



# Contemporary Indian Writing in English:

Themes, Genres and Narrative Techniques  
(A Study From 2005 Onwards)

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**Dr. Krati Sharma**

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# Contemporary Indian Writing in English: Themes, Genres and Narrative Techniques

(A Study from 2005 Onwards)

*Edited By:*

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## Preface

Indian writing in English has a relatively short but rather distinguished history whereby it has created a special niche for itself in global literature. Indian Writing in English (IWE), of course, refers to literary creations by writers in India who express themselves in the English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. Its early history began with the works of several authors, most notably Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Toru Dutt, in the nineteenth century. Later, as the Freedom Struggle dominated the subcontinent, Indian writings in English also evolved – and writers like Sarojini Naidu, R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao made major contributions in the early twentieth century. The themes of this early phase largely revolved around British imperial possession of India, nationalism and the freedom struggle, and a bit later around Independence and Partition.

The efflorescence of Indian Writing in English gathered pace and prominence in the post-independence era. As a category, these works come in the broader realm of post-colonial literature - the creations from previously colonized countries such as India. Broadly speaking, contemporary Indian writing in English refers to the body of work produced in India in the 1950s and beyond. This genre encompasses a wide range of styles, themes and perspectives reflecting the diversity and complexity of Indian society. Some of the most distinctive writers in this initial phase of IWE in the post-1947 era were Khushwant Singh, Dom Moraes, Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das and Anita Desai to name just a handful.

The big breakthrough for Indian English writing, however, came in the 1980s and 1990s when a host of young authors, most significantly Vikram Seth and Arundhati Roy, grabbed global attention and won international laurels. This fresh phase of IWE exhibits confidence in tackling new themes and experiments with new techniques and approaches to handle these themes. The turn of the century saw the emergence of powerful new voices ranging from Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Deshpande, Gita Hariharan, Namita Gokhale, Vikram Chandra, Kunal Basu and several others giving IWE a new salience and vibrance. As contemporary Indian English writing grapples with new realities, IWE virtually gives expression to the Indian experience in modern settings and circumstances – and IWE emerges as a niche genre in global literature.

Over the years IWE has attained an independent voice and a celebrated status in the arena of world literature. A rich and totally diverse range of themes are explored by Indian English writers. On the one hand, this literature continues to contemplate on Indian culture, tradition, social and moral values and even India's historic experience whereby it vividly portrays the lifestyle and culture of Indians. But on the other hand,

Indian English authors are experimenting with new forms and styles pushing the boundaries of traditional literary conventions. Some of them are attempting a remarkable mix and fusion of Indian and western cultures in an era, as is popularly said, where the world has shrunk into a global village. In fact, the IWE scene in the twenty-first century is vibrant and diverse, with a number of writers contributing to various genres and themes in the new millennium.

These contemporary writers also depict immense control and finesse over the English language. It would perhaps be no exaggeration to state that they speak and write with near native proficiency. It's no more an alien or a foreign language for a majority of these writers. The renowned Indian English writer KR Srinivasa Iyengar, himself a scholar of distinction in English studies, in one of his lectures had aptly remarked: "It is pointless now to dissociate one action from the other, English has become ours, it is not less ours for being primarily the Englishman's or the American's, and Indo- Anglian Literature too is our literature, the literature which, with all its limitations, still taught us to be a new nation and a new people".

It is in this context that one tends to agree with the assertion that English, which has been domesticated and nativized in India, has become one of our own languages like say Punjabi Marathi, Kannada, Bengali, or Assamese. Hence, literature written in Indianized or nativized English is Indian English literature. It bears an indelible stamp of Indianness which implies 'life attitudes and patterns', 'modes of perception' and 'conventions that have emerged over the years in India'. As Gowri Deshpande rightly remarks, "We are right in asserting that we are Indian poets writing in English. Our landscape is Indian; our thought is moulded by our political, social, economic and philosophical scene."

It needs, however, to be appreciated that Indianness or the Indian experience of life cannot be restricted to rigid definitions, as its expression varies from person to person, writer to writer, poet to poet and novelist to novelist. It is this richness and variety of experience which imparts colour and beauty to IWE in recent decades. It embodies the Indian sensibility which has come down to us since Vedic times. In the context of IWE, as with many regional languages, the process of coming to terms with the traditional and the contemporary and moving to develop an indigenous sensibility has indeed been a large and complex historical process, which has evolved through a variety of phases.

Literary works in Indian English have grown enormously in recent decades and they have been privileged to be regarded among the leading genres in world literature.

Simultaneously, works with a special blend of Indian socio-cultural realities have glorified the English language in more ways than one; it has eventually made it more

attractive and the English literature has benefited richly by the Indian English contributions. In this context, most scholars would tend to agree with Iyengar's view that "English is a world language. This status carries privileges as well as responsibilities, advantages as well as dangers".

