

Mapping of Indian Writing in English with Historiography of British India

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Indian Writing in English (IWE) finds its roots in early British colonies in India, that is in early 18th century. And, since then many creative hands carved IWE and transported it to present stature. Undoubtedly, English easily made its way into Indian lives and became more than any other language in India. The present paper discusses the Indian Writing in English since its inception to post-colonial period in India. And it also focuses on many authors' and poets' perceptions and themes that are seasoned along with Indian history.

Keywords: Indian Writing in English, Prominent authors in Indian Writing in English

Introduction

The impact left by British culture and predominantly language was and is very significant in Indian history. For initiation of any language, the foundation must be strong. In other words to be developed, any language required the people who understand and enjoy all forms of it. Thomas Babington Macaulay introduced English Education in India to get some Indians trained for clerical office. Indian elite who got education in English, started reading and writing in English to extend their scope of experience. One hundred and ninety years of colonial rule and amalgamation of Indian and Western cultures resulted in Indian Writing in English in India. English language had become the focus of many Indian authors, who intended to reach most and it took many transformations in all genres of literature.

Evolution of Indian Writing in English from Its Inception

Indian Culture and English language both blended and brought out two arrays of literatures in subsistence, namely, Indo-Anglican literature and 'Anglo-Indian' literature. Indo-Anglican literature is about corpus of work that combines Indian literature and literature written in English and it could be understood literature produced in English language by Indian authors, where themes, style and outlook are completely Indian. On the other hand, 'Anglo-Indian' entails the literary works of English authors in India dealing with Indian themes. The term 'Indian English Literature' was coined by Kodaganallur Ramaswami Srinivasa Iyengar. In *The Indian Contribution to English Literature* Iyengar noticed that "for Indian writer writing in English, using Indo-Englishman sounds discomfited and using Anglo-Indian is misleading." So, he categorized all works written in English by Indians as Indian Writing in English. This enormous quantity of literature included not only fiction but also nonfiction by Indians authors.

Dated Three Centuries Back

Sake Dean Mahomed's travelogue, *The Travels of Dean Mahomed* written in 1793, considered as the first Indian writing in English. Hence, history of Indian Writing in English is dated three centuries back. Since then many authors who wrote in their regional languages tried their hand in writing in English and enriched it with complex, intricate and multifaceted and variety of themes. In *Modern Indian Writing in English: Critical Perceptions*, N. D. R. Chandra holds that, "at beginning Indian were not so cordial towards learning English language, but gradually they develop interest in it. (2)"

Different Phases in Indian Writing in English

History of Indian writing English studied and explored in three phases. First two phases were in colonial period and the third in post colonial period. The first phase was instituted by English learned and university educated Indians. It was renaissance period in Indian Writing in English and was started during mid nineteenth century, that period was represented by remarkable legendary philosophers like Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, Kesub Chunder whose powers were extended towards social reform, educational reform and religious reform. Many English learned Hindus started criticizing the baseless practices and looking forwards reformation. Foundation of Brahma Samaj by Raja Ram Mohan Roy brought a great reform into society and a great shock to orthodox Hindus.

Kodaganallur Ramaswami Srinivasa Iyengar said in his *Indian Writing in English* "Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, Lokmanya Tilak and Gokhale, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi and many other great authors used English language as forceful vector to communicate their ideas and emotions. These all eminent people were designers of modern India." (15)

Second phase of IWE began with writers like Raja Ramohan Roy and Rabindranath Tagore and later Mulk Raj Anand, Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami, and Raja Rao.

Third phase appeared after colonial rule where Indian Writing in English has been seen in its real form by the contribution of many authors and novelist. This great pool of literature includes both fiction and nonfiction. Non-fiction writers including great leaders like Nehru, Abdul Kalam Azad, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Iqbal and Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan and many others produced a great corpus of literature to support historiography of India. After colonial rule Indian writing in English bloomed in different regions and major contribution was done by undoubtedly by Bengali authors.

First, the three different and well-versed authors, Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K Narayan have left a remarkable feature with their Indian sense and emotion on English Literature; later at second phase many different authors from all regions of India represented their regional and emotional themes through their writings. Finally, in the third phase during globalization, many authors adopted different themes like diaspora, dislocation and science and technology, etc.

