



The New Age Fiction – Exploring New Possibilities

Abstract - Today not only for globalization but also for localization, translation has become very essential. It has become an everyday need of a civilized person. It seems that, in a world where so many different languages with strong literary background are spoken, translation has become a basic requirement to bridge the void between different nations, cultures and civilizations. In this age as a literary genre New Age literature is still not well-defined, what seems obvious that it is a yearning to explore the higher reaches of human prospective. The paper tries to understand this term and discusses few writers and trends that we are marching towards in this century. It is best to define it as a genre that explores new possibilities and concepts. Subsequently, it can be as enormous and varied as the human mind itself, and difficult to pigeonhole. Even the effects vary.

Key words – The New Age Fiction, Globalisation, translation, spirituality

Alvin Toffler, an eminent writer, sociologist and futurologist in his *The Third Wave* (1980) describes the contemporary era and also anticipates the coming era. Concentrating on families and investment, media and military, businesses and administrations, he prepares us for the comprehensive changes that are rushing toward us all. In his *The Third Wave* he describes the breakup of the modern society and he says that in this age of science and technology, human being is experiencing lack of recognizable order. To this loss of order, he says that we must also add the loss of meaning. The feeling that our lives count is lost. This feeling, says Toffler comes from healthy relationship with the surrounding society. It also depends on being able to see ourselves as part of a larger, even cosmic scheme of things. However, the sudden shift of social ground - rules have shattered the world - image that we carry.

Today, as we enter the 21st century, all round us we see terrorism, violence, gang-rapes, mass-suicides, corruption, starvation, social discrimination, inflation, economic depression, pollution, dehumanization of human values.... in short, we can hear the dooms-song, leading us towards catastrophe -

They scream they cry
 They suffer they die;
 No one to hear them
 No one to help them;
 It's a waste land.
 The dance of destruction,
 The song of the dead,
 Their screams hopeless,
 Their cries tearless,
 Animal, birds and men-
 With no light no ray.
 The waterless land

The helpless man.
 The dead march in a procession
 With their terrible cry-
 Tamsa ma Jyotri Gamaya'-
 From darkness, lead us to light,
 From death to immortality,
 Mrityu ma Amrutam Gamaya'
 (By Dr.Mrinalini Thaker)

Well, in this time of explosive changes and spectacular vagueness, many writers round the world have come up with fictional and non-fictional books on self- help. Nowadays we see a strong renaissance of realistic writing, often in support of social change. The main writers of this age include writes such as James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Salman Rushdie, Yukio Mishima, Bharti Mukherjee, etc. Nonetheless in the latter half of the 20th century we also see the rise of the non-fiction novel and the new journalism.

The 20th century it seems preferential the globalization of culture and as part of the process translation has come to acquire a good deal of prominence. In the modern literary context, it seems that translation has become inevitable. Today not only for globalization but also for localization, translation has become very essential. It has become an everyday need of a civilized person. It seems that, in a world where so many different languages with strong literary background are spoken, translation has becomes a basic requirement to bridge the void between different nations, cultures and civilizations. We agree when George Steiner says that it is no over-statement to say that we possess civilization because we have to translate out of time. Translation plays a vital role in opening new lanes in the literary-world traffic (Frenze, 103). Translation also helps to break the narrow domestic walls and to build up the one-world concept. Scholars from all over the world have given numerous methods and models for translation; nevertheless the research does not aim at this aspect of translation. However it is equally true that as an independent discipline, translation has proved to be a bridge between different people and as a unifying medium it has made literature written in diverse languages accessible.

Consequently, with translation coming to age, along with English novelist, many novels from different parts of the world have found their place on the shelf of modern libraries. Today when we talk about novel, we have a congregation of different novelist from all round the globe, including translated works. The literature of our times it seems is very prosperous as well as abundant. There is God's Plenty on the vast canvas of world literature as far as novel is concerned. But it becomes equally hard to get perspective on and evaluate this literature of our time as we are too close to it and it is still writing itself.

Along with the mainstream novelist and writers, our age is witnessing a host of diverse writers who write with diverse purposes. The trend it seems has in recent times been in style and the books of these writers have become best-sellers as they act as self-help guide for the disheartened masses. The books of these writers as such are full of spiritual message and have an unquestionable power to accelerate the soul and kindle the moral zeal of all who look up to it for support and guidance. These writers it seems have a wider demand, particularly among young readers, who see a close similarity between their own struggle and dreams and those voiced by these authors. No doubt, that the popularity of such books, show us that in spite of all materialistic possessions that the 21st century has provided us for, the human heart pines for peace, contentment and spirituality.

