

## Ravinder Singh: The Evolving Writer of Popular Fiction

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### Abstract:

During the developmental course, a number of new popular fiction writers have emerged and gained wide popularity in the last decade in India amongst whom are Chetan Bhagat, Shobha De, Vikram Seth, Ashwin Sanghi, Preeti Shenoy, and Ravinder Singh. Recently, Chetan Bhagat's *One Night at the Call Center* (2005), *Five Point Someone* (2007), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2004), and *Revolution 2020: Love, Corruption, Ambition* have stood distinguished in the field of contemporary Indian Popular Fiction. Other contributors such as Ashwin Sanghi's *Chanakya's Chant* (2020), Thrity Umrigar's *The Space Between Us* (2006), Preeti Shenoy's *Life is What You Make It*, (2011), Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2013), Radhakrishnan Pillai's *Chanakya in Daily Life* (2016), Prabhu Swaminathan's *Wasted in Engineering: Story of India's Youth* (2014) and Roopesh Kumar's *I'm an Average Looking Boy... Will You Be My Girlfriend?* (2017) have carved out a special niche for the genre of Popular Fiction.

Though a number of bestseller writers are simultaneously contributing to the development of this genre. Ravinder Singh stands unique due to his meritorious contribution to Popular Fiction. Appealing to that vast majority of readers for whom English may be a second language, this generation of writers has their exclusive gaze and concerns focusing on India particularly. Yet, the new genres such as Chick Literature and Techie Lit do reveal a striking reliance on an Indian dogma of life. Hence, Contemporary Indian Popular Fiction has a distinctly Indian flavor, concern, appeal, and reliance as well. Hence, the present paper undertakes a careful study of Popular Fiction and explores Ravinder Singh as the writer of Popular Fiction.

**Keywords:** Love, Marriage, Fate, Death, Separation, Destiny, Inspiration, Popular Fiction, etc.

### Introduction

Popular Fiction is the most bought and read genre of literature and thereby falls in the category of a bestseller. However, it is completely different from the mainstream genre of literary fiction. Therefore, it becomes essential to know the distinguishing elements between the two. The theoretical distinction between Literary Fiction and Popular Fiction has been very clear

that mainstream literary fiction serves the basic purpose of literature whereas popular fiction seems to be somewhat lighter than the previous one. Relatively, the prime aim of fiction, as stated by Aristotle and Horace, is to entertain and delight the sense of human conscience. Falling the in a similar line, Popular Fiction is commonly thought, perceived to be less valuable than the literary fiction. But this distinction merely does not appropriate the value of popular fiction. Such fiction cannot be truly compared with individual works of literary fiction for so, popular fiction, as well as shares so much value, and serves a similar purpose as literary fiction does. Hence, seemingly, considering Popular Fiction to be of less value or inferior shall lead to another controversy. Popular Fiction and Literary Fiction are not equally evaluated since they form, contain dissimilar aspects, and serve distinctive purposes. It would be quick to dismiss the value of popular fiction superficially.

Popular Fiction is a very noteworthy area of literature and literary studies. It is found difficult to define the genre due to its close association with mainstream literary fiction. It blurring boundaries and disciplinary transgression to other genres does not allow us to have a pervasive understanding of the genre as an exclusive one. Similarly, many books of literary fiction share some features of popular fiction and many works of popular fiction do transgress into the realm of other genres. Hence, it is difficult to decide the exact boundary between the two. The present chapter, as it necessitates, aims to define the genre of Popular Fiction, to its fullest possible extent. Popular Fiction can be made something easy with the help of the theory of Popular Fiction as proposed by some critics who have tried to define popular fiction as a special kind of cultural practice. The present study incorporates the theory of Popular Fiction in the light of perspectives of some prominent critics, Ken Gelder, Victor Neuburg, and Thomas Robert to clarify the concept of the genre as a special kind of literary and cultural practice.

