

**INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL: AN OVER VIEW (PUBLISHED
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STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION”
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The interplay of a number of material and cultural factors has brought tremendous change in recent times. The rapid developments in the field of technology and the influence of mass-media have resulted in an unprecedented interaction among various cultures. All these factors may not have resulted in the emergence of a global village yet the developments in one part of the world certainly have an immediate and immense impact at local and global level. It has a deep influence on the lifestyle and thinking of the people at a mass level. The intervention of these influences has introduced new trends in the emerging art forms including literature.

Literature no longer remains limited to particular geographical, national or cultural circumstances. The global concerns and shifting paradigms informing different art forms have transformed the nature and the understanding of literature. The diversity of the reading material available in the market has changed the desires and expectations of the readers also. There has been a spurt of writings that not only mark interdisciplinary nature of literature but also provide an impetus for competition under unreasonable pressures to innovate. It has resulted in a form of writings that contests categorization based on traditionally accepted literary canons.

The fictional writings of many of the recent Indo-English fiction writers also register a marked shift. Instead of informing a typical Indian cultural background and traditional Indian cultural ethos, their works exhibit global concerns through the presentation of multi-cultural reality. The changed nature of their concerns has resulted in their ever-increasing readership. The expansion of the scope of their thematic concerns and development of new forms of expression have won them many prestigious international awards including the Nobel Prize won by V.S. Naipaul. Their writings have won acclaim far and wide. Instead of the presentation of typical Indian socio-cultural background and typography these writers concentrate on different forms of life concerning various cultures. Similarly, the presentation of traditional Indian middle class society and its contradictions has been replaced with the life and experiences of the rich and to a large extent socially liberated people. Their works are not limited to the representation of commonly experienced epistemological world of the poor and the socially down-trodden. They make efforts to bring out new forms of life showing multiple possibilities of human existence in a new world. Not only this, their fictional writings also exhibit a tendency of mixing fact and fiction that marks a shift from the view that treated literature as an artistic social document. The writers like Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth Namita Gokhale, Kiran Sawhney and Shobha De exhibit this tendency in their works. Apart from an interest in global concerns that tends to broaden the scope of their fiction, there are other factors that mark a new trend in Indian-English fiction. These factors are related to various changes in life and the shifting paradigms of understanding in literary theory and practice.

Similarly, the quick urbanisation of Indian society and the influence of mass-media have brought immense change in contemporary Indian life. The traditional moral values and static, all-pervasive norms of behaviour have collapsed under the impact of multi-cultural nature of reality and the influence of new means of communication including tv, cable tv, computers, internet and print media. Apart from this, the democratisation of power has destabilised the traditional hold on moral and social values. All these factors have resulted in the emergence of new forms of life. And the role of media-generated images providing fantastic and romantic possibilities of life has made life more complex. Consequently, the form of fiction has undergone a corresponding shift to give an expression to the complexities of life. The complexity informing human life finds fictional expression in the depiction of multiple human selves. Human life and experience no longer follow a set pattern based on pre-fixed norms of behaviour. It marks a shift in the presentation of systematic development of human life. Instead of understanding experience on the basis of stable norms and values, multiple responses of different people in particular situations find more relevance. Consequently, fictional writings of most of the contemporary writers concentrate on the creation of different possible human situations instead of the depiction of major incidents having epic dimensions. The nature of the narrative concentrating on the presentation of these situations becomes complicated and complex. And the overwhelming presence of the story elements now seems to have been replaced by the creation of different situations and the expression of the responses of different characters in these situations. Jhumpa Lahiri's stories exhibit this tendency in abundance. Amitav Ghosh also marks this tendency by presenting multiple aspects of human self and identity through the intervention of power in human relationships.