The present volume is a thought-provoking compilation of perceptive pieces on a wide range of themes on the works of some of the more eminent contemporary Indian writers in English. There are generic essays on themes, genres and narrative techniques of contemporary IWE and on the effects of western culture on Indian people. Then there are specific scholarly expositions on selected novels of Aravind Adiga. Other highlights of the volume include a thoughtful article on well-known writers Arundhati Roy's, Kavita Kane, Kiran Desai and Chetan Bhagat's fiction. A few other pieces that I found rather appealing were one on Tamil Sangam Literature and another one on gender issues and struggles depicted in Shashi Deshpande's novels. Other contributions that seem really engaging are on 'Diasporic Experience and Survival Strategies' in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and 'Conquering Communal Clashes through Social Harmony: A Comparative Analysis of Khushwant Singh's Novel *Train to Pakistan*.'

Besides being an absorbing, insightful read, this anthology will certainly be useful for anyone who's interested in Indian Writing in English. My congratulations to Dr Krati Sharma who seems to have put in a great deal of effort to put together in a pithy volume on a subject that has a lot of contemporary relevance and significance. All students and scholars of literature, especially those fascinated by IWE, will find it an enriching experience to engage with this labour of love!

Professor Shaila Mahan

Former Joint Director

Department of College Education of Rajasthan

## Acknowledgement

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to the creation of this book. This project would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and contributions of many individuals and institutions, and I would like to acknowledge their invaluable assistance.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Shaila Mahan for giving her consent for writing the Preface for this book. She is always there for me with her smile and agreed to this academic endeavor.

I am thankful to the talented and prolific authors whose works form the core of this book. Their literary contributions have not only enriched Indian literature but have also provided the foundation for this comprehensive exploration of contemporary Indian Writing in English.

I extend my sincere thanks to the Emyreal Publishing House specially Mr. Mohit who has provided access to the necessary materials and permissions for the inclusion of excerpts from various works. Your cooperation has been instrumental in making this book a reality.

I am indebted to the scholars and experts in the field of Indian literature who generously shared their insights, research findings, and critical perspectives during the course of this project. Your expertise and guidance have added depth and context to the analysis presented in this book.

I also express my appreciation to the academic institutions and libraries that provided resources, access to archives, and a conducive environment for research. Your facilities were crucial in the compilation of this book.

I want to acknowledge my family especially my husband Mr. Sharad Bhomia for his unwavering support and encouragement throughout this endeavor. Your patience and understanding during long hours of research and writing are deeply appreciated.

Lastly, I want to thank my dedicated team of proofreaders, and designers who worked tirelessly to ensure the quality and presentation of this book. Your attention to detail and commitment to excellence have been indispensable.

In conclusion, this book stands as a collective effort, and I am humbled by the collaboration, assistance, and inspiration that I have received from all those mentioned and many others who have contributed in various ways. "Contemporary Indian Writing in English: Themes, Genres and Narrative Techniques (A Study From 2005 Onwards)" is a testament to the vibrant literary landscape of India, and I hope it serves as a valuable resource for scholars, students, and enthusiasts of Indian literature.

**Dr. Krati Sharma**



## Introduction

In the landscape of Indian Writing in English after 2005, themes, genres, and narrative techniques played pivotal roles in shaping the literary landscape. This period marked a dynamic fusion of traditional Indian storytelling with contemporary global influences. In this exploration, we'll delve into the diverse themes that authors grappled with, the evolving genres they embraced, and the innovative narrative techniques that breathed life into their narratives, all of which together formed the vibrant tapestry of Indian literature in English during this pivotal year."

Indian Writing in English from 2005 onwards is comprised of many notable writers across the country. These are just a few examples, and the Indian literary scene remains dynamic and diverse, with numerous writers contributing to various genres and themes in the post-2005 era.

- Anuja Chauhan: An author known for her contemporary and witty writing style, her novels like 'The Zoya Factor' have garnered a wide readership.
- Rohinton Mistry: Though he published notable works before 2005, his novel 'Family Matters' continued to showcase his talent in portraying the intricacies of family life in Mumbai.
- Arvind Adiga: His debut novel 'The White Tiger' won the Man Booker Prize in 2008 and critically examined issues of class, poverty, and corruption in India.
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: While not exclusively Indian, her works like 'The Thing Around Your Neck' have resonated with a global audience and explored themes of identity and feminism.
- Kamala Das (Madhavikutty): Her poetry and prose have continued to inspire readers with their candid explorations.
- Manu Joseph: Known for his satirical and darkly humorous style, his novel 'Serious Men' gained critical acclaim for its sharp commentary on contemporary India.
- Jhumpa Lahiri, the author of 'The Namesake,' skillfully explored the immigrant experience, identity, and the clash of cultures.
- Chetan Bhagat, with his debut novel 'Five Point Someone,' marked the emergence of a new genre of contemporary commercial fiction in India.
- Kiran Desai, who won the Man Booker Prize in 2006 for her novel 'The Inheritance of Loss,' depicted the intricacies of post-colonial identity and globalization.