Prime Personalities in First Phase of IWE

If one observes the evolution of Indian Writing in English one can understand the fact that first phase was flourished majorly in Bengal where British established their strong colony. Raja

Ram Mohan Roy, a famous personality of Indian history, was not only a social reformer but also a good author who produced prose and poetry with authority and ease. The first Indian English poet, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831) was son of English mother and Indian father. He was highly influenced by romantics and also welcomed debates about religious philosophies when he was working at Hindu College, Calcutta. He won the students' devotion by his brilliant teaching and started cutting through the social and religious beliefs of orthodox Hinduism. Kashiprosad Ghose (1809-1837), whose part is counted as equal as Vivian Derozio was considered as the first Indian to publish a regular volume of English verse. He was editor of an English weekly *The Hindu Intelligence*. His poetry is counted for its morality, originality and descriptive beauty.

Maikel Modhushudan Datto (1824 –29 June 1873) was most celebrated poet and dramatist of nineteenth century. He was immensely influenced by William Words Worth and John Milton and he was a spirited Romantic. He wrote many plays among them *Padmavathi* and *Sermista* were noteworthy. Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909) was Toru Dutt's cousin. He had passed Indian Civil Service Examination in 1869 and held different positions in India. He had also served literary world by producing many artistic works in both Bengali and English. He translated many religious scripts like Vedas and Upanishads and also, he wrote many historiographies of Indian subcontinent. Another worth noticing prominent author, Manmohan Ghose (1869-1924) began writing poetry with the influence of Romantics like John Keats and Matthew Arnold. Unlike his contemporaries in India, including his brother Aurobindo Ghose, his poetry mirrors long to England where he had spent his twenty-two years of life.

The versatile, sage and astute personality of Indian literary world, Rabindranath Tagore (1861- 1941) known as the Rishi, the Gurudev and the Maharshi. He was a poet, dramatist, actor, producer, musician, painter, an educationist, reformer, philosopher, prophet, novelist, story writer, and a critic of life and literature. Rabindranath Tagore translated many of his poems and plays from Bengali into English. Before he was eighteen, he had written more than 7000 lines of verse. *Gitanjali*, the Nobel prize winning work made him world poet. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar says in his *Indian Writing in English* about Tagore that, "Tagore appeared as a real Rishi of Upanishadic times and sage in his manifestation and his writings reflected real world". (103)

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) was an invaluable and stupendous figure in Indo-Anglican literature. His contribution to Indian English literature was profound. His long poetic career has given Sri Aurobindo the height of literary master of Indo-Anglican literature. His *Songs to Myrtilla* and *Urvashie* were published in 1895 and 1896 respectively. Aurobindo put more focus on mythology of Hinduism than contemporary society.

The first phase authors and poets of IWE constituted from elite of well off and well-educated families who were fortunate to join universities like Oxford and Cambridge. These authors either reinterpreted Indian mythology or were influenced by their contemporary English writers. But a few authors could cut through cobwebs and brought new light into Indian Writing in English.

Second Phase of IWE

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Sk. Shakila Bhanu, M.A. and Dr. Y. Suneetha

Mapping of Indian Writing in English with Historiography of British India

225

Early twentieth century was marked with innovative thoughts in both literary and political world. At that time, the fervor of nationalism was in swing and many young leaders were got influenced by fresh air of Gandhism and took the path of nationalistic movement. Mahatma Gandhi though not keen in writing and was not a writer, influenced many through his writings and found a great place in word of letters. The period between two World Wars noted as Gandhian age in India and these thirty years was brought the revolutionary changes in India and had brought a great transformation in India in political, economical, educational, religious and social spheres. Among the writings of Gandhi, his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth* is the most outstanding work. It is a detail account of his personal life expressed with frankness and honesty which became human document.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was the most remarkable name in the history of India as well as in the history of Indo English literature. He was influenced by Tagore, Gandhi and his father, Motilal Nehru. His works clearly reflect the influence of Karl Marx and Lenin. Nehru always desired to explore the great legacy of India and authored *The Discovery of India* (1946). This historical survey captured the picture of India from the Indus Valley Civilization to the mid-nineteenth century. The two journals run by Gandhi, *Young India* and *Harijan* influenced the national movement.

