

THE NOVEL

VARUN ARYA

ABSTRACT: *As mentioned in the Wikipedia, “A novel is relatively long work of narrative fiction, normally in prose, which is typically published as a book”. Novel, one of the most popular and widely loved genre in English literature. Among all the forms of literary creations, Novel, found its position at higher ranks. As a dominant form of literature, the novel is actually a young breed of the English Literature. It is supposed to be only 250 years old and remained a popular form of entertainment since its introduction. As mentioned in Oxford’s Dictionary Of Literary Terms the novel is described as “Nearly always an extended fictional prose narrative, although some novels are very short, some are non-fictional, some have been written in verse, and some do not even tell a story. Such exceptions help to indicate that the novel as a literary genre is itself exceptional: it disregards the constraints that govern other literary forms, and acknowledges no obligatory structure, style, or subject matter.”*

Due to this openness and flexibility, the novel has become most important form of literary world in the modern age. Its immense popularity even surpassed epic and romance and other narrative forms. Novel is different from short stories in terms of length. It is the length of the novel that distinguishes itself from the short stories. Due to its greater length it has an advantage of exploring its theme more perfectly and artistically, its gives more detailing to its characters and development of the plot. The term novel is believed to be derived from Italian novella that means a shorter tale.

KEYWORDS: *Narrative fiction, Popular genre, Fictional, Non-fictional, Literary form, Flexibility, Novella, Short story.*

INTRODUCTION ORIGIN

The word novella was first ever applied in 16th century to give an account of the short stories of the Decameron and the Heptameron, and others like them. The present word Novel is associated with romances of illicit love, came into limelight in mid 17th century, in England. The Novel, a literary form grown gradually via memoir-novel and epistolary novel of 16th and 17th century. During the 17th century, people of England started moving towards cities and towns, from villages. Their love for city life resulted in dense population of bigger cities like London. As a consequence of population growth as well as migrations in cities, the quantity of readers, also raised. Since the invention of printing press, it also became possible to print the material at mass scale. So both these factors acted collaterally to give rise to the Novel. At one hand you have readers, and on other hand there was press to serve them. The only thing left was the ideas. This purpose was served by the condition of society due to sudden increase of the population. Due to raised population, there raised the shortage of resources that led to changed and miserable life of certain class of the society. A major section of society suffered and their sufferings became ideas for the writers. Problems like insufficient housings, disease, drunkardness, child mortality and so on emerged as the issue of concern for most of the intelligentsia. And the people like Daniel Defoe emerged as novelists. It should also be kept in mind that novel is the cheapest form of the entertainment. Due to increased poverty, it was almost impossible for an average house hold to go to the theatre for entertainment purpose. The novel appeared to them the most reachable source of entertainment. One more fact that is worth mentioning for the rise of novel, the grown literacy rate. More literate people, more demand for study material, hence a grown readership. Moreover 18th century society had the leisure to relax at home with a book or periodical in hand. The woman had an inclination towards the knowledge of fashion and the trends. She was curious to know about the right way of life, how to dress rightly, how to converse rightly, how to walk and so on. She was searching for a number of questions in these periodicals. All this added to the growth and development of the novel.

CHIEF CONTRIBUTORS

As we know that the novel as a literary form has a number of exceptions, it does not follow conventions and there is no set definitions for this form of literature. It is therefore it becomes hard to conclude which work to distinguish to which work we should refer as first of the novel. Humans have been telling stories since ages, but modern novel is just 250 years old. Mind the word modern novel, loosely more or less similar form is 550 years old. In the list of claimed Thomas Malory’s ‘Le Morte D’Arthur’, written in 1470 is also claimed to be first of novel. Some also claim Don Quixote, published in 1605, Oroonoko published in 1688, as first of novels. Without the mention of John Bunyan’s ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress’, this discussion would be incomplete. Published in 1678, a Christian allegory, regarded as one of the most significant works of religious English literature. It has been translated into more than 200 languages. It has been also considered as one of the first novel in English literature.

