

Post Independence Period in Indo-Anglian Literature**Dr. Bhagyalaxmi**Assistant Professor, Dept. of English
Govt. Degree (Autonomous College) Kalaburgi**Introduction:**

With the introduction of English education in India in the early nineteenth century, a new class of readers and writers emerged on the literary horizon of the country. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Prince Dwarakanath Tagore and their compatriots in those days were convinced that English only could play a prominent role in hoisting literary and cultural harmony in a polyglot nation addicted to heterogeneous practices and dissimilar traditions. Manifestly, Macaulay's famous Minute on Education spelt the death-sentence on un-reconciling language feuds, facilitating Lord William Bentick to install English as the official language of India. He recommended on March 7, 1835. The great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and sciences among the natives of India, and that all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone¹. Subsequently it was adopted as the all-superseding medium of instruction in all major institutions and metropolitan colleges. The establishment of universities in the presidency towns of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras all the more accelerated the element of English studies in India, which simultaneously actuated the origin and ascent of Indo-Anglian Literature, a new idiom of expression later ardently embraced by many a great literary luminary who authored works of world standard.

The teaching of English opened fresh pastures and the new Indian student came into contact with the Western thought and philosophy. The introduction of European arts and sciences to him brought unprecedented change in his mental outlook and physical outfit. This ultimately culminated into creating a new social order, an elite which loved learning the language and literature of their rulers. The legacy of Indian classical spirit seemed fast

petering out and the craze for the study of Shakespeare and Milton preoccupied the cerebrum of young university students. Though to a limited extent this renaissance did awaken the sense of greatness of Sanskrit language and the oriental aura, it actually flushed a wide the window to the Western ways of life and living. The consciousness of the great Sanskrit heritage, the revival of classical learning—largely the work of foreign scholars—was only one aspect of the new changes that appeared on the Indian scene in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The main aspect of the Indian renaissance was the effort to recreate the cultural life that existed in the West. Indo-Anglian literature was born out of this instinct of imitation².

Western education brought about national awareness which in course of time became the militant nationalism of the novelists of the 'thirties and the 'forties of our century. Nationalism gave rise to the literature of struggle, the literature of the Gandhian era³. Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and many others of the formative days upheld the great national values in their thought-provoking works. Today we have novelists like Abbas (Inquilab), Anand (Untouchable), Raja Rao (Kanthapura), R. K. Narayan (Waiting for the Mahatma) and many more that have exposed the cause of nationalism and patriotic fervor as in the days of mass upheaval against the alien rulers. The consciousness as to self-pride and self-respect has been mirrored, though at many places they drift towards mysticism and oriental obscurity. Mahatma Gandhi's call for struggle is significantly reflected in these novels and the pre-independence period is marked by changing literary characteristics and varying themes and tones. The thought-wave of optimism which surged the literary horizon in the first quarter of the century was suddenly short-circuited by the attainment of independence. The zeal, the zest, the thrill went underground by the midcentury and a new genre—literature of protest,

literature of dissent, literature of unrest, literature of remonstrance or what you call—was taking birth. How could the novelists escape the all-pervading wave? Hence, as a landmark in the making of Indo-Anglian fiction, these turbulent decades covering the period of melodramatic journey to a Free India at once plunge us down into a new nation where agony and ecstasy, love and lust, power and pelf, courage and cowardice, romance and reprisal and a host of such antithetic issues sway the heads and hearts of the teeming millions.

