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Indian English Fiction: Issues and Concerns

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Abstract:

We, human beings are peculiar social animals on the planet. One of the distinctive aspects of human beings compared to other animals is their instinctive urge to express their feeling and experiences, and literature is one of the media for this. In such a direction, literature possibly can best be described and understood by situating it in its socio-cultural ethos, as no literature can be produced in a vacuum. This paper attempts thematically to look how the Indian English novel as a literary phenomenon, is pre-eminently a social form, and is concerned with social issues and relationships. It takes a brief survey of concerns and themes that Indian English fiction has preoccupied itself with in lieu of depictions of Gandhism, freedom struggle, the plight of Untouchables and the poor, partition, communal tensions, issues women, the East-West encounter and such other social and political issues.

Keywords: Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, Aravind Adiga, Gita Hariharan, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande.

Introduction and the Rise of Indian Novel:

The novel as a genre “gives artistic form to the relationship of man and society,” and is “the organic product of a particular environment in a particular society in a given time.”¹ The rise of the novel in India is not only a literary phenomenon, but also a social one. It is deeply rooted in the socio-political, economic and cultural facets of the Indian society. It pre-eminently synchronises with the rise of the reformist zeal in the 19th century Indian society - mainly the upper caste Hindu society bound to tradition and customs.

In such a direction, let us take a cursory look at some of the reformist movements in the nineteenth century India. There were attempts to reform the age-old Hindu society on religious and social grounds. Many of these reforms were carried out during the period of Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor General of the East India Company in India from 1828 to 1835. For example, the most well-known of the reforms carried out by Bentinck was the abolition of *sati* tradition by a law passed in 1829, in response to a Bengali reformist, Raja Ram Mohan Roy's vigorous campaigns against it. With this law, the tradition of *sati* was prohibited in December 1829 in Bengal, and in 1830 in Madras (now Chennai) and Bombay (Mumbai). Bentinck also passed a law against the ritualistic female infanticide to emancipate women from the tyranny of custom and blind faith. Another important measure taken by Bentinck was the banning of the tradition of *thagi*- ritual murder and robbery in the name of goddess Kali. Other social reformists like Akshaykumar Dutt argued in favour of marriage reforms, which would include widow-remarriages, and courtship before marriages.

The rise of novel in India coincides with these developments in society. It is bound up with these moments in the country's history. Being a social phenomenon, it mirrors these social issues and relationships of society. The novel as a form arrived first in regional languages, and then in English² as Meenakshi Mukherjee points out:

Within about twenty-five years after the passing of the Educational Minutes of 1835 which made English the official language of higher education in India, the new narrative form called the novel began to emerge, first in Bangla and Marathi (renamed *upanyas* and *kadambari* respectively) to be followed soon after in Hindi, Urdu, Tamil and Malyalam.³

The first novel in Marathi, *Yamuna Paryatan* (1857) by Baba Padmanji (1837-1906), a Christian convert, deals with a major 19th century problem, viz. pitiable conditions of Hindu widows and their remarriage. The novel narrates the story of Yamuna, a poor girl, who has attended a missionary school, married to an enlightened Hindu, Vinayak to keep her mother's promise. When the couple sets out on a journey, Yamuna comes to know the pathetic plight of Hindu widows in India. Later, she has to confront with the same situation after her husband's death. When Vinayak dies in an accident, Yumuna's mother-in-law wants to shave Yumuna's head, and strip her off all her jewellery to follow the strictures of social, religious and caste conventions. But Yamuna is rebellious and she does not want to fall prey to such inhuman conventions. She runs away, takes shelter in the house of a Christian couple, and finally remarries. Padmanji's concern for widow-remarriage is also shared by Gauri Dutt in *Devarani*

Jethani Ki Kahani (1870), the first novel in Hindi. These examples show that the Indian regional novel represents social reality as it derives its theme, content and subject matter closely from the prevalent social issues and concerns.

