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A Social Cognitive Analysis of Selected Young Adult Literature in Indian English

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ABSTRACT: The paper has various primary and secondary objectives. One of the main objectives is to consider the selected works of Indian English 'Young Adult Literature' YAL in the light of Social Cognitivism to explore the link between young adults and their behaviour patterns. The study also aims to show how the authors weave an Indian view of the adolescent self and their world in their works. It will also try to highlight how a psychological search for identity overlaps with the understanding of larger issues such as morality, humanity and cooperation. The study will eventually make an attempt to focus on Indian rural and urban culture as they get depicted in these works. It will also try to prove how the journeys and adventures of the protagonists inculcate a sense of belonging to and pride of the community. The study will also consider the ethical issues that emerge in the selected works. It is within the purview of the proposed study to see how the young adult characters redefine their identities and experience a transformation. The secondary objective of the study would be to see whether the research would have any validity for the young adults in modifying their behavior patterns

KEYWORDS: 'Young Adult Literature', Social Cognitivism, transformation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The distinction between children's literature and adult literature is blurred in what is variously referred to as Young Adult Literature, Adolescent Literature, Juvenile Literature, Junior Books, Children's Literature, and Books for Teens. 'Young Adult Literature' (YAL) appears more positive and appropriate than the alternative terms 'adolescent literature' and 'teen literature,' both of which have negative connotations. There has been a distinct subgenre of young adult literature for quite some time. The stories in books aimed for teenagers and young adults tend to be intense, often to the point of being overwhelming in their intensity, and to have a swiftly growing storyline that emphasises the need of expanding one's horizons as one moves beyond infancy. The main character in YA fiction is often a teenager, and the plot focuses on the protagonist's efforts to overcome obstacles and find resolution. The story is told in the first-person by a teenager, and unlike children's tales, it isn't guaranteed to have a happy ending. 'Coming-of-age' concerns including racism, broken families, peer pressure, uncertainty, sexuality, relationships, and drugs are explored, and parents are either noticeably absent or at odds with their children. Teens may look within and outward at themselves and their surroundings through the lens of YA fiction. Teens can more easily navigate the text and enjoy pop culture references, themes, and so on because the language is less archaic in young adult literature. This results in more reading pleasure and ultimately improves reading comprehension. (There are 49 viewers) Teen literature now is quite different from what it was a century ago. Some critics of teen literature from the middle of the twentieth century say it's too preachy and moralistic. Although it was intent on conveying a message, it fell short in other areas, including character and plot development and the exploration of different themes. However, modern YAL tends to be more risky, realistic, and even depressing. There is a consistent undercurrent of suffering, worry, terror, rage, and guilt running through all of these accounts. Teenagers nowadays are more concerned with keeping up appearances in an online social realm than they are with really forming meaningful relationships with other people. Teens are more likely to recognise their own humanity after reading realistic novels in which the main characters struggle with similar issues. Dr. Seema Hingorani, a psychotherapist, says that since young people are at a transitional stage of life, they experience a surge of hormones when confronted with the unknown. The teens are trying to find their footing in both the teen and adult worlds. They might feel like an adult without really being one by reading realistic fiction. It's only logical that, in a society dominated by youth culture, young people would be the subject of fiction. Young people's literature is becoming more reflective of real-world situations. Today's youth are robotically functional, fiercely competitive, and lonesome. Young people may



cope with isolation and be better prepared for adulthood by reading books that explore raw emotions and relate tales of an individual's struggle against the world. Rowley writes that "Young adult and adult fiction often overlap boundaries" in her essay defining YA literature. When it came to identifying this "nascent literary genre," the biggest challenge for authors of young adult literature was "getting publishers and literary critics to accept and acknowledge" (Rowley) it. Despite widespread critical praise, YA fiction nevertheless finds itself shifting back and forth between the realms of adult literature and works specifically written for its target demographic. Rowley highlights and explains some of the most crucial features that serve as criteria for classifying this kind of literature.