The novel that we see today, and that’s the actually what we feel a novel would be, the modern novel, finds its beginning with Daniel Defoe’s ‘Robinson Crusoe’, and Moll Flanders. Published in 1719 and 1722 respectively, brought a huge amount of popularity to this genre. Before this Aphra Behn’s ‘Oroonoko’ published in 1688 is also thought to be a prose fiction. Jonathan Swift’s satire and parody of travellers, ‘Gulliver’s Travels’, published in 1725 is also now supposed to be a prose fiction.

18th century saw a rise in publications of novels. Writers like Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne and Oliver Goldsmith showed their excellence, and this led to raise in the status of the novel as a literary genre. ‘Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded’, was an epistolary novel by Samuel Richardson, published in 1740 and became a best seller even after being criticized for its content. ‘Tom Jones’ by Henry Fielding, was published in 1749 in London. It was categorised in two types of genres, picaresque as well as Bildungsroman. We will discuss these types and kinds in the later section. It got a place reserved in the list of world’s ten best novels in the book of W. Somerset Maugham, ‘Great Novelists And Their Novels’. ‘Tristram Shandy’, by Laurence Sterne published in parts between 1759 and 1767, had nine volumes.

An important figure in the history of English novelists is Charles Dickens. His work served as role model for succeeding novelist like Jane Austen. He wrote in 19th century, is a prominent novelist of Victorian era. During the first half of Victorian age, most novels published in three volumes. Charles Dickens’ ‘Pickwick Papers’, published in twenty parts between April 1836 to November 1837. Works like ‘Oliver Twist’, ‘A Christmas Carol’, ‘David Copperfield’, ‘Bleak House’, ‘A Tale of Two Cities’ and ‘Great Expectation’, brought him great name and fame. His main

thematic concern was London life and struggles of poor. He used humorous tone to depict the characters and circumstances. His contemporary William Makepeace Thackeray is best known for *Vanity Fair* appeared in 1847.

One of the greatest novelist of 18th century who showed her concern for women life, Jane Austen is still remembered for her genuine contribution in the literary world, especially to the novel. Her work is often considered as the novels of sensibility. Austen also remained a part of the 19th century realism. Whether its *Sense And Sensibility* (1811), *Pride And Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) Or *Emma* (1816) each novel explored the aspects of women's life that were worth attention. The issue of marriage of women and self dependence remained her main concern. 19th century which is also regarded as Victorian age saw a great deal of novels. The subject matter of this era's novel is generally associated with the social life and relationships. Sir Walter Scott, the founder of historical novel, has something important to contribute to the English literature. His novels *Guy Mannering*, *The Antiquary*, *Old Mortality*, *Wood Stock* etc are remarkable, in the genre of historical novels. Charlotte Bronte is best known for *Jane Eyre*, while her sister Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is included in world's best novels ever.

Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, Mary Shelley, everyone has added feathers to the novel and English literature. Joseph Conrad, with his typical language and wide wisdom made a significant contribution to this genre, with his worth mentioning works like *Loed Jim*, *The Secret Agent*, *Under Western Eyes*, *Heart Of Darkness* and *Typhoon*. *Heart Of Darkness*, is placed at 67th rank in the list of the 100 best novels in English of the 20th century, by Modern Library.

Thomas Hardy, bestowed with extraordinary powers of imagination and wisdom added new dimensions to the realism of Victorian age. His novel are best remembered for his imaginary Wessex, catching the local colors. *Far From The Madding Crowd*, *The Mayor Of Casterbridge*, *The Return Of Native*, *Jude The Obscure*, *Tess Of The Urbervilles* were his famous work that appeared in Victorian era.

