



SECTION FOUR

4.1 History of Novel

The eighteenth century has gifted English literature two entirely new forms which are without any traces in the ancient classical heritage. One of those was 'The Periodical Essay' and the other was 'NOVEL'. Both of these forms, especially 'Novel', caught the spirit of the eighteenth century as the age of intellectual, sentimental and realistic plane and tried to instruct the readers, which would help them to a more purposeful and virtuous life. Since the time of its origin, novel has been gaining popularity and growing gradually. Today, it is recognized as the most dominant literary genre.

A Novel is a relatively long narrative fiction which describes intimate human experiences normally in a prose form. The present English word 'novel' is derived from the Italian 'novella', meaning 'new'. A Novel narrates a story embellishing it with more details of time, place, nature, people and their minds, their gestures and activities. It presents the picture of the society of that period. Novel makes life easier to understand than in drama and poetry. In modern era, novel has adopted literary prose.

Novel as a literary genre has a history of about two thousand years. Among the early precursors of novel a collection of tales known as Greek Romances dating from the second to sixth century may top the list. These imaginative and delightful stories of ideal love and marvellous

adventures profoundly affected the creative writing for the next thousand years. Though novel in the modern era usually makes use of a literary prose the earlier threads of the genre can be found in Virgil's Eclogues or Malory's 'Morte De Arthur' or Geoffrey Chaucer's 'The Canterbury Tales'.

Lady Murasaki Shikibu's 'Tale of Genji' (1010) has been described as the world's first novel. The European novel is often said to begin with 'Don Quixote' by Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes which was published in two parts between 1605 and 1615. In the 18th century, the appearance of newspaper and magazines attracted a large number of readers from the middle class. These new readers had little interest in romances and tragedies, which were appreciated by the upper class. Thus, need for a new type of literature arose that would express the new ideas of the 18th century. The 18th century new literature was characterized by the spirit of realism and denial of romantic features like enthusiasm, passion and imagination. The foreground for the novel was prepared by all these factors. After 1740, Novel originated as the literary form in England. Increase in trade and commerce, along with the Industrial Revolution, gave rise to the middle class. A class of people had emerged to occupy an elite status. The realistic picture of everyday life and problems of common people depicted in the novels appealed to the newly educated class and was regarded by them as respectable reading

material. Thus, novel as a form appeared to have been designed for both—to voice the aspirations of the middle and lower classes and meet their longings. The advent of machines provided time to the newly formed educated middle class to indulge in reading and discussions about the books. Drama and poetry were the two literary forms that were fading away. Novel was the combination of some features of drama and poetry, some new more features were added. It became the prominent form in the eighteenth century by encompassing the social, political and cultural happenings and scientific progress.

‘The Pilgrim’s Progress’ by John Bunyan (1678) and ‘Oroonoko’ by Aphra Behn (1688) initiated the plenteous and colourful tradition of English novel and was followed by Daniel Defoe (Robinson Crusoe, Mall Flanders), and Jonathan Swift (‘Gulliver’s Travels’ – a famous satire). Other major novelists of 18th century are Samuel Richardson, (‘Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded’ and ‘Clarissa,’ both epistolary novels), Henry Fielding, Lawrence Sterne and Tobias Smollett. The tradition was enriched by many other stalwart novelists such as Charles Dickens, Walter Scott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Horace Walpole, Thomas Hardy, Willkie Collins and H.G. Wells. The 20th century is marked by the modern topics and innovative styles and techniques and widened angles of the views by the novelists like E.M. Forster, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Henry James, George Orwell, Graham Greene, D.H. Lawrence, William Golding and Anthony Burgess. They widened the circumference of the genre by writing political, social, psychological and other modern issues in their novels. There are immigrant authors like Salman Rushdie (India), V.S. Naipaul (Trinidad), Kazuo Ishigura (Japan) and many others.

The contribution of women novelists to this great pageant cannot be neglected. The novel of manners ‘Evelina’ by Frances Burney, Gothic novels by Ann Radcliffe, a novel based on Science of the age ‘Frankenstein’ by Mary Shelley are landmark novels. Jane Austen has been ruling over the minds of the people through her novels. Bronte sisters Emily and Charlotte have created their own place by their incomparable works ‘The Wuthering Heights’ and ‘Jane Eyre’. Mary Ann Evans alias George Eliot wrote the novels reflecting psychological insight. Virginia Woolf is the pioneer of the Stream of Consciousness technique in English novel. Agatha Christie created her own place by writing many novels based on crime. Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple are the evergreen detectives created by her. Harper Lee, Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker have elevated the tradition further to prosperity.

Indian Scenario :

‘Rajmohan’s Wife’, by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya serialized in ‘The Indian Field’ was the first novel in English written by an Indian. The period after that is marked by few more novels written by the Indian writers. These novels bore either nationalistic virtues or social issues as their main framework. Mulkraj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao were the major trio who prevailed in the period after that. Novelists like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal and Arun Joshi and Manohar Malgaonkar uplifted and revolutionized Indian English novel through their works. Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth and Upamanyu Chatterjee ameliorated the Indian novel in English by adding new features to it. Recent years have witnessed the dazzling performance by Indian novelists like Salman Rushdie, Arvind Adiga, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai

and Kiran Nagarkar. The tradition of Indian English novel, since its inception, has registered a marked shift exhibiting global concerns.

