



## Background of the Rise of English Novel

The word novel derives its origin from the Italian word “novella” which was used for stories in the medieval period. Novels focus on character development more than plot. The novel came into popular awareness towards the end of the 1700s, due to a growing middle class with more leisure time to read and money to buy books.

The early English novels concerned themselves with complex, middle-class characters struggling with their morality and circumstances. "Pamela," a series of fictional letters written in 1741 by Samuel Richardson, is considered the first real English novel. Novel became a prominent form of English literature during 18th century but it did not get its perfection and proper form suddenly. There are various factors in the history of English literature that have contributed to the rise of English novel in 18th century era.

Through this piece of writing an attempt was made to unveil the emergence of Novel in English literature. The factors that contributed in the rise of English Novel are summed as under:

### Story Telling

Story telling is an activity which is a part of humanity and it is liked by everyone irrespective of the society which ever it belongs to. Real stories were told by wanderers, bards and other poets moving from one place to another, it was the cult of that time to move from one place to another by telling stories, people used to change the background of the story depending on the society in which they live in, story remains the same but the background started changing from place to place. The feature of local interest in novels thus came into existence, novels were now used to identified with the locality from where they come from.

But written form of the novel has started in the late middle and in the early modern ages. The traces of the stories can be found in the history during the time of Greek and Roman

period where we can find the classical stories. Another set of story tellers were associated with the church and used to narrate the stories related to the Bible because they thought that they can reach to the people in an effective manner and can easily convey the morals which has been written in the Bible.

## **Drama**

Drama is a form of literature in which the content has been told in the form of dialogues. The stories which were narrated during the early period of English literature are the stories of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round table, which has its origin from the locality. Then we have the stories of the “Troy” which has been adopted even in English literature. During that period people were not so educated hence written form of literature isn’t admired and adapted. Meanwhile drama gained its popularity and has become one of the favorite mode of entertainment for the majorities, whether it is the Dramas of Marlow or Shakespeare the characters in them are not monotonous characters on the other hand they were the characters which develops from beginning to the end and this special feature was adopted by novels. During these time dramas were blended together for instance tragedy and comedy were mixed with each other and the same feature was adopted by the novel. Hence just being a gloomy novel, novels can now be a combination of tragedy and comedy which made the novel more interesting for the readers. Even introduction of dialogues in novel can be attributed to dramas.

## **The invention of printing press**

Printing press was introduced in England by Caxton and through it the circulation of stories was increased, people get printed form of stories and started reading them. One of the crucial factor which added to the popularity of stories was to inflate the population of literate public. When merchant started moving from one place to another place they started bringing new stories and their stories are quite different from the stories of their own places. Earlier Arthurian stories and the classical stories were famous but now they were replaced with the stories of merchants. One of the earliest traces of English story can be found in Chaucer's “Canterbury Tales” in which a group of pilgrims were going to Canterbury and each pilgrim was supposed to tell two stories while going and coming back. Next Malory wrote a collection of stories related to king Arthur and his Knight’s legends called “Morte d'Arthur” in this work the themes were related to chivalry, honour and Knights rescuing the ladies. So this can be considered as one of the major work which has its influence on the writing of novel.

Later another important figure who influenced the writing of novel is Don Quixote who was a Spanish writer and his famous work "Cervantes" had a great influence upon the writing of novel and this work came to England through translation, it had a major influence upon the writers of that time.

John Bunyan's "Pilgrim Progress" is an allegory in which a male protagonist is making the journey to the town of God and the trials and tribulation that he sees on his way. Even though the story is deep rooted in the Bible and it is religious in nature but the people whom the protagonist meet on his way and the conversation which he had are realistic in nature and it can be considered as a major text which has its influence on the novel.

The other Elizabethan writers to mention here are Thomas Dekker, John Lilly and Thomas Deloney who gave realistic fiction and portrayed contemporary scenes, people from trade guild's apprentices etc. They focus on middle and lower middle class in their text. John Lilly who is known chiefly as having developed unique literary style called euphuism is one of the most influential for the early dramatist, then we have Thomas Nashe's work "Unfortunate Traveler" which is another important work which gives an account of a traveler who goes on travelling through the continent and the experiences which he had in the journey. This adventurous work influenced the genre of novel a lot. Philip Sidney's "Arcadia" gave the formal order of verse to prose. In this way the Elizabethan and Jacobean writers contributed a lot to the writing and development of novel in English.

The establishment of Royal society of England gave rise to scientific experiments and their results were all published in prose, so in this way it paved path how prose should be written in order to demonstrate the realistic things in an accurate way. Later we have the authorized version of Bible which came in 1611 by king James I, that gave a proper style to prose in English and set the benchmark for English prose writing for many centuries to come, moreover it has a measured prose style with musicality of the verse on every page. Every page has some special features which had its dominance during the Elizabethan age and Renaissance.

