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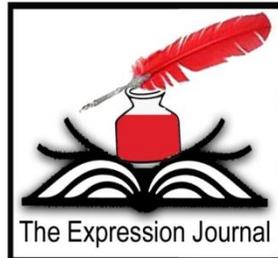
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## THE EMERGING TRENDS IN POPULAR FICTION

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### Abstract

Popular literature includes those writings planned for the masses and those that find favors with bulky audiences. It can be different from artistic literature in the sense that it is designed mainly to entertain. Unlike high literature, popular literature generally doesn't seek a high degree of formal beauty or delicacy and is not proposed to endure. The development of popular literature has paralleled the spread of literacy through education and has been facilitated by scientific developments in printing. With the Industrial Revolution, works of literature, which were previously produced for using up by small, learned elites, became available to large sections and even the most of the members of a population. The border line between artistic and popular literature is misty, with much traffic between the two categories as current public preference and later critical assessment. While he was alive Shakespeare could be thought of as an author of popular literature, but now, he is regarded as a creator of artistic literature. Certainly, the main method of defining a work as belonging to popular literature is whether it is ephemeral, that is, losing its demand and importance with the passage of time. Thus, Westernization, Feminist influence etc. are the basic factor for Pop. Literature

### Key-Words

Westernization, Indianness, Feminism, Indian myth, Diaspora, Sensitivity.

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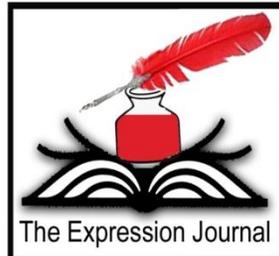
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### The Westernization in Characterization and Styles:

The trend to mimic the western popular fiction style is particularly noticeable. Today we have Ravi Subramanian, a banker, who writes thrillers associated to banking industry which is found very interesting by his viewers. His works include *I Bought a Monk's Ferrari*, *If God was a Banker* and *The Bankster*. He parallels himself to John Grisham, another popular writer of legal thrillers. Indian literature formerly regarded as a post-colonial literature has now completely morphed into the European standards. The Indian novels are not vivid any more. The pace is fast. The style is like to that of pulse-racing thrillers. An example, for the change of style is Vikas Swarup's *Q & A*. *Q & A* was the story of a boy from slums who takes part in a Television reality show and wins many rupees. The style is that of a thriller movie where the situation and visuals change fast keeping alive the suspense and adventure. It does not pictorise the heart breaking poverty of Indian downtrodden but rather follows a roller-coaster ride of thrills. The recent bestseller *Once upon the Tracks of Mumbai* written by Rishi Vohra deals with the parallel theme in the psychotic and schizophrenic style. But India has not accepted the western outlook as a whole. In Europe, America and Africa, the autobiographical writings of gays, lesbians and middle sexes are very popular. In India such a trend has not yet been set. In novels which have a setting in metros, homosexuals come as secondary characters, but the readers have not grown so broad minded enough to accept their life. The subject has become a hot topic for discuss in cities but when it comes to morality, Indians still consider this as a sinful act and an evil trait of Westernization.

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## **The Feminist Writings:**

India has produced a number of female writers writing in English. Kamala Markhandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai are among the long list. With the passage of time, the attitude of the society towards female writing is also undergoing a turbulent change. But not many Indian women writers have made it to bestsellers just. Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* became a bestseller. Anita Desai's *Village by the Sea*, *In Custody* and *Cry, The Peacock* were once popular. But, these books became popular only abroad. However, Markandaya's *Bombay Tiger* (2008) and Anita Desai's *Zigzag Way* (2004) did not receive the same reaction as their earlier books did. Feminist attitude is strong but it doesn't address the real gender issues like family violence, female infanticide, contradiction in education to women, sexual abuses of women etcetera. This was more pronounced in writings in nineteen eighties and nineties. However, we cannot come into the conclusion that Indian readers are against to feminist writings. Shobha De's columns in *Outlook*, *The Times of India*, and *Stardust* are very popular amongst Indians. They might not have made it to the bestsellers but still her works are considered both feminist and popular. Her works like *Starry Lights* (1989) and *Socialite Evenings* (1989) depict stories of starlets, bright city lives, aspiration and love lives. The spicy style is obviously tempting to Indians. Meenaxi Reddy Madhavan's blogs were sensational in all over India. It was not just because of her innovative ideas but because of her playful and erotic content. She wrote under the pen name. Whenever a woman writes about love, sex and marital lives the people sense that it has an autobiographical element which makes the sales even better but certainly affects the author's confidentiality. Another female writer who was preyed by such bias and social banned was Kamala Das. The female characters in male writers' writings are also undergoing a change. Females are not any more the homemakers but multitasking motherly figures who manage the home affairs and office jobs. She has got attitude, career and an self-governing personality. In Chetan Bhagat's novel *Two States*, we can see the hero staying with his lover's family trying to impress her family. So the general societal attitude towards women are changing and it is honestly depicted the Indian popular fiction of both male and female writers.

## **The I.I.T. Way:**

The technocrats and managers seem to strike a daring for recent audience. The insider accounts of IITs and IIMs have become ultimate sellouts. The first writer to start this fashion was Chetan Bhagat, a pass out of IIT Delhi and IIM Ahmadabad. But later Sidin Vadakut's *Dork's series*, Neeraj Chibba's *Zero Percentile* also followed the style. It obviously shows the Indian preference for technocrats and professional jobs. The hi-fi job's glamour pulls people other than teaching, science research etcetera. Before a few decades Indian narratives used to cope with actors, strugglers, teachers and government workers. But today, the characters are new generation employees of Bank, call centre, internet café

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workers, copywriters etc. Such professions have come into fashion only from past 2 decades. The readers of English novels also include the city youth who wish for such professions. So, obviously the competition in professional fields, the tight work schedules, the target completing rushes, placement worry etc. seem to take the attention of the audience.