Indian writing in English served as good connecter among different regions of the country and constituted corpus of its literature established a great sense of nationalism among the readers. And it attracted the scholars with great amount of literature that was build through the translation from different regional languages. Many scholars opined that corpus of literature from Indian languages to English as well as from Indo-Anglican writings into regional languages should be treated as Indian literature.

Third Phase of IWE and Indian English Novel

Among all forms of literature, novel gained immense attention and popularity among authors and readers. Other forms of literature like drama, poetry are very old and dated centuries back. It is evident that new form of literature, novel, was welcomed by all Indian writers. *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) was recorded as first Indian English novel. Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K Narayan were big three of Indian Writing in English. They nurtured novel with their literary artistic capacities and charm of innovative themes which attracted the contemporary reader.

In nineteenth century, Indian novels were more directed towards social interest with political consciousness as younger generation was more aware of social and political happenings. A noteworthy development observed in nineteenth century was women novelist started publishing their works. Indian novels in English had originated from different parts of country. Despite geographical, cultural and social differences, theme depicted in novels shared common thread of nationalism.

The Big Three in Indian English Literature

After First World War novelists were influenced by the ideologies that challenged capitalism and colonialism. The major influence noticed was Marxism, and Mulk Raj Anand represented it in his novels with utmost flexibility. After these three foremost Indian writers of

fiction in English, there were many other prominent writers like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Khushwant Singh, and Amitav Ghosh along with prominent women authors like Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherji. All these novelists have considerably enriched Indian English literature.

Women Authors in Indian Writing in English

The contribution of women authors to Indian writing in English could not be overlooked, they represent a considerable segment of Indo-English writers. The English language has provided a good access to new horizons of knowledge. The quality of continuous absorption of the spirit of modernity, rationality, and the friction between custom and novelty made them produce blend of themes. Post colonial Indian English literature bloomed by many female authors who ventured to put their natural and true emotion in their writings through their work. They were undervalued at initial but later they equally compete with their male counter parts. In inception women writings hold the themes of female subjugation and suppression later it was moved towards the quest for identity. Their exploration and emotions presented in works shown a new world to the reader. Last three decades marked with the prominent works by famous women writers like Shashidesh Pande, Kamala Markandeya, Nayantara Shagal, Arundhati Roy, Shoba De and Jhumpa Lahiri enriched the Indian English Literature with their rich and fruitful themes and artful diction. K. V. Surendran writes in his *Women's Writing in India: New Perspectives* that "it is reflected that women writings are necessary to explore female psyche and understanding. Elaine Showalter coined the word 'gynocriticism'. It is considerate to read women's text with concerns of women emotions and perceptive and gives room to express and feel women sensibility". (4)

Toru Datt was a British Indian poet who wrote in English and French and many of her works translated by her sister Aru. Sarojini Naidu (1879–1949) was the most celebrated female writer who wrote in English and she was called Nightingale of India. She became one of the principal political figures as she was president of the Indian National Congress and her leadership skills and oratorical mastery made her a national leader.

Anita Desai, a popular novelist of the Indian English fiction was born in 1937. Anita Desai is categorically one of the celebrated Indian English fiction writers Anita Myles observed about Anita Desai's depiction in her edited book *Feminism and the Post-modern Indian Women Novelists in English* as "Anita Desai secured an exceptional place in Indian women novelists. Her protagonists become depressed, violent or self-destructive, but they are strong and never give up. Her woman characters struggle against patriarchal practices and order to explore their own potential or to live on their own terms". (36)

Shashi Deshpande, winner of the Sahitya Akadami award, has authored many novels with prolific creativity. She has shifted the objectivity of women's status in literature to subjectivity. And Manju Kapur is another creative novelist who decorated Indian English novel with her profound themes and inventive craft. Through her writings, she has showcased patriarchy, marriage and female and male relations. She has portrayed her women characters as victims of biology and psyche.

