives converge as they share an obsession. Here the question arises- Can *Ravan*, a lowly taxi driver, and *Eddie*, a bouncer-cum-bartender at an illegal bar, rise from their dusty CWD chawl to the glittering heights of international fame? What could they become except extras? Today, hardly any actor or actress get success without having a godfather in the

film industry. The fact is that there are thousands of men and women living there just waiting to get their break. The novel asks readers to decide: Are we protagonists and superstars or are we extras in that movie called life?

Review of the relevant literature:

Following criticism in the form of research articles are available on Nagarkar's novels.

1. "De-glorification of Homogenous World by Kiran Nagarkar's Ravan and Eddie," by Dr. Nitin Jarandikar, Radhanagari Mahavidyalaya, Ratnagiri.
2. "Kiran Nagarkar's Ravan and Eddie" by Preeti Shirodkar.
3. "Kiran Nagarkar's Seven Sixes Are Forty Three" by Suresh Chandra.

Significance of the Research:

The present study will be a great help for the readers, researchers and interpreters who wish to study, analyze and interpret any literary text from the protagonist's point of view, their crucial role in society, their journey, their depression, pessimism, sufferings and disappointment, various dimensions of human experience, the tension and balance between the social personal worlds, their incapability to understand the possibility of redemption, helplessness of human lot through a dream, loneliness, their incessant struggle, self realization, doubt and suspicion etc.

Aims and Objectives of the Research:

1. To portray the protagonists as a great organized creative and moving force of work of art.
2. To emphasize the central characters moral, psychological and metaphysical anxieties from different perspectives.
3. To explore the complexity of human existence through the lives of protagonists.
4. To project the absurdity of human life through the lives of the central characters.
5. To highlight the fatal entrapping of the protagonists in the realm of sin and guilt.
6. To reveal the hidden life and intricacies of identity of the protagonists.

Scope and Limitations of the Study:

The researcher wants to explore a new approach by analyzing and understanding the novels, so that a fresh perspective will be available. There is a considerable scope for studying the selected novels as they are multidimensional one. As the present study is about the

critical study of the protagonists in Indian English Literature, the focus will be laid on the selective research work only.

Hypothesis of the Research:

1. In any novel, the protagonists get entangled with a myriad of circumstances and incidences in their journey throughout the development of the story. In many narratives, the main characters seem unable to resolve their problems because they lack the skills to overcome the forces of antagonism that confront them.
2. The protagonists are both symbols and witnesses of human frailty.

Rationale behind the selection:

The present study focuses on the protagonists in post colonial Indian English Literature. Here researcher would attempt to explore new dimensions of the protagonists as they play the key role in the novels and are treated as the soul of the work of art. They help in moving the plot of the story. The researcher wants to reveal the reality of human life through the lives of the protagonists who are mostly unnoticed by the society. Here researcher intends to acquaint the vitality of the protagonists in work of art. In short, the researcher feels that the story would be incomplete without the protagonists. These central characters are very prominent in the novels of Kiran Nagarkar. His complete identification with the characters account for the remarkable authenticity in their portrayal. His choice of characters is consistent with his theory of literature and life. Analyzing protagonists is adventurous as it has wider scope in Indian English Novels. By considering all these aspects, present researcher has selected the topic The Critical Study of Protagonists in Some Selected Novels of Kiran Nagarkar for his research work.

Research Methodology:

Emphasis will be laid on a very close reading of primary and secondary sources. Evaluative, interpretative, analytical and comparative methodology will be used for the present study.

Pedagogical Implications:

The present study has significant pedagogical implications. The insights gained through this research can be used to know the critical study of the protagonists in Kiran

Nagarkar's some selected novels in Post colonial Indian English Literature. The present study focuses on the postmodernism as an ideological approach and thorough study of protagonists, their qualities, their significant aspects of life, experiences or relationships, their supplementary roles, their true picture in society etc. It also highlights on different perspectives of protagonists like their thought and actions, struggle for survival, exploitation, pain, agony, plight etc. The work will be useful to the students, researchers, readers and teachers to get acquainted with the literary term protagonists and their role in Indian society at a greater extent.

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