



## RUSHDIE TO ADIGA: THE EDIFICE OF THE INDIAN NARRATIVE



<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6876-0222>

**KU. GOLDIE KISHOR JAMBHULKAR**

Assistant Professor, Department of English  
Smt.Savitabai Uttamrao Deshmukh College, Digra Yavatmal  
[goldiekarhade@gmail.com](mailto:goldiekarhade@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

Indian English fiction enlivened and attained a stature of its own with the advent of Salman Rushdie's novel. *The Midnight's Children* A novel that broke all conventions, and rules to create a new genre that was revolutionary in its use of theme, literary techniques and linguistic variations, it has remained one of the best fictions ever to have bagged the prestigious Booker Prize in 1980. *Midnight's Children* transformed not only the face of Indian English very genre of fiction on a global scale. Arundhati Roy's *The God of The Small Things* (1997), Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and more recently Arvind Adiga's *The white Tiger* (2008) have won the coveted prize Keeping Rushdie legacy alive and Kicking with their talent and expertise. The paper traces the excellence achieved by these Booker Prize-winning novelists and their novels, which have generated the image of Indian English fiction as the hot new cakes of world literacy scenario. The novelty of expression and representation inherent in the works will be taken as well as their influence on the whole gamut of Indian and world literature. Indian English fiction owes its grandeur to the literary experiments and innovations of its stalwarts the path breaking genius of Salman Rushdie, the panache of regional flavour in Arundhati Roy, diasporic consciousness in Kiran Desai and social critique in Arvind Adiga. The experiments, in language, theme and technique have engendered their art as exquisite pieces of literature that has promoted the whole world to stand up and take notice. In the present paper the novels of the four Booker Prize winners will be studied focusing on the narrative skills and expertise in the select novels : *The Midnight's Children* (MC), *The God of Small Thing* (GOT), *The Inheritance of Loss* (IL) and *The White Tiger* (WT), respectively.

**KEY WORDS:** Edifice, Panache, diasporic consciousness, Narrative, Regional flavour, social-critique.

### Introduction:

In the year 1981 was published a novel that has continued to win laurels even after two decades. Salman Rushdie's ground breaking novel *The Midnight's Children* was a pioneer of sorts in the history of Indian English fiction. It heralded a new beginning for the genre that had seen the likes of such literary geniuses as the celebrated trio of Indian English fiction amongst a plethora of so many others. This novel proved to be the

beginning of a new era with its unabashed expressions, use of language, extravaganza and multitude. A saga of a country's journey from inception to partition and freedom, it juxtaposed the realms of personal with public, history with fiction, realism with magic; a trend that influenced the coming generation of writers and is visibly reflected in their art. The contemporary structure of Indian English fiction; its edifice rests assuredly on the capable shoulders of its new generation of writers

who have followed in the foot steps of Rushdie. In 1997, Arundhati Roy bagged yet another Booker Prize for an Indian, with her novel that centred on the patriarchal Indian society, the class structure and gender discrimination. Drawing up a regional picture of rural society in South India, Roy reveals glimpses from her own life through the eyes of the young twin, Rahel and Estha.

Kiran Desai, the next Indian to win the coveted prize in 2006, is a diasporic writer like Rushdie. It's the characteristic backward look of the Diaspora that finds an expression in her works that are based on Indian society, culture and ethos. Her narratives are the portrayal of small town India with all its idiosyncrasies, and social and cultural life that gives a charm to her fiction. Unlike Desai's nostalgia for her home that finds an expression in her choice of themes and settings for her novel. Arvind Adiga, the winner of 2008 exposes the underlying dark belly of Indian society, culture is a politics. The novel is a harsh indictment of India and the India of Darkness. All the novelists and their literary art are winners and have richly contributed to the development of the genre, the genre, giving a shape and form to the edifice of the Indian narrative. Literally speaking a narrative is a story that tells a tale through images, pictures, characters, dialogues, verse, etc. as per the genre. In other words apart from fictional narrative, poetry, drama as well as non-fiction can also employ the narrative structure as its mode of representation.