The trend it seems starts with Dale Carnegie. His How to Stop Worrying and Start Living became an instant success. Dale Carnegie is followed by a host of different writers and speakers including Jack Canfield, Mike Dooley, John Gray, Marci Shimooff, M. Scott Peck, Stephen Covey, Rhonda Byrne,

Richard Bach, Og Mandino, Dr. Spencer Johnson, Deepak Chopra, Robin Sharma – just to name a few. These writers it seems have become a blessing for human race.

Anupama Bhattacharya in an article in Life Positive October 1999 calls it New Age fiction. Since the term New Age (with its present connotation) was first articulated in 1971, as a literary genre is still not well-defined, what seems obvious is a yearning to explore the higher reaches of human prospective. He says –

Though the genre itself is rather vague at the moment—you can stretch it to include other realms, different states of being, space/time continuums, spirit entities, supraconsciousness and such phenomena— what is obvious is a desire to explore the higher reaches of human potential. It's almost there, the gift of wings, words that rend asunder the mask of reality and touch the core of that unknown, unsought ecstasy. You reach out, the elastic universe stretches to its brink. Then it snaps. So close, yet so far away. Is that what New Age fiction is all about?

In the same article, he says that from spirituality to scientific fiction to horror, the New Age Fiction genre seems to embrace all. In fact, it is best to define it as a genre that explores new possibilities and concepts. Then, it can be as enormous and varied as the human mind itself, and difficult to pigeonhole. Even the effects vary. If Bach takes you on a flight of ecstasy, Hess forces you to look at the world from a brand new perspective. If Adams's books are a snigger at creation then Coelho brings out the passion and the turmoil of a seeker's journey. The scope is stunning. Metaphysics rubs shoulder with nuclear science and Vedic wisdom is expressed in psychedelic visions. Moreover, rarely does it jar. Clarke spices up his science with metaphysical insight while Chopra adds colour to his philosophy with the pace of a thriller. The amalgamation is enriching. In that sense, New Age fiction, he says is not so much a genre as an irrepressible urge to go beyond human limitation. Even if it means, peeping through the looking glass into a time-warped dimension where the impossible is the only way of life. Generations of people globally are inspired and challenged by what these writers of The New Age have written and it is hoped that they will be the source of a new brainwave for many years to come.

The first among them, Dale Carnegie (1888-1955) was an American writer and lecturer. He has also developed courses in self-improvement, salesmanship, corporate training, public speaking and interpersonal skills and is pioneer of literature of self-help. Born in poverty on a farm in Missouri, he was the author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, first published in 1936, a massive bestseller that remains equally popular in the present era. He also wrote *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, *Lincoln the Unknown* - a biography of Abraham Lincoln, and several other books. One of the core ideas in his books is that it is possible to change other people's behaviour by changing one's reaction to them. His books are full of inspiring stories that show the readers how they can lead a better and happier life, showing a way to self-discovery.

Another writer belonging to the same category is M. Scott Peck (1936-2005) an American psychiatrist and best-selling author. With his *The Road Less Travelled* (1978), he presents a new psychology of love, conventional values and spiritual growth. His *The Road Less Travelled* continues to explore the nature of loving relationships and leads us toward a new serenity and fullness of life. It helps us learn how to distinguish craving from love and how to become a more sensitive parent and ultimately how to become one's own true self.

In the famous opening line of his book, "Life is difficult" and that the journey to spiritual growth is a long one, Peck never persecutors his readers, but rather guides them softly through the hard and often painful process of change toward an advanced level of self-understanding. His books have a message that is authentic, down to earth and practical. Drawing heavily on his own professional experience he suggests ways in which one can reach an advanced level of self-understanding. While his *People of the Lie* reflects on the moments situations in life in which not only ordinary people but also psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists are forced to think about such ethical and religious topics as good and evil. He questions the prevalent social taboo and crosses the borderline of conventional thought patterns. In doing so, he managed to show that it is not always possible or illuminating merely to attempt to understand, explain and evaluate people's behaviour and actions in terms of mental health

or illness. This is a very valuable contribution, particularly today, in light of such events as those of 11th September, 2002. His works are exceptional collection of writing through which life's spirit, the 'authentic' spirit, travelled.

Though the book *The Road Less Travelled* had been written in the mid-1970s, when Peck was 39, but it was in 1938 that it made it to the New York Times bestseller list. It subsequently stayed on the list for so long that it entered the Guinness Book of Records. Peck's later books include *People of the Lie* (1983) on healing human evil, *The Different Drum* (1987) on community life, and *A Bed By The Window* (1990), an inspirational novel. *A World Waiting to Be Born* (1993) looks at the idea of civility at the personal and social level, while *Denial of the Soul* concerns euthanasia and incurable suffering. While *Meditations from the Road and Further along the Road Less Travelled* (1993) was developed from lectures given by the author around the world.