## **Sensitivity to Evil Heritage Practises:**

Indian writers in English have shown the honest picture of Indian domestics. Issues like, casteism, dowry, female infanticides et cetera were portrayed purposely Dalit writers like Dilp Chitre, Narayan Mane, Sharankumar Limbale were alarming to the marginalized culture. Dalit issues were highly sensitized by Indian writers writing in English. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, *Cooliee* etc. R. K. Narayan's *English Teacher* and *Dark Room* responded against the harmful practices in Indian marriages. Yet, today not many English writers turn their focus to public issues. An exception is Aravind Adiga's *White Tiger (2008)* which was based on casteism and its aftermath. But the number of several social issues of India remains unexplored.

## **The Indianness of Indian Fictional Characters:**

Raja Rao stressed the Indianess of Indian writing in English. He highlighted the necessity of using the Indian English. The Gandhian philosophies and patriotic and local feelings were intentionally defended in his works. In the novel *Kanthapura*, we can see the characters addressing in local tongue and even the language giving highest justice to the translation of the local tongue. The characters were Indians in feelings and deeds. Writers who write about villages and the stories which may be useless to the cities like David Davidar are appreciated in newspapers and also abroad. But today, his works are not found in bestseller lists. But, the characters may be Indians, but we cannot feel an Indian language's touch in their language. Amma, Appa, Papa, Maa is replaced by Mum, Dad etcetera. Even the conscience dialogues make it feels that the thought process is also in English. The conversational terminologies are similar to that of American fictions. It is, in a sense, an honest picture because the lifestyles are shifting towards Western World in metro cities especially. We cannot declare that the Indianess of writers is lost. However, the characters are becoming less Indian. The reason is that, the readers are more exposed to the Western lifestyles. To adjusted with their styles the characters also become pro-Westerners.

## **From Villages to Metros:**

Be it films or dramas or music, Indian art forms are shifting more towards small town and big cities. The villages make up more than half of the Indian population. Yet the readers seem to like the city life episodes. Therefore, the novel setting shifts from the villages to the towns. Mumbai, Delhi metros and abroad are the areas where major stories take place.

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## **Influence of Indian Myths:**

The Indian myths and epics still seem to encourage the audience but may be in a different package. Amit Tripathi's *The Secret of Naga* (2012) and *Immortals of Meluha* (2010) and Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) are bestsellers that can be considered as exemplar. Tripathi gives a new direction to Lord Shiva's story in both his novels while *Great Indian Novel* is presented in traditional Indian Epic Style of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Another bestseller, Ashwin Sanghi's *Chanakya's Chant* published in 2011 narrates the story of Chanakya and the scenery is Patna in 340 B.C. So it can be seen that Indian readership is still interested in epics, puranas, Indian history and myths.

## **Adaptability to Movies:**

Today's Indian novels written in English are more frequently modified into movies. The reason is the changing narration style. The narration style of today's popular novels brings visuals to our brain. The fast pace, thriller style, the cinematic techniques of montage, quickly changing visuals help in edition. The thought process of people shift to visuals than words owing to impact of movies. It may be for this reason that this pattern shifts to narration. The descriptive form traditional style of postcolonial works is long lost. Anita Desai's *Zigzag Ways* was criticized for having descriptive styles, slow pace and less engaging characters. The authors also adapt their styles to viewers who watch movies. The modern Indian novels use more cinematic techniques and that's why can be easily adapted into movies. *Q & A*, *One Night at a Call Centre*, *Three Mistakes of my Life* and *2 States* verify this. The pace of narration is also fast and pulse racing like a thriller. *One Night at a Call Centre* was adapted into a Bollywood film 'Hello'; *Three Mistakes of my Life* was adapted into a movie 'Kai Po Che'.

## **Persisting Orthodox Mentality:**

Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* became a controversial book and it annoyed many protests and fatwas in India and abroad. A similar luck was faced by many writers like *Ram Swarup*. The attitude might have changed a bit but still Indian audience is very sensitive to the religious sentiments. Aravind Adiga's *White Tiger*, published in 2005, also caused debate. It can be concluded that though ages have passed, Indians are still very traditional in religious matters.

## **Diaspora Writing:**

Indian Diaspora always played an important part in Indian English literature. V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth are prominent names among them. Amitav Ghosh's *River of Smoke* (2010) became a bestseller. Salman Rushdie's works are also popular in India. Aatish Thaseer, a British Indian journalist, is another Indian diaspora writer whose novels - *Noon* (2011) and *Temple-Goers* (2010) whose works have become popular in India. But the Diaspora's sense has to be widened. David Davidar's *House of Blue*

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*Mangoes, Ithaca* gained international attention but could not make its presence among Indian bestsellers. All his novels have the traditional storylines of villages and the style is also descriptive. The major reason is that the theme is Modern writers like Chetan Bhagat, Rishi Vohra and Aravind Adiga were employed and sometimes educated abroad. Their major works have been written while they were abroad. Therefore, the perspective might have a foreigner's ideas. The exposure to another country and their lifestyles can add to their experience as influence their novels. The perspective of looking at India becomes mixed with their exposure to the Indians abroad too and hence has a Diaspora trait.

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