#### Edifice of Indian Narrative: -

The narrative style that has evolved and developed from Rushdie to Adiga is characterized by the post-modern technique of an amalgamation of various narrative voices with the story. The narrator is often the protagonist of the novel around whom the action revolves, not only on the personal front but the public as well. In Rushdie's *The Midnight's Children*, Saleem Sinai's life is closely intertwined with the life of the nation. He is born at the time of midnight when India achieves independence and this uncanny fusion of personal and public becomes an integral part throughout his

life. The narrative in Roy's *The God of small Things* though not akin to that of Rushdie does represent the Indian social and cultural life through the life of its characters. The treatment that Ammu faces in the hands of her own family and from society at large, the exploitation and suffering of Velutha are all examples that reveals the prevalent social prejudices and evils. In her novel, Desai wraps up her representation of the diaspora within and without through the characters of Judge and Biju along with the contemporary north-eastern situation plaguing India. Her narrative presents a perspective on the social, cultural, psychological and political situation of present day India. Adiga's narrative is the continuation of the style conceived and conceptualized by his predecessors as well as a deviation from their technique. In his narrative style there is a strong influence of his journalistic experience that brings in a dash of investigative approach to a social and cultural issue.

The post-modern condition in literature is pre occupied with the idea of representation of life: knowledge, history and reality through the employment of the meta-narrative. Meta, which means beyond and narrative that refers to the story merge to form the distinctive literary style of the meta-narrative. The protagonist Saleem Sinai narrates the story of his birth and the birth of Indian subcontinent. The story of Ammu is an expression of the women pushed to the peripheries of existence by a patriarchal society, while the plight of Velutha reveals the deep tentacles of casteism in the Indian society administration and politics. Balram Halwai, the protagonist is the voice of the migrant workers and servants, the exploited and people in power. In building up the edifice of the Indian narrative the writers have employed the technique of the meta-narrative to represent the voices from the periphery. In each of the narratives, either the first person narrative is employed through one of the characters or the third person narrative, fused with dialogues or monologues multiplicity of voices, stream of consciousness, linguistic experiments and satire. The Writers employ one or the other literary

technique to give credibility to their stories. The Indian narrative tradition employ the oral tradition of storytelling and enactment of tales in the folk theatrical tradition has an influence on the art of the writers.

### **Influence on the narratives:**

Rushdie's narrative in midnight's children displays a strong influence on the oral tradition of stories in India. In his novel, Saleem Sinai narrates the story of his family, spanning three generations. It is through his voice that the tale of his life and the nation unfolds. In Roy's The God of Small Things, the narrator is the omniscient author/narrator who gives a voice to adult Rahel returning from the US. The story unfolds through Rahel's perspective that introduces us to Ammu, her life, desires and her tragic end. The oral tradition storytelling in the manner Rushdie employs in his novel is missing in Desai's The Inheritance of loss. Like Roy, here it is omnipresent, invisible narrator, who introduces the setting, the characters and theme of the novel. It is Desai who gives a glimpse of her characters and their thoughts, like and dislikes. The narrative style employed by Adiga is unique and quiet different from those of his contemporaries. In The White Tiger Adiga follows the epistolary tradition of writing, representing his story through a series of letters written by the protagonist Balram Halwai to the Chinese premier.

### **Stream of Consciousness :**

In a world where borders and boundaries are fast disappearing, time leaps in consciousness is common and central to the narrative structure. The employment of flashback, stream of consciousness and digressions marks the narrative style of these writers. Rushdie's Saleem relives the history of his entire family through his memory. Saleem, awaiting the final disintegration of his self, tries to preserve the story of his family and himself through his narrative that he pens down while recounting it to Padma. He also merges the political history of the nation with his personal one. Like Rushdie's Saleem, Rahel takes the readers on a journey to her past and present. In Kiran Desai, the narrative is

based in the present with Sai coming to stay with her grandfather, the Judge, Jemubhai. In Adiga's novel, the stream of consciousness or flashback technique is self-evident as the entire narrative rests on the memories narrated by Balram. It is through his memory that cast ridden India, corrupt and unscrupulous comes to life.