Popular Fiction has been generally known by various names such as "Junk Fiction", "Genre Fiction", "Pulp Fiction", "Commercial Fiction" and "Market Fiction." The term "Junk Fiction" was popularized by Thomas J. Roberts in his book *An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction* (1990). "Genre fiction" in contradiction to "Junk Fiction" appears to be a respectable category as it addresses a much better category of writing. Seemingly, all works of "Genre Fiction" cannot be

included in the "Popular Fiction" category since they do not serve the meaning- of "Popular" in any sense. Hence, both could be called complementary categories of writing a novel, but their conceptual identity remains distinctive from each other. The close relationship between these two categories of writing brings them together to serve the very basic purpose of literature. Conclusively, be it Market-Fiction, Pulp-Fiction, or Commercial-Fiction, significantly their disciplinary features do overlap with the inherent philosophical interest of Popular Fiction.

The conflict between Popular Fiction and Literary Fiction does not merely settle down by theoretical distinction since both are mutually exclusive categories of fiction. Hence, both are - either at the same time or simultaneously - both popular and literary, equally or partially together. The two categories might exhaust the domain of fiction, or neither the category. There is an obvious relationship between literary and popular fiction since literary fiction can be popular in a purely numerical sense. It is less obvious whether a literary work that is originally outside the sphere of the popular can become popular fiction in a more substantive sense. In contradiction to this, it is often some works of originally popular fiction become works of literature as time passes. An author does not write by keeping the form and the genre of writing in his mind. His writing choice, merely, treats a literary text as a spontaneous overflow of his feelings as stated by William Wordsworth. Hence, critics only do care about the literary and generic distinction of literary works of art. As the genre primarily aims to entertain the senses of human beings, the generic distinction should be given less value to enjoy the text.

However, the genre has gained acclaim and its unique position in world literature. Despite long negligence, popular fiction has established its own unique identity as one of the noteworthy branches of literature. Contemporary English literature adheres to both mainstream literature and Popular Fiction as well. Ken Gelder in his popular book *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of Literary field* has clarified the original field of Popular Fiction. Moreover, he defines the genre as

The field of popular fiction is so immense that even those commentators who try to account for the whole of it inevitably reveal only the tip of the iceberg. (p.49).

Gelder's comprehensive thinking attempts to explain the distinguishing feature of the genre. He views Popular Fiction in terms of Popular Culture in society. Similarly, Thomas Robert has

attempted to define the genre in his book *An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction*, as a special kind of literary practice.

However, many works under the shade of Popular Fiction have gained worldwide popularity and appreciation. Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, Suzanne Collins's *Catching Fire*, Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* have acclaimed their distinguished place amongst the wave of world literature. Simultaneously, they have earned a high reputation in the genre. Hence, studying the genre would create an everlasting impact on the genre and also provide it with a unique identity.

### **Popular Fiction and Ravinder Singh**

Ravinder Singh is a dynamic Indian literary figure especially noted for his contribution to the genre of Popular Fiction. He has been honored both nationally and internationally for his outstanding way of writing Popular fiction with a light mood and thematic concern that specially caters to the contemporary metropolitan scenario. He has received many great compliments for his astounding literary works and has a number of fans to his literary taste and flavor.

### **First Love as Inspiration for Life**

Ravinder Singh has found his true inspiration for life and literature from his first love named Khushi (as named in *I Too Had Love Story*). It happened so, Both Ravinder Singh and Khushi had a love affair for a long time. Gradually, in real life, their love affair was about to be converted into an arranged marriage. Unfortunately, a few days before their formal engagement Khushi met an unnatural road accident and dies an unnatural death. This fills the entire life of Ravinder Singh with the beautiful memories of Khushi and true love which remains unfulfilled forever.

However, Ravinder Singh ties the wedding knot with Khushbu Chauhan on 23rd September 2012 in a privately arranged ceremony in the presence of close friends and family. Khushbu was one of the readers and went to Gurudwara to pray for him even before they met. Ravinder Singh is fortunate enough to receive true love from both the loves.