In the latter half of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century we have two writers Joseph Addison and Richard Steele and in their periodicals "The Tatler" and "The Spectator" have introduced the characters like Sir Roger de Coverley who was the forerunner of characters in novel. They earmarked how a character should develop, whereas if the main characters remain constant throughout the story the readers may

lose the interest in it very soon. Interesting character is the one which develops periodically. In this way novels have borrowed character development element from Addison and Steele.

The didactic purpose or to provide the morals to the public was one of the main purpose of the periodical essays of the time and this has been taken up by the earliest English novelist who are interested in conveying morals to the society. Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" and Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver Travels" were the earliest known novels of English literature and the earliest versions of novel we know today. In "Robinson Crusoe" Defoe tells the story in prose form about a man who goes to an island and his life in that Island, how he is rescued and comes back, it became a major text of study for postcolonial critics and postcolonial writers. The form and the content of the novel has changed the perception of the novel. It has given birth to a whole bunch of novel which were written in the same fashion. So Defoe's important contribution was his realistic and picaresque model Robinson Crusoe.

Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver Travels" also contributed a lot for the growth of novel it represented the time when it was written, it narrates the story of a man who goes to four different places and tells how those societies are different from each other, it was strongly a satirical work and protagonist satirizes all that he sees in the society as bad and disgusting in nature. Through this Swift tries to satirize the existing trend of society during that era in England. "Gulliver Travels" was a satire later it was recommended for children, thus giving a new identity to the novel that a book or a novel that is meant for one audience need not to be read by them or confined to that particular genre, they can also be referred for other group of audiences also for example Harry Potter was meant only for children but today we can find that people of different age group started enjoying it. This dimension of novel is unveiled by Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift.

Richardson's novel "Pamela" is the first novel of English published in the year 1740 in epistolary mode. It shows us that novel does not have to be told always in third person's narrative, instead it can also be written in the form of letters. In this novel the protagonist writes letters to her parents sharing her experiences of work place i.e of the house of a knight where she works in as a maid, the whole novel came in 7 volumes of letters. This novel analyzes the mental state of Pamela and serves as a precursor to Thomas Hardy's work "Tess of the Durbervilles". Thomas Richardson had an intention to Reform the society. He did not like the powerlessness of the people which leads to their

oppression, so through this novel he fulfilled the didactic purpose of the novel and tried to improve the position of women.

During Victorian age Henry Fielding wrote two novels “Joseph Andrews” and “Tom Jones” which contains the elements of picaresque and bildungsroman novels. There are many fun reading elements present in these novels.

Henry Fielding was one of the chronicler of the Eighteenth century’s England. He was a moralist and also a satirist but his satires were not as savage and gloomy as Richardson’s. He was gentle in his satires, when he wanted to satire something he would do it more humorously.

Tobias Smollett in his famous works “Roderick Random” and “Humphrey Clinker” developed the style of caricature which later influenced the works of Charles Dickens. We also have Laurence Sterne who experimented with time in his work “Tristram Shandy” where he discarded the chronological sequence of the time. This technique influenced the work of James Joyce. Oliver Goldsmith who wrote “The Vicar of Wakefield” which has a light touch of domestic life and daily encounters which makes his work a best example of domestic comedy. Horace Walpole’s work the “Castle of Otranto” was an early example of the Gothic mode. William Godwin’s sociological novel “Caleb Williams” which highlights the social and economic ills of that time.

This analysis shows that the novel which comes to life in 18 century becomes a dominant form of the era and does not remain as novel only but essence of several other things like Orientalism, Gothic, sociological, bildungsroman etc were now blended with it. Some of the major women writers who were among the pioneering 18<sup>th</sup> century Novelist prepared the platform for upcoming women novelist. Ann Radcliffe with her work “Mysteries of Udolpho” a gothic novel, Fanny Burney with her work “Evelina” which gives information of middle and upper class life, Maria Edgeworth with her work “Castle Rackrent” example of regional novel which entertains both adult and children are few to be noticed.

In lieu of the above synopsis the major features responsible for the rise of English Novels are extracted and listed as under:

- Realism
- Episodic and Epistolary structure

- Survey of the Contemporary Society
- Satiric and Reformatory Aim
- Focus on Middle Class
- Emphasis on Characterization

To conclude it can be portrayed that novel is not a product of solo mindset or genre rather there are various exponents which has influenced its evolution. It is the child of many experiments which were done by great writers of that age.