Similarly, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife*, the first novel in English, takes its theme from such a reformist zeal. The novel appeared in serial form in the Calcutta Weekly, *The Indian Field*, in 1864, and was published in book form only in 1935. It deals with the problems and role of women in patriarchal society in the 19th century of an upper caste Bengali family in a remote village named Radhaganj. The novel portrays sufferings of the beautiful but passionate eighteen-year-old married woman, Matangini who is expected to embody the ideals of a submissive wife, and her conflicts with her bullying, short-tempered and villainous husband Rajmohan, who represents patriarchal mindset.

Before *Rajmohan's Wife*, the two tracts of imaginary history – Kailash Chunder Dutt's "A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945" appeared in the *Calcutta Literary Gazette* in 1835; and Shoshee Chunder Dutt's "The Republic of Orissa: A Page from the Annals of the 20th Century" published in *The Saturday Evening Harakuru* in 1845. They are considered the precursors of the Indian English novel, which "project into the future, describing battles of liberation against the British but end with dissimilar resolutions."⁴ But, the novel as a genre in Indian English literature, has evolved with Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* - a significant beginning in Indian English fiction, and, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee can be said as the originator of the genre. The novel is important as far as the canon formation of the Indian English novel is concerned. Krishna Kripalani points out Chatterjee's role in establishing the novel as a genre in Indian English fiction thus:

It was Bankim Chandra who established the novel as a major literary form in India. He had his limitations, he too was romantic, effusive and indulged a little too freely in literary flashes and bombast, and was no peer of his great contemporaries, Zola and Dickens, much less of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. There have been better novelists in India since then, but they all stand on Bankim's shoulders.⁵

Kripalani's observation about Chatterjee becomes significant and valid in the sense that the way the novel paves the way for its successors - the upper caste urban middle- and upper-class writers in English as it sets the formula of representing social issues within a certain

framework. Within this purview, let us take a brief survey of issues, concerns and themes that Indian English fiction handles.

Issues and Themes of Indian English Fiction:

The 19th century Indian English novels after *Rajmohan's Wife*, are hardly significant, and they almost go unnoticed. The Indian novel in English gained currency only in the first half of the 20th century. The novel as a prominent literary form appeared only in the 1930s as K. S. Ramamurti observes that “real fiction, good fiction in English appeared only after the thirties.”⁶

The Indian English fiction of the 1930s and after is deeply influenced by the political, social, economic and ideological ferment caused by Gandhian movements. In the 1920s, after Bal Gangadhar Tilak's death, M.K. Gandhi rose on the horizon of Indian struggle for independence. Gandhi not only influenced the political scenario but practically in all areas of Indian life -social, economic and even literary sphere. His political movements like Non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience, Dandi-Sabarmati March, Quit India and other movements and activities stirred the Indian English literary world as well. In this direction, M. K. Naik comments on the effect of Gandhian influence on Indian English literature and particularly on the novel thus: “A highly significant feature is the sudden flowering of the novel during the ‘thirties’, when the Gandhian movement was perhaps at its strongest.”⁷ Similarly, Leela Gandhi observes,

[t]he novel of the 1930s and ‘40s in turn played a very important part in imagining and embodying the radical vision of anti-colonial nationalism... the novelists of the 1930s and 1940s owed their inspiration and the conditions for their emergence to two contexts: the social and political upheavals of the ‘Gandhian whirlwind’ and the era of the late-modernism in Europe.⁸

The Indian English novelists propagated Gandhian ideology in their works, and indirectly plunged into the freedom struggle contributing their literary share in it. Gandhi remains a driving force behind the novels of the period. Naik sums up the effect of Gandhian phase on the novels of the period, and gives full credit to Gandhi for making changes in Indian literary scenario thus:

The works of K. S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao would not perhaps have been possible had the miracle that was Gandhi not occurred

during this period. In fact, it was during this age that Indian English fiction discovered some of its most compelling themes: the ordeal of the freedom struggle, East-West relationship, the communal problem and the plight of the untouchables, the landless poor, the downtrodden, the economically exploited and the oppressed.⁹

An overview of some novels dealing with the Gandhian theme and representation of caste among them will make the point clearer. K. S. Venkataramani's second novel *Kandan, the Patriot: A Novel of the New India in the Making* (1932), "an exponent of Gandhian politics"¹⁰, as its title suggests, tells the then contemporary story of the Civil Disobedience Movement of the 1930s. An upper caste protagonist Kandan, is an Oxford educated Indian youth who resigns from the lucrative and luminous Indian Civil Service to plunge into freedom struggle and finally succumbs to police-bullet. The novel represents several lower caste characters like Nandan, Mukkam, Nallan and Kariyan who are agricultural labourers, and occupy a minor position within the horizon of Kandan and his noble Gandhian cause.