In his works, he articulates in a wonderful way the message of love, community, decency and spirituality. He dared in reality analyse, determine and celebrate all of life's layers and then bring to us his insights. Courage, faithfulness and bona fide intelligence are some words that easily spring to mind as we assess his giant contribution, to the dignity of the human spirit.

Stephen Covey (1932-2012) an MBA from Harvard and a doctorate degree from Brigham Young University, is an American educator, author, keynote speaker was an internationally respected leadership authority, family expert, teacher, organizational consultant. His most prevalent book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* is considered one of the most profound and impactful books ever written on personal effectiveness, leadership development and change, In the 7 habits of highly effective people, Stephen Covey presents a holistic, cohesive approach for accessing timeless principles. It is a ground-breaking manual to attaining peace of mind within and building trust without by seeking the roots of human behaviour in character and by learning principles rather than merely practices.

With probing insights and keen anecdotes, Stephen Covey reveals how our actions branch from who we are and offers a structured process for living with equality, integrity, morality and human dignity -- principles that give us the security to adapt to change and the wisdom and power to take advantage of the opportunities that change creates.

Outstanding among the writers devoted to writing on personal growth and relationship is John Gray (born 1951) an American relationship counsellor, lecturer and author, he has written seventeen books, including his book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (1992) which is being turned into a motion picture. Gray's most current book is *Venus on Fire | Mars on Ice*, an exploration of relationships and the role of food and nutrition to sustaining a healthy romantic partnership. Gray's seventeen books have sold over fifty million copies and have been published in forty-five languages worldwide.

Rhonda Byrne (born 1951) is another great name in this category; she is an Australian television writer and producer, best known for *The Secret* - book and a film by the same name. By 2007, the book had sold almost 4 million copies, and the DVD had sold more than 2 million copies, in 2007, Byrne was listed among Time Magazine's list of 100 people who shape the world. *The Secret* teaches us that we create our lives, with every thought every minute of every day. *Living The Secret* offers tools and ideas to help and create the life of one dream. *The Secret* has arisen from the writers own anguish and grief, but as claimed by the writer that *The Secret* has been used by thousands of people to manifest their dreams whatever it may be – a perfect home, life partner, cars, jobs, promotions and all.

Another writer belonging to this category is Mike Dooley (1961-) a former PriceWaterhouseCoopers international tax consultant, turned entrepreneur, who's founded the Philosophical Adventurers Club on the Internet. Mike is also best known for his free Notes from the Universe emailing and his New York Times best-sellers *Infinite Possibilities: The Art of Living Your Dreams* and *Leveraging the Universe: 7 Steps to Engaging Life's Magic*. His inspirational books emphasize spiritual accountability

and he is also one of the featured teachers in the universal phenomenon, *The Secret*. The basic principle of Mike's philosophy, which is a very ancient one, is that 'thoughts become things'. He tells that we create our own reality, our own fate, and our own luck by our thinking. He tells that we humans are filled with infinite possibility—just ready to explore how powerful we truly are. Exhibiting the glory of our dreams is not about hard work, but rather about belief and expectation. These principles transcend belief, realizing the truth about human nature. The author lives what he teaches, traveling internationally speaking on life, dreams, and happiness.

Next is Jack Canfield, (1944-) co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and author of the best-selling book *The Success Principles*. He started his career with his teacher, W. Clement Stone, who taught him the vital success principles that he still operates. Jack Canfield is an American motivational speaker and the Founder and Chairman of Canfield Training Group and *Chicken Soup for the Soul Enterprise* in Santa Barbara, California. He has been teaching, training and coaching businesspersons, educationalists, corporate leaders, and people from all fields of life and of all ages and cultures to create the life they desire. His bestselling book, *The Success Principles: How to Get From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*, has been applauded as the new self-improvement model, containing 64 of the most potent principles of success known to humankind.

The list also includes Marci Shimoff, one of the bestselling female nonfiction authors. She is also a *New York Times* bestselling author, a world-renowned transformational teacher and a proficient speaker on happiness, success, and unconditional love. She is the author of *Love for No Reason, Happy for No Reason*, co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and involved lecturer in the documentation film *The Secret*. President and co-founder of the Esteem Group, she delivers keynote addresses and seminars on happiness, empowerment, and peak performance for various companies, professional and non-profit organizations and women's association. She is dedicated in helping individuals live more empowered and blissful lives. Her current passion is mentoring people in her program *2014: Your Year of Miracles*. Her profound teachings are simple and easy-to-understand.

