
Study of Indian Writing in English with Reference to Historical Novels

Dr. Pramod Machhindra Nile,
Dept. Of English,
Kohinoor Arts, Commerce and
Science College Khultabad,
Dist: Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar
pramodnile.eng@gmail.com

Abstract :

This paper transcends traditional boundaries by examining the dynamic interplay between literature and history within Indian writing in English. By exploring how canonical historical novels—ranging from the partition chronicles of Manohar Malgaonkar and Chaman Nahal to the epic reimagining of Shashi Tharoor and Amitav Ghosh—operate as unified existential systems, the study investigates the deep structural connections between narrative fiction and

historical documentation. Through the lens of textual interpretation, the historical consciousness and the human heart are revealed not as polarized dualities, but as an interconnected continuum where past events and literary expression merge into a singular experience.

Key Words :

1. Indian Writing in English
2. Historical Novels
3. Literature and History
4. Narrative Fiction
5. Textual Interpretation

Introduction

The intersection of literature and history has long remained a foundational site of critical inquiry, particularly within Indian Writing in English, where historical memory and national identity are continuously reimagined. Writers such as Manohar Malgaonkar, Raja Rao, Chaman Nahal, Shashi Tharoor, and Amitav Ghosh have extensively utilized historical epochs—ranging from the colonial era and the trauma of partition to post-independence political transformations—to reflect the complexities of the human condition. While traditional scholarship often approaches history and narrative fiction as distinct or binary domains, applying the Pramod Effect ($1 - 1 = 0 = 1$) via trans-deconstruction allows for a monistic reappraisal. This paper examines how historical novels function as unified existential systems, bridging historical consciousness and literary art into an absolute continuum.

The present paper focuses on Indian writing in English and glance on some historical novelists and novels. Literature and history are interrelated. We cannot separate them. It will define historical novel. It will also discuss some novelists and their novels.

Historical novel is a novel in which the action takes place during a specific historical period well before the time of writing (often one or two generations before, sometimes several centuries) and in which some attempt is made to depict accurately the customs and mentality of the period. The central character-real or imagined-is usually subject to divided loyalties within a larger historic conflict of which the reader know the outcome. (*Oxford Literary Terms*)

Historical fiction was cultivated by the writings of Manohar Malgaonkar, B.S.Gidwani and Kamala Markandaya. One of the popular Indo-English novelists of the modern era is Manohar Malgaonkar. He started his career after independence with the publication of *Distant Drum* (1960). He is an artist of the first order. He excels in literary sensibility and critical maturity. He subtly makes a landmark as a historical novelist. His major preoccupation seems to be the role of history in individual and social life in India. *Distant Drum* (1960) is a documentary of army life in its various aspects and a celebration of army code as developed by the British in the army. *Combat of Shadows* (1962) derives its title and epigraph from the Bhagvad Gita. Malgaonkar's best novel *The Princess* (1963) reveals the bright side of the princely world. The setting of *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) is partition while Ramayana is the source of its title and epigraph. His novels after 1980 include *Bandicoot Run* (1972), *The*

Garland Keepers (1987) and *Cactus Country* (1992). Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind* (1972) deals with the great revolt of 1857 and B.S. Gidwani's *The Sword of Tipu Sultan* (1976) is fictionalized history. Kamala Markandaya attempts to combine conventional historical fiction and a psychological study in *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977).

One of the remarkable novelists of Indian Writing in English is Raja Rao. His novel *Kanthapura* (1938) is a classic Indian historical fiction, portraying the profound impact of Mahatma Gandhi's independence movement (1919-1931) on a fictional South Indian village, blending historical events with local myths and oral storytelling. Raja Rao has made profuse use of such legendary and historical associations, the present is constantly glorified by juxtaposition with the past, and the simple and the petty is thus raised to epical heights.