Though apparently well-defined in their themes and techniques, the interplay of characters and incidents, the philosophy and the promise, novels of the period were not devoid of the realism, the truthfulness, the naturalism which overpowered the destinies of men and women, in every spectrum of existence in a nation reborn out of the throes of slavery and serfdom. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* is a story of an outcast, the events of which he has narrated with unusual insight and vision under orthodox Indian circumstances. It highlights the misery, the suffering, the persecution which the untouchables experience in a highly superstitious society. With its stern artistic concentration and naturalistic description of the minutiae, Anand's *Untouchable* seems to be unique in the Indian literary experience of naturalism. It minutely describes the various humiliations suffered by Bakha, the hero of the novel, in his regular rounds of cleaning the town⁴. Allied to this the religious temper of the Indian villagers and what God means to them have been described dexterously in *Kanthapura* by Raja Rao. Both the religious Bhajans and the national movement have helped the novelist penetrate into the deeper layers of human nature and perceive the pettiness, greed, jealousy and in some cases callousness and inhumanity of the so-called spiritually-bent Indian⁵. The striking consciousness as to caste and religion has assumed a formidable enormity in the changing social set-up of a rehabilitating nation. True, the blocking barriers are fast sinking down, yet the age-old customs take their own time to crack. Further, Malgonkar (*The Princes*) and Narayan (*The Sweet-Vendor*) expose almost in a similar vein the intricate feudal characteristics, the ideographic and original figure of a common man respectively with equal understanding and awareness.

The conflict between modern scientific growth and the traditional rural values has been forcefully portrayed in the novels of Kamala Markandaya: *Nectar in a Sieve* and *The Coffers Dams*. Rukmini, all for calm and quiet of the countryside, and Kunthi, all for din and disturbance of the town life, stand in temperamental contrast in the novel *Nectar in a Sieve*. The rapid industrial advancement and the radical technological leaps have drifted Man away from Nature. Bhabani Bhattacharya, too, tries to re-establish Gandhian values allegedly losing their rank and honour in the post-independence India. The Charkha and the machine represent two separate schools—one symbolic of Gandhian simplicity and the other of machinistic heartlessness. Avowedly, it has created a cleavage in the society. A fast-developing nation, unmindful of its manpower is expressly adopting measures for brisk industrialization, no wonder, ultimately a move towards frustration and defeatism.

The post-independence shift in the attitude to women has generally proved a boon for the fair sex, hitherto treated as an inferior entity. Their lot has completely been overhauled and now they stand equal to men in all social and political concerns. Privilege to enter technical and industrial world, right to universal franchise, change in marital relations, growth of a newer class of working women—all such things have considerably improved their status. Bhabani Bhattacharya says: I think the women of India have more depth and more richness than the men. The transition from the old to the new, the crisis of value adaptation, strikes deeper into the lives of our women than of our men folk. He has tried to paint this type of image of the Eve in his woman-conscious novels as Kamala Markandaya, Jhabvala and Attia Hosain do in their works. The traditional role which women enjoyed in Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*—with prostitutes, courtesans, maid-servants, marriage melodies—has now been replaced by the portrayal of a liberated species which in clubs and councils, operas and offices dominates the scene. Hallowed with the grace of university education, these firebrand protagonists of the cause of their uplift and advancement, have compelled us to reconsider our stand as to them. The craving of the modern Indian women for a place in the sun, after centuries of *purdah*, is intelligible enough. Their

individuality is seldom allowed to grow. It is suspect. In Vedic times women enjoyed equality with men. It was much later that they were thrown in the junkyard and consigned to what is called the doormat status.⁷ Raja Rao too has upheld the idea of equality for women in his *Kanthapura*. The new openings for the women folk and the new social outlook, forebode a bright future for them in the post-independence India.