### **Love Converted into Literary Career**

Ravinder Singh, as stated before, wrote his first novel *I Too Had a Love Story* taking into account the heartbreaking incident that took place with his late girlfriend. This book was published by Shristi Publishers. Later it was re-published by Penguin India in (2008) The novel, having autobiographical elements of its author's life provides in detailed life history, a love affair, mental trauma, and aftermaths of a beloved's death in life. Despite life's losses and challenges, he did not give up but took the loss as an inspiration to write. His confession is asserted as

To be honest, I am touched! Sometimes, the tragedy in our lives either shatters us or completely transforms us. Facing the loss of a loved one can only be imagined by the person who has been through that phase of life. The journey from an engineer to a novelist must have been through a huge phase of emotional storms. (Web.)

His deep love and disappointment in life can be felt in the excerpt of the novel

She died. I survived. Because I survived, I died every day. I was bound by my stars to live a lonely life, without her, I felt so alone. Though the fact is that it's just she who is gone and everything else is the same. But this 'everything else' is nothing to me... (w eb)

The novel has received a wide appreciation and positive reviews from readers, critics, and well-wishers. It was highly appreciated for its writing style and innate beauty of context by *The Hindu*

Along with the innate beauty of their love story, the expression of the subtle emotions in the most simple and lucid way makes it special... The writer has summed up the essence of his story in the most appealing terms. (Web.)

Though he failed in love due to his misfortune, his literary career began after the huge success of his first novel. *I Too Had a Love Story* was also published in the Kannada language called *Nannadu Ondu PremaKathe*. After receiving a wide appreciation and recognition as the metropolitan author, Savrina Kapoor , a reviewer in her *The Viewspaper* once writes about the novel *I Too Had a Love Story*

The author has described the instances of his personal life in the story. Being a love story, the genre seems very interesting and appealing to many youngsters who have experienced the essence of love and relationships in their lives and those who have sacrificed something for other's happiness. (web)

Ravinder Singh, later writes a sequel to his first novel *Can Love Happen Twice?* (2011). After a debut success on the contemporary literary canvas, he published several novels such as *Love Stories That Touched My Heart* (2012), *Like it Happened Yesterday* (2013), *Your Dreams Are Mine Now* (2014), *Tell Me A Story* (2015), *This Love That Feels Right* (2016), *Will You Still Love Me* (2018) and *The Belated Bachelor Party* (2019).

Meanwhile, he founded a publishing house named Black Ink. He published several books under his publishing house such as *A Good Girl*, *Making of Babaji*, *The Guest*, and *Three Marketers*. Ravinder Singh earns a decent amount of money from his career as an author. All of his books so far have been the national bestsellers. No wonder he lives a lavish life from the amount he makes from his profession. However, his current estimated net worth is still under review. He leads a well-maintained lifestyle and appears quite classy and trendy. He also loves to hang out with his friends during his leisure time.

### **Ravinder Singh: Literary Stature**

As noted before, Ravinder Singh shares a high prestige and status in the field of Indian Popular Fiction. His contribution to the genre has owned him a high reverence and credibility that establishes his identity as an outstanding player in the genre. Ravinder Singh's novels are filled with lots of hopes, meaning, and emotions for all those love birds seeking true love in life. He writes very much in a fashion of Popular Fiction that chiefly concerns with lighter mood, distinctive style of writing, and emotional appeals in his novels. He has been an outstanding player in the field of Popular Fiction. His romantic flair, breathtaking romance, loving aspirations, and simple and honest confessions do overwhelm all his readers in the true sense. His all-way contribution to the contemporary Indian Popular Fiction earns him wide recognition and appreciation for his works from all walks of life. Ravinder Singh chiefly concerns several themes in his novels such as love, marriage, romance, fantasy, dreams, hopes, desires, trust, crime, relationship, horror, divorce, modernity, rejection, dejection, etc. His thematic concern and distinctive style of writing appeal to a wide readership and earn him a reputation as an outstanding player of Popular Fiction in the contemporary age.

