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SOME LEGENDS OF INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

Effort of this present research reveals the formative glory of Indo Anglian Literature, in which the prolific Indo-Anglian writers of twentieth century have enriched the branch with their valuable contribution, and gave rich fertilizer to the plant of Indian writing in English to sprout vigorously its root into the fertile soil of Indian culture, tradition and customs. These great writers sublimated the various emotions by their pure creativity. They tried to give solutions of many grave problems of society. Literature is a creative art so triumbrate like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K Narayan elegantly and seriously dedicated themselves to the cause of creativity. Bhabani Bhattacharya and Manohar Malgonkar also enlightened the lamp of this branch. Literature always mirrors the society, in this concern the great scholars went deep into the society and pondered over the grave problems and elevated this phenomenon.

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The current research aims at the five great Indo Anglian fictionists of twentieth century who have enriched the branch with their rich and valuable contribution. They are Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Manohar Malgonkar.

Born in 1905 in Peshawer Mulkraj Anand was a prolific writer who made lower and middle class people, their social and economic condition and the injustice and inhumanity directed towards them by society as the subject of his three great novels- *Coolie*, *Untouchable* and *Two Leaves And a Bud* appeared in thirties like a perfumed wind.

Untouchable is the most popular novel of Anand. It covers one whole day during which the hero Bakha faces countless social problems.

'They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt' is the tormented voice of Bakha who is a low-caste. He wants to do something good in life but the so-called sophisticated and high ranked people of society do not give him any chance. This burning problem of poverty and caste has been made the subject of humour and gossip by them.

Similarly, the novel *Coolie* depicts the consequences of class struggle. It is the story of Munoo, a village boy from Kangra hills who is maltreated by his own relatives. In search of bread and butter he plays various roles like a domestic servant, a coolie, a factory worker and a rickshaw puller and fate takes him from

one place to another to make him the victim of industrialism, capitalism, communalism and colonialism. Finally, he is lost in the valley of death. Thus the novel seems to be the blend of the horrible and the holy, cruelty and innocence.

Two Leaves And a Bud shows the exploitation of women who have no time to take care of themselves and their family because of the heavy work in plantation. To add fuel to fire, they are doomed to satisfy the lust of white masters because of their weak economic condition.

Besides, *The Old Woman And the Cow*, *The Road*, *The Big Heart*, *the Seven Summers* and *Lament on the Death of A Master of Arts* are some other novels of Mulk Raj Anand through which he has put forth the disturbing and horrible social problems of India.

The second most prolific and creative talent in the field of Indo-Anglian fiction is R.K. Narayan who is the son of a School Master and spent a major time of his life in Mysore. He is a regional novelist and Malgudi is the name of the region where his characters walk. His novels depict South –Indian people with their customs, traditions and culture. He is known for giving uncommon colour to common circumstances and happenings. His characters are also common people like school going children, business-bent shopkeepers, money-minded sweet sellers, pious house wives, teachers, swamis and foreigner

His first novel *Swami And Friends* (1935) is the story of a school-boy. *The Bachelor of Arts* describes the struggle of Chandran who, inspite of being a brilliant student, is unable to get a job. The novel puts forth the socio traditional set up in which the protagonist spends his life. *Waiting For Mahatma* is a political novel which describes the sympathy of Gandhi Ji for Harijans and his dreams and desires for a free and peaceful India. We find R.K. Narayans literary and moral flux coming out of flowing undisturbed after independence. In that mood he wrote three prominent novels- *The Financial Expert* (1952), *The Guide* (1958) and *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1962). *The Guide* won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1960.