When we talk about the 20th century novel, we are either talking about modern novel or post-modern novel. James Joyce's *Ulysses* appeared in 1922, has a significant impact on the whole century's novelists. A new term "stream of consciousness" has been introduced by William James in 1890 and used by modernists like Dorothy Richardson, Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner. But the most prominently employed in James Joyce, in his master piece *Ulysses*. In 1920, expressionists like Alfred Doblin, Berlin Alexanderplatz took novel to a different height.

Then we have the greatest modernist D.H. Lawrence, who brought sexual revolution through his concepts and novels. Although remained surrounded by controversies, he still remembered for best of his works. His controversial status can be estimated by the fact that his *Lady Chatterley's Lover* published in, 1928, Italy because British considered it as an obscene work. Later the ban is lifted by British but after a gap of 32 years. The impact of two world wars remained visible in the works of modern and post-modern novelists.

DIFFERENT GENRES OF NOVEL

We are using different terms for different genres of novel in our discussion. It's very important to have a knowledge of these terms to have a complete understanding of it. Here is a brief account of these terms and types of novels.

1. Epistolary Novel

As the name suggests, epistolary novel is the kind of novel, where there is use of letters. The word epistle refers to a special, long and formal letter. In this kind of novel the narrative is carried on entirely through the exchange of letters. The most prominent member of this genre is Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

2. Picaresque Novel

The word picaresque is derived from *Picaro*, which means a rogue. This kind of novel deals with the humorous and lighthearted adventures of a rogue, a rascal. It is the one of the earliest form novel, and is sometimes also referred as the precursor of the novel. Arranged in episodic form, usually tells about a journey. The journey chiefly focused on the adventure and misfortunes of the central character. This kind of narrative became popular during 16th century in Spain. We have a lot of popular novels in this genre Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* can be categorised in this row, although it is also placed in the category of Bildungsroman. Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* is one of the pure and prime example in this genre.

3. Historical Novel

Historical novels are based on historical backgrounds. They have some of their character, theme or plot from the historical concern. We have Charles Dickens, *A Tale Of Two Cities*, this genre for example purpose. It is set in London and Paris before and during French Revolution. It is published in 1859. Walter Scott is best known for his historical novels like *Ivanhoe*, *Rob Roy*, *Waverley*, *The Bride Of Lammermoor* and so on.

4. Bildungsroman

This category deserves a special mention as it is a well discussed category of novel in the literary criticism. It is a German word which is comprised of two words, *Bildung* and *Roman*. *Bildung* word refers to the education and *Roman* means novel. The focus and theme of this kind of novel revolves around the psychological and moral growth of the main character. The protagonist is shown as a sensitive character who goes through different kind of hurdles right from the young age consequently he emerges as a changed personality at the end of novel. *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding is the most popular novel in this category. As its discussed earlier that it falls in both categories, as a picaresque novel and a Bildungsroman too. *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens also lies in this category and who can forget *A Portrait Of The Artist As A young Man* by James Joyce.

5. Gothic Novel

In the second half 18th century, a different kind of novel made its way in the literary world and it became a popular form. Its plot comprises of fiction and horror. In 1764, Horace Walpole, an English novelist, introduced this form of novel, with his novel *The Castle Of Otranto*, subtitled as "A Gothic Story". Later on this form met with immense popularity, with the publication of works like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Edgar Allan Poe's, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and so on. In Victorian era, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* gained popularity. The themes and topics were aimed to evoke terror by exploiting mysteries.

6. Social Novel

Between 1830 and 1850 social novel became a popular form. It was the time when realism as a movement flourished and the actual social condition of the England was a matter of concern for the various artists and novelist in particular. The actual condition of the society of the England evoked various writers to write on it. The social problems raised due to industrial development or the various problems of poor section of society, whatever was evident in society remained a central theme for such kind of novels. Charles Dickens' *Oliver*

Goldsmith, Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* or Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* all are a representative of social novel. In short when fiction mingles with the social problem the outcome is social novel.