- Salman Rushdie, known for works like 'Midnight's Children,' continued to experiment with narrative techniques, blending magic realism with political allegory.
- Vikram Seth's 'Two Lives' showcased the genre of autobiographical non-fiction, adding a new dimension to Indian literary output.
- Shashi Tharoor, a prolific writer and politician, delved into historical fiction with 'Riot: A Love Story,' exploring themes of communalism and identity." There are many writers who extensively contributing to the contemporary literature like
- Ruskin Bond, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Kavita Kane, Amish Tripathi, Ashok Banker, Jerry Pinto, Namita Gokhale, Mrinal Suri and others cannot be neglected.

These authors and their works reflect the diversity of themes, genres, and narrative techniques that are defined in this book.

Many key themes emerged during this contemporary time like.

- Identity and Diaspora: Authors like Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai delved into the complexities of identity among Indian immigrants and their descendants, exploring themes of cultural displacement and hybrid identities.
- Globalization: The impact of globalization on Indian society and culture was a recurring theme. Writers like Arundhati Roy and Salman Rushdie addressed this through their works, highlighting the clash between traditional values and modernity.
- Social Injustices: Authors continued to shine a spotlight on social issues such as caste discrimination, gender inequality, and communalism. Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things' and Chetan Bhagat's 'Five Point Someone' touched upon these issues in different ways.
- Post-Colonial Narratives: The aftermath of British colonialism remained a rich source of exploration. Salman Rushdie's magical realism and Shashi Tharoor's historical fiction, for instance, examined the legacy of colonial rule.
- Family and Relationships: The dynamics of familial relationships and personal connections were central to many works. Authors like Vikram Seth and Jhumpa Lahiri delved into these intimate aspects of life.
- Technology and Modernity: With the emergence of authors like Chetan Bhagat, a new generation of writers began to address the impact of technology and modern urban life on Indian society, especially among the youth.
- Autobiography and Memoirs: One of the most explored genres which give the common, ordinary, popular and successful to talk about their life. Sportsmen and

women, Singers and artist, writers and transgender they all have used this canon and make it exclusive.

Beside some other relevant themes like Posthumanism, Digital Narrative, Post COVID literature, Medical Humanities and many more.

This book tries to encompass contemporary literature in the form of a book. This book will be helpful to the readers, scholars and faculty members and academicians for their research and teaching assignment.

## About the Editor



Dr. Krati Sharma is currently working as an Associate Professor of English at the Poornima Institute of Engineering and Technology, Jaipur. She has extensive expertise in Autobiographical writing, Gender Studies, and Indian Writing in English. She holds a PhD in Gender Identity and Narrative Perspective in Indian Women Autobiographies from Jaipur National University, Jaipur. She has been teaching English for more than 15 years. She had associated with Govt. MMR PG College Champa (CG) and IIHT Champa during her teaching assignments. She has authored three books to her credit. She has written many chapters for the edited volumes. She has written many scholarly articles for UGC-listed Journals. She has presented papers at many National and International Conferences. She has done courses on English for Specific Purposes from Oregon University America, Developing Soft Skills and Personality from IIT Madras, The Philosophy of (Auto)Biographical -Experience and (Self) Representation: An Interdisciplinary Course from IIT Tirupati, Literature and Life from IIT Madras, English Literature of the Romantic Period, 1798-1832 from IIT Madras. She has been an active member of i-SPELL, Rajasthan Forum. She has been the examiner of the BN University, Udaipur, and Rajasthan Technical University, Kota.

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## ABOUT THE EDITOR



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

Indian Writing in English began in the early twentieth century with the work of Madhusudan Das, Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu. Post independence the trio Rajaroa, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, gives it wings and gives it an international image and acceptance among the English readers. With the Booker Prize winners writers like Arundhati Roy's and Arvind Adiga Indian English writing keep treading steadily on the global map. This book is a reflection on themes, techniques and narration of the last two decades harnessed in Indian Literature in English. The volume explores many themes from autobiography, medical humanities, gender roles, globalisation, management skills, trauma, dalit writing, fiction in films and plethora of themes giving dimension to Indian Writing in English a new age readership and research insight. The aim of this book is to provide critical analysis of the literary text which has been a part of syllabus taught in the English Literature of Indian Universities.

It provides an opportunity to the researchers and students to understand the text better and explore the new avenues for the research. This book aims to bring Indian Writing in English to a global map. The book aims to bring good critical study volumes for the students and scholars of Indian Writing in English in international level.



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