Another aspect of the changed social scenario is the quality and nature of the readers. Instead of the traditional middle class educated people the contemporary readers form the generation of people fed on media-generated images and growing under the cultural mix of MTV, or the western reader eager to know about new forms of Indian life. Catering to the demands of these readers, Indo-English novelists exhibit a tendency to include different elements in their works that corresponds with the expectations of the readers. It makes them depict a mixed culture and the life influenced by media-generated images. This new orientation can be ascertained from the fictionalisation of simulated reality instead of social reality. The depiction of constructed reality instead of the representation of reality brings their works close to the art forms manufactured as a commodity. Moreover, the contemporary readers influenced by the fast growing consumerist culture are more interested in the reading material having immediate popular appeal. For them the fictional works are not the sacred works of art meant to be preserved or reread. They view fictional works like other art forms related to popular media having transient entertainment value like television serials and advertisements. This tendency of the readers has also impacted the nature of Indian-English fiction. In order to make their works reader friendly these writers tend to include popular and easily understandable elements in their fictional works. The message, if at all there is any, is flashed in these writings in a quick succession of images like scenes in advertisements and films. As a result of this, the descriptive passages and philosophical views that earlier used to adorn the pages of different fictional works seem to have been replaced with narrative details presented at a break-neck speed. It marks the repetition of similar scenes and incidents presented in the fictional works of the writers like Shobha De.

Apart from the changed attitude and reading behaviour of the people the commodification of art and commercial interests of the writers have also impacted a change in the nature of fiction in contemporary times. The commodification of art is an important aspect of the consumer culture. The aesthetic considerations that earlier determined the worth of a work of art seem to have been replaced by its commercial viability. In the changed perspective, the use value of everything, including art, decides its worth. This commercial aspect makes the writer manufacture market and reader friendly product. In order to make their novels commercially viable, the novelists tend to include various elements like fantasy, romance, sensational incidents, mystery and even pornographic material in their writings. Media plays a significant role in promoting the sales of different novels. And the publishing industry, with an easy access to the means of production and advertisement, seems to play a decisive role. The big publishing houses tend to promote the works having a mass appeal. Some of the writers like Shobha De openly admit writing fiction as a project given by certain publishers. The role of the publishers in encouraging a new type of fiction can also be ascertained from the means they adopt to earn more profits through this form of literature. The appearance of reviews much before the publication of the work and celebrity status of the writers are used as ploys to enhance the acceptability of the work. As a result of this publicity most of the readers have made up their mind to buy or borrow the work much before its publication. Of course, no fictional work is worth its salt if it does not appeal to the readers. But the type of fiction that the contemporary Indian publishing industry is patronizing has developed a purely popular brand of fiction. The abundant use of titillating reading material and the presentation of popular themes in the novels of Shobha De, Namita Gokhale, Shashi Tharoor and many other contemporary writers is ample proof of the commercial considerations having an impact on the literary writings.

Along with the economic, social and cultural materiality the philosophical and theoretical developments in recent times have also influenced novel writing in contemporary times. In the shifting paradigms of understanding the very nature of reality and its presentation in literature have undergone immense change.

In the changed scenario reality is no longer treated to be stable, monolithic, absolute and transcendental in nature. It is considered to be pluralistic, provisional and contextual. Corresponding to these ideas the fictional reality depicted in literature is comprehended as constructed and discursive instead of being mimetic and representative. In the present scenario signifiers do not have fixed signifieds. Instead, there is an endless play of signifiers that makes the ultimate meaning incomprehensible. Historical and cultural context plays a crucial role in determining the meaning. The provisional and contextual nature of reality marks the indeterminacy of meaning. It implies that the concepts like Truth, Goodness, Justice, Right, Wrong etc., cannot be understood in absolute and ultimate terms. These concepts are immanent in the process they tend to govern. They are not fixed entities. In a sense everything is fiction.

These ideas have challenged the understanding that treats history as an objective and authentic account of historical events. Now history turns out to be another kind of fiction. Therefore, the treatment of history in contemporary Indian–English fiction is directed to highlight the constructed and fictional nature of the historical truth. The writer, instead of providing an objective, ultimate, all pervasive understanding of historical reality, tends to provide multiple

views about historical events. Even the treatment of contemporary Indian history in the recent novels of Shashi Tharoor, Manju Kapur and Rohinton Mistry exhibits this changed perspective. The other Indian-English fiction writers who have treated history from a different perspective include Salman Rushdie, Khushwant Singh and Amitav Ghosh. Similarly, the view that does not treat literature as a representation of reality finds expression in the writings of the contemporary fiction writers in their presentation of constructed and contextual reality. Instead of the question how to understand the world created by these writers, the question what kind of world has been constructed in their fiction becomes more significant. It has led to the presentation of life and experience not based on mainstream reality informing common human experience. Consequently, the forms of experience which were earlier considered to be unworthy for inclusion in literature have also found a place in it.