7. Science Fiction

When fiction is combined with science and an imaginative plot is woven for the purpose of entertainment such genre is science fiction. It is also referred as speculative fiction. The imagination is used for scientific projects, such as advanced science and technology, spaceflight, time travel, or extraterrestrial life. It is kept in mind that the facts and creativeness is always based on science and technology. Few examples of these kind of novels are H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*. He also wrote *The War Of The Worlds*. It has been observed that general themes and central Idea of this genre is related to scientific changes and their impact on the climate and environment like ecological concerns, geological changes and much more. In general we can say that the uses and abuses are used as a particular theme in this kind of novels apart from the entertainment. *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, 1984 by George Orwell, *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess are few examples in this particular genre.

8. Metafiction

A kind of fiction that is known for its fictional elements. While reading such novels, we are continually reminded of the fact that, we are reading a fictional work due its structure, language and the plot. Metafiction is self-conscious about its language, the kind of work. Let us study a case, Laurence Sterne's *Life And Opinions Of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, published in 1759, in 9 volumes, its style is marked by digression, double entendre, and graphic devices. His similes, are reminiscent of the works of metaphysical poets of the 17th century. Most of the novel focuses on the problem of language. The novel is a biography of Tristram but he cannot explain anything of his life in simple words. The narrative is so complicated that the birth of Tristram takes place in third volume. German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, described *Tristram Shandy* as one of the greatest novels ever written. In 1969, there appeared John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, at the same note.

9. Sentimental Novel

As name suggests, a sentimental novel is the type of novel which depends upon emotional stuff. The plot and its arrangement of sequences is such, that the responses have a emotional outbreak, and the sentiments of the readers will have a significant impact. The abundance of scenes of tenderness, distress and pity is one of the chief feature of this kind of the novel. The novels of Jane Austen usually fall in this category. They are also referred as the novels of sensibility. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or virtue Rewarded* is also categorised as sentimental novel.

10. Romance

The form of fiction, which is more often is confused with a love story, but its not always a love story, although their main focus remains on relationships. But the stories like *Arabian Nights* do fall into this genre. Walter Scott defined this genre of literary form as "a fictitious narrative in prose or verse; the interest of which turns upon marvellous and uncommon incidents". It do have subgenres like fantasy, historical romance and even science fiction is placed under this genre. The novels of Jane Austen also a part this genre apart from being a part of sentimental novels. Likewise, *Pamela* is also a romance.

11. Psychological Novel

Apart from the physical world, when the subject matter is psychological, related to the internal world of the main characters of the novel, the novel is termed as psychological novel. In this kind of literary genre, stress is laid on the internal characterisation, internal circumstances and actions although they have a direct or indirect relation with the outer world. The important aspect of this kind of genre is the character and its characterisation. In general sense, the main protagonist of the novels are thoughts. The stream of consciousness is often employed in most of the stories, in which interior monologues and flashback technique is used to illustrate the thoughts and mentalities of the character. It is believed that the trend has been started by sentimental novels. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* is one of the front crusader in this genre. One of the greatest novelist of this genre is Fyodor Dostoyevsky whose works, *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime And Punishment* share great deal of psychological novels. Few more examples of this genre are Henry James, Patrick McGrath, Arthur Miller and Edith Wharton. There are sub-genres too like Psychological thriller, Psychological horror, Psychological drama etc.

We do have few more categories of this genre like documentary novel, Fantasy novels, The novel of manners and so on. As it is discussed earlier that the genre of novel is itself an exception, full of exceptions so we can't fix or limit its sub-categories.

CONCLUSION

We mentioned a calculated numbers and these works that have been mentioned in this article may not be even a tenth part of this genre. Our focus was limited to get familiar with types and major contributors of this genre. Moreover it is not possible for anyone to conclude a vast and rich subject in mere three thousand words. Since the introduction of this genre it is widely popular and still it has maintained its charm among the readers. It may has several forms, languages, themes and subjects but one thing is common that is its popularity.

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