Mulk Raj Anand makes Gandhi a character in *Untouchable* (1935). It is a tale of an eighteen-year-old untouchable sweeper boy Bakha, based on Gandhi's portrayal of Uka in *Young India*. Bakha hears Gandhi talking about the abolition of untouchability and protection of cows, but has no direct and personal contact with him. Here, Bakha occupies a major place for the first time, which is a significant change in itself in Indian English fiction as far as representation of caste is concerned. The novel represents the pitiable plight of the lower caste protagonist Bakha, whose life is tied to the deep-rooted caste system in Indian society. The novel portrays an eventful day in the life of an eighteen-year-old sweeper boy Bakha, who belongs to Bhangi caste. He is the son of Lakha, the *Jamedar* of all the sweepers in an army cantonment town of colonial North India, who lives in a colony of the outcastes of Bulashah. The novel depicts how Bakha is ill-treated, insulted and abused always by the upper caste people because of his caste, and is addressed to in the most humiliating manner. He is compelled to think that he does not do anything in life except polluting the upper caste people. Anand creates a character who, in quest of his identity, will likely embrace Gandhism at the end.

Another novel of Anand *The Road* (1961) has a lower caste protagonist, Bikhu, who belongs to the Chamaar (Cobbler) caste. Bikhu who has helped to build the road in village, has a sense of pride and decides to leave the village along with his fellow-men. Therefore, at the

end, he takes the road towards Gurgaon- the way to Delhi hoping that he will not suffer there, because of his caste, and may achieve dignity in life by changing his profession. The novel depicts various atrocities like burning the huts of Untouchables, paying lower wages to them, and various atrocities committed by the landlord Thakur Singh. The novel, in Gandhian vein, talks about dignity of labour, as work is worship. Anand returned many years after *Untouchable* to deal with the lower caste lives in this novel, but it did not attain the popularity of *Untouchable*.

In Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), Range Gowda from the Potter caste appears as a subsidiary to the high caste, Brahmin protagonist, Moorthy, who uses religion skilfully to imbibe the Gandhian spirit in the minds of the poor and ignorant villagers to fight against the British. The novel focuses on Moorthy, a young Gandhian, who embodies Gandhi's influence and charisma that can be seen even in the remotest South Indian village of Kanthapura - a fictional village in the province of Kara which is caught in the Gandhian whirlwind of the 1930s. Iyengar sums up the theme of the novel as "Gandhi and our village,"¹¹ and Naik calls it, "perhaps the finest evocation of the Gandhian age in Indian English fiction."¹² Iyengar writes:

The style of narration makes the book more a *Gandhi Purana* than a piece of mere fiction. Gandhi is the invisible God, Moorthy is the visible *avatar*. The reign of the Red men is Asuric rule, and it is resisted by the Devas, the satyagrahis.¹³

S. Menon Marath's novel *The Wound of Spring* (1960), is about a matriarchal joint family in Kerala set in 1920s when Gandhian movement was flourishing speedily. It represents how Unni, son of high caste Krishna Menon, responds, like his brother Govinda and sister Meenakshi to the Gandhian call of demolishing boundaries of caste system and inequality. Unni runs away from home after realising that his mother Parvati loves Govinda more. He has various escapades, and in one such situation, he is rescued and nursed by untouchable lower castes- Kandan and Kochutti. He starts working with them on a farm and falls in love with Cheethu, the eighteen-year-old daughter of Kandan and Kochutti. Unni marries Cheethu, but their inter-caste marriage is not accepted by Unni's family. They treat it as a betrayal and treachery. As a result, Unni is attacked by self-appointed guardians of moral social order leaving him seriously injured. *Red Hibiscus* (1962), by Padmini Sengupta, also deals with the life of high caste Sita, who has grown under the influence of her Gandhian freedom fighter

father. Sita represents the first generation of women who were influenced by the Gandhian spell.

