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## **Indianness in Post-Independence Literature: An Overview**

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the British government's motivations for introducing modern education to India, this move completely transformed India's social structure. Indian literature, which was written in English by Indians, had to be considered Indian literature. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar compared the English language to the Suez Canal, which connected India and England intellectually. Most importantly, it is created by Indians in the Indian climate. As a result, the literature they created must be considered national literature. When Indian writers attempted to express their emotions in English, a literary phenomenon known as Indian English literature arose. The artistic sensibility and mode of expression are the most important aspects in such writings. These writers, according to M.K. Naik, conveyed the Indian sensibility and ethos in their writing with utmost sincerity. The present paper reviews the Post-independence literature and observes the Indianness reflected in those works.

**Key Words: Indian Sensibility, Indianness, Indian English Literature, Post-Independence Period**

## Introduction

The concept of Indianness serves as a springboard for debating the value of the various cultural forms made available in India via Indian Writing in English. The concept of Indianness is centered on specific representative periods, traditions, languages, and literary cultures. However, the assertion that Indianness is what makes the works of expatriate Indian writers exclusively 'Indian' in a global cultural market is related to Indianness as a representational mode. It's also because their discussions of Indian history, culture, and literature provide an interesting backdrop for examining how the concept of Indianness has developed through their unique representational mode. It's clear that these authors are forced to travel to two different India. To begin with, the phrase "to be Indian" evokes a sense of "unity" or "homogeneity" in the various places where they now reside. Second, being Indian entails living in one of twenty-eight Indian



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states, each with its own topography, history, language, and culture, resulting in an ever-increasing sense of "heterogeneity." In both cases, the concept of Indianness is made both politically and culturally complicated. As a result, the political definitions of the individual at various levels have been influenced by the conditions of 'being in Indian.' As a result of this preoccupation with the idea of India and an attempt to see Indianness as a representational mode, a detailed examination of how the concept of Indianness has functioned in a wide range of Indian Writing in English, primarily in the last three decades of the twentieth century, is warranted.

### **Expression of Indian Sensibility/Indianness**

The term "Indianness," which grammatically implies an abstract essence, is frequently used to address the difficult issues of identity and cultural politics involved in the creation of literary texts. What exactly is this "Indianness" that Indian English writers frequently seek to address? The authors have used the concept of Indianness as a representational mode. It has evolved into a system of literary devices and practices with the goal of criticizing and, more importantly, representing Indian realities or realities accessed by Indians. This realization necessitates a consideration of the author/socio-political narrator's and cultural positions, as well as the relevance of certain narrative traditions, styles, and modes of presentation. In addition, the authors' socioeconomic positioning in relation to other aspects of geopolitical India, as well as their cultural positioning in the post-colonial world, has become a necessary component of their literary output.

When viewed in relation to various aspects of the notions of 'India' and 'Indianness,' it is clear that the sources relevant to the problem of 'Indianness' can be accessed through a type of Indian writing that is entirely historical, topical, literary, journalistic, and even political writings, perhaps best exemplified by post-independence writers.



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## Post-Independence Indian Writing in English at a Glance

Western education brought about national awareness which in course of time became the militant nationalism of the novelists of the 'thirties and the 'forties of our century. Nationalism gave rise to the literature of struggle, the literature of the Gandhian era. (Naik 98)

In their thought-provoking works, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, and many others of the formative days upheld great national values. Novelists such as Abbas (Inquilab), Anand (Untouchable), Raja Rao (Kanthapura), R. K. Narayan (Waiting for the Mahatma), and others have exposed the cause of nationalism and patriotic fervour in the days of mass upheaval against foreign rulers. The sense of pride and respect for oneself has been mirrored, though in many places it has veered towards mysticism and oriental obscurity. The pre-independence period is marked by changing literary characteristics, varying themes and tones, and Mahatma Gandhi's call for struggle is reflected in these novels. The wave of optimism that swept across the literary horizon in the first quarter of the century was abruptly cut short by the country's declaration of independence. By the mid-century, the zeal, the zest, the thrill had gone underground, and a new genre—literature of protest, dissent, unrest, remonstrance, or whatever you want to call it—was emerging. How could the novelists break free from the all-encompassing tidal wave? As a result, these turbulent decades covering the period of melodramatic journey to a Free India plunge us into a new nation where agony and ecstasy, love and lust, power and pelf, courage and cowardice, romance and reprisal, and a host of other such antithetic issues sway the heads and hearts of the teeming millions as a landmark in the making of Indo-Anglian fiction.

Though seemingly well-defined in their themes and techniques, the interplay of characters and incidents, the philosophy and promise, novels of the period were not devoid of the realism, truthfulness, and



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naturalism that overpowered the destinies of men and women in every spectrum of existence in a nation reborn from the throes of slavery and serfdom. *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand is a story about an outcast, which he has narrated with unusual insight and vision in orthodox Indian circumstances. It emphasizes the misery, suffering, and persecution that the untouchables face in a society steeped in superstition. Anand's *Untouchable* appears to be unique in the Indian literary experience of naturalism, with its stern artistic concentration and naturalistic description of the minutiae. It describes in detail the various humiliations suffered by Bakha, the novel's protagonist, while cleaning the town on a regular basis.

Allied to this, Raja Rao deftly described the religious temperament of Indian villagers and what God means to them in Kanthapura. Both religious Bhajans and the national movement aided the novelist in penetrating deeper layers of human nature and recognizing the so-called spiritually bent Indian's pettiness, greed, jealousy, and, in some cases, callousness and inhumanity. The preface in Kanthapura summarizes the emotions felt by Indian writers who wrote in English.

