



The Changing Trend of Indian Writing in English

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Abstract

From writing about serious and dark issues to narrating stories about common people, from the didactic to the informal and from critically acclaimed to successfully read Indian novels- the Indian literary canon has seen all these transformations in the previous years. The Indian writing in English has largely changed in its content, characterization and language. The article compares the two novels briefly- In Custody and 2 States with their content, characterization and language. Also, looks at the relation between Society and Literature.

Keywords: Language, content, characterization, society, women, opportunities, writing, Desai, Bhagat style.

Introduction

From writing about serious and dark issues to narrating stories about common people, from the didactic to the informal and from critically acclaimed to successfully read Indian novels- the Indian literary canon has seen all these transformations in the previous years. The Indian writing in English has largely changed in its content, characterization and language.

A new form of writing

Novels: Whenever a new form of writing emerges, there are a lot of changes in the society which influences it. For example, when the form of 'novel' came into the literary canon in the eighteenth century, it wasn't just the form which emerged but it represented a whole lot of people who thought the way a 'realistic' protagonist in the novel did. In Britain, the shift from epics to novels came gradually as more and more people from the working classes and women started reading. This could be related to the growing economy where goods started being available in the market, which meant that women didn't have to produce those goods at home, giving them a lot of luxury time. Reading was also considered a luxury and to show off their wealth, the aristocratic men gave a lot of free time to their women. It slowly became a status symbol.

However, when women and the working class started reading, the novels had to be about something they understood. They needed a more vernacular language and a much easier content without fancied language and techniques. Result of these numerous political and social changes was the emergence of novel. The novel now had a simplistic approach and authors wrote about people from daily lives. An example of this would be 'The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman'. It is a novel placed in the eighteenth century and interestingly, the title in itself reflects the change. Had it been an old, classical European text, it would have been the 'The Life and 'Adventures'' rather than Opinions¹. This change is significant

to be noticed. It shows that now the importance was given more to the experiences of a normal man rather than adventures of heroic figures. The same century also witnesses Gulliver's Travels which in itself is a commendable travel narrative and talks satirically about the theory of reason and critiques rationality and politics through a common man's point of view².

A similar change can be traced in the Indian context as well. The Indian context too has witnessed critically acclaimed novelists who brilliantly mentioned about the Indian society and showing its realistic face. One such novel which mentions about the reality of a poet's life is Anita Desai's In Custody. The novel was immensely popular and won The Booker's Prize as well. A Bollywood movie too, was based on this novel.

Comparing the two authors

Anita Desai and Chetan Bhagat: The central character's life becomes a repository of the challenges that every man at that time would have faced. However, Deven's character becomes a complete opposite to what the mainstream definition of a protagonist would be. When mentioned about a 'protagonist', the reactions usually are a person with traits like- heroism, strength, intelligence, etc. However, this novel completely contrasts this idea. Deven is the last of a person one could imagine as a protagonist. He is a male character who finds himself miserably trapped in the world of no possibilities. From a mediocre lecturer to a man finding opportunities through Nur's life, he is stuck. However, the female characterization too is worth talking about as Desai has brilliantly shaped the women characters in order to show the real side of the society. Including to this is the emphasis that Nur as a poet has failed to survive the world of writing. This probably is the reason of the time in which the novel is placed. The novel, as mentioned above is a master piece and touches the reader when he reads into Deven's miserable life. Desai's characterization is her strength as all the characters in the novel are brilliantly shaped and witnessed, be it Nur's wife or Nur himself.

However, a significant shift could be traced in the past few years. Today, the writing industry in India is flourishing with young talent. Writing about the day-to-day monotonous lifestyles seems to be the new 'mantra' in the Indian style of writing. One of the first authors to write about such stories is Chetan Bhagat.

In his five fiction novels namely *Five Point Someone*, *One night at the Call Centre*, *2 State*, *3 Mistakes of my life* and *Half Girlfriend* there is one thing which is significantly common. The stories revolve around common characters. Be it the character of Krish in the love story *2 States* or the character of Ishaan in *3 Mistakes of my Life*, the characters are relatable and narrate a story which is familiar to the audience³.

To read his novels, it is not mandatory to be a learned in English as the language is not fancy, rather extremely simplistic without the usage of rhetoric or complicated sentences. This is one of the newest additions when we consider the Indian writing in English.

Talking about the casual college life, expressing sweet and realistic love stories and keeping the content exceptionally simplistic and conversational is the new trend in the publishing industry. As I mentioned above, the changes that occur in the literary genre are simultaneous with the changes in the way a society thinks. Comparing for example, Deven's Character from *In Custody* and Krish's character in *2 States*, it's visibly clear that the society has broadened its approach and has moved into a world with much opportunity. We find Deven being a character caught in the mesh of no opportunities for a better life but we find Krish pursuing his studies and opening a world of many vibrant opportunities.

Also, another significant comparison is the idea of writing and poetry in the two novels. Nur in 'In Custody' is a poet but is not well paid off for, however Krish in the novel wants to write once he has earned much. Towards the end of the novel, he publishes his book and the stress is on becoming a writer. Bhagat brilliantly shows that a writer's life needs patience and calm. The character tries writing so many times but because of his turbulent mind, he pauses every time. Nur is a character which shows no opportunity in the world of art whereas, Krish is just the opposite. It also refers to the Indian Publishing Industry where today, many young minds are jotting down their thoughts and writing and fortunately have opportunities too.

Another important change which indeed is a much needed one is in the characterization of women. Media, including the films and daily soaps along with books have been showing the women as submissive and naïve throughout. Even in Anita Desai's *In Custody*, we find women more stronger than Deven. Deven's character is much like the piteous. For an instance, Nur's wife also asserts her rights to get respect but we never find Deven doing so. This is an attempt to show the female characters against the pre conceived notions of womanhood by Desai⁴.

This is similar in Bhagat's *2 States* too. Ananya, the female protagonist is a strong South Indian woman who is independent and broad minded. Even bollywood blockbusters now have central characters as women. Again, a part of the society influences it. The position of women has gone up the pedestal and the notion has changed regarding them and certainly, we find the evidences in the novels⁵.

Novels and stories are directly or indirectly influenced by the present society and therefore, if we trace a change in the Indian Writing, much of it is because the society too is changing. However, technological changes cannot be ignored while talking about the constant changes in the Indian Publishing. The introduction of e-books and eminent self-publishing units has encouraged young authors to write. E-books have made stories available to every smart phone which further encourages reading. Another technical, yet practical point is that of the costs. The books are now available at a cheaper rate which is a big reason that people are buying them and reading them. This could be traced back from the earlier times in Britain when pocket books were introduced.

Concluding, I would like to reinforce that the Indian writing in English has considerably changed from earlier times till today. As compared above, Desai's novel and Bhagat's work today have a lot of differences in the form, technique and style of language and words. The characterization differs and amid this, the fact that Indian Writing is yet rising in the pedestal.

Conclusion

Literary Tradition in India has seen a gradual change. While we compare the two eminent writers- Chetan Bhagat and Anita Desai; critically; there is no comparison. However, both of them have made their own mark in the Indian writings in English. It's quiet natural to compare it with the bollywood statistics. A box office hit may not be as critically acclaimed as a documentary. The critics may have criticized the movie but it does wonders at the box office. Similarly, Bhagat has his own set of readership which probably is not those who love English or are eminent readers; but the fact couldn't be denied that he has made India read. From the bus stops to the airports, people pick up his books. However, the touch of English and writing cannot be compared to Anita Desai because she has a brilliant and firm style of writing. Concluding, I would say that both of the novelists are important in the field of Indian Writing in English as both of have set different trends!

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