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Interface between West and East: Postmodernism and Contemporary Indian English Fiction

Even though various critical, literary and cultural theories propounded in the West have found ready acceptance in the Indian academia and been applied widely to Indian literature, particularly the one produced originally in English language, yet the current domination of postmodernism encounters a somewhat different reception in the creative field. Postmodern thought and literary styles have served as a guide to many a novelist but not all are enamoured of it. Again, it has been noted that some of the Indian philosophical concepts find an echo in postmodern philosophy, but at the same time, some native literary traditions have also impacted the practice of postmodern literary principles. Thus, Salman Rushdie has advanced the cause of postmodern literature significantly through his use of magic realism and intertextuality, even as he has also popularized the Indian epical narratological style. My paper studies this interface between the Western and Indian paradigms. More than 1400 novels were published originally in English by Indian authors during the first two decades of the 21st century. Many of these novels reflect postmodern tendencies. In this paper, after discussing briefly the evolution and main features of postmodernism along with their convergence with the Indian creative and critical paradigms, I explore its impact on language, style and narratology as also the thematic aspects of novels based on history, myths, margins, globalization, dystopia, etc., in both serious and light fiction categories. Apart from taking in a broad view, the writers whose texts have been quoted to buttress the assertions include Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Ashwin Sanghi, Kiran Desai, Chetan Bhagat, Aravind Adiga, Ashok Banker, et al.