

HISTORY OF INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT: There are some queries about Indian English literature. When it began? Who wrote first as an Indian writer? This paper highlights on the origin of Indian English literature, who is the backbone of Indian English literature? Who introduce English as a medium of education in India, what is the contribution of Rabindra Nath Tagore and other Indian English Writers? It also highlights on the History of Feminism in Indian English literature Indian writers illustrate in their works the ancient and glorious cultural, social, political, religious and time – honored philosophical traditions and the enduring values of Indian society.

KEYWORDS: Literature, Philosophical, Contribution, Ancient.

INTRODUCTION:

Indian writing in English literature is not essentially different in kind from other Indian Literature. It is a part of it, a modern face of that glory which, commencing from the Vedas has continued to spread its mellow light Indian writing in English Literature which is now turned as Indian English Literature, Indian English Literature begins from about 1800. The British domination swept all aspects of Indian life since then the Dutch, French, and Portuguese from the outside and the Marathas from the inside had almost lost their powers. That is to say the battle of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764) changed the destiny of the British as well as Indians together. Dean Mohamed (1759-1851) was affected by this, originally from Patna, he served the Mughals and he left them when they lost power, and he settled in the U. K. His book „The travels of Dean Mohomet (1794) was the first book ever written by an Indian in English.

Indian English Literature has its origin since the time of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Though he was not a creative writer but he is the backbone of Indian English Literature. Raja Rammohan Roy and Lord Macaulays „Minute on Education introduced English as a medium of education in India. Macaulay observed: “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.1” So Indians of the upper class, and caste, began learning

English for jobs and some of them started writing prose in the new medium.

The British thought that introduction of English for Indians would facilitate their power of rule. So English education institutions like Sherburnes and Drummonds academies and Presidency College came into existence. It is said that the first phase of Indian English fiction began with Bankimchandra Chattopadhyayas Rajmohans wife (1864), the second was Gandhian phase from the 1920s; and the third was Salman Rushdies phase.

The 1930s and 1940s is the birth time of Indian fiction in English. At the time great Indian writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabans Bhattacharya, Raja Rao, Aubrey Menon and G. V. Desani made a career for themselves. This time Gandhis role in the freedom struggle inspired the writers and they used the Mahatma theme in their fiction. The most internationally famous writer is Noble laureate Rabindranth Tagore, who received the Noble prize for Literature in 1913 for his work “Gitanjali” He wrote the national anthem of India and Bangladesh namely, “Jan Gana Mana” and Amar Sonar Bangla”, respectively. He was the first Asian who won the Noble Prize. Rabindranath has written enormous amount of poems, songs, Essays, Novels, plays and Short stories.

In the field of fiction Indian English Literature is not lagging behind, ever since the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterers, Raj Mohans wife in 1864. Indian English novel has grown considerably in bulk, variety and majority. What began as a „hot house plant“ has now attained a luxuriant growth and branched off in more direction than one Indian English Literature has gained worldwide recognition today. Fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment of the contemporary Indian English Literature.

The women writers make us see a different world and help in realizing the true worth of human achievement. Woman writers have had to battle with certain deeply ingrained critical Prejudices, the main prejudices is gender based.

The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases: the first phase, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, initiated when male European colonists began to speak out against the social evils of

Sati; the second phase, from 1915 to Indian independence, when Gandhi incorporated women's movements into the Quit India movement and independent women's organizations began to emerge; and finally, the third phase, post-independence, which has focused on fair treatment of women in the work force and right to political parity. During the sixties and seventies women writers from highly educated families who felt the need of presenting woman's plight in the male dominated traditional society of India and now they changed the focus by depicting woman craving for individuality and equality with man.

Wiston Churchill said "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty"³ In the development of the Indian English novel the feminine sensibility has achieved self-sufficiency and has developed very well in spite of its late manifestation. Traditionally India had a male dominated culture. In literature as well as in social life Indian women had no autonomous existence as they were suppressed by layers of prejudice, convention, ignorance and reticence.