Ravinder Singh, besides, his recognition as a Romantic Writer, is widely popular as Relationship Guru amongst the urban youth that appeals to their Gyan on, '*Mohabbat*

*BuriBimaari*. Ravinder Singh sits lightly on his success in the world of romantic fiction. His down-to-earth demeanor endears him to the crowds. His readership, moreover, has named him *'The King of Romantic Novels'*. He represents the generation that is unafraid to express their love by holding the hands of their beloved in public and confessing a promise of a lifetime. Especially, when distinguishing between, writing about love and being in love, Ravinder Singh finds it easy, and safer on writing. Because, being in love, he finds, demands a great sacrifice in life.

Indian Popular Fiction, specifically, refers to the writing that is well known and celebrated by the masses of readers due to its light mode of writing, elegant setting, and playful thematic concerns. Structurally, the genre differs, and stands opposite the genre, 'Literary Fiction'. There has been a significant distinction between the two since they serve distinctive purposes. Indian Literary Fiction aims to uphold the mirror to the conditions of human life while Popular Fiction aims to entertain, please, thrill, and comfort its readership. This minute disciplinary distinction between the two makes it extra-ordinary from the rest of all the genres of literature. While rejecting the idea of mainstream literary fiction and non-fiction, Ken Gelder offers a lively, progressive and comprehensive account of popular fiction as a distinctive literary practice in recent times. Respectively, literary fiction and popular fiction co-exist in a constant state of mutual repulsion and repudiation, therefore their classification is unattainable.

Significantly, it has been difficult to distinguish between the two genres since they share a common ground of ideas, coupled in the manifold literary canvas. Logically, he discovers a wide range of popular novelists from Sir Walter Scott and Marie Corelli to Ian Fleming and proposes its meritorious status on the canvas of literature. According to him, many proponents of the genre such as J. K. Rowling, Stephen King, John Grisham Michael Crichton, Anne Rice, Jackie Collins have escalated the worth, and dignity of, 'Popular Fiction' through their noteworthy contributions to the genre. The genre of Indian Popular Fiction has been contributed, and enriched by several Indian outstanding works such as Amitabha Bagchi's *Half the Night is Gone*, (2014) Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing*, (2017) Tanaz Bhathena's *A Girl Like That*, (2018) Shobha Rao's *Girls Burn Brighter*, (2018) Benyamin's *Jasmine Days*, (2018) Perumal Murugan's *Poonachi*, (2017) Sujata Massey's *The Windows of Malabar Hills* (2018) and

Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps*. (2017). Indeed, amidst all these writers, the contribution and reputation of Ravinder Singh in the field of Popular Fiction remain unsurpassable.

The chief aim and largest concern that Ravinder Singh's Popular Fiction, his style of writing service is its distinctiveness from mainstream literary fiction. It mediates less significance to the plot of the story where often very little happens but is constructed with big-hearted, bally stories that slip down easily to the comic consort. A huge significance is given to the characters who act like stock figures and the story revolves around them. Linguistically, the care is taken not to waste a single word that creates everyday humor and is closer to real life. It is often filled with witty dialogues, generous kinds of dialogues, and heard in everyday life. Thematically, the genre explores relevant, appealing, fascinating, and interesting themes that too in effective manners. Thus, popular fiction distinguishes itself from the other genres of literature and presents its unique identity in the realm of literature. The research in this area would impart a unique status to the genre as well as the same would bring forth a concrete analysis of Ravinder Singh's selected novels. Almost all the novels of Ravinder Singh encapsulate themes of love, fortune, romance, rejection, relationship, beloved's memories, death, thrills, suspense, and crimes. These themes are entirely fascinating to its readership. Hence, he has been recognized worldwide. Hence, the present research aims to undertake the first three novels of Ravinder Singh for careful study and examination and to trace out perspectives, techniques, and themes of Popular Fiction in them.

Although the genre is very popular and mostly read, it is not equally received as a literary genre. It is often taken to be a time-pass, cheap, and sub-ordinary due to the content and style it adopts for the presentation of the story. Whatever may be its position in the literary world, it enjoys popularity, love, and readership across the globe.

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