

Blend: A Tapestry of Multi-Disciplinary Narratives

ENGLISH PART - II, MARATHI & HINDI



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13. Narrative Innovations in the Postmodern Indian English Novels

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Introduction

Human beings are the only species in the universe that tells stories and they have been telling stories since the time they learned to communicate with each other. Now, telling a story is an essential part of humanity. Across the civilization, the act of telling stories began with oral traditions and were in the forms of myths, legends, fables, anecdotes, and ballads. These were told and retold, passed down from generation to generation and they help in sharing the knowledge and wisdom of early people to the next generation. The subjects of early stories include fear of natural forces, heroic deeds of men and gods and to educate values and virtues through the life of characters. Most of the early religious stories were intended to teach spirituality to common folk and were widely spread by religious institutions. Majority of the earlier stories were told by a narrator who may be a direct participant in the action of story action and he often shares the event and experiences as a first-person narrator. Sometimes he may only remain an observer of the events as a third-person narrator, and gives his views and opinions. However, the stories of modern times have a broader purpose. These modern tales do not merely amuse readers, but serve as ways to communicate writer's moral, cultural, and political views and opinions. Doing so these writers came up with lots of experiments in the form and content of stories and exploited innovative narrative techniques.

The features of Modern Indian Novels

The literary world has seen the works of many Indian novelists writing about diversified subjects in a different innovative style of narration. Many novelists seem like a mediator or a reflector on the social-economical-political events of modern India. There have been novels of self-contemplation, personal and confessional in nature, there have been re-writings of history and

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restatements of the past, and there have been writings on the social and political condition of the nation. Besides, there is seen the novelist turning in to nostalgia of the past and glorifying and idealizing it, or to turn to the present in a gesture of protest.

The novelists of the post-independence period certainly were able to represent how the happiness of freedom turns into a tragedy due to the massacre in partition. Some writers choose to write about corruption, inefficiency, poverty, oppression and heart-rending miseries of the poor. A few select to write about ills and evils in governance. Moreover, these novelists had to appeal to the heterogeneous community, people of diverse ethnic-religious and cultural backgrounds. For this purpose they pick out subject matter and human conditional that is similar across the nation. These themes are recurrent and closely match the taste of that generation. This is how a wide range of topics that features very Indianness were thoroughly covered by it.

The Indian English fiction after publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in 1981 took paradigm shift. This novel drew a lot of attention from all over the world for its content and form. Rushdie had played with language and attempt to make it more native to Indian. Further, he was followed by writers like Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, Upamanyu Chatterjee and many others who made Indian novels globally famous. The style and experiment they have practiced, the used innovative narrative techniques and themes related to the issues of contemporary society are aspects grab the reader's thoughtful attention globally.

Major Novelists and their Contribution

Salman Rushdie is a major novelist of the post-colonial phase. His novel *Midnight's Children* was praised all over the world because of its language and style. He used blending of comedy and satire to mock Indian politics. The distinctiveness of the *Midnight's Children* lies in its narrative technique. Rushdie used this technique for the factual rendering in a historical setting. He gives an augmented picture of reality and rejects partial realities. While doing so, he depicted the reality with a touch of fantasy. We see the use of bold literary innovations and disarrangement, such as unconventional words in the novel. Saleem Sinai, the narrator and protagonist of the novel, presents his story as an autobiographical narrative that brings around self-conscious parallels between events in his own life and subcontinental history as seen from his point of view as well as from the point of view of his diasporic Muslim family during their frequent visits to places like Kashmir, Delhi, Bombay, the Sunderbans, Dhaka, and Karachi.

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Amitav Ghosh's novels frequently deal with subject's liketravel and diaspora, history and memory, environmental concern and cultural complexities. Ghosh's most notable narrative lies in his ability to blend historical events with fictional narrative. In novel *The Circle of Reason*, he talks about unity in diversity and advocates in unity of the world opposing division of world among countries. In his another novel *TheShadow Lines* his focus is on freedom of people in the modern world and criticizes the absurdity of drawing lines between peoples and nations.

Vikram Seth is another major novelist of the post-colonial phase. He is well

Known for his novels, *The Golden Gate: A Novel in Verse* (1986), *A Suitable Boy* (1993) and *An Equal Music* (1999). He achieved international fame primarily as the author of the epic narrative, *A Suitable Boy*. It is a much admired novel of Indian life, which is set between 1950 and 1952. It brings before the readers a panoramic view of the Indian society in the years immediately after independence. Seth considers his novel a plea for religious tolerance among other things. Vikram Seth explores in his novel some of the most important political and social issues of the time. He appears to be bent on presenting before his readers the structure of social change, the way that life and love will go on no matter what history may be up to. The novel *A Suitable Boy* endorses the idea of strong India, of cultural harmony and religious tolerance. The novel's secular and realistic narration and its depiction of the Indian society make it worth reading.

Rohinton Mistry with his novels like *Such a Long Journey* (1992) and *A Fine Balance* (1996) showed to the literary world that he is a novelist who believes in depicting life as it really is. Both the novels exhibit his complete understanding of Indian social life. The portrayal of the Indian middle class is the high point in Mistry's narratives. His bitterness, his anguish towards the government's hostile attitude towards the poor is evident in his novels. His novels can be read for its realism. His novels derive their form from the classical literary tradition. Mistry's narration reminds the readers of the great tradition where the novelist not only changes the possibilities of art for practitioners and readers but becomes significant in terms of the human awareness they promote, awareness of the possibilities of life. We find the elements of comedy, tragedy and satire.

Arundhati Roy entered the Indian literary scene with her award winning novel

The God of Small Things (1997). The novel set in the southern Indian state of Kerala,

During the late 1960s when Communism rattled the age-old caste system, is an arresting novel for its exuberance of style. Roy in this novel presents before her readers the story of a broken family. It is supposedly the story of young twins Rahel and Estha and the rest of their family but

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the book feels like a million stories whirling out indefinitely. The plot of the novel, focus around a destined, forbidden relationship between Ammu, a divorcee and Velutha, the low cast untouchable carpenter. The narrative is presented from the perspective of Ammu's twins, Rahel and Estha. Their story stretches both backwards and forwards, not only into the subdued past in a pattern of flashback but also towards its horrendous conclusion, which is anticipated, repeatedly in a process of a flash forward in which future events are anticipated in the narrative present. The core narrative strategy outlined here can be adequate to tell a personal story of confronting alienation, and the writers in this survey skillfully use it to depict several arcs of how their protagonists come to terms with their awayness in the context of the return to their homelands.

To conclude, the study of narrative style in Postmodern Indian English novels shows a rich complexity of innovation and experimentation. The contemporary novels are not stick to traditional forms and norms narration but rather embraces the fluidity of storytelling. Many authors have demonstrated a willingness to challenge conventions, blur genre boundaries and engage with diverse thematic concerns.

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