Novella :

- Novella, the word originated from the Italian word ‘novelle’, is a type of narrative prose fiction which is shorter than a full length novel and longer than a short story. It is a well-structured yet short narrative, often satiric or realistic in tone. It usually focuses on one incident or issue with one or two main characters and takes place at a single tradition. Some of the famous novellas in English are –

- ‘The Heart of Darkness’ by Joseph Conrad
- ‘The Turn of the Screw’ by Henry James
- ‘Billy Budd’ by Hermann Melville
- ‘Death in Venice’ by Thomas Mann
- ‘Seize The Day’ by Saul Bellow
- ‘Pearl’ by John Steinbeck

Elements of Novel/ Novella

There are six elements essential of ‘Novel’ or ‘Novella’. All these factors may be related to one another in the work by an author.

Theme : Theme is the central idea in the novel which can be expressed in a nutshell. It is a philosophical statement or a truth which the writer has put forth through the narration of the series of events in the story and characters acting in the particular setting.

Plot : Plot is essentially the story or the course of events that make up the theme. It is created by the conflict either internal (inside the mind of the character) or external (with other characters or entities). Plot may be simple (one plot) or complex (consisting

the interweaving of many subplots).

Character : Characterization is related to the plot as the course of events take place because of the certain behaviour of the characters.

Depiction of character can range from a thumbnail sketch to deep, wordy, highly detailed verbal sketch. The important character may have been described in its every aspect by the writer. The minor characters are not given much importance. The reader follows the actions of one main character throughout the novel. This character is referred to as the ‘Protagonist’. Protagonist (main character) is in conflict with a character or an entity or a force (internal or external) which is known as Antagonist.

Setting : Setting is the background in which the story takes place.

There are several aspects of the setting. It includes place, period, time, climate or weather and lifestyle. Plot and character are the two major elements that are affected due to setting.

Conflict : The struggle between the opposite forces in the story is called ‘conflict.’ Conflict in the story provides interest and curiosity about the plot.

Language / Style : The language and the techniques used by the author for the narration of the course of events is known as the ‘Style’.

An author can use extensive vocabulary and high phrases or he may be laconic and would write only to the point or he may mix both according to the requirement for meeting his purpose. He may use linguistic devices to make the narrative effective. All these factors decide the ‘texture’ of the narration and create an impact on the readers.

Types of Novel

Realistic novel : The realistic novel is a piece of fiction that gives the effect of realism and is also called a novel of manner. It can be characterized by its complex characters with mixed motives that are rooted in the social class. The characters in the realistic novel interact with other characters and undergo plausible and everyday experiences.

Picaresque novel : The word 'picaresque' is originated from the Spanish word 'pícaro,' which means a rogue. A picaresque novel narrates the adventures of the protagonist, who is an eccentric or a disreputable person, in an episodic form.

Historical novel : A historical novel is a novel set in a period earlier than that of the writing.

Epistolary novel : The word 'epistolary' derives from the Latin word 'epistola,' which means a letter. The epistolary novel is that in which the writer presents the narrative through a series of correspondence or other documents. Although letters are the most common basis for epistolary novel, diary entries are also a popular form of this type.

Gothic novel : The novels that include terror, mystery, horror, thriller, supernatural, doom, death or decay or haunted buildings are called the Gothic novels.

Autobiographical novel : The autobiographical novel is a novel based on the life of the author. Sometimes, the author changes the places and names of characters or even may change or avoid certain details of his life. It may or may not be in the first person narration.

Allegorical novel : An allegory is a story that bears more than one level of meaning. The surface meaning of such novel is different from the symbolic

meaning of it. The symbolic meaning of an allegory may be political, religious, historical or philosophical.

Utopian/ Dystopian novel : Utopia is an imaginary community or society possessing the ideal qualities. It is a common literary theme, especially in science fiction or speculative fiction.

Psychological novel : Psychological novel is a work of fiction that treats the internal life of the protagonist or even the other characters as much as the external factors.

Stream of Consciousness novel : Stream of consciousness is a phrase coined by William James in his treatise 'Principles of Psychology.' (1890). It means the flow of the thoughts. Incidents in the plot are in the sequence of their occurrences. The novelist narrates them as they enter the mind of the character.

'Bildungsroman' novel : The German word 'bildungsroman' indicates growth. The fictional biography or autobiography is concerned with the growth of the protagonist's mind, spirit and characters from their childhood to adulthood.

In the first half of the 20th century a cult of 'pulp magazines' became popular in which fantastic fiction for the general entertainment of the masses was printed on the cheap pulp paper. The pulp fiction era provided a building ground for the detective novels and science fiction.

Science fiction is a genre of speculative fiction dealing with imaginative concepts such as futuristic setting, futuristic science and technology, space travel, time travel, parallel universes and extraterrestrial life. Science fiction often explores the potential consequences of scientific and other innovations. 'Frankenstein' by Mary Shelly (1823) is considered the first novel

based on science and technology. The genre flourished in the second half of the 19th century.

Detective fiction is a subgenre of crime fiction and mystery fiction in which an investigator or a detective—either professional or amateur—investigates a crime, often a murder.

BRAINSTORMING

(1) Match the columns:

A

- (a) Murasaki Shikibu
- (b) Novella
- (c) Don Quixote
- (d) Rajmohan's Wife

B

- (1) Cervantes
- (2) Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya
- (3) Tale of Genji
- (4) New

(2) Pick out the odd element from the group.

- (i) Arun Joshi, Vikram Seth, Graham Greene, Kiran Nagarkar
- (ii) Place, Period, Theme, Climate, Lifestyle
- (iii) Theme, Plot, Character, Novella

(3) Complete the following statements:

- (i) The two types of conflicts that the plot may have are.....
- (ii) The word 'picaresque' is originated from.....
- (iii) The epistolary novel presents the narrative through.....
- (iv) In the eighteenth century middle class could get the time for reading and discussing the novels because.....

(4) Write short notes on:

- (i) Style of the novel
- (ii) Stream of consciousness novel
- (iii) Novella
- (iv) Indian tradition of novels.