The new ideas have destabilised the difference between 'high' and 'low' culture and art. As everything is now treated to be fiction and constructed then how can one fiction be better than the other. Instead of looking at literature and culture in terms of binary oppositions they are seen as multiple forms of cultural expressions. It has further contested the difference between commercial and serious art. This rejection of the boundaries between the high and the low has provided an opportunity to the writer to concentrate on the forms of life on the margins. The forms of life that were earlier treated to be deviant now mark the acceptance of the existence of multiple valid voices in a given socio-cultural context. Consequently, the fictional world of recent Indo-English novelists also gives expression to surprisingly different, startling and bizarre ways of life.

The novelists like Shobha De seem to have exploited this aspect of the shift in paradigms of understanding to make their fictional works acceptable. As the forms of life presented under the garb of giving expression to mute-voices and traditionally marginalised aspects of human experience serve the commercial ends of the writers, more and more contemporary writers have started including such material in their writings. The recent novels of the writers like Khushwant Singh (*The Company of Women*), Manju Kapur (*A Married Woman*), Shashi Tharoor (*Riot*) also mark this tendency. It implies that instead of concentrating on the expectations of the critics and academicians the contemporary fiction writers are more concerned about the masses interested in popular fiction. The implied reader of these writers includes reader on the run, bored middle class housewives and the romance-loving casual readers who fantasise about deviant forms of behaviour as depicted in movies and presented in glossy magazines. It tends to bring fiction close to different forms of popular visual and print media. Consequently, the forms of life—like the experiences of sexual perverts, sexual exploitation in the film industry, business world and the world governed by underworld dons, intimate marital experiences etc.— that usually form a part of popular media have started showing overwhelming presence in literary writings, particularly fiction. Apart from this, contemporary popular subjects related to recent communal clashes and political controversies also find a significant place in contemporary Indian-English fiction.

The theoretical perceptions propagated in different critical theories like postcolonialism and feminism have also introduced a new trend in contemporary Indian-English fiction. These perspectives have not only provided an opportunity for the expression of the life at the margins but also added political dimensions to fiction. Under the impact of the new perceptions the fictional writings of the contemporary writers also explore the working of power politics in

human relationships. It tends to make their works a politically symbolic act. As a result of this, the images of particular classes of people and the fictional stereotypes of different cultures are presented and studied from a different perspective. The postcolonial perspective, with its emphasis on the experiences of the erstwhile colonies of the British empire, has resulted in the depiction of cross-cultural contexts from a different view. It adds political overtones to literary writings. The colonial experience and the process of decolonisation finds powerful expression in Amitav Ghosh's novels. An interesting aspect of the depiction of the experience of the colonised culture is the continuation of colonial oppression in postcolonial cultures in a different form. Moreover, how the process of decolonisation finds extended meaning in man-woman relationships has been presented by feminist Indian-fiction writers, particularly women writers. Here again the constructed nature of historical truth, cultural stereotypes and the concept of gender gets highlighted.

Feminism with its thrust on women's concerns has also brought a major change in contemporary Indian-English fiction. Women writers, in particular, seem to deliberately concentrate on women's experiences. Their concern for the marginalisation and subordination of women in different walks of life can be ascertained from the fictionalisation of different forms of women's life in their works. A notable change in their depiction of women can be observed from the presentation of the women characters different from their traditional counterparts. Instead of submissive, docile and passive women we find assertive and aggressive women characters in the writings of contemporary Indian-English women writers. They tend to show modern, educated women who do not seem to accept their lot in traditional family set up. In their efforts to find a viable space in patriarchy dominated society these women explore different aspects of female sexuality and advocate a redefinition of gender roles. Most of these women seem to be free from economic worries and traditional moral dilemmas resulting from incompatible marriage. Now marriage and a life of domesticity do not seem to absorb all of women's energies. They no longer treat marriage as the ultimate goal of their life. Traditional moral values particularly enjoined upon women are challenged by them. They assert their control on life and human affairs including female sexuality. They are not ashamed of indulging in deviant activities and involve themselves in extra-marital relations frequently to mark their protest against male hegemony. It has marked a deliberate attempt by the women writers to present deconstructed images of women. The destabilisation of hierarchical thinking has provided an opportunity to these writers to express new avenues of woman's existence including female sexuality. The fictional world created by these writers tends to be woman-centered. Even the bizarre and startling ways of life led by the women characters in these writings finds acceptance in an extended version of decolonisation of women from male dominance. It has resulted in a spurt of writings by women. In this context, the new aspects of women's experiences fictionalised as a form of feminist understanding of life find expression in the novels of Shobha De, Manju Kapoor, Namita Gokhale, Kiran Sawhney Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherji, Shashi Deshpande and others.

