

Popular literature and the Telugu Novel, 'Secretary'

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Abstract: Popular literature is the literature that is appealing to the general public; widely favored or admired by an individual or a limited group of people. It includes the writings that have wide and continuous acceptance, measured by sales, frequent imitation, adaptation to other cultural forms, and general commercial success. The print medium is the base of popular literature, and the wide readership is the result of mass literacy.

Popular literature came to India as a term and product under the western impact. Since Western countries have high rate of literacy and education, works of western authors have a high degree of marketing. Indian English writings also have a wide range of distribution, but other Indian language writings have limited market within their language territory. Even much popular novels of Indian languages could sell only some thousand copies at a time. The other reason is that many regional languages have limited readership. That's why, we are not able to equate the popular literature of western countries with our Indian language writings.

Though there are different forms of literature, but novel has achieved the real status of popular literature in Indian Languages. The present paper studies the Telugu novel, *Secretary*, written by Yaddanapudi Sulochanarani. This novel was written in 1965, but it is liked by the readers even today. A movie has also been made on the story of this novel. Women readers have liked the novel the most and identify themselves with the character of Jayanthi. The very beginning of the novel creates curiosity in the minds of readers. The incident having suspense, in the first chapter, takes the reader towards non-stop reading.

Key Words: Yaddanapudi Sulochanarani, Telugu novel, *Secretary*, Popular literature,

1. INTRODUCTION:

Popular literature is the literature that is appealing to the general public; widely favored or admired by an individual or a limited group of people. (Patric Hanks, 1140). According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, the word 'popular' is meant as a synonym for the word 'successful'. Ranganathacharylu, while discussing the popular literature with Bertolt Brecht, quotes, "Popular means intelligible to the broad masses taking over their own forms of expression and enriching them (by adopting and consolidating their stand point) representing the most progressive section of the people in such a way that it can take over the leadership" (Ranganathacharylu, 229). It can be described as: 'Belonging to the people'; 'Intended for or suited to the ordinary people'; 'Designating literature and ephemeral publication, intended for general readership'. (Simpson and Esc Winer, 125). Victor E Neuburg writes, 'Popular literature can be defined as what the unsophisticated reader has chosen for pleaser.' (Victor E Neuburg, 11). 'The most obvious way to define popular literature doubtless is quantitative; if many persons read a particular kind of literature, it is popular. Cheaper cost and more readers – have resulted in the production of a vast amount of written material that the most part is intended for and consumed by ordinary persons, and this literature, or some person of it often been called popular literature.' (William F. Hansen, xii-xiii). It includes the writings that have wide and continuous acceptance, measured by sales, frequent imitation, adaptation to other cultural forms, and general commercial success.

According to the Encyclopedia of Britannica, 'Popular literature includes those writings intended for the masses and those that find favor with large audiences. It can be distinguished from artistic literature in that it is designed primarily to entertain. Popular literature, unlike high literature, generally does not seek a high degree of formal beauty or subtlety and is not intended to endure.' The term seems very simple for usage, but it has some complicated implications. 'The basic aim of Popular literature is to provide the readers with easy, immediate, and unbroken engagement, while demanding little of them Works of popular literature that are aimed at the group of readers, such as less educated or less-affluent persons may contain the themes, such as anti-intellectualism and fantasies, such as the acquisition of great personal power that are intended to appeal particularly to these groups, but the features are accidental, not necessary, qualities of popular writings.(ibid.)

2. Popular Literature in Indian Languages

It is a common fact that popular literature came to India as a term and product under the western impact. The print medium is the base of popular literature, and the wide readership is the result of mass literacy. Since the western

countries have high rate of literacy and education, works of western authors have a high degree of marketing. The books, in English language, can be sold in millions because of its global existence. The Indian English writings also have a wide range of distribution. But Indian language writings do not have such a wide market within their language territory. Even much popular novels of Indian languages could sell only some thousand copies at a time. The other reason is that many regional languages have limited readership. That's why, we are not able to equate the popular literature of western countries with our Indian language writings.