Since the installation of popular governments at the Centre and the States soon after independence a new political awakening has corroded the hearts of millions of Indians. At many International meets and the world-forums like the U. N. O., Indian representatives have been vehemently propagating the policy of non-violence and non-alignment. Alternately, we are borrowing lines of political behavior from our Western allies. The Marxist philosophy has pre-eminently influenced our ways. As such the cause of the underdog, has been spelt with compassion and pity by Mulk Raj Anand in his *Coolie*. Malgonkar's *The Princes* speaks of the medieval feudal glory, now an obsolete thing. *Rajahs*, *Shikar-parties*, *court-dances*, *bohemism* and *birthday revelries* are things non-existent now in a people's nation in the making. Instead, we have established new social service centers for the weaker sections of the community, welfare schemes have been drafted for their steady development, untouchability has been legally banned and the have-nots have been fraternally adopted as part of the society. Again, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is a story of a village, fast changing under Gandhian influence. The problem of untouchability is the theme of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*. Bhabani Bhattacharya too delves deep into the issue in his novel, *He who Rides a Tiger*. A spate of social reforms, a series of community welfare programmes, a sequence of popular polls have profusely altered the ways of Indian life and today we have included workers in the managerial board of the mills, artisans are members of the governing body of the engineering complexes and the dividends of a company are judiciously shared by the employers and the employees. Added to this, the spirit of democracy has evoked the sense of discipline, responsibility and allegiance. Though, the freedom brought with it a sweeping current of communal holocaust, hatred and horror (*Train to Pakistan*: Khushwant Singh, *Distani Drum*: Manohar

Malgonkar), it was short-lived owing to the call given by Mahatma Gandhi to restore sense of grace and goodwill for fellowcitizens, irrespective of caste, creed and colour. True, Mahatma Gandhi's image as one symbolic of love, brotherhood and communal harmony has been projected as such in many a novel of the post-independence period.

It is natural now to ask what the contemporary Indo-Anglia novel has offered us. Have these novelists really projected the growing trends of change in attitude, outlook and aspirations of nation committed to ameliorate the destinies of crores living below poverty line, subjected to economic constraints and orthodox social obligations? Is it merely an artistic expression of their imaginative spur far detached from reality and responsibility? Are these plots just fairyland fantasies? The quest may lead us to confusing corners. Technically we may not be concerned with new political and economic programmes, as our main strain is the new social vision. However, it is an admitted assumption that all these issues are intimately interwoven, inseparably interlinked. The difficulties facing the serious Indian novelist are of course real enough. What is he to write about? Must the novelist's be a scientific or realistic or even naturalistic approach to contemporary social problems? ⁸ The age-old Indian tradition easily assimilates new ideas, new idioms and new experiences. Despite their portrayal of a Utopian world, the contemporary novelists were closely associated with plain reality and natural simplicity of the Indian life and legend. The complex social forces and the limitations of an individual attract immediate attention of a discerning observer. The curious coalition of multi-faceted historical vicissitudes, Western impact, Marxist obsession, Gandhian enlightenment and the echoes of industrial advancement form the fabric of some of the great contemporary novels. No need to say, it is a portrayal of our own aspirations, ambitions and the millennium.

The ideological commitments of an author like Anand; the compassionate approach to life as seen in Narayan's novels; the mystic and obscurantist attitude of Raja Rao; the feminine sensibility of Kamla Markandaya; the unusual insight of Jhabvala; the medieval myth and marvel in Malgonkar; the jet-set galaxy of characters in Arun Joshi; the retort and

repartee of Khushwant Singh all such things take us to a world teeming with truth and credibility. From romance we are led towards reality, from temperamental tangles we are shown undisguised frankness, from the mazes of darkness we are taken towards dependable faith. Is this not morally elevating? Has it not boosted out spiritual and vital values? There cannot be two answers. It can emphatically be asserted that modern Indo-Anglian fiction is closely related to our individual passions and feelings, personal fads and favours—essentially a forceful approximation of human existence an optimistic image of life-size articulation, and above all a generous and genuine evaluation of post-independence mood of millions of Indians.

References:

1. Lord William Bentinck Along with Thomas Babington Macaulay he *introduced English as the language of instruction in India*. Mysore was annexed under his presidency.
2. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indo-Anglian Literature*, K.R., p.77
3. Hemant Kumar, “Gandhian Philosophy in Indian Literature”, *Contemporary Literary Review India*, vol-8, No.1, February, 2021.
4. Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, p. 54
5. Kanthapura, *Raja Rao*, p.131

