

## **THE MODERN BRITISH LITERATURE HAS ITS BEGINNING IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY EUROPE AND AMERICA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The modern British literature has its beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe and America. A number of events contributed to the concept of „modern“, to illustrate a few important –Charles Darwin and his book *Origin of Species* published in 1829 which brought out a new world outlook especially among religious communities, emergence of socialism and later communism by the advent of Karl Marx by his book *Das Capital*, appearance of Sigmund Freud and the psycho analysis theory, Albert Einstein’s Theory of Relativity combine with Quantum theory and more importantly World War I. The drastic influence of these events gave rise to modernism. Modern inclinations were evident in all disciplines, if one considers painting, music arts, science and literature. Traditional tools and techniques and notions were rejected, and new approaches and ideas emerged.

**KEYWORD:** Modern British Literature, Religious Communities, Emergence of Socialism

### **INTRODUCTION**

Forster’s symbolism, Joyce’s epiphany, Woolf’s psychological teaching, Lawrence’s Oedipus complex, Orwell’s dystopia, Golding’s vision of a golden age and Greene’s moral and religious allegories are the ingredients which have freshened up and have widened the scope of English function today. The purpose here is to highlight the influence of the pioneering work of the writer and enumerate to examine the impact of their theories of art to re-establish the modern elements in the short stories of Mulk Raj Anand. The entire European society underwent a tremendous upheaval in the Era of the two World Wars resulting in quest for values and identity, which marked a crucial change in the intellectual atmosphere of scientific discoveries such as relativity and quantum theory which had shattered the suspicions and had revealed the reality explored by Albert Einstein (1879-1955) and extends a major support to modern physics. He secured the 1921 Nobel Prize for the discovery of photoelectric effect which served as the essential building block of the hypothesis of Quantum theory that explicated on the code of conduct of subatomic and atomic fragments.

*Interpretation of Dreams* (1901), a commendable work by Freud, altered individual’s perspective of human personality and psyche. The therapeutic techniques in which patients reported their thoughts without reservations and displayed their analysis of feelings derived from their childhood attachments was developed by Sigmund Freud (1856-1929), an Austrian neurologist and the founding father of psychoanalysis. Oedipus complex was thus formulated as the focal tenet of psychoanalytical hypothesis to incorporate sexuality to further include its infantile forum. A self-analysis and a study of the dreams and fantasies of his patients, as a

satisfaction of one's wishes gave him the models for the clinical investigation of mechanics of repression and symptom formation. Further, the theory of unconsciousness as an agency disruptive of conscious states of mind was elaborated upon. The briny line of advancement of the twentieth century literature evidences a rift with the school of naturalism and realism, marking a development inwards a complex vision of man and his humanity. The close of nineteenth century witnessed a shift in focus, portraying individuals and the world from outside. The pioneer modernist scholars employed psychoanalytic hypothesis the art with an aim of exploring the inner psyche of a being, playing as essential as the outside world. Thus the innovative modernist literature thrived in the twentieth century initiated by Henry James (1843-1916), Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930), James Joyce (1882-1941) and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941).

### **Modernistic Strokes: Characters and Characterization**

Modernity argues to be configured by how the modern man perceives the external world. The pioneer was F.H. Bradley who intended that the human mind is a more fundamental feature of the universe than matter and that its purpose is to search for truth. Some psychological theoreticians remodelled the way the modern man viewed his own reality, however Sigmund Freud was the first to gaze inwardly, to explore the inner world where the conflicting forces carry out the dynamics of shaping the psyche and personality. To explain this internal world within each of us, he developed a complex „theory of the unconsciousness“ that illustrated the importance of unconscious motivation in behaviour and the proposition that the psychological events can go on outside of conscious awareness. And so, according to Freud, fantasies, dreams and slips of the tongue are outward manifestations of unconscious motives (232). Furthermore, in explaining the development of the personality, Freud expanded man's definition of sexuality to include oral, anal and other bodily sensations. Thus his legacy to the modern world was to expose the impulsive side of man that had been hidden from view by the hypocrisy of nineteenth century writers. As Morag Shiach says in his work *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Novel*:

The sole *raison d'être* of the novel, for which it should remain unapologetic, is to represent the novelist's direct impression of „life“. An essential precondition is freedom, the absence of any limit on the novelist's technique or interest... to catch the very note and trick, the strange irregular rhythm of life. (38)

Modernity implies the desire to break away from the traditionally established ways of narrative and give a free rein to experiment with the literary form and ways of expression. With the onset of the twentieth century, writers like T.S.Eliot, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf believed that the traditional way of writing a realist novel was an inadequate form for capturing the human experience. The extent of liberty of the form and the narrative layers should be reconsidered to be on a par with the crucial and ambitious project of reflecting the complexities involved with life through the fabricated write up. With this idea, evolved the modern novels conforming with the principles of abstraction concocted with realism. The discourse on modernist fiction recommends it to be Janus faced - particularly directing inwards towards the form and language on one hand, varied circumstances in which fiction was being offered and consumed on the other.