There are some worthwhile instances in Telugu literature which have created records. More than thirty-five thousand copies of the first edition of some of the novels, written by Endamuri Veerendranath *Tulasidalam*, and *Vennelu Adapilla*, have been sold. This is the highest number in the sale of Telugu novels. Five lakh copies of one music album of Gaddhar the revolutionary artist have also been sold. The drama, *Kanyasulkam* of Gurajada Apparo, is very popular among Telugu readers and has been reprinted a number of times. Even this drama is quite popular among illiterate people. It is difficult to conclude whether the form or the content could make these works so popular.

The popular form of literature in India is mainly fiction. The other forms, like poetry, short stories, drama, are not able to attain the status of popular literature in many of Indian languages. Within the fiction, all the genres have not attained popularity likewise some specific genres. The reasons cannot be explained in many cases. Some of the contemporary popular Telugu Fiction writers include: Yaddanapudi Sulochanarani, Yandamuri Veerendranath, Suryadevara Rammohan Ray, Malladi VenkataKrishna Murti, Mullapudi Venkata Ramana, Madhubabu, Yarramshetti Sai, Kommanapalli Ganapatirao, Chandu Sombabu, Bhalabhadrapatruni Ramani, Mallik, Madireddy Sulochana, Surepalli Vijaya, and Mainampati Bhasker.

Though there are different forms of literature, but novel has achieved the real status of popular literature in Indian Languages. The popular novels have common themes with some regular formula. They contain the stories of middle class members. They meet with upper class members, fall in love, and face problems before their happy union. Some other major categories include, suspense, thriller, horror and mafia adventure. Some of the popular novels give detailed information about a successful life and how to be successful in life.

The first Telugu novel, "Rajasekhara Charitra", was written in the year 1878 by Kandukuri Veereshalingam pantulu(1848-1919). The novel is an adaptation of Oliver Goldsmith's novel and has been translated into English under the title "Fortune Wheel". It has also been translated into Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam. However, prior to this novel, another novel was written by Naraharary Gopalasetty in 1872, but scholars consider Kandukuri Veereshalingam pantulu's novel as the first one in Telugu Novel Literature. Kandukuri has also written some other novels, like "satyaraju purva desha yatralu", and "satyavathi charitra".

Some other novel writers in Telugu are: *Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Chilakamarthy Lakshmi Narasimham, Unnava Lakshmi Narayana, Adavi Bapiraju, Viswanatha Satyanarayana, Sharada, Chalam, Sripada Subrahmanya Sastry, Munimanikyam Narasimha Rao, Arudra, Kodavatiganti Kutumba Rao, Tenneti Hemalatha, Malathi Chendur, Koduri Kausalya Devi, Norinarasimha Sastri, G. V. Krishanarao, Mudigonda Sivaprasad, Ranganayakamma, Kavana Sarma, Buchi Babu, Patbanda Madhavasharma, Pilaka Ganapatishastri, Korlapati Sreeramamurti, Rachakonda Viswanatha Sastry, Tripuraneni Gopichand, Bina Devi mudiganti Sujata Reddy, Kaluvamallaiiah, B. S. Ramulu, Anandaramam, Chandralatha, Sridevi, and Bhanumathi.*

Kovvali Venkateswara Rao has written 1001 novels which have been published in various magazines. It is considered as world record. Some of his most popular novels are: "Neeli vartha", "kasiyatra", "kamandhudu", "Yamuni teerpu", "Adapetthanam", and "sreeranganeetulu".

Sharada, (Pen name of Natarajan) has written seven novels: "Edi satyam", "mamchi- chedu", "apasvralu", "cheekati teralu", "mahipathi", "andaladeevi", and "kshanamlo sagam". He belonged to Tamilnadu and came to Andhra Pradesh at the age of fourteen. He joined a hotel as an attendant. Later, he learnt Telugu and started writing novels. His two novels, "manchi-chedu", and "apasvaralu", became quite popular among readers.