Apart from these examples, there are many novels which deal with the Gandhian themes like Venkataramani's *Muragan*, *The Tiller* (1927), Krishnaswamy Nagarajan's *Athavar House* (1937) and *Chronicles of Kedaram* (1961), Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* (1947), K. A. Abbas' *Inquilab: A Novel of the Indian Revolution* (1955), R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955), to mention but just a few. Largely, the novels written before and after independence handle the theme of Gandhian ideology. The novelists exploit the magic and charisma of Gandhi's name and presence in their writings. As Meenakshi Mukherjee notes, "He has been treated variously as an idea, a myth, a symbol, a tangible reality, and a benevolent human being. In a few novels he appears in person, in most others his is an invisible presence."¹⁴ Leela Gandhi sums up Gandhi's impact on Indian English novels thus:

[T]he impact of Gandhism on these novels is measured not only in terms of its anti-imperial content but also and perhaps more significantly, for its impetus to the programme of internal national reform. By and large, the social realism of contemporary fiction seeks its material and gains its inspiration from the nationalist mobilization and 'upliftment' of women, workers, untouchables and peasants.¹⁵

Apart from these Gandhian examples, there are a few more novels that deal with representations of caste and Dalits as major characters. For example, in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954), Kalo, the Blacksmith is a bogus swami. It is the story of a hunger driven Kalo and his daughter Chandra Lekha in Calcutta. Kalo is jailed for three months for stealing a bunch of bananas. He then becomes a pimp for survival in the city. There he realizes that his only daughter Lekha has herself been lured to harlotry. His attitude towards life and society at large becomes bitter. In order to save his daughter and to avenge society then, he disguises himself as a Brahmin Mangal Adhikari accompanied by Lekha transforming themselves into a priest and a nun. He performs miracles like a stone Shiva rising from the ground to exploit faith of devotees. People from all strata - the rich and the poor, jute merchants and rice profiteers, including even a magistrate, who had earlier sent Kalo to prison, become his ardent devotees now. He builds lies upon lies to continue all the fraud. The proverbial title of the novel implies, that a man who rides a tiger, does not know how and when to dismount, and Kalo is trapped in a similar condition. Lekha finds herself in an awkward and uncomfortable position as a nun, and feels as if the harlot-house had tried to pollute her body.

Also, the fraudulent temple spreads corruption inside her. Finally, Kalo decides to tell the truth. When he reveals the truth, the upper caste devotees, sightseers and stragglers are taken aback, and in sheer frenzy, they cry calling him as the rogue and *saitan* and beat him the black and blue.

In R. K. Narayan's *The Guide* (1958), Rosie is a lower caste character born of *devadasi*. She is a dancer and is married to Marco, a single-minded researcher and historian of art and civilisation. She is neglected by Marco and as a result she gets attracted towards Raju, a tourist guide. When Marco comes to know that Rosie has been dancing before Raju as well as committing adultery with him, he abandons her. Deserted, Rosie now turns up at Raju's doorstep, and initially Raju's mother receives her warmly. However, when the scandal spreads, Raju's mother asks Raju to send Rosie away. Instead, Raju lets the mother retreat to her old village and begins to commercially promote Rosie, who is now more traditionally renamed Nalini. She soon becomes the best known and the best paid *bharatnatyam* dancer in the country.

Shanta Rameswar Rao's lesser known *Children of God* (1976) fictionalizes the lower caste lives in relation to the question of temple entry. The lower caste woman narrator's son Kittu is beaten and burnt to death as he has defied the social norms by entering a temple. The upper caste people cannot tolerate the proud and assertive Kittu's advances. So, they make him pay the price for it. The novel focuses on how various atrocities are committed on the lower castes by upper caste people even after twenty-five years of independence. Suresh Chandra's least known work *Baba's Tribe* (1989) is a caricature of the lower caste leaders, who terrorise and exploit their own people. It tells how Wako, Sada and Rasu, the rustic trio come together to rescue the common folk from their tyrannical leaders, and ultimately become messiahs of the oppressed.