An additional contemporary author who writes in the same trend is Richard Bach (born 1936) he is an American writer and poet. His *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* - a story published in 1972 became a best seller. It is a story about a seagull, which goes against the conventionalism of seagull society and finds a higher purpose of life. This book, during the last decades has inspired many people. By the end of 1972, over a million copies were in print, *Reader's Digest* had published a condensed version of the book, and the book reached the top of the *New York Times* Best Seller list where it remained for 38 weeks. In 1972 and 1973, the book topped the *Publishers Weekly* list of bestselling novels in the United States. While in his other bestseller novel *Illusion- the adventure of a Reluctant Messiah* (1977), Richard Bach tells us about his predestined meeting with a messiah - Donald Shimoda. The book it seems is not just a story, but also a way of looking at life. Richard Bach's mystical adventure story revolves around two barnstorming pilots who meet in a field in Midwest America. It is a story born out of inspiration. The great thing about Richard Bach's *Illusions* is that he creates a plot, which is both amusing and easy to follow, featuring his chosen message and presenting his conception of life. His other novels are also equally inspiring in which, Bach sets forth rather abstract eastern religious principles in digestible, accessible terms for the western palate.

Robin Sharma, Uganda born Indo - Canadian author also writes with the purpose to motivate and encourage. Robin Sharma is an author of 11 international bestselling books, and a globally respected leadership expert. In an independent ranking of leadership gurus, Sharma ranked second (source: leadershipgurus.net) His best known books include the multi-million copy bestseller *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* has been translated into 75 languages .His latest book is *The Leader Who Had No Title: A Modern Fable On Real Success in Business and in Life*. Today it seems that Sharma is one of the most widely read authors in the world.

In the novel *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari - A fable about fulfilling your dreams and reaching your destiny* (2003) Robin Sharma, tells us a story about Julian Mantle and his transformation from a millionaire lawyer to an enlightened monk - his journey from being a sceptical litigator towards being a yogi and a believer. The book is deeply inspiring, idea- rich and full of real-world tactics that can be

immediately applied to one's life. The language of the book is quite effortless and the message direct. Robin Sharma via fable, fairy-tale and other stories captures the wisdom of the past and presents it in a reader-friendly manner. His message is that life is an incredible game, a quest for happiness. The universe has a great sense of humour, marvellous love and gifts of magical unseen guidance. Every step of the journey is to be enjoyed and simultaneously the strength, the power and the magic will be taken care of by the universe – the cosmic law. To reach the destiny there are no quick fixes or short cuts. Julian, the main protagonist of this novel says that all lasting changes require time and effort and perseverance is the mother of personal change. The book seems to generate a world of wisdom, purpose, happiness, love, peace and success.

In this trend, the works of Paulo Coelho are not only the reflection of the society to which he belongs but it is also the reflection of the struggle and the obstacles he faced in life and eventually it is the image of the ultimate victory of humankind's inner qualities and spirituality. Novels of Paulo Coelho are a call to each of us to live our dreams, to hug to the uncertainty of life and to rise to meet our own unique destiny. The above-mentioned three novels have become worldwide phenomenon as they charm the mind's soul and captivate the mind's eye. A common feature present in all the novels is that the respective protagonists of all the three novels take up some journey, which ultimately becomes a quest for wisdom, a truly initiatory experience that transforms as it teaches. As readers as we take the journey with the protagonists of the novels we find ourselves on a route that takes many twists and turns and travel along unexpected pathways. There are surprises on the way as the protagonists discover the width of the knowledge, skills and attitudes and learn how to convert it into life experiences and remember to celebrate the surprises and enjoy the journey.

The characters portrayed by Coelho in his novels – Paulo and Petrus in *The Pilgrimage*, Santiago, the Crystal Merchant, Fatima and The English Man in *The Alchemist*, Paulo, Chris, Gene and Valhalla in *The Valkyries*, Pilar and her childhood friend in *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*, Veronica, Eduard in *Veronika Decides to Die*, Chantal Prym, Carlos, the widow Berta in *The Devil and Miss Prym*, Esther, Mikhail an elusive Kazakhstani man and the narrator in *The Zahir*, Igor Malev's, his ex-wife Ewa and Hamid- a fashion magnate in *The Winner Stands Alone* are characters who in spite of hardships and obstacles, choose to follow their hearts. Moreover, at times they go against the laid norms of the society. They do not fear to stand-alone, they are restless and searching for something that ultimately they find within.