A women writer imprisoned within her own social dogmas had to choose her literary canvas from a selected area of experience with certain vistas remaining beyond her reach. These forbidden vistas are being creatively explored and delineated. As in commonly known, women have low access to education, health and employment. The awareness of the lack is high in the social development, which is why domestic violence against women instantly raises. Is our way of thinking handicapped? No, the literature is not a mirror of society held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it.

Bharati, Sarabhais play "Two Women" discusses women existentialism especially the problem of widowhood. These two women, in a way, represent the contemporary progressive women of India who are conscious of their rights and resist all efforts at surrender to the will of others. Nissim Ezekiel, Asif Currimbhoy, Mahesh Dattani, Girish Karnad and Vijay Tandulkar each of these five have raised the issue of feminism in one way or the other. Both sides of feminism are found in their plays: woman as the „Shavian New Woman. The Shavian concept projects and contemporary woman as liberated because she does not succumb to the male chauvinism, though at the same time she fulfills her respective role of womanhood competently and sincerely. Betty louise bells professes, "I was raised on the voices of woman, the kitchen table was first a place of remembering a place where women came and drew their lives from each other" Dialogue takes place at kitchen tables or over meals between women who hear

and respond to one another's stories whether they are verbal or written writing becomes a path to healing, and an indigenous feminist ethos of responsibility compels women to share their stories and personal pain with one another to promote healing for everyone. There has been a spurt of woman writers like Kamla Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Nayantur Sahgal, Anita Desai, Bharti Mukherjee, Geeta Mehta, Shashi Deshpande, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Uma Vasudev, Gita Hariharan, Namita Gokhale, Nina Sibal, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapoor and Jhumpa Lahiri. Through their writings, the women novelists very successfully and skillfully capture the Indian ethos. The English poetry produced by the Dutts-Romesh Chunder, his cousin Toru, her father Govin, their uncles Hur and Greece and another cousin Omesh- is great and inspiring.

Indian English Literature is "a bastard child of Britain Colony"⁶ wrote Uma Parameswaran, but this bastard child has now bagged many coveted literary awards to date, pulling the carpet from below the whites and thereby creating a furor in the entire world. In Rabindranath Tagore's two-act play *Malini* (1895), Tagore deals with the conflict between the old ethic and the new one. Because of her leanings toward Buddhism, Princess Malini becomes the target of attack by the Brahmins, who demand her banishment. Surprisingly enough, she herself appears before the unyielding Brahmins, gathered before the palace. Attracted by her holy appearance, people hail her as a Goddess and the Mother.

Nevertheless, of the friends Kemankar and Supriya, who stand apart, the former boldly attempts to bring foreign aid to fight the Buddhist heresy. Tagore in this play seems to emphasize the importance of the religion of love. As he has in his mind the story of Buddha, his female protagonist follows almost the same path so far as the various phases of her life are concerned.

Girish Karnad's play *Hayavadana* tells a story embellished with the harsh Truths of life and psychological study of a woman. Indian writers illustrate in their works the ancient and glorious cultural, social, political, religious and time – honored philosophical traditions and the enduring values of Indian society. Their works represent an artistic and imaginative perception of the changing phenomenon and the shifting values of contemporary Indian life and reality.

The Indian English novelists naturally find a genuine medium for the expression of their artistic skills and perceptiveness. They manifest in their novels different sections of the Indian pluralistic contemporary society,

its cultural ethos and glorious heritage. Novelists depict the socio-political and cultural problems faced by Indians and also depict the psychological problems such as alienation, rootless ness and search for identity in their works.

Rajagopalacharya said, "English is Saraswatis gift for India." Indian writer travels in search of new knowledge and truth. Indian English writing has known for its great vibrancy and resilience, it occupies a prominent place in world Literature.

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