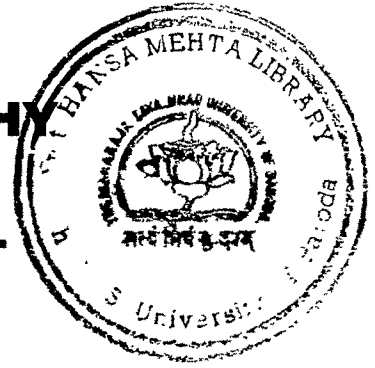


**HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY
OF
THE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL**



SUMMARY OF
Ph.D. DISSERTATION
IN
ENGLISH

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SUMMARY

The Indian English novel has, by now a century-old tradition to its name. As an area of literature it has seen considerable increase both in terms of output and popularity particularly over the last two decades.

One reason why this area of literature has received so much critical and scholarly attention is the fact that it has been institutionalized as a subject in colleges and universities. Along with other, new areas of literary studies, the study of Indian English literature has become part of the prescribed syllabus for undergraduate and post-graduate students. The critical and historical studies, undertaken thus far, of the Indian English novel has classified it in terms of periods or canons. This strategy may enable the teacher in the classroom to familiarize the students with the literature. But as a method of charting its history, this strategy fails to account for several difficulties that such a history would actually involve.

One of the main difficulties is whether or not it is possible to attempt a literary history of the Indian English novel. If at all such an attempt is made, another question that arises is whether it is appropriate to draw purely upon the principles of Western historiography for writing such a history. Would the methods of periodization and canonization which are two of the most favoured methods advocated by Western historiographers, suffice in this context? These are some of the problems that have been explored in this dissertation.

The first chapter of this dissertation examines in some detail

the critical studies of the Indian English novel made thus far by renowned scholars such as Srinivas-Iyengar, C.D. Narasinhmaiah, M.K. Naik, C. Paul Verghese, Meenakshi Mukherjee and William Walsh. These critics have explored some of the critical and historical possibilities of this area and their contribution in this direction can, in no way, be underestimated. The aim in this dissertation has not been to criticize the efforts of these critics but to build upon them. The chief thrust of the argument in this dissertation has been on the need to go beyond biographical and bibliographical surveys of this area of study and thematic and stylistic analyses of Indian English novels and to visualize the tradition of the Indian English novel from a purely historiographical perspective

In this connection, the usefulness of Western historiographical methods for charting the history of the Indian English novel has been examined. Some of the theories of literary history formulated by critics such as Rene Wellek, R.S. Crane, Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser, Hayden White and the New Historicists have been discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation. The argument put forward is that while some of the suggestions offered by these theorists may be incorporated when considering the historiography of the Indian English novel, the limitations of a complete acceptance of Western historiographical principles in this regard must also be kept in view.

The third chapter of this dissertation outlines suggestions for attempting a history of this area of literature on the basis of more realistic, more historically appropriate methods. In this regard, the inadequacies of the methods of periodization and canonization have been demonstrated. As an alternative to these methods, it has been suggested that it would be more desirable and more realistic to view the history of the Indian English novel in terms of

clusters. Five clusters have been distinguished on the basis of themes and styles:

1. The first cluster consists of novels with social themes which have been further sub-divided into two groups: novels which explore the theme of social and economic injustice and novels which reflect the social reality of India.
2. The second cluster contains those novels which explore the theme of gender injustice.
3. The third cluster groups together novels with political themes.
4. The fourth cluster consists of those novels which examine the theme of the East-West relationship.
5. The fifth cluster is based on the classification of two distinct styles of narration : the realistic mode of narration and the fantastic mode of narration.

This dissertation does not claim that such a classification is final and complete in itself. This method of classification is open to further modification. The argument in this dissertation is that the history of the Indian English novel based on such clusters is more appropriate, more realistic at this juncture, however, piecemeal and fragmented it may appear than a history based on an indiscriminate appropriation of Western principles of history, which would only falsify and perhaps even exaggerate the actual state of the development of this fiction.

Further more, it has been suggested in this dissertation that it would be worthwhile for the historian of the Indian English novel to consider those novels which cannot be neatly categorized into any of the identified clusters. He would have to think of a

new category to classify those novelists who have made serious contributions to fiction in and about India, though their nationality does not happen to be Indian. In this case, the boundaries for the inclusion and exclusion of certain novelists will have to be re-defined in terms other than that of nationality alone.

Finally, the historian of this area of literature will consider looking at the entire field from the subaltern perspective. He will have to determine whether the Indian English novel has a subaltern category. In this regard, he may widen his perspective a little more and include novels translated from other Indian languages within his purview. The case for an inclusion of translations has already been strongly and convincingly defended by some contemporary Indian critics. These considerations will aid the historian to deal with the question of the cultural identity of the Indian English novel.