Another significant development that brings out a perceptible change in Indian-English fiction is the depiction of cross-cultural context. Earlier this theme was mainly concerned with the conflicting aspects of the East and the West. Indian life was presented to highlight its exotic features that had a specific appeal for the western readers. The western reason and scientific point

of view juxtaposed against the Indian perspective governed by faith in spiritualism and highly emotional response to life formed the major thrust in the writings of earlier Indian-English fiction writers. It tended to create specific cultural stereotypes representing two major cultures coming in a close contact due to political compulsions. The understanding that governed the depiction of this theme was usually based on the perspective that viewed life in binary terms. The two different cultures in question were seen from the consciousness of the colonisers. The essential qualities of both the cultures were considered to result in a conflict. The differences between the Eastern and the Western cultures depicted in this kind of fiction were treated to be fundamental, transcendental and eternal. Moreover, the interaction between the people related to these two cultures was shown to be taking place at a limited and specific level; either it was on the political level, or it was shown taking place at individual level in particular situations. Consequently, the characters belonging to the western culture were either political bosses or kind-hearted missionaries and social workers. The acceptance of an essential difference between the two cultures seemed to be the governing principle so far as the depiction of East-West encounter is concerned.

In the changed scenario the fictionalisation of East-West encounter has undergone a major change. The view that treats the two cultures essentially different stands challenged. The constructed nature of the cultural stereotypes is highlighted in contemporary Indian-English fiction that marks a major shift in the understanding about different cultures. Another significant aspect of cross-cultural encounter presented by contemporary Indian-English fiction can be observed in the writings of diasporic Indian writers. In the postcolonial times these writers concentrate on the experiences of the displaced and exiled people. The people belonging to erstwhile colonies experience a sense of alienation which is different from their experiences during the British rule. In spite of the cultural interaction taking place more frequently and at a mass level the people who have to leave their home and settle abroad experience a different kind of dilemma. They may not be considered inferior in political terms yet their acceptance in an alien culture in a natural way remains a far cry. The contemporary fiction writers concentrate on the minute and subtle aspects of human behaviour that makes the diasporic people experience a sense of alienation and being kept at a distance. Different writers have tried to bring out multiple shades of this experience. On the one hand, there are writers who concentrate on the diasporic experience at an alien place informing the supremacist attitude of the natives towards them. There are other writers who see this experience as an outcome of cultural interaction that facilitates the emergence of a universal civilisation.

Another related aspect of postcolonial perspectives that marks the emergence of a different trend in Indian-English fiction is that instead of presenting the British empire as the culture representing colonial oppression and the eastern culture, particularly Indian culture, as the other, the contemporary writers tend to bring out the internal contradictions of the national culture. The conflicting interests of different communities and the fear psychosis resulting from minority/majority syndrome find expression in the recent fictional works of different Indian-English fiction writers. The presentation of this theme involves the expression of a sense of resentment, in the sub-cultures within the main culture, against the false sense of inclusion of their voice by the majority culture. The treatment of this theme marks the presence of neo-

colonialism in erstwhile colonies of the British empire. It also shows these writers' concern for community specific themes. Rohinton Mistry's writings, in this context, are particularly related to give expression to the marginalised consciousness of the Parsi community. Manju Kapur and Shashi Tharoor deal with the communal clashes that took place in recent past. Their presentation reveals an awareness that tends to highlight the need for the acceptance of multiple-voices within a national group. The political overtones of this theme sometimes make the literary value of these elements doubtful. But the treatment of this theme finds greater significance in giving expression to multiple, valid social voices and bringing out the composite nature of Indian culture. In the process, it brings out a different understanding of national identity and home. In the changed perspective one's native place need not necessarily exude a feeling of home. One can feel exiled and displaced even at one's own native place. And one may gradually accept the new place as his home. It means one who belongs to nowhere, in a sense, belongs to everywhere. Consequently, who is a native and who is an alien becomes difficult to define. In Indian-English fiction different shades of cross cultural interaction can be seen in the writings of Bharati Mukherji, Rohinton Mistry, V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri.