The most gifted woman author Arundhati Roy, born in Bengal and grew in Kerala. and she is the first non-expatriate Indian author and the first Indian woman to have won this prize. In *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: A Critical Appraisal*, by Amar Nath Prasad observes "Arundhati Roy focused more on class antagonism and class exploitation. Her well received works dealt with universal theme of social consciousness. She concentrated also on women issues in society". (105-106)

Bharathi Mukherjee is a Bengali post colonial writer. Her works centre around the phenomenon of migration, the status of new immigrants and the feeling of alienation often experienced by Indian women and their struggle.

Kamala Markandaya is another pioneer of her own kind. She depicts about women who stand for quest for self fulfillment. Markandaya's novels portray women who prove strong enough to bare all oddities of life with their inherent capacity of compassion, sacrifice, nurturance and acceptance of the unavoidable contests. Another wonderful woman novelist is Ruth Praver Jhabvala who wrote about the middle-class life of Delhi. Political issues are focused through her characters and their suffering and struggle related those issues. Her depiction is simple and concerned to social problems and she maintains a sardonic tone.

On the other hand, Nayantara Sahgal's novels give a different outlook about marital relationship. Her female characters find fulfillment in outside the marital relation. All her novels portray this theme, with major political events as backdrop. Many critics have found political glimpses in her novels. However, her depiction exhibited emancipation of women mostly in their personal lives. Sahgal's protagonists contrast with Anita Desai's protagonists. In Desai's novels protagonist tries hard to save her family and household whereas Sahgal's chooses to be bold for her cause of being. The vital characters of post-colonial novel often try to find their own identity breaking through the nostalgic traditions and find themselves torn between self and social. Anita Desai experimented with innovative writing technique, stream of consciousness to discover the self alienation of her central characters.

Themes

One of the frequent themes observed in the post-colonial Indian English novels is nostalgic about joint family system. The major themes demonstrated by women novelists are self exploration slowly developed into social change in India in all its complex arrays. The shift of traditional society to industrialization and then to modern metropolitan has been practically manifested in Indian English novels. It can be said that Indian English fiction included whole range of themes and trends related to the self distinctiveness, struggle with orthodox world, partition, social evils corruption and many other.

Contribution of Muslim Authors to Indian Writing in English

The brilliant galaxy of Indian Writing in English had been augmented by many Muslim authors. Many prominent Muslim authors contributed their thought and philosophical experience with absolute beauty of delineation for the development of Indian Writing in English. Ahmed Ali to Salman Rushdie and Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain to Sohaila Abdulali enlighten the sphere of Indian Writing in English with their narrative skills and exceptional themes. These fiction makers brought newness and current in their electrified subject matter and created a watershed in

Indian Writing in English. To this enormous pool of Muslim contribution, great and stupendous and remarkable political figure Abul Kalam Muhiyuddin Ahmed Azad also had his great part. The Progressive writers' Movement was majorly instrumented by Muslim authors like Syed Sajjad Zahir, Ahmed Ali, Rashid Jehan, Attia Hosain and Mahmuduz Zafar. In fact, they were the trend-setters for modern writers in Indian Writing in English.

Partaking of Muslim Female Authors

Indian Muslim female authors have equal share in the corpus of literature produced by Indian Muslims authors. In early writings major themes dealt by these authors were inequality, suppression and patriarchy, later they look at the innovative and social and political themes. Authors like Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Ismat Chughtai questioned the male patriarchy through their writings. Attia Hossain, Rashid Jahan, Qurratulain Hyder, Samina Ali and Anees Jung and many others bestowed Indian Writing in English with their empowering themes.

Conclusion

Language is a powerful vector to transport one's emotions, ideas, joys sufferings and experiences. Literature constituted in most spoken language like English certainly would attract more attention of scholars and researchers. Introduction of English language in India and its gradual development facilitated the accrual of Indian Writing in English.

India, being a nation of diversity, is definitely a creator and bearer of different cultures and heritages which greatly manipulated one another. Authors from different regions of India bestowed their best works in English Language. Indian Writing in English, as a novel sector of English Literature, attracted many scholars and critiques with its innovative themes and thoughts. India, being colonized around two hundred years, by British, attained a complex cultural hue and the same was reflected in its literature. Literature produced in English and in other languages during and after colonial period mirrored the real images of contemporary society. Partition that was happened after independence became a center of all literary interests and great amount of literature was produced on it.

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