Raja Rao is the third great Indo-Anglian novelist who carved out a significant place for himself by his popular and scholarly literary output. After completing his schooling he went to France and Sorbonne to interact with the western culture. Then he returned to India and was influenced by the spiritual values of India and became a follower of Tara Nath and Atma Nand- Gurus of Trivendrum. Raja Rao started his literary career with the novel *Kanthapura* (1938). It represents hundreds of such Indian villages as awoke from their long slumber under Gandhian guidance and jumped speedily into freedom movement. After a long silence of twenty years he gave another novel *The Serpent And The Rope*. This novel has an autobiographical touch. It describes K.P. Ramaswami's quest for truth and his journey from illusion to reality through sexual experience. The hero is a man first, then a Brahmin and then I, the subject of his search. The name of the novel is also symbolic as the Hindu mythology puts forth this fact that rope is often wrongly taken to be the serpent. Similarly, *The Cat And the Shakespeare* is another example of his philosophical approach. This is the story of a cat and two clerks. In this novel Raja Rao wants to share his spiritual experience with others. He opines that one should surrender oneself to the supreme like the kittens who are absolutely dependent on 'Mother Cat'.

The fourth star in the sky of Indo-Anglian fiction and much popular in India as well as in abroad is Bhabani Bhattacharya. He came under the influence of Tagore and Gandhi. He is a social novelist and represents social problems through his novels, as he could minutely observe the deep rooted layers of selfishness in society which gave rise to their problems.

His popular novel *So Many Hungers* deals with the horrible condition of Bengal famine. *Music For Mohini* is another social novel in which Bhattacharya deals with the problem of adjustment for a city bred woman Mohini who is married in a village. The old and traditional view of life in the form of the mother in-law and the semi western view of life in the form of Mohini Clash against each other and finally Mohini learns to enjoy the music of life. *A Goddess Named Gold* deals with the confusion of Meera who is given a taveez by her grandfather and believes that it has the power to turn copper in to gold. Finally, she realizes that freedom is the real miracle stone and mercy has the power to change cruelty into modesty.

The fifth great novelist in this series is Manohar Malgonkar who was born in 1913. He worked in army and after retirement started his literary career by writing novels like-*Distant Drum* (1960), *Combat of Shadows*

(1962) and *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) *Distant Drum* is the story of an army officer Kiran who loves Bina and marries her. The novel deals with Army life *A Bend in the Ganges* deals with the horror of partition.

Now I came to the women novelists who have carved out a highly remarkable place for themselves by their valuable fictional contribution in the field of Indo- Anglian fiction. They are Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamla Markandaya, Ruth Pravar, Jhabvala etc. Iyengar writes-

Women are natural story tellers even when they don't write or publish. And in India we have seen how the marvelous Torulata (Toru Dutt) wrote both a French and an English novel before she died of the age of 21 in 1877. Other women writers too have since made their mark in Indian fiction in English'.²

After the second World War many women novelists of quality enriched Indian fiction in English. Kamla Markandaya is one of them. Her first novel *Nectar In A Sieve* appeared in 1954. This novel is often compared with Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* and K.S. Venkataramani's *Murugan the Tiller*. It is a tale of long suffering of Rukmani, the narrator heroine who faces innumerable problems in her life like her husband. Nathan's infidelity, her daughter's going to the streets to save the family from starvation, the death of her child and her ejection from the home finally, her husband also dies leaving her alone. The novel also gives us a glimpse of a South-Indian village where life has not changed for a thousand years. **Some Inner Fury** is the other novel of Markandaya that was written in 1957. It is written in autobiographical form. The heroine of the novel is Meera who is led by imagination and falls in love with Richard, her brother Kit's Oxford friend. Some other characters like Kit, Govind, Premala, Roshan and Hickey also weave the theme of the story but they are carried along by the quit India Movement. Richard dies and Meera confines herself in to a room with dark memories of past. It is a political tragedy.

Kamla Markandaya's third novel in *A silence of Desire* that appeared in 1961 and deals with spiritual realities of life. It is the story of Dandekar, a government servant who is extremely frustrated because of his wife who, ailing from a tumour seeks faith-cure from a swamy. Finally, Swamy goes away and Sarojini also filled with the strength of faith undergoes a successful operation.

Kamla Markandaya's fourth novel is *Possession* that appeared in 1963. In this novel we come across a modern Swamy who flies to London and enjoys silence and society both with equal enthusiasm. The story revolves round caroline Bell, Valmiki, Val, Ethia and the Swamy. The action takes place in India, England and America. It gives the lesson that what we try to possess is taken away sooner or later and it is giving, not taking, it is losing, not possessing that leads us fulfillment.

Markandaya's fifth novel is *A Handful of Rice* that appeared in 1966 and can be compared with Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*. The chief character of the novel is Ravi who breaks into Apu's household but stays on and becomes assistant to Apu and marries his daughter Nalini. Apu falls ill and after his death he takes charge of Apu's household and business. The title of the novel is also significant and symbolizes the rising grain prices.

The coffer Dams is Kamla's latest novel that appeared in 1969. The novel depicts a British engineering firm starts to build a dam across a South Indian river. They are assisted by Indian engineers like Krishnan and local technicians and labourers. One of the tribals Bashiam also works with the company as a technician. The novel also portrays the small British colony that includes Helen, Clinton's wife and Millie Rawlings, the chief engineer's wife. Helen is drawn towards Bashiam.

Similarly, Anita Desai is also a prominent Indo-Anglian novelist of modern times who has given to the world novels like *Cry*, *the Peacock*, *Voices in the City* and *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*. Her novels deal with the inner psychology of the characters as writes Iyenger-

'Since her pre occupation is with the inner world of sensibility rather than the outer world of action, she has tried to forge a style supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fretfulness of the stream of consciousness of her principal characters.'³

Cry, the peacock deals with the married life of Maya and Gautam. The novel can be seen as Maya's effort to tell her story to herself to discover some meaning in her life. Her husband is a busy rich middle aged lawyer. The novel revolves round the thinking of Maya who as a girl, is told by an astrologer that four years after her marriage she or her husband would die and during the fourth year of her married life she is so much obsessed by the prophecy that she pushes her husband down from the balcony and then she also commits suicide.

Voice In The City is the other novel written by Anita Desai in which the action takes place in Calcutta. The main characters are Monisha, Jiban, Nirode and Amla. Monisha commits suicide as she is no more able to live in her husband's house. The novel also deals with the failure of Nirode who has a mother fixation and who even goes to the extent of comparing his mother with Kali after Monisha's death. About this novel Iyengar says-

'The central insight is that Calcutta the city of noises and muffled voices, the city teeming with the meaningless riot of life, is really the city of Death, Kali the mother is also Annihilation. For this meaning to come through, Anita Desai has found it necessary to explore the inner as well as the outer climate, and to disperse the narration in the flow of several samibilities'.⁴

Bye-Bye Blackbird is her latest novel in which Mrs. Desai projects the prison-physical as well as psychological. The novel also deals with the problem of adjustment.

The third prominent woman novelist in this series is Mrs. Nayantara Sahgal who has given a rich contribution in the field of Indo-Anglian novel in the form of two autobiographies *Prison And Chocolate Cake* and *From Fear Set Free* and novels like- *A Time To be Happy*, *This Time of morning*, *Storm in Chandigarh*, *A situation in New Delhi* and *Rich like us*.

She is a social reformer by spirit and like Mulraj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya wants to reform the society by the revolution of naked truths and vicious attitudes. As a realist she carefully studies the political and social problems of post independent Indian society and describes them through her novels. As she comes from a family with political back ground, so she has witnessed the political condition of slave India, the efforts of Indians to get rid of bondage under Gandhian inspiration and achieving of freedom. She is fully acquainted with every aspect of India's as political growth. Her political novels reveal problems like- emergency, division of Punjab and Hariyana, partition violence etc. *Rich Like us*, *Storm in Chandigarh* and *This Time of Morning* represent their problems. A situation in New Delhi depicts the problem of disorder in educational institutions. In fact, the problem of indiscipline and dissolution has been common in the field of education and those who try to solve it become victim of violence. Some people have sought the way of terror to bring equality in society.

These great masters had difficult task to enhance the Indo Anglian fiction in such precarious times. They had presented real picture of society , with all its evils. There was an aim to revitalize the society. These novelists felt great responsibility and made this period remarkable for the above mentioned branch. This age is milestone of the time.

Reference

1. Quoted by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.