The fictionalisation of contemporary history in the works of contemporary Indian-English fiction writers also brings out a changed perspective. Instead of presenting historical truth from monolithic view of the governing consciousness of the author, the contemporary writers tend to provide multiple perspectives. It highlights the constructed nature not only of the historical truth but also that of the different perspectives. In spite of the presentation of the political implications of the constructed reality the involvement of multiple perspectives tends to make their works artistic. It saves their works from being propaganda. Another aspect of the presentation of contemporary social reality and history is the interaction between the majority view and a marginalised consciousness. The intervention of politics in common human experience also finds expression through multiple points of view. In the process what gains significance in relation to historical events is not the truth but truths. In the works concentrating on the fictional presentation of history the distance between the author and his work is carefully maintained. Instead of providing an all pervasive view the expression of multiple voices gains more significance. It sometimes results in making a fictional work a topical discussion on some events having historical importance in the national context. It certainly marks a shift in the nature of the fiction. The interest in such kind of a fiction lies not in the life spectacle presented or the fate of some character rather it centres on the discussion involving different groups expressing pluralistic nature of truth. Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* Rohinton Mistry's *Family Matters* and Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* are some of the examples of this fiction.

The changed perception informing a different nature of the relationship between the author and his work has also impacted the contemporary Indian-English fiction writing. Instead of being the creator or the producer of a literary work his role gets approximated to that of the manufacturer of a work of art. As the understanding of a fictional work is no longer associated with the personal circumstances of the author the constructed nature of the narrative gets highlighted. It has also resulted in a conscious attempt made for the construction of the narrative informing these writers' heightened sense of craftsmanship and their awareness about the fictionality of fiction. It makes the nature of their narratives more significant than the subject

matter presented in these writings. This kind of fiction also envisages a changed role of the reader. Earlier a reader was treated to be a passive receiver. Whatever the author presented in a work of art was considered to be an authentic expression of reality. The author was expected to guide the reader and take him/her to the ultimate reality. In the changed understanding about reality and literature that has resulted in its constructed nature the author is not the ultimate authority. The reader not only has to arrange the fictional details to re-create a plausible narrative but also has to exercise his/her own perception for its understanding. The constructed nature of narrative demands an active role of the reader. Apart from other Indian-English fiction writers indulging in conscious experimentation with its form there are writers like Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie and Shashi Deshpande whose recent publications express their attempt to construct narratives that highlight the recent trend evolving in Indian-English fiction writing.

This aspect of the form of fiction developing in recent times has had a deep impact on the nature of the plot structure informing fictional works. Most of the writers who exhibit an awareness about the constructed nature of narrative do not deploy a traditional linear plot. Nor do they seem to concentrate on the life and experiences of a limited number of people taking place in a sequential order. The traditional linear plot is shunned to introduce frequent digressions. Instead of a compact, well-knit plot what we find in the name of the construction of narrative includes a variety of material involving a number of characters, places and experiences. All these elements seem to have only a thin link among them. Instead of developing a single story the plot now marks the presentation of multiple stories. It develops on the pattern of story within the story. Consequently, it becomes difficult for the reader to trace the priorities of the author. The reader gets involved in making sense of the multi-layered narrative. It baffles the reader. Another trend that marks a shift in the development of plot is its construction on the pattern of visual forms of art. It has brought fictional works closer to visual art forms and the author seems more interested in showing than telling. The complex nature of the plot informing a major shift in contemporary Indian English fiction can be observed in Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land*, Shashi Tharoor's 'Riot' and *The Great Indian Novel*, Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things*. The development of plot on the pattern of Bollywood movies informs the plot construction in the novels of Shobha De and Khushwant Singh's *The Company of Women*.