From its earliest days up to the present, Young Adult literature has a well-documented history. The book *Literature for Today's Young Adults* by Nilsen and Donelson is a great resource for learning more about this area of literature. According to them, in the early nineteenth century, children's and young adults' literature "was largely religious, pious, and sober, but it hinted at the possibility of humanity's experiencing a satisfying life here on earth" According to Nilsen and Donelson, around the turn of the century, Alcott and Alger were two authors who had achieved widespread acclaim. Horatio Alger, Jr., and Louisa May Alcott. Alcott depicted idyllic domestic life in her works. Alger explored the topic of dysfunctional families. The books of Alcott may be brutal at times, but they were always genuine. The books of Alger were romantic fantasies, but at the time, the most popular author for young adults was Oliver Optic.

Even at the turn of the 21st century, the genre of Young Adult Literature remained mostly unknown. In regional Indian languages, many renowned writers such as Tagore, Premchand, and BibhutibhushanBandopadhyay have written works of fiction, but English-reading teenagers have had to make a huge leap from children's fiction to literature intended for adults. The Indian literature for young adults, which is often classified as a subgenre of children's literature, is not significant enough since it lacks the depth necessary to be included in the mainstream literary canon. Young adult literature (YAL) has long been overlooked and undervalued, but only recently (and mostly in the West) has it started to get the critical consideration and attention it deserves. BibhutibhushanBandopadhyay's *Chander Pahar/Moon Mountain* is a must-read that deserves wider recognition as a groundbreaking novel from Bengal/India that significantly advances the canon of this literary subgenre. During his lifetime, Bandopadhyay released four of his main works aimed towards adolescents: *Chander Pahar* (1938), *Maraner Danka Baje* (1940), *MismiderKabach* (1942), and *Heera MaanikJwale* (1946). *SundarbaneShaataBatshor* (1952) was a young adult adventure tale released after the author's death. Bandopadhyay's intention while penning works for his target demographic of young people was to promote both reading enjoyment and the development of their literary skills. This is why there are books for young adults like *Pather Panchali*, *Drishti Pradeep*, *Debjana*, and *Aranyak*, as well as versions of these books that have been simplified and condensed. Bibhutibhushan was already well-known as a famous writer for young people, but it was an untouched *Chander Pahar* who made his name. The novel's main character, a young man named Shankar, travels into the African desert, and his experiences there are vividly and realistically depicted. The book survives on the staples of young adult fiction, such as a hunger for the fantastic and the unfathomable, a love of mixing the real with the fantastical, and a thirst for adventure and the unknown.

II. CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH YAL:

Over the past few years, a new genre of writing known as YA (Young Adult) literature aimed squarely at readers between the ages of 14 and 21 has emerged on the subcontinent. Since the 1990s, a plethora of 'new writing' has appeared in Indian English fiction, including chick-lit, graphic novels, detective fiction, pulp fiction, campus fiction, and the most recent addition, 'Young Adult fiction,' or 'YA fiction' for short. Although young adult fiction is not an entirely novel genre in world literature, it is still in its infancy in India, struggling to gain acceptance among the country's literary elite. Several important studies have been published in the West since the 1990s, demonstrating the potential of young adult fiction to not only encourage adolescent readers to develop a lifelong love of reading but also to be used in schools to instill important values while teaching subjects like history, literature, and social studies. The little information we have on young adult literature in India comes from newspaper stories and infrequent book reviews about this emerging genre that has already captured the fancy of the publishing community in the West. Finding a single point of historical beginnings for this genre in India is difficult. While systematic studies of the genre have yet to



