

Trends and Themes in Contemporary Young Adult Literature

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Abstract :

In the past few decades, Young Adult literature has become progressively more popular. Film makers, Television, Fans, Critics and Academics all seem to have an inclination towards the Young Adult field. The present mankind genus is more engrossed in the literature contextualizing analysis of broader trends. However, while Young Adult persist to expand, it often materialize that the corpus of texts which is taught, studied, and critically examined overlap with texts discussed in the popular media; this has resulted in increasingly diminutive hyper canon of texts and is very often limited to the kinds of bestseller texts that make an enormous impact on popular traditions and ethnicity. To non-experts, the Young Adult class is often considered to be identical with huge blockbuster fiction titles like Harry Potter, The Fault in Our Stars, Twilight and The Hunger Games. The Young modern adult now seeks variant approaches with tangible trends in terms of theoretical importance, cultural significance, pedagogical value or amalgamation of all these approaches.

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The contemporary term 'Young Adult' is utilized to define a 'bazaar' where the audience defines the publicity, popularity and business. It is therefore, a developmental category, which is in constructing form rather than a constant term that precisely defines an age bracket. Research scholars have described this literature category as 'experiencing an extraordinary shift', being in a 'state of flux', 'fast-growing and ever-changing' & 'vexed and varied'. These contentions are quite closely associated with the similar fields of psychology and sociology which deals with structuring adulthood and play a significant role in redefining the meaning and experience of youth. While psychologists address this contemporary term as 'emerging adulthood'. These descriptions are widely accepted by diverse fields like human development, anthropology, health sciences, law, pediatrics and journalism. With consequent acceptance in varied fields, societal transformation is apparent and it is explicable that Young Adult fiction is similarly assimilating such change to reflect new and potential norms and trends.

India is not resistant to the universal and apparently exponential, mounting appeal of bestselling Young Adult fiction. Different Writers' Festival have showcased and reflected the rising popularity of this genre of writing. These festivals' debate touched recognizable edges of contention such as the appropriateness and advocacy of content promoted and marketed as Young Adult fiction and for Young Adult readers. Discussions of this sort have always been centered on the rising demand, 'Young Adult fiction' for readers, writers, publishers and film-makers. The concept extends on discourse relating to international bestselling Young Adult fiction which provides a wide range of contemporary literature that magnetizes the present genera. This is evident from the transitional period of 1930s to twenty first century which has given a boost from graphic novels to film technology.

The era when the comic books and novels were the only charm to fascinate and thrill the young adults has now become more of a virtual reality for them. On examining this appeal, a fact is revealed about the increased stakeholder involvement, having impacting patterns of readership, genre trends and content, within the category of Young Adult fiction. While the degree of change is not measured quantitatively, it rests upon strategies and behaviors exhibited by invested groups and institutions, which are accountable for affecting change. These variations over the decade aids in identifying the changing conceptions of young adulthood, in terms of sophistication, it also helps in knowing how Young Adult fiction is fashioned by those who create, produce and consume it.

These changes are commendable as young adults are seemingly accepting the challenges of the society and ultimately leading to the betterment of the society.

This genre is quite awakened and speaks candidly on a range of issues which are noteworthy and is also seen in young Indian and International writings. Though very less has been uttered on the driving forces behind these transformations yet the impact on these groups are perceptible. It is pragmatic that the major area lies in the film section that assists in stimulation of the literal moral sketch.

The utopian and dystopian fictions gather requisite attention of young adult readers as it provides a variety of tastes to admirers of fiction. The blockbuster series like *I too had a love story*, *Fault in Our Stars*, *2 States: The Story of My Life*, *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *Maize Runner* and *The Hunger Games* trilogy have proven to be benchmarks among contemporary literature. Text of such writings may have faced struggle based upon their popularity and artistic merit but on the contrary they have superficially gained enormous recognition and have immensely been embraced by young adult readers. And this in hand also becomes one of the major causes that these works are widely accepted by the young readers i.e. the use of language as an instrument which is adapted only to express the thought process of the writer. The literary use of language is merely considered and this allows the young adults to adhere more with the writer. The fictional writers of India like Chetan Bhagat and Ravinder Singh who also hold for International best sellers, account for the same. The book ***Critical Foundations in Young Adult Literature: Challenging Genres*** also states '*If you simplify your English, you are free from the worst follies of orthodoxy*'.

Secondly, these novels deal with cross cultural understanding as well as post- apocalyptic collapse of society which impels young people to tend towards the further understanding of commodity and consumption, such as Drug Use and Abuse, Pregnancy, Suicide and Violence. The realistic approach and themes marginalize the context and facilitates in acquiring better association between the reader and writer. The modern literature has nearly broken all boundaries of acceptable subject matter in understanding and addressing real- life problems by enabling itself to vision vivid mesmerizing concepts. Consequently on reading these fictional texts reader becomes enthusiastic and tends to be more accurate and realist which helps in eager connection with the societal and political affairs.

