

## Indians and India as Portrayed in Shrilal Shukla's *Rag Darbari*

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Shrilal Shukla's *Rag Darbari* of 1968 is considered one of the best novels written not only in Hindi region, but in India in general. Its literary merit was confirmed by the Sahitya Akademi Award granted in 1970, and its popularity all over India was proved by its multiple translations to Indian languages. According to Gaeffke *Rag Darbari* is a "picture of crude victory of machiavellism over morals and tradition" (Peter Gaeffke, *Hindi Literature in the Twentieth Century*, Wiesbaden 1978, s. 70), and as such it is a very intricate picture of post-colonial Indian reality, which is drawn with satirical disillusionment with Independence as means to change the country. The novel provides readers with a kaleidoscope of characters (Brahmins, students, wrestlers, teachers, unprivileged villagers, goondas etc.), who portray those who have power or want to have it and those powerless. An invented village of Shivpal Ganj, where the action is set, is very vividly present in the novel, and therefore it constitutes not only a mere background, but becomes one of the novel's main and most interesting characters. In *Rag Darbari* Shrilal Shukla sketches a very detailed miniature painting of an average North Indian village and its multiple characters are representatives of its colorful inhabitants. Much of acclaim received by the book was caused by the fact that its portrayal of India is a satirical one, and as such it is still very much relevant and applicable to the reality of Indian villages even in the present times.