In the present scenario the role of language has also witnessed tremendous change. Language is no longer treated to be an objective medium used to express or represent already existing reality. Language now is used to construct a world according to the given cultural and socio-historical context instead of representing or expressing stable reality. The different factors working in the background of human experience do not allow it to remain a neutral medium. In the construction of a particular context language is used to deconstruct and destabilise established systems of understanding. For example, in postcolonial and feminist perspectives language is effectively used to deconstruct established cultural stereotypes. Similarly, the interaction of various cultures has resulted in a cultural mix. It has marked the emergence of a mixing of different languages rejecting the purity of language. The use of a language contesting an understanding of life on hierarchical and binary terms has a special significance in postcolonial

and feminist perspectives. Language is used to mark a decolonised state of existence and the rejection of centralised, totalising and unitary views that result in the marginalisation and suppression of certain social groups.

These ideas have contested the concept of the purity of language. Consequently, frequent code mixing and code shifting forms an important aspect of the language used by contemporary Indian-English fiction writers. The words and sentences from Hindi and other regional languages are laced with English. Instead of a standard code, the language in use finds more relevance. The language used by different social, cultural, ethnic and professional groups is also incorporated to give expression to the heterogeneity and multiplicity of experiences informing human existence. No doubt, earlier Indian-English fiction writers also used to sprinkle native words and expressions in their writings. They often provided a translated version of the words and expressions taken from regional languages. On the other hand, most of the contemporary writers rarely feel the need to give the translated version. It may be due to the emerging close contact among different people resulting in frequent cultural mix. In such a situation certain words and expressions tend to become a part of the conceptual zone of the people using a different language due to the repeated occurrence of these words in their day-to-day conversation. Another factor contributing to the emerging trend in the use of a mixed language can be attributed to the impact of mass-media. In the Indian context, people influenced by media often tend to use a mixed language promoted by MTV mix. The language used in the novels of Shobha De forms an interesting example. The use of a mixed language by different Indian-English fiction writers marks the emerging trends in contemporary Indian society.

Another aspect of the use of language finds expression in its attempt to challenge the concept of binary understanding of language based on gender. Traditionally, women's language is supposed to be related to the life of domesticity and men's language related to the public sphere. And the language used by men does not find social acceptance when it is used by women. Certain words and expressions are considered to be taboo for women. In the present circumstances, women not only use masculine language but also show no inhibition in using taboo words, particularly in certain sections of the society. The destabilisation of the traditional understanding of language is often used to mark a decolonised existence of women. In the works of some of the contemporary Indian-English fiction writers women characters use this kind of language to mark their protest against patriarchy-dominated society. The language used by women characters in the novels of Shobha De, Namita Gokhale and Manju Kapur can be seen in this context. These aspects of the use of language not only contest the difference based on hierarchical terms but also tend to make the works popular.

All these factors, discussed earlier, have introduced the inclusion of a variety of elements in fictional works that mark the interdisciplinary nature of literature, particularly fiction. A novel may include the elements of biography, history, sociology, anthropology, fantasy, romance, journalism, history and even pornography. Similarly, the art forms like film, advertisement and computer generated images also form a part of fictional writings. The existence of a variety of elements destabilises the traditional norms governing the understanding of literature. Therefore, an understanding of recent fiction writing requires a changed perspective which is not based on the fixed notions of canonical literature. In contemporary Indian-English fiction the recent novels

of Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Khushwant Singh and Shobha De mark the inclusion of the elements of different art forms making their works interdisciplinary in nature. The use of diary entries, newspaper reports, poems, letters, transcriptions of interviews form useful narrative units in Shashi Tharoor's *Riot*. The elements of mystery, fantasy, romance and pornographic details can be observed in the novels of Shobha De, Khushwant Singh and Shashi Tharoor. The development of a fictional narrative on the pattern of a research project forms an interesting feature of Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land*, Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies* and other such writers. The inclusion of traditionally considered non-literary material in the fictional works marks the destabilisation of genre boundaries.

A study of the recent Indian-English fiction reveals a deep impact of all these views on the writings of various novelists. A marked shift in their fictional concerns and the emerging form can be observed easily. But the emergence of new orientation in the recent publications of a number of Indian-English writers does not mean that this change is all pervasive. For example, if there are novelists like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor and Shobha De who have explored new themes in a different way, there are novelists like Rohinton Mistry concentrating on contemporary social reality from traditional realistic perspective.

The present book intends to trace the impact of recent developments on the subject and form of contemporary Indian- English fiction. A study of the recent publications of some of the established and emerging fiction writers has been taken up to critically analyse their writings on the basis of new orientations informing literary theory and practice.