Furthermore, the contemporary Young Adult literature imbibes a whole set of strong human emotional state like anger, depression and pleasure. The modern YA novels transmit all the essence and the reader is instantly connected to them. Due to these grounds, The historical fantasies, Teen spy novels, Road trip fictions, etc. easily carry away the young readers. Today's young readers are more leaned and interested in the dark secrets of life which can be said as the reality least talked

of especially in India. This makes readers to crawl out of their shells and confront their emotions through these novels. Thus, Young adult fictions take in count the consideration of the changing nature of the adolescence. The erotic novel series of *50 Shades of Grey* by British author, E.L. James is one of best sellers that have successfully enchanted the young hearts. The thrill and romance of the novel sensitizes the young adult readers and reveals the murky undisclosed nature of a human. While some Young Adult works contemplate serious life-and-death issues, such as suicide, rape and cancer experienced by young adults as depicted in *13 Reasons Why* by Jay Asher and John Green's *The Fault In Our Stars*. And some novels like *Gone Girl* by Gillian Schieber Flynn portray suspense and crime. These elements immediately connect with the adult reader and reader starts comparing himself with the protagonist. This is one of the beauties of the modern contemporary literature that captivates the reader. The Young Adult fiction writers focus on these classy essentials.

On the other hand, the institutions are effectively accepting these changes and resetting their literary parameters for better understanding of this category of work. Conversely, it is difficult to quantify the degree of impact of the content and theme of these writings, it is better to be selected by the adults for the young readers while being in the institution. The institutional libraries can inculcate the entire award winning books which help in making independent choices and provide a degree of freedom to the young adults as well as adolescents. Though at a community level, public library and schools, staff chooses the shelve fiction according to the age suitability as some schools restrict few novels because they group them under 'mature themes' besides the fact that these works do not carry any age suggestion whereas the pictures on the book are often age specified. However the increasing popularity Young Adult fiction have helped in acquiring finest place in many libraries even front shelves are dedicated to these fictions in book stores to showcase the works with more mature themes for potential readers and buyers, thus, directing to trending literature. Apparently now many of the publishers display a marker notes stating the presence of mature themes that gives buyer a view for its suitability. On the same hand the publisher can't be too specific for mentioning age levels as it may affect purchasers. This increased sophistication in the work infers a range of potential motivations, from altruist and educational to economic though their position in curricula is yet to be decided.

Another aspect to be included are the adult dominated industries like film industries which affect the adult fictional content and keep on giving a constant shift. It may happen due to the high publicity of a particular content by the film industry

and may cause an imbalance in the market and can frustrate writers and publishers. This hampers the theme and readership in the adulthood.

The nature of Young Adult fiction is rapidly changing and is coming in hand with a challenge to become the 'global best seller'. It is observed that the change in Young Adult literature is majorly brought by The USA. The tremendous success of *Twilight*, by Stephenie Meyer changed Young Adult editing and publishing, it attracted diverse readership of young adult and adult readers as it sparked a supernatural trend and inspired a sequence of similarly themed fiction. The publication of *Twilight series* sales statistics out ripped age and genre and observed an increase in sales revenue of 41 percent. On an average 20.90 percent of increased sales has been observed in Young Adult book while the adult fiction class showed slight decline. Although the data does not conclude that adults are selecting Young Adult fiction as a preference over adult fiction but it is definitely producing an impact and indicate that the adults are attracted towards the themes, trends and content of the contemporary writings. Similarly the series of *Hunger Games* based on the theme dystopia and utopia by Suzanne Collins' dominated global market. Some of the journalists consider that the success of such novels rests upon sexualized narratives used, for instance the complicated love triangle of Edward, Bella and Jacob in *Twilight* attracts the young group while some consider these as catalyst. But the content of these novels and its acceptance has given evidence of the emergence of 'New Adult' for readership depicting transition between adolescence to a mature life stage and these writings often encompasses flexible age based parameters or the same transition period. These 'New Adult' characters are often depicted experiencing college, living away from the home, apprenticeship, military deployment, first serious relationship or a first job. These novels actually accompany the same plotlines that a young adult faces thus the reader exhibit better connectivity with them. In addition to this, in the recent years, the social networking sites like Goodreads.com recorded 500 percent rise in New Adult book listings. Many websites like Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Macmillan also included new adult labels, clearly signifying the popularity and sales of Young Adult fictions. According to *Bowker's biannual study* 55% of people are purchasing Young Adult fiction to read themselves rather than buying a book for others and relatively aged over 18. Adult readers now seem to be firmly aligned with this category. The consequent blockbusters Young adult titles have paved the change.

Conclusion

The Young Adult Literature has brought a completely new prospective to the world where the young adult is keen to explore a wide range of human approaches.

The contemporary form of Young Adult literature has paved the understanding and association with aesthetic values leading to Self realization. These trends of work and themes have led to a new form of business to the stakeholders. Film makers look these Young Adult fictions as profitable dealing which compels them to take these fictions to the screens, ensuing expected outcomes. Young Adult Fiction writers like Chetan Bhagat, Ravindra Singh, Stephen Meyer and John Green bring forth the attraction and love among young adults. This trendy form of literature has succeeded in serving the essence like love, hate, anger, trust etc in more realistic style which bound the reader and mesmerize them, this also becomes the reason of likings of modern fiction literature following utopian and dystopian themes.

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