Rohinton Mistry's well-known *A Fine Balance*, which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize of 1996, has Ishvar and his nephew Omprakash as major characters who belong to the Chamaar (Cobbler) caste and are victims of caste discrimination. Ishvar's father apprentices his sons Ishvar and Narayan with a Muslim tailor, Ashraf *Chacha* in order to break away from their misery and poverty as leather workers in a village. The tailoring skill is also passed on to Narayan's son Omprakash (Om). Narayan and his family are killed by Thakur Dharamsi, an upper caste village thug, and Ishvar and Om are the only two who escape the killing as they are with Ashraf in the nearby town. Ishvar and Om move to Mumbai to get work, where they are hired by Dina Dalal, a Parsi widow, and their business runs fairly smoothly for

almost a year until the Emergency. When they return to their hometown to find a wife for Om, they are forcibly taken in a truck as the government officers want to fulfil the quota of the family planning programme during the Emergency. The forced sterilisation they undergo ultimately reduces them to the status of beggars.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, the Booker Prize winner of 1997 and one among the New York Times Notable Books of the Year for 1997, revolves around the tragic love story of the lower caste man Velutha and upper caste woman Ammu. A neglected daughter in her family, Ammu's marriage with a Bengali proves to be a nightmare for her. Deserted by her own people, she gets attracted towards Velutha, Paravan by caste. For this, both of them have to pay the highest price in their life. Ammu discarded and humiliated by her own people dies in a deserted lodge, and Velutha is beaten to death by the police. The novel depicts the tragedy of inter-caste love affair; and at the same time exposes the hypocrisy of the upper caste people, like, Chacko, Ammu's brother, who has illicit relations with lower caste women working in his factory to which his mother Mammachi has her consent. She builds a separate entrance for Chacko's room and even secretly pays money to these women for keeping her son sexually satisfied.

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, the Booker Prize winner of 2008, revolves around Balram's journey from the heart of darkness to shining India. Balram Halwai is a member of Halwai- the sweet-making caste in Bihar. Though he hails from the poor backward family of a rickshaw puller, Balram is determined not to die in the wretched world of darkness, where there is only slavery, poverty and ignorance. He decides not to live life like his father and brother, who are reduced only to the role of breadwinners of their family, to work like slaves to feed family. At the end, Balram, kills his master Ashok and becomes a so-called entrepreneur.

Manu Joseph's *Serious Men* (2010) has Ayyan Mani, a middle-aged Neo-Buddhist, erstwhile Mahar by caste, as a key character. He is a sweeper's son, who lives in BDD Chawl at Worli, Mumbai. Ayyan weaves plots around his ten-year-old son Adi's life that his son is an extraordinary, genius, a mathematical wizard, which is ultimately a lie. Actually, Adi is a geeky child and is disabled (deaf by left ear). Ayyan works as an assistant to a brilliant Brahmin Aravind Acharya, an astronomer at a scientific institute in Mumbai. It is a story of a deprived man's angst, vengeance, aspirations and frustration narrated using irony and satire.

Apart of Gandhism and issues of caste, partition is another dominant and favourite theme that Indian English novelists deal with. At the birth of new nation, India faced another

crisis, i.e. pains of partition between Pakistan and India. Khushawant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) is a classic example, which deals with this theme. The novel is a poignant picture of the eruption of violence and carnage between the Sikh and the Muslim in a small village named Mano Majara, located on the banks of the Sutlej river on Indo-Pakistan border. It depicts how, earlier, both Sikhs and Muslims used to live peacefully together for several years, regardless of their religious beliefs and differences, but partition makes them enemies of each other in a night. It deals with a generous and impulsive village gangster Jugga, a Sikh, and his love for a Muslim girl Nooran. He saves the situation at the cost of his own life, when the villagers are stirred up to attack the Muslims travelling on the train to Pakistan. The novel shows impact of partition "with pitiless realism of description and the swift tempo of the narrative carries the reader along."¹⁶

Chaman Nahal also presents the nightmare, misery, bitterness and horror of the partition in his novel *Azadi* (1975). The novel focuses on the elements and outcome of partition like suicide, forced conversion, resigned acceptance, sudden departures, muted despairs, etc. The story revolves around the Hindu Lala Kanshi Ram of Sialkot and his family, who are forced to leave Sialkot for Delhi after the partition. It is a story about Arun's (Lala Kanshi Ram's son) love to Nur, a Muslim girl in Sialkot, but how the partition separates both of them. The novel presents a moving description of the horror and pains of partition like burning of the cities, and Hindus and Muslims killing one another.

