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A Study of Major Literary Movements in Indian English Literature: Pre- and Post-Independence Perspectives

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Abstract

Indian English Literature has undergone significant transformation from the colonial period to the post-independence era, reflecting the nation's evolving socio-political, cultural, and historical realities. During the pre-independence period, literary writings primarily focused on nationalism, social reform, colonial resistance, and the revival of Indian cultural identity. Writers such as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R. K. Narayan employed literature as a medium to inspire patriotism, challenge colonial dominance, and advocate social equality. Following India's independence in 1947, literary movements expanded to address themes of identity, globalization, migration, caste, gender, postcolonial consciousness, environmental concerns, and technological transformation. Contemporary Indian English writers have diversified literary expression by incorporating marginalized voices and multicultural perspectives into mainstream literature. This study examines the major literary movements that have shaped Indian English Literature before and after independence, highlighting their historical background, thematic concerns, stylistic innovations, and continuing relevance. Using qualitative and descriptive research methods, the study compares the characteristics of different literary movements and evaluates their contribution to the evolution of Indian English Literature and global discourse.

Keywords

Indian English Literature; Literary Movements; Pre-Independence; Post-Independence; Nationalism; Postcolonialism; Feminism; Dalit Literature; Modernism; Globalization; Cultural Identity.

Introduction

Indian English Literature represents one of the most dynamic branches of world literature... Before independence literature emphasized nationalism and reform; after independence it expanded to identity, democracy, globalization, migration, caste, gender and social justice. This study explores major literary movements across both periods and their contribution to Indian and global literary traditions.

Objectives and Aims

To examine major literary movements before and after independence; analyze their evolution, themes and techniques; compare pre- and post-independence trends; and evaluate their contribution to Indian English Literature and global scholarship.

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Explanation

Indian English Literature evolved through the Indian Renaissance, Nationalist Movement and Progressive Writers' Movement before independence, followed by Postcolonialism, Feminism, Dalit Literature, Diasporic Writing and Contemporary Literature after independence. Pre-independence literature focused on anti-colonial resistance, cultural revival and social reform. Post-independence writing shifted toward identity, democracy, caste, gender, migration, globalization and multiculturalism. Writers including Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri enriched Indian English Literature through innovative themes and styles, making it globally influential.

Methodology

This qualitative, descriptive and analytical study relies on secondary sources including books, journal articles and literary criticism. Comparative textual analysis of representative authors is supported by postcolonial, feminist and sociological approaches to interpret the evolution of literary movements.

Data Analysis

The analysis shows that pre-independence literature emphasized nationalism and reform, whereas post-independence literature broadened to postcolonial identity, feminism, Dalit consciousness, diaspora and globalization, demonstrating the expanding scope of Indian English Literature.

Conclusion

Major literary movements have shaped Indian English Literature from colonial resistance to contemporary global concerns. The tradition continues to represent India's diversity while contributing significantly to world literature.

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