One has to convey in a language that is not one's own, the spirit that is one's own.... English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up...not our emotional make-up. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. Our method of expression... has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish and the American. Time alone will justify it. (Rao iv)

In the changing social set-up of a rehabilitating nation, the striking consciousness of caste and religion has assumed a formidable enormity. True, the stumbling blocks are being dismantled at a rapid pace, but age-old customs are taking their time to crumble. Furthermore, Malgonkar (*The Princes*) and Narayan (*The Sweet-Vendor*) expose the intricate feudal characteristics, the ideographic and original figure



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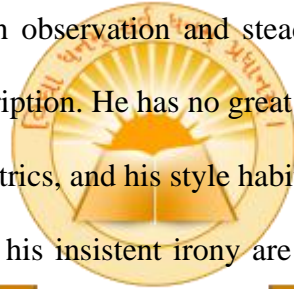
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of a common man with equal understanding and awareness in a nearly identical vein.

R.K. Narayan wrote fiction which was realistic. His famous works include 'Swami and Friends', 'The Guide', 'The Financial Expert' and 'Waiting for the Mahatma'. He created the town of Malgudi with an idyllically pastoral setting to indicate the manner in which ordinary Indian villagers go about their daily lives. Even though his writing style was simple, his work was deeply meaningful. He had a style that was original, while at the same time. His style was characteristically different and his depictions of the average Indian still ring fresh in the memories of people who read his books. At the threshold of independence, an India voice. Those who read his work could get a taste of the real India with all of its idiosyncrasies. M.K. Naik observes:

Narayana relies more on keen observation and steady accumulation of small details than on evocative description. He has no great heroes and heroines- only local nobodies and local eccentrics, and his style habitually wears a deliberately drab air so that the thrusts of his insistent irony are felt all the more sharply.

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A longstanding Indianness influenced Indians all over the globe for years to come. While others see him as being far removed from reality, he has the right to create a charged world he wishes to depict. He claims to have an advantage over the west as a writer. Life in the West was so ordinary, compared to life in India, where so many different stories were available. Some other readers have praised Narayan's work because it enabled them to glimpse the ways of small-town life. They found it cute. Narayan continued to write into the 21st century. 'The Sahitya Akademi Award's first recipients were the Guides in 1960.

The conflict between modern values and traditional values is well portrayed in Kamala Markandaya's novels, Nectar in a Sieve and The Coffin Dancer. Rukmani in the novel Nectar in a Sieve, who enjoys a quiet





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life is also opposed to peace, the commotion of the city excites. In the age of rapid industrialization and radical innovation, ground breaking technological leaps, he has become estranged from his true self. The Bhabani Bhattacharya also believes in the principles of Gandhism, which he claims have fallen by the wayside in modern India. Gandhian simplicity is symbolizing itself in the handcrafts, represented by the Charkha and the machine. There has apparently created a split in society. This may well explain why a developing nation would adopt explicit measures for industrialization, resulting in alienation and defeatism.

the rise in the regard for women's rights after independence has been very beneficial, they have been elevated to a position of equality in all social and political affairs. It has been a privilege to enter the technical and industrial world, and an additional class of working women has been developed alongside it; meanwhile, new opportunities for change have opened up for the group.

A new political awakening has corroded the hearts of millions of Indians since the installation of popular governments at the Centre and in the States shortly after independence. Indian representatives have vehemently promoted the policy of non-violence and non-alignment at numerous international meetings and world forums such as the United Nations. Alternatively, we are adopting political strategies from our Western allies. The Marxist philosophy has had a major influence on our thinking. As a result, Mulk Raj Anand's Coolie spelled out the cause of the underdog with compassion and pity. The Princes by Malgonkar is about medieval feudal glory, which is now a thing of the past. Rajahs, Shikar-parties, court dances, bohemianism, and birthday celebrations are now non-existent in a developing people's nation. Instead, we've established new social service centres for the community's most vulnerable members, devised welfare schemes to ensure their steady development, outlawed untouchability, and welcomed the have-nots into society with open arms. Kanthapura, by Raja Rao, is a story about a village that is rapidly changing under Gandhian influence.



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In his novel *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Bhabani Bhattacharya delves into the subject as well. A flurry of social reforms, a series of community welfare programs, and a series of popular polls have radically altered Indian life, and today we have workers on the management boards of mills, artisans on the governing bodies of engineering complexes, and company dividends are judiciously shared by employers and employees. Furthermore, the democratic spirit has instilled a sense of discipline, responsibility, and allegiance. Despite the fact that the freedom brought with it a sweeping current of communal holocaust, hatred, and horror (*Train to Pakistan*: Khushwant Singh, *Distant Drum*: Manohar Malgonkar), it was short-lived due to Mahatma Gandhi's call to restore a sense of grace and goodwill for fellow citizens, regardless of caste, creed, or colour. True, Mahatma Gandhi's image as a symbol of love, brotherhood, and communal harmony has been projected in numerous post-independence novels.

### Conclusion

Narayan's compassionate approach to life; Raja Rao's mystic and obscurantist attitude; Kamla Markandaya's feminine sensibility; Jhabvala's unusual insight; Malgonkar's medieval myth and marvel; Arun Joshi's jet-set galaxy of characters; Khushwant Singh's retort and repartee—all of these things play important part in showing Indianness in post-independence Indian English literature. Post-independence Indian writing in English is inextricably linked to the individual passions and feelings, personal fads and preferences—essentially a forceful approximation of human existence—an optimistic image of life-size articulation, and, above all, a generous and genuine assessment of millions of Indians' post-independence mood.





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