

Tracking Political Imagination in Indian Fiction

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Abstract:- Human beings are always considered as political animals and political fiction has become a very familiar expression from time immemorial. Novels which depict socio political realities come under the category titled political novels. The mixing of social reality and imagination takes place in the genre tagged as political fiction. Contemporary living environment plays a significant role in Indian political novels. The socio-political setting acts as a dominant player in the political fiction. The paper tries to explore numerous Indian fiction that fall under the category of political fiction or political novel.

Key words : Political Imagination , political fiction , socio – political novels .

Political fiction has become a common literary expression these days . Twentieth century post war situation led to the rising popularity of the genre named political fiction. Giving a fitting definition for the genre political fiction is not that easy. Anyways there exists umpteen definitions provided by various theoreticians , critics , and practitioners of the genre all around the world. Joseph L. Boltner in *The Political Novel* says , “a political novel is ... a book which directly describes, interprets or analyses political phenomena” (2). Irwing Howe in the work titled *Politics and the Novel* argues that, “by a political novel, I mean a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting” (19).

A political novel picturizes characters who are totally into the socio-political scenario of the period. The term political novel refers to any work of art that presents political ideas, or a species of fiction in which action, characters, setting are all based on politics or a fiction which describes the impact of the political system on lives of the people around. The term political novel also includes the works voicing particular political ideologies. Political theme has been dominating Indian writing from the beginning itself. India, a community of diverse beliefs, provides ample stuff for the political narratives. K.C Dutt's - *A Journal of 48 Hours of the Year 1945*, S.C Dutt's - *Republic of Orissa : Annals from the Pages of the Twentieth Century*, S.K Ghose's - *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* showed a strong political colouring. K.A Abbas's- *Tomorrow is Ours: A Novel of the Indian of Today* , Inqilab R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Anand's *Untouchable* are a few noticeable political Indian novels of the early period. With the rise of the national movement , Independence struggle , Indian literature witnessed the flourishing of the political novels . Though the earliest specimens of Indian English fiction show their link with the ancient Indian tradition, their subject matter is contemporary. M.K Naik, in his *Dimensions of Indian English Literature*, points out that “the urge for social reform was, of course, a significant aspect of the Indian renaissance of the nineteenth century; it therefore naturally became an important theme in some early Indian English fiction”(100). Indian English writers of political themes preferred writing in context that suits Indian sensibility. Indian peasant situation, violence against women , child marriage, widow remarriages , poverty , economic crises , Indian bureaucracy are the major themes discussed in the so called socio political Indian novels.

Indian novelists tried to describe the social changes happening in India . Anand's *Untouchable*, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, K. S. Venkatramani's *Kandan the Patriot* Amir Ali's *Conflict*, Salman Rushdi's *Midnight's Children* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* can easily be recognized as novels that deal with socio political themes. Social realism vogue in Indian literature since freedom struggle and still continues. Kamala Markandaya 's and Jabwala's have novels encapsulate social realism

The major themes of the Indian novelists are portrayal of the life of the poor and downtrodden. They also portrayed the social system, racial conflicts; the story of Indian Independence struggle . The task of the novelist in modern India is to deal with real India and

almost all the political developments during Indian Independence got pictured in novels of the time . Kushwanth Singh's *A Train to Pakistan*, Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh*, Chaman Nahel's *Aazadi* and Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* are a few to name. After independence, the post-colonial writers' attention began to be concentrated in the political environment of independent India . The socio political realities of postcolonial India urged many writers to present or fictionalize the socio political scene. Cultural, social, economic conditions prevailed in Indian society could be studied through the narratives of Indian political fiction . Post Independent Indian fiction exhibited certain characteristic features. Their prime focus was the society with its specific culture and history. Many of the writers of the period began to connect personal life with the social and political life of the nation. These writers truly explored the sociological context in which they exist upon.

Since 1947 the nation had been engaged in the herculean task of nation building. Society still bearing the effect of colonialism , became a theme for the literature of the day , and the literature of the day bears the traces of colonial after effect.. As Edward Said puts in *Orientalism* "There were and there are cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and their lives, histories and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West"(5). In *Beginning Theory*, Peter Barry argues that for centuries the European powers have devalued what is not West and considered their "precolonial era as a pre-civilised limbo, or even as a historical void"(193). Ashis Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy* opines that "The West is now everywhere; with is the West and outside in structures and in minds. (11)

Writings from the post colonial India recounts the colonial past and the holocaust which it went through. . Post Independent India . The state of post coloniality is always disturbed by the colonial shadow. Leela Gandhi in *Post Colonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* makes the comment , "postcolonial theory inevitability commits itself to a complex project of historical and psychological "recovery"(8).. The postcolonial writers takes up the historical, political, cultural and social themes as central to their discourses. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* are a few to name . The genre of political fiction in India may expand its horizons in the future , as the tendency to depict the life and ways of the human beings will never die out.

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