3. A Novel with Popular Elements in Telugu

Yaddanapudi Sulochanarani has written more than fifty novels, but, here, the novel of discussion is "Secretary". The novel was written in 1965 but it has been reprinted more than 80 times. A movie has also been made on the story of this novel. The novel starts with a happy note. Jayanthi, the protagonist, opens the door and enters the house with the news that she has got a job. She talks about the job and how good it is. This type of opening is common not only in novels but also in movies.

Jayanthi is a middle class girl. She has lost her parents and lives with her grandmother. She gets the job of a secretary in the office of Vanitha Vihar. She meets Rajasekharam, a businessman, at her workplace and establishes a friendship with him. Within a short period of time, she meets problems with her employer and resigns from her job.

Rajasekharam helps Jayanthi by appointing her as a secretary in his company. She meets Shivaram and Prakasham during this job and they become friends. For some reasons, she does not get satisfied with her current job and plans to resign. Her health too is affected and she undergoes a surgery. Rajasekharam takes care of her health in his house.

One day, Rajasekharam expresses his wish to marry her, but she refuses to marry a business man. She wants to marry Shivram, but he shows no interest. She gets disturbed and wants to go to some new place. Prakasham helps her to go to Bangalore and accompanies her. During their stay in Bangalore, Prakasham meets with an untimely death. One friend of Prakasham, Prasad, helps Jayanthi in getting a job of secretary in his sister's office. Prasad's sister proposes Jayanthi to marry her brother, but she does not get ready. She recollects her friendship with Rajasekharam and returns back to his place. Both get united at the end of the story.

Jayanthi is portrayed as a middle class, educated, self-esteemed, and beautiful girl. Rajasekharam is a rich, kind, handsome, and a man who possesses helpful nature. The other characters, like Shivram, Prakasham, Prasad, and his sister are also kind, but they possess lesser qualities. Jayanthi has a wavering mood and takes some abrupt decisions. Her decision to resign from her first job, her marriage-proposal to Shivaram, her willingness to go to Bangalore with Prakasham, affect her life immensely. But she takes a right decision at the end to marry Rajasekharam which gives a happy ending to the story.

The novel follows the formula of middle and upper class encounter which makes the readers to expect the happy ending of the love affairs. The women readers identify themselves with the character of Jayanthi. The very beginning of the novel creates curiosity in reader's mind and determines the mood and expectation. The incident having suspense, in the first chapter, takes the reader towards non-stop reading. Though this novel was written in 1965, it is still liked by the readers.

The incidents, in the novel, are described dramatically. The first meeting of Jayanthi and Rajasekharam is portrayed cinematically. Jayanthi listens to the comments on Rajasekharam's good nature. While she was in auditorium and feeling herself sleepy and tired, Rajasekharam appears from behind the chair and introduces himself. It makes the reader to have more expectations of further turn. The suspense is cleared through a letter at the end. This letter is written by Rajasekharam to Jayanthi in order to explain his life, his love towards Jayanthi, and his way of earning. It is sent to Prasad's sister, but it returns back to his own address. Finally, it reaches to Jayanthi. This turn fulfills the expectation of the readers.

4. CONCLUSION:

Indian Popular novel is mainly dependent on educated middle class readers. Hence they deal with the expectations, dreams, ambitions, emotions, fantasies, ideologies and problems of urban middle class. They deal with the day-to-day life of modern urban society. They equate the characters with the readers. *Secretary* could become the best-selling novel because of the reception from women readers. The house-wives and working-women find sympathy and empathy towards the character, Jayanthi. Another reason of attraction is its price. The novel contains 250 pages, but priced Rs. 75 only. Yaddanapudi Sulochanarani uses simple language for sentimental expressions. The examples and maxims also attract the readers.

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