The existing form of the novel was no longer felicitous to the modern epistemology, thus came what Harold Rosenberg calls „the tradition of the new“ or Ezra Pound“s maxim “make it new”. Christopher Butler in his book *Modernism* narrates:

To understand an innovation, then, we need to understand the intellectual model that the artist or scientist is using. We can ask whether Marcel Proust or T. S. Eliot, or James Joyce or Virginia Woolf, made Bergsonian assumptions about memory and the nature of mind or the self, or ask how „Freudian“ Richard Strauss was in *Elektra* or Arnold Schoenberg in *Erwartung*. (Butler, 13)

In the Modern civilization, complexity comes to forefront through the psychic state of the characters. T.S. Eliot“s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1917) is neither a love song nor a spontaneous outburst of the feeling of a lover for his beloved; rather it is an analysis of the mind of the lover who is unable to take a decision about making the proposal. Eliot speaks of people who don“t understand their own experiences and of the ability of an author to probe beneath the surface of the human mind and soul in order to discover deeper layers of consciousness beneath daily experience. “The Love Song of J. Prufrock”seems like an attempt to develop or imitate that skill. The poem follows no logical progression of ideas but meanders along with Prufrock“s thoughts from questions to external images, back to internal tensions, among past, present and imagined worlds, and often returning in mental cycles to the same thoughts or variations of them. While Eliot“s technique shows formal intentionality on the author“s part, the content of the poem reflects the uncontrived and unpredictable nature of his character“s thoughts.

This new concept of being „modern“ arose as an outcome of a number of occurrences. This chapter would focus on the aspect of psycho-analysis as specified by Sigmund Freud. Life is actually hard to capture, and to examine the rigour, the complexity of an average mind-play on a most common day involves more innovative and free form. The magnitude of the diverse stimulations experienced by the being emphasizes the transient nature of the boundaries between inner and outer world. These diverse thoughts of the characters are reflected by the technique called stream of consciousness.

The term coined by William James, psychologist brother of the novelist, Henry James, characterizes the continuous flow of thoughts in the human mind. It attests the forces, both external and internal influencing the psychology of a character at a single moment. The metaphoric stream or river most naturally describes it as the thoughts that pass through a person“s mind at all times, a constant stream of thoughts. There is always a conversation going on within a person“s mind, whether it is an internal debate or just a general observation. The technique was first expounded by Edouard Dujard (1861-1949) in the novel *Les Lauriers sont coupes* (1888). Thereafter, the literary critics borrowed it to discuss a specific kind of modern fiction which has attempted to exemplify or imitate the process. Other notable writers were T.S.Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner employed the term in their works. Peter Childs in his work *Modernism* characterizes it as:

Flaubert wrote with scrupulous precision, as did Joyce, who in his first prose work *Dubliners* followed Flaubert“s style, inflected by that of the English essayist Walter Pater, developed the practice of channeling the narrative through the perceptions of one

character. This was the technique perfected by Henry James in his quest for not social but „psychological realism“. (82).

Anand coincidentally got a copy of James Joyce’s banned book *Ulysses*, from his friend and literary mentor, Bonamy Dobree, and was deeply impressed by it. Also, he chanced to see Proust’s remarkable use of stream of consciousness technique in *Remembrance of Things Past*, which absorbed him for years “with its reiterations of feelings, in integral musical rhythms.” Anand holds that a definite advance in the novel form has been made by James Joyce’s stream of consciousness technique, extended further by Dorothy Richardson and refined by Virginia Woolf. (“Introduction”6)

## CONCLUSION

The most significant event in the history of Indian English fiction in the nineteen thirties was the appearance on the scene of its major trio: Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, whose first novels were published in 1935, 1935 and 1938, respectively; and it is the mark of stature that they revealed, each in their own characteristic way, the various possibilities of Indian English fiction. Mulk Raj Anand, the eldest of the three, has been the most prolific. Anand says,

—I grew up like most of my contemporaries, a very superficial, ill-educated young man, without any bearings (132), since the education of those days glorified western culture at the expense of

Indian tradition which also forms the subject matter of his short story —Lament on the death of Master of Arts.

R.K. Narayan’s fiction is imbued with a strong ‘sense of place’. His setting, Malgudi, develops from novel to novel but always possesses a genius locus which gives reality to his men and women. Narayan is no poet and cannot give us what Henry James called the ‘aroma of the meadows and lanes’ in Hardy, but he certainly makes real to us the ‘ankle deep’ dust in Anderson Lane and the raucous noises in the market. Like Arnold Bennett, Narayan relies more on keen observation and steady accumulation of small details than on evocative description. He has no great heroes and heroines, only local nobodies and local eccentrics, and his style habitually wears a deliberately drab air so that the thrusts of his insistent irony are felt all the more sharply. It is out of its depth only when the author expects his words to take wing or catch fire. Narayan’s fiction consistently creates a credible universe observed with an unerring but uniformly tolerant sense of human incongruity, but gains in stature when, at his best, he is able to hitch the wagon of his ironic action to the star of moral imagination.

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