Chaman Nahal is also a notable novelist of his time. His novel *Azadi* (1975) presents an intensive picture of the consequence of the traumatic experience of partition and history. He has depicted the horrors of partition by focusing on the life of Lala Kanshi Ram of Sialkot. His novel depicts the tragedies of partition and its aftermath on the Indian subcontinent.

One of the important novelist writers at this time is Shashi Throor. His *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) re-imagines the Mahabharata epic through 20th-century Indian politics, featuring historical figures as mythological characters, with key figures like Ganga Datta (Gandhi), Dhritarashtra (Nehru), Priya Duryodhani (Indira Gandhi), Karna (Jinnah), and Vidur (Sardar Patel), narrating India's independence and post-independence journey, making complex history accessible through satire and allegory.

Amitav Ghosh is one of the important diasporic writers. His novel *The Glass Palace* (2000) is a historical novel by Amitav Ghosh that chronicles the lives of two families over three generations, from the British invasion of Burma in 1885 to the mid-20th century. *The Glass Palace*, a novel that not only grasps the reach and fall of empires across the twentieth century, but also maps with unerring skill the rival geography of the human heart.

In the upheaval that follows the British arrival in Mandalay and the shattering of the kingdom of the Glass Palace, Rajkumar, a stateless orphan in a tattered lungi, is lifted on the tides of chaos deep into the teak forests of upper Burma. There, with the help of an itinerant merchant from Malacca, he will make his fortune. Yet he is haunted by the vision of Dolly, a

child attendant of the royal entourage being escorted under armed guard into exile in India. So, now adult and wealthy, he leaves Burma to find her.

Through the intertwining stories of Dolly and Rajkumar, the history of the twentieth century is told across three generations; spread over three interlinked parts of the British Empire: Burma, with its conflicting undercurrents of discontent; Malaya, with its vast rubber plantations, and India, amid growing opposition to British rule. Here, too, is the story of Dolly, bound to the magisterial Queen Supayalat, and her ill-fated struggle to maintain the standard of a vanished court while living in exile in the small Indian district town of Ratnagiri. Through Arjun, an Indian officer and soldier of the Empire, the story moves into another generation, one caught in the crossfire between old loyalties and new aspirations. With World War II and the terrifying arrival of the Japanese juggernaut, Rajkumar is again set adrift. In an ocean of refugees fleeing war and devastation, he and his family make a treacherous one thousand-mile trek across the border to India. The door to Burma closes behind them and the glittering light of an extraordinary civilisation is at last extinguished. Thus *The Glass Palace* is a masterful historical novel that intertwines grand historical events particularly focusing on the silenced histories of the colonized and the formation of modern Southeast Asian identities.

In this way the present research paper tries to focus on some historical novels. As we know that history and literature are interconnected. And we can clearly see the reflection of history in literature.

Conclusion

In summary, the intersection of history and literature within Indian Writing in English reflects a profound engagement with national trauma, political evolution, and cultural identity. Through the works of prominent novelists such as Manohar Malgaonkar, Raja Rao, Chaman Nahal, Shashi Tharoor, and Amitav Ghosh, historical epochs are intricately transformed into compelling narratives. By examining these texts through the lens of the Pramod Effect and trans-deconstruction, the rigid boundaries between historical fact and fiction dissolve into a monistic continuum. Ultimately, these historical novels serve as unified existential systems that capture the enduring complexities of the human experience across generations.

Works cited :

- Chris Baldick. 2024. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford University Press.
- Iyenger. K.R. Srinivasa and Prema Nandakumar, 1985: *Indian Writing in English*: Sterling Publishing Private Ltd.
- Pawar, Pramod Ambadasrao. *Against Binarism: 1-1=0=1—The Pramod Effect*. Penguin Publications Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar, 2026.
- Mukherjee Meenakshi. 1971. *The Twice Born Fiction: A Study of Themes and Technique of Indian Novel in English*. New Delhi: Heinemann.
- Naik, M.K. 1982. *A History of Indian English Literature*. SahityaAkademi.