Another important theme that seems to have fascinated many Indian English novelists is the East-West encounter. In these novels "the West appears as a character, in some others as an attitude or a set of values."¹⁷ In many of these novels, urban upper class westernised protagonists (male or female) educated mostly in the UK and the USA universities return home from a stay of a few years there, and are of same values. Bhabani Bhattacharya's Rahoul, is a Cambridge educated astrophysicist in *So Many Hungers* (1947), Bhalchandra Rajan's Krishnan is from Cambridge in *The Dark Dancer* (1959), Nayantara Sahgal's Sanad Shivpal, a is *zamindar's* son in *A Time to be Happy* (1958), Chaman Nahal's Ravi Sharma has returned from the United States in *Into Another Dawn* (1977), or Gita Hariharan's Devi, is a graduate from the UK in *A Thousand Faces of Night* (1992). These characters have difficulty in coping with the native Indian culture as they have returned with western outlook and values. The East-West confrontation poses serious problems in their lives resulting in sufferings and conflicts of identity. These writers write about urban, upper caste, cosmopolitan characters who often speak English- the language of their daily life. Meenakshi Mukherjee finds a stereotypical pattern of

representation of these characters, who are types rather than individuals in these novels. She points out this phenomenon in relation to Bhalchandra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* thus:

The "England-returned" young man who deserts his patient suffering wife for a glamorous English woman, the brilliant scholar who is forced by his family to take up a government job that does not give him intellectual satisfaction, the advocate of individual freedom who willy-nilly submits to an arranged marriage, all these are stereotyped situations in Indian fiction today.¹⁸

Some novelists have depicted rural India in order to "solve the problem of heterogeneous audience by choosing themes and situations that have more or less the same validity all over the country."¹⁹ Mulk Raj Anand writes mostly of villages in *The Village* (1939), *The Sword and the Sickle*; and Raja Rao in *Kanthapura*. Kamala Markandaya, educated at Madras University, married to an English man and settled in Britain, tries to go beyond the depiction of elite urban people to the poor peasants of rural India. She delineates the struggle of poor peasants of a typical South Indian village through the tragic story of Rukmani and Nathan in *Nectar in Sieve* (1954). But she has certain limitation as Shyamala and Mee aptly observe thus:

[H]er descriptions of the life of the poor (in *Nectar in Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* for instance) are often inaccurate in minor details. Markandaya's writing is more confident when she writes about her own class and *The Nowhere Man* (1972) perhaps her best work deals with a slice of life - racial prejudice against Indian migrants in Britain, of which she has first-hand knowledge.²⁰

Women novelists like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Gita Hariharan, and others deal with the world of urban middle class, upper caste and in some cases westernised women, who struggle within patriarchy and gender issues. For example, Anita Desai, born of a German mother and a Bengali father, depicts in her fiction the educated upper-middle class women and their aspirations in novels like *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965) and others. Ruth Pravar Jhabvala's westernised protagonists clash with their conventional Indian families to the subject of arranged marriage and romantic love as in *The Householder* (1960), or in *Heat and Dust* (1975). Shashi Deshpande's novels- *The Dark Holds no Terrors* (1980), *Roots and Shadow* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1988), and

Small Remedies (2000), deal in a direct way with the situation of women in urban, middle-class life and their fears, hopes, uncertainties and frustrations.

Conclusion:

This succinct survey of the history of Indian English fiction shows that the Indian English novel is dominated by themes, which are of national and international concern, such as Gandhism, exploitation based on caste and gender, patriotism, partition, East-West encounter, problems of women and so forth. This proves the point that the Indian English novel is pre-eminently a social form that deals with social issues and relationships.

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¹¹Iyengar, *Indian Writing*, 391.

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