emerge, there are a few things one can observe in order to get a sense of where things began. Indian publishing houses like Children's Book Trust and National Book Trust were among the first to publish works aimed at young adults, according to a short review of YA literature published on sify.com. Only after major English-language publishing houses took an interest in YA literature did the 'young adults' subgenre come to the forefront. The 'Harry Potter' and 'Twilight' series, both examples of Western Young Adult fiction, are often cited as influences on modern Indian YA literature. Correspondingly, an article on dailybhaskar.com titled "Books for India's Young Adults Turn New Page" noted that the popularity of the contemporary young adult genre in India skyrocketed around 2007 when the 'Twilight' series of vampire romances made its way to Indian bookstores. After seeing how enthusiastically teenagers reacted to these novel types of fantasy adventures, various Indian publishers and writers started thinking about publishing desi (Indian) adaptations of the same. While Western authors are undoubtedly responsible for the development and originality of India's young adult fiction, the Indian version of adolescent literature has very few things in common with its Western counterpart in terms of themes and content. Western YA literature deals with a wide range of topics that affect today's adolescents and young adults. These range from more universal concerns about identity and self-determination to more specific ones about the complexities of adulthood, such as death and dying, drug and alcohol abuse, divorce, spousal and child abuse, racism, and classism. While teen fiction in India is still in its infancy and has room to grow, the country's young adult audience isn't unfamiliar with the subgenre. From the 1970s forward, a continuous stream of western adolescent thrillers entered the nation, and many readers and publishers believe this primed the metropolitan centres to receive this new genre. One remarkable aspect of the recent boom in Indian YA literature is that publishers have effectively redirected this demographic of readers to enjoy the works of indigenous writers who provide "desi" (Indian) adaptations of Harry Potter and Edwards based on characters like Ravana, Krishna, and Kansas. Books with Indianized names include David Hair's Swayamvara: The Return of Ravana, Ashok Banker's The Slayer of Kamsa, and Shoba Naidu's On the Yeti's Trail. There is a clear trend in Indian English literature towards exoticizing mythological history and a resurgence of epic themes and characters. However, this does not imply that only fantastical tales can be found in books aimed at young adults. Skunk Girl is a narrative about the pain of coming of age in a free society, while Real Men Don't Pick Peonies is a book about a Himalayan adventure. Battle for 19 by Ranjit Lal depicts the reactions of metropolitan teens when placed in a war environment. Several recent YA titles can be accurately categorised as "Coming of Age" stories because they feature a protagonist who comes to important discoveries, learns to make their own decisions, successfully navigates difficult obstacles without the guidance of adults, and has a clear understanding of their own inner strengths and weaknesses. Adolescents face a variety of difficulties, including coming to terms with their own sexuality, competing successfully in a demanding academic environment, resisting the influence of peers, and learning to cope with tragedy, calamity, and other frightening experiences. are additional topics that modern young adult literature in Indian English addresses. Authors like Deepa Agarwal, Paro Anand, Ramendra Kumar, and RanjitLal all tackle similar themes in their YA novels. These authors not only give voice to the worries of teens, but also allow young readers to consider difficult and unpleasant topics from a distance, find their place in the world, and realise that they, like everyone else, have the power to make a difference. Paro Anand is a brave and prolific writer for young people. She has written a wide variety of pieces, from plays to short tales to novellas to full-length books. In addition to his own works, Anand has edited and published a number of collections of children's literature from around India. She has served as the head of prestigious literary organisations including India's National Centre for Children's Literature and The National Book Trust India. Paro Anand has organised training programmes on the value of reading and established libraries and Readers' Clubs in underserved areas of India. She set a record by working with more than 3,000 kids from eleven different Indian states and thirteen different languages to create the world's longest newspaper (850 metres long). The initiative was conceived so that disadvantaged youth who lack access to a literary forum might have a place to share their work and gain confidence in their own abilities. The Russian Centre for Science and Culture has honoured Paro Anand for her work in children's literature. In 2007, President of India Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam acknowledged her for her writing on Republic Day. Anand has also been the country's representative in the United Kingdom and France, among other countries. She has toured extensively as a storyteller, sharing her tales with audiences in several locations in India, the United Kingdom, France, and Switzerland. She also oversees a project called Literature in Action, which teaches kids and teens how to utilise literature for personal growth. Anand has co-authored a book with a Swedish writer aimed at youngsters with special