The search for optimism continues with Austine "Og" Mandino II, (1923-1996) a great American writer and thinker. He wrote the bestselling book *The Greatest Salesman in the World* (1968) and *The Greatest Miracle in the World* (1975). His books have sold over 50 million copies and have been translated into over twenty-five different languages. He was the president of *Success Unlimited* magazine until 1976 and was an inductee of the National Speakers Association's Hall Of Fame. Mandino's main philosophical message is that every person on earth is a miracle. He feels that one should choose to direct one's life with confidence and congruent to the laws that govern abundance. His *The Greatest Miracle in the World* is the incredible story of Simon Potter, a rag picker who delivers an inspiring memorandum from God to make the difference between success and disaster in one's life. It is a story of hope and inspiration narrated in a simple way.

The most striking feature of contemporary literature it seems is that fiction which began long ago as an oral story is now regarded by many apologists as the most inclusive of all arts. In his *The Greatest Salesman of The World*, Og declares with finality that he is finished with his former life of going with the flow, he says I am a lion and I refuse to talk, to walk, to sleep with the sheep, with this sentence he says that he is finished with living by just getting by. He is finished with living without direction, without passion, without focus. Moreover, with this sentence, Og declares with potent supremacy that what he chooses to do, what it takes to fulfil the full measure of his potential, to realize the full measure of his talents and abilities. He chooses to rise up, to be counted, and to be stoutly self-directed. He also tells what new literature he and others like him are going to produce in this century.

The writers of *The New Age* it seems write with the purpose of searching and directing the new world. Simultaneously they are not aloof from the desires, the visions and the frustrations of the

human being looking for the stars in a world where clouds form on the horizon. Thomas Wolfe was not out of key with the coming generations when he wrote near the end of his life, that the essence of all conviction for people of belief is that man's life can be, and will be better. This belief in the creative power of the human spirit to endure and to prevail, whatever the obstacles or the foibles of the individual, is the central and fundamental aspect in the works of these writers. Paulo Coelho calls it as globalizing the spiritual Quest. (Confession of a Pilgrim)

However many people today it seems have been programmed to go with the flow, to wait for the shepherd to tell them what to do, to hide in the mob. They are programmed to fear the anonymous, avoid the different and hang to the comfortable. Even for such persons these writes act as a boon. No doubt, in this milieu, the above-mentioned writers (fictional and non-fictional) are trying to awaken the humankind from the long nightmare and are compelling them to make a choice. With self-inspiring stories and quotations, they help unleash the inner lion. In their works, they combined the ancient principles with incredible new scientific breakthroughs into mind/body chemistry. They show humankind a path of rising up with fury in all the power, majesty and glory of the inner lion.

The hypothesis that humans create their own reality by the thoughts, beliefs, intentions and expectations that they hold, has been part of eastern thought and religion for centuries and has recently established a growing following in the west. Its essence it seems can be seen in the works of many respected thinkers of our time, including members of the scientific community. In addition, it is a major influence on the literature of today. We humans do not want to learn from simple things, we think philosophy as well as moral values as theoretical object with negligible practical value. Economic development and higher living standards are good for society; however we cannot deny other aspects of life. Life is not a contest, it is not a scale of achievements, but it is a simple process that can be enjoyed by everyone. If a large part of society remains engaged and involved in life-not fight - then it is a social virtue, a boon for society. The core of the belief in progress is that human values and goals congregate in parallel with our increasing knowledge.

However, the 21st century shows the contrary. Human beings use the power of scientific knowledge to assert and defend the values and goals they already have. New technologies can be used to alleviate suffering and boost freedom. They can and are being used, to wage war and strengthen tyranny. Science made possible the technologies that powered the industrial revolution. In the twentieth century, these technologies were used to implement state terror and genocide on an unprecedented scale. Ethics and politics do not advance in line with the growth of knowledge — not even in the end. However, it is a known fact that there is an enlightenment revolution of sorts taking place on this planet. Every intentional act to support or hasten that revolution is a good thing whether it is something as small or it is something bigger in scope, the writers as a community, have the potential to influence the perspective of millions of people.

The New Age fiction is a superb and outstanding product of the modern age - the age of globalization. A product has been enriched by the excellent minds of all nations. All these great novelists belong to different caste, creed, colour, race, and nation but ultimately show the same path. Moreover, as such the philosophy presented by all such writers is universal, indicating the oneness, wholeness and the universality of the path that is easily approachable as well as applicable to all human beings.

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