



# Colonial Karma: Self, Action, and Nation in the Indian English Novel

*Josna E. Rege*

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Although the Indian novel in English has received unprecedented acclaim on the global stage over the last two decades, most readers outside India are unaware of its long history. *Colonial Karma* offers a much-needed overview, tracing the Indian English novel from its nineteenth-century colonial origins to the turn of the twenty-first century, with each chapter focusing on a particular historical moment. It links the development of the novel in India with that of nationalism, showing how English-educated Indians sought to solve their problems of individual and civic action by redefining the concept of karma to create a new, hybrid idea of action. The term "colonial karma" refers both to plot action in the literary texts and, more broadly, to the persistence of colonialist and nationalist thought in post-independence India. After considering early works in English and in Indian languages by Bankimchandra Chatterjee, O. Chandu Menon, and Rabindranath Tagore, *Colonial Karma* discusses novels by a wide range of writers, including K.S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Deshpande, Githa Hariharan, and Arundhati Roy.

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