needs, and he has also participated in an Indo-Swedish workshop. She has also served as a Rajiv Gandhi Foundation resource person, helping children who have been affected by terrorist and separatist violence in Kashmir. Her first-hand interactions with these youths inspired her to write *No Guns at My Son's Funeral*, which has received widespread critical praise and was nominated for the IBBY Honour List in 2006 as India's finest book for young adults. The novel is now being translated into Spanish and German, and talks are underway to adapt it into a film. The tale follows a young child who is influenced by harmful people and ultimately becomes a terrorist. Similarly set in Kashmir, the novel's sequel, *Weed*, follows the son of a terrorist as he seeks to define himself and provide for his family. *I'm Not Butter Chicken*, and *Wild Child and Other Stories* are two more of Anand's novels and short story collections that are great for teenagers. More than fifty of Deepa Agarwal's works are aimed at children and young people, and they cover a wide variety of genres and subjects, including mysteries, thrillers, stories about ordinary life, picture books, biographies, retellings of folk tales and myths, and assembled textbooks. Agarwal has written for and edited a number of anthologies, as well as contributing to several children's periodicals in India and throughout the world, websites, and the children's sections of newspapers. Most Indian languages including those of Korea, Japan, and China have seen translations of Agarwal's works. Her most recent works include the historical adventure narrative *Caravan to Tibet* (published by Puffin/Penguin Books), a translation of the well-known Hindi classic *Chandrakanta* (also published by Puffin Books), and a biography of Rani Lakshmbai. Some of her publications include *How to Get Your Child to Read*, and *Write Right*, a handbook to creative writing published by Scholastic India, and the children's novels *The Mango Birds* and *A Real Giraffe*, both published by National Book Trust. Several of her books have been recognised by the Children's Book Trust Writers' Competitions, and the International Youth Library in Munich has included five of her books in their White Raven Catalogue of Suggested Reading. In 1992–1993, her picture book *Ashok's New Friends* won the N.C.E.R.T. National Award for Children's Literature. The White Raven Catalogue features *Caravan to Tibet* since it was chosen for the IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) Honour List 2008 as the finest book from India. The Korean version has also been released. Her short tale "Cradle Song" won first place in The Asian Age short story competition, while her story "Visitor's Hour," which appeared in *Cicada* magazine in the United States, came in second place in the Magazine Merit honours given by the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators of the United States. Deepa not only translates her works from Hindi to English, but she also creates poetry and fiction for adults. Her collections of short stories, *If the Earth Should Move...*, and poems, *Do Not Weep*, *Lonely Mirror*, have both garnered attention. In addition to her work with Scholastic India, the National Book Trust, and Ratnasagar Publishers, Deepa Agarwal has led several workshops on creative writing and storytelling in classrooms around the country. She has started a group whose mission is to unite kids with books called the Habitat Children's Book Forum.

While investigating the chosen Indian English YAL, the research takes into account the following hypotheses. These theories are tentative assertions that will be strengthened or discarded after a thorough examination of the original documents, namely the chosen examples of Indian English YAL. The Selected Works provide a perspective on mankind that is grounded in the teen's feeling of duty to take care of the planet. Because they shed light on how adolescents learn and behave, these novels can be included in Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive theory. Adolescent literature has characteristics with these works, including a focus on innocence, humanism, and morality. Conflicts in relationships, social instability, parental and peer group pressures, a sense of value and identity, and similar social and psychological concerns are all explored in these books.

III. CONCLUSION

The ongoing discussion throughout the thesis focuses on the identity and behaviour issues of teenagers. The thesis discusses the works of modern Indian authors who have indirectly woven stories using teenagers as the central protagonists. It uses narrative sequences typical of young adult literature to have a conversation on the behavioural and psycho-social adaptive problems of teenagers during the most formative years of their lives. Understanding the teenagers' psychosocial behaviour and the capacity of young adult literature to educate its target audience are the goals of this study. The study was motivated by a critical need to make adolescent learning and behaviour the focal point of all human research. Understanding how literature might sympathise with the current teenage issue is another reason to study Social Cognitivism in chosen Indian English YAL. This research also highlights how the YAL in the Indian



setting reflects the distinctive characteristics of teenagers. The research also supports the importance of using literature to examine the whole spectrum of teen relationships.

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