### **Magic Realism**

All the novelists represent the contemporary creed of writers who are known for their penchant for portrayal of realism in their fiction. In Rushdie's Midnight's Children, realism portrayed through symbols and metaphors; it is realism. The extensive use of the post-modern technique of magic realism lend a unique charm as well as complexity to the novel that present an ironical picture of India's political history by breaking the structure free from the hegemony of the centre, as such the voices from: Saleem, Parvati, Picture Singh and all other subdued voices can be heard. The technique is employed by Rushdie through his characters and their magical powers. In Arundhati Roy, the technique is less used, and it is employed through the dreams of Rahel and Ammu. Rahel imagines Sophie move in her coffin and hears her scream when being buried. This technique of magic realism is however not employed by Kiran Desai and Arvind Adiga. Their narratives are marked by their direct and explicit approach to reality.

### **Metaphor/Imagery and Other Features.**

Rushdie's fiction proliferate in the use of the metaphors and images, myths drawn from religion, caricatures of political figure, facts and fantasy. Saleem is the metaphor used to symbolize the birth, illusion, hopes and disillusionment of India as a nation, political allegory, vast, extravagant, etc. are some of features that describe his novel that refers to facts as the Partition, War, Emergency, Widow juxtaposes and them with the magical powers of the midnight's children. Arundhati Roy an activist and feminist, she exposes the castism, and gender discrimination, through the metaphor of the Laltarn and the Mombatti. In Desai, her characters are more than individuals, the Judge; an anglophile stands for

'ridiculous Indians. Adiga supplies a very striking metaphor of 'Darkness' and 'Light' in his novels. Adiga's extensive use of animal imagery reminds of Orwell's Animal Farm. To describe the landlords and the powerful men in his village he names them after animals, the Buffalo, the Wild Boar, the Stork and the Raven, the Rooster Coop for their servile attitude.

### Language :-

All the concerned writers are very well expert in playing with the language in their novels. In Midnight's Children, Rushdie has made a liberal use of the Hindi and Urdu words and expressions. He has employed the word as it is Baap-re-baap, kali-yuga, Gandharva, falooda etc while at others he has given literal translation: "Piece-of- the Moon". Expressions, like "Godown, gudam, warehouse, presents the fusion of language by Rushdie. Roy's use of the vernacular is an example of Indianization of the "English language: "Aiyyo kashtam" (GST 163), "Ividay!" (GST 68) and Desai's use of the influence of the regional tongue portrayed in the conversation of Biju or the cook, "Ai aaa, ai aaa... please, I'm a poor man..." (IL5) Adiga also employs the language along with regional flavour, paan, vada', daal, etc. His language is used in various tones, in tune with class, education, profession and background of the character Balram's used to articulate terms as Mall on Pizza as, Mool.. Mowll, Malla" (WT14), "Pijja, Pzija. (WT155)

### Conclusion

The writers like Rushdie, Roy, Desai and Adiga are the proud and capable flag- bearers of the

genre who have contributed immensely to the enrichment of the edifice of the Indian narrative. With them, the genre has matured and attained an identity of its own within the nation as well as on an international scale. Diverse and multifaceted the genre has its own characters and language. The story that is endeavours to represent; the narrative style vibrant, traditional, contemporary, fresh and fascinating. Its uniqueness lies in modes of expression and representation. Rushdie and Adiga's narrative is laced with satire that is an indictment of social and political situation prevalent in the nation. Roy and Desai on the other hand represent the social, cultural and political in a realistic tone. The four Indian Booker Prize winners have carved a niche for themselves and for the genre of contemporary Indian English fiction, there by strengthening further edifice of the Indian narrative.

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