

Social Reflection in Indian English Literature

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ABSTRACT:

Social reflection in Indian English literature explores how authors use literary works to examine societal issues such as caste, class, gender, religion, and political complexities, providing insights into India's cultural and social fabric. The literature functions as a mirror, reflecting social realities, inequalities, and transformations while also acting as a catalyst for social change by challenging injustices and fostering progressive ideas. Through narratives, writers highlight the struggles of marginalized communities and comment on the evolution of national identity in a diverse and changing society, from colonial times to the post-colonial and contemporary eras. My paper will focus on Indian English writing following are the topics such as English Literature as an image of the society, Trio of Indian English Literature and Post colonial and contemporary period of Indian English writers.

KEYWORDS:

Social Reflection, Indian English Literature, Caste and Class, Trio of IEL, Post-colonialism.

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Introduction:

Literature and society have a fundamental bound that's why we call literature is the reflection of the society. Literature not only reflects the values, morals, ethics and sentimental feeling of the human beings but also demonstrates its illness, weakness and suggests measure of their improvements. The writers of Indian English Literature do the transport of the real-life events in their writing

with the different literary forms such as novel, poetry, play, etc. and present to the society as a mirror with which people can look at themselves and make amends wherever necessary. In literature we can notice the stories to portray human life and values through some characters, dialogue words and actions and it also convey certain message for the purpose of knowledge, information, education and entertainment

Social reflection in Indian English Literature, depicts the complex social issues such as caste discrimination, class inequality, women's oppression, poverty and political corruption. The earliest writers like Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyya to the medieval writers like Mulk Raj Ananad, Raja Rao, R.K Narayan to the contemporary writers like Kushwanth Singh, Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga have critically explored the social evils and suggested the measures for social reforms.

Indian English Literature serves as a powerful instrument in awaking the realities and reflecting critically the multifaceted social, cultural, and political condition of Indian. Form its colonial origin to its contemporary global presence. My paper will focus some elemental factors of the social reflection that is presented by great Indian English writers.

Indian English Literature as an image of the society:

Indian English Literature encompasses a variety of literary works created by Indian authors in Pre-Independence and Post-Independence period to portray the social ethics and values in their works. The real beginning with the work of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyya's Rajmohan's wife (1864) revolves around 19th-century Bengali society, showcasing the conservative, patriarchal family structures, superstitions, and rituals of the era. The novel highlights gender inequality, portraying women's confined lives within incom-

patible marriages and the prevalence of domestic violence, while also presenting a contrast between the old society and the emerging modern India through the protagonist, Matangini.

Trimurtis or Trio of Indian English Literature:

The trio of Raja Rao (1908–2006), Mulk Raj Anand (1905–2004) and R.K. Narayan (1906–2001) can be considered the founding fathers as well as pioneers of Indian fiction. It is this trio which dives into the metaphysical of what is an Indian reaches the very root off the Indian tradition. They, then powerfully depict the presence of various social elements echoing throughout the Pre-Independence period.

Raja Rao concern revolves around the realities of Pre-Independence and Post-Independence period. He focuses on the themes of freedom movements, the caste system and exploitation on the poor. His *Kanthapur* (1938) offers a village perspective of the Gandhian movement and the struggle against social and political oppression.

Mulk Raj Anand laid the foundation of Indian English Literature and become the leading light earning the epithet of ‘Father of Indian English Literature’. M. R. Anand witnessed the struggle of the underprivileged from the young age which inspired him to highlighting their plight through realistic portrayal in his works and he became the championed of the social realism. And brought Indian culture to the global level. M. R. Anand, fearlessly exposed the evils of the caste system and exploitation on the poor. His first novel *Untouchable* (1935), powerfully depicts the daily indignities faced by an outcaste boy named ‘Bhaka’. The plot revolves around the argument of eradicating the caste system. *Coolie* (1936) highlights the harsh realities of a child labour. The plot revolves around 14 years old boy named ‘Munoo’ and his plight due to poverty and

exploitation of the upper caste. Untouchable and Coolie are painted with the colors of social realism. Regarding the literary achievement of M.R. Anand Dr. P. K. Rajan, a leading educationist and literary critic sums up as “The achievements of Anand as a novelist in Indian English Literature has a threefold significance. First, he is the forerunner of the protest novel in India and the third world with the underdog in society at the very centre of the narrative delineating the suffering of the poor in a colonial situation projecting the hope of a change at hand in terms of the desire image....”.

R.K Narayan, the last of trio in his chronicles of the fictional town of ‘Malagudi’, subtly explores the challenges of middle-class life, social conventions and the clash between tradition and modernity. His stories often explore themes such as the clash between tradition and modernity, individual freedom, and the dynamics of Indian family life. His style is marked by genial humor, gentle iron and simplicity, his works includes *Swami and Friends* (1935). highlights the education of village children, the impact of the National Movement, and the disciplinary practices in schools. *The Dark Room* (1938, probes the difficulties of family life and the societal expectations for wives in a patriarchal system. *The Guide* (1958), features Rosie’s struggle between traditional norms and newfound liberation, showcasing women’s fight for independence. *Malagudi Days* (1973), a collection of stories that captures India’s transition from a colonial to a modern, independent nation, reflecting significant social and cultural shifts. *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955), critiques the social and political upheaval during India’s independence movement and its effects on ordinary people. *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) explores the life of Jagan, a prosperous widower who grapples with the contradictions between his material success in the sweets business and his spiritual aspirations influenced by Gandhian principles

The early decades of the 20th century were well presented by the writers in a realist manner. Indeed, literature then becomes a true reflection of the society and its contemporary period. Raja Rao himself speaks of the distinction between the three---“Mulk Raj talks of poor people disinherited, Narayan talks of the middle classes. Raja Rao talks of the metaphysical “

Post colonial and contemporary period:

The Post colonial literature explores the themes of identify cultural hybrid it, nationalism and of colonial rule. This period saw a deep concern of social issuers. This period can be classified as early and later colonial writing; the early writers like M R Anand, Raja Rao and R K Naryan gave the identity of Indian English writing. Later colonial writers like, Salma Rushdie, Kushwanth Singh, Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga are prominent Indian English writers whose work often explores postcolonial themes and the complexities of Indian identity. These authors are recognized for their unique literary styles, significant contributions to Indian literature, and for garnering international acclaim,

Salma Rushdie, born in Bombay (now Mumbai) is a prominent figure in Indian English Literature with his works often engages with history, politics and culture. His *Midnight's Children's* (1981), is a seminal example, using magical realism to reflect on the trauma of the partition and the chaotic vibrant reality of the post-Independence India, These novel critiques political and social upheavals with a blend of satire and historical commentary. Kushwanth Singh, a distinguished historian, novelist and political commentator. Singh was a notable social critic in Indian English Literature His *Train to Pakistan* (1956) addresses the devastating human cost of the partition. Arundhati Roy, known for her powerful and evocative language. She examines complex social and political

issues, weaving personal stories into broader narratives about history, politics caste and social injustice. Her *God of Small Things* (1997) masterfully weaves together narratives of inter caste relationships and the oppression nature of the class and caste system. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008), and own 40th Booker prizes the same year. The novel provides a darkly humorous perspective of India's class struggle in a globalized world as told through a retrospective narration from Balram Halwai, a village boy. The novel examines issues of the Hindu religion, caste, loyalty, corruption and poverty of India

Thus, the postcolonial and contemporary period is characterized by former colonies reclaiming identity and challenging colonial legacies, while the contemporary period sees these struggles continue through globalization and neocolonialism, which extends the influence of former colonial powers via economic, political, and cultural means. Both periods analyze the enduring impacts of imperialism, seeking to dismantle cultural dominance, and promote inclusive dialogues that acknowledge the perspectives of the colonized and address ongoing inequalities.

Conclusion:

Indian English literature acts as a dynamic record of the nation's journey chronicling its social evils, political transformations and evolving identity, all while serving as a tool for social awareness and positive change. Social reflection in Indian English literature serves as a vital mirror and agent of change, reflecting the nation's historical, cultural, political, and economic realities, from colonial impact and postcolonial anxieties to the complexities of globalization, gender inequality, and religious tensions. By translating lived experiences into narratives, Indian English literature not only preserves cultural identity and documents societal shifts but

also critiques injustices, provokes thought, and inspires empathy and action